



# Professional Development of Teachers to Improve the Education of Gifted and Talented Scholars

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## Abstract

Due to the shortage of ongoing professional learning it has created a gap for educators of gifted learners wanting to increase self-efficacy and desire to improve their pedagogical strategies. Cortina (2011) suggested limited opportunities for professional development in gifted education topics for general education teachers is a persistent and pervasive problem. The mixed methods research study consisted of the researcher employing both theoretical frameworks, Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1980; 1984), and the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997). The results of the survey revealed that teaching area emerged as the strongest predictor that contributed to the model significance. The significance of the data and the implications they have on the future of professional development for gifted educators is critical. These study findings may influence teachers, administrators, professional developers of school districts, and the gifted community in promoting further evaluation of G/T professional development practices.

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether local gifted and talented teachers feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of gifted and talented students. In addition the study identified the differences in the level of teacher interest as it pertains to a variety of independent variables gender, life stage, teacher concerns, primary teaching assignment, year of experience teaching, professional learning in gifted education, and in-service workshop or conference hours in gifted education.

The mixed methods research study consisted of the researcher employing both theoretical frameworks, Adult Learning Theory (Knowles, 1980; 1984), See *Figure 1* and the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) See *Figure 2*. The theoretical framework of this review of literature is tied to the concepts of secondary teacher's desire for professional development in competencies needed to teach G/T learners, inadequate training of gifted educators, and the current state of gifted education in the United States.

The significance of the study was to construct data on gifted teachers desire for further professional development and uncover the less obvious reasons limiting continuous professional development opportunities to provide insight to professional developers designing and implementing more relevant and ongoing professional training for teachers of secondary gifted learners.

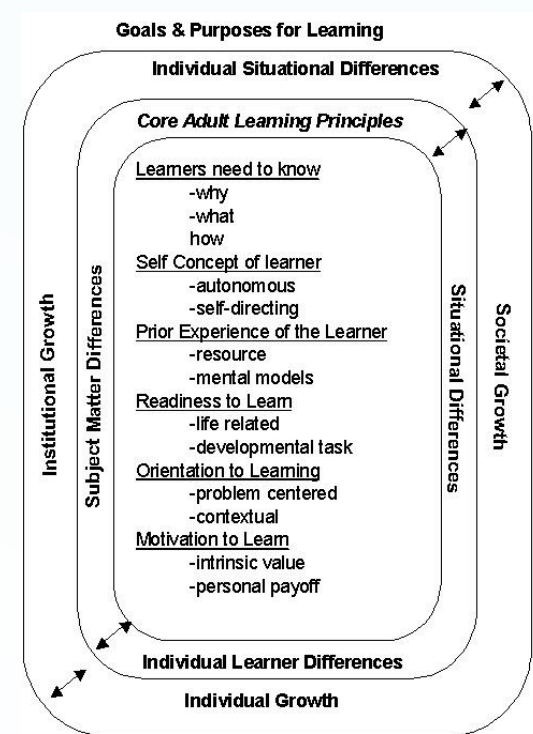


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework of Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy) in Practice Model (from Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 1998).

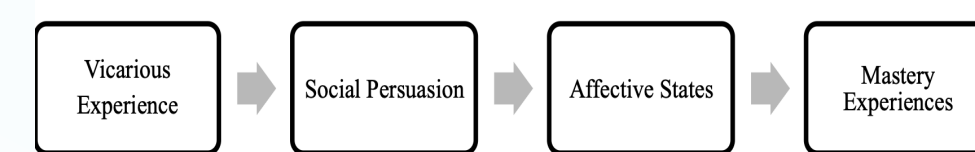


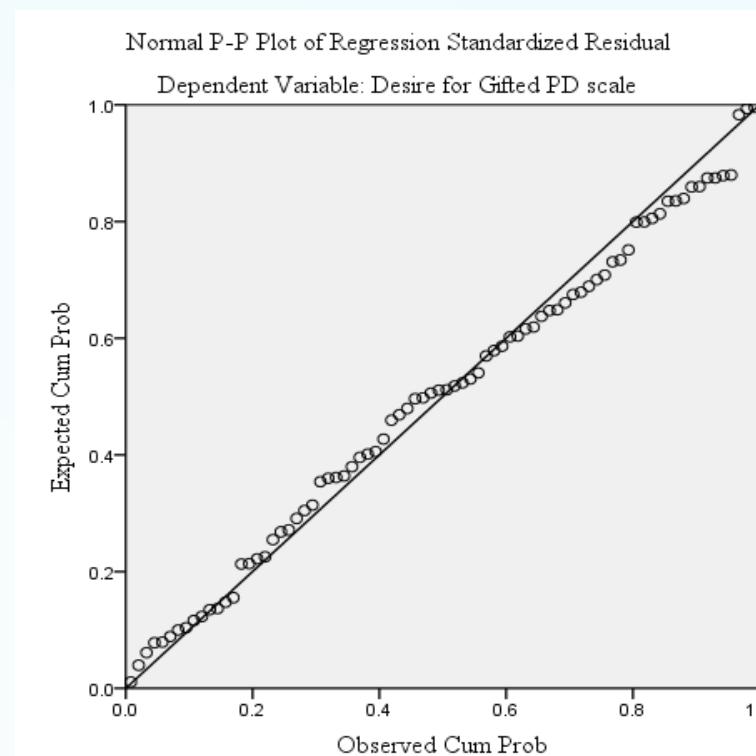
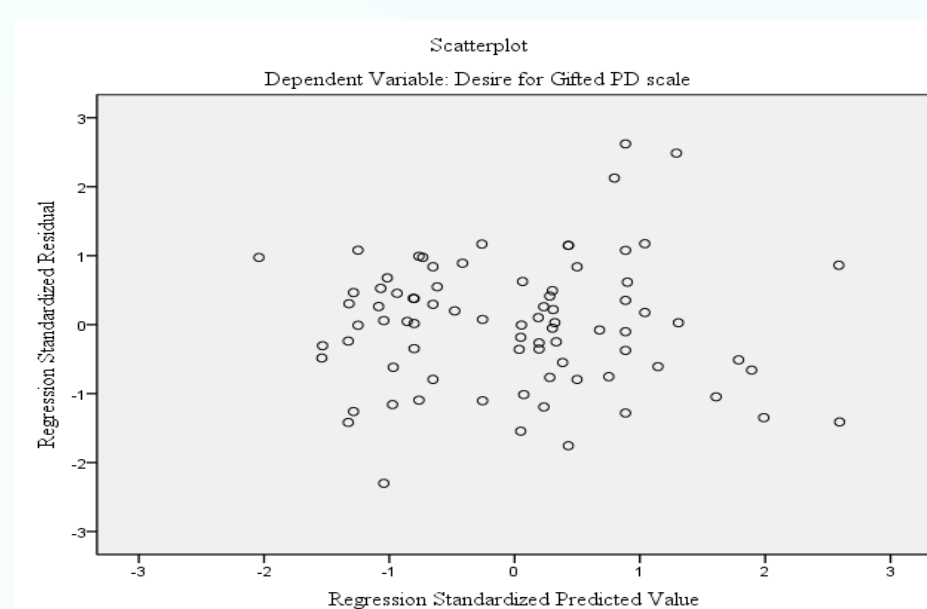
Figure 2. Theoretical Framework Through the Lens of Bandura's (1997) Sources of Efficacy.

## Methodology

The mixed method approach allowed the researcher to answer the research questions on different levels. A multiple linear regression was conducted to examine research question 2, and assess if the independent variables predict the dependent variable (measure). In this instance, the independent variables (gender; life stage; teacher concerns; primary teaching assignment; years of full time teaching experience; credits completed in gifted education; and hours completed in conference, workshop, and/or other in-service training opportunities in the field of gifted education) and the dependent variable the Desire for Professional Development in Gifted Education Scale (DPDGES). The survey instrument had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .92 which suggested the DPDGES had exceptional inter-item reliability.

## Results

The results of the survey revealed that teaching area emerged as the strongest predictor, with teaching area C (Other: guidance/special education) educators expressing a greater desire for G/T professional development than academic teachers. Core academic teachers in comparison to physical education teachers, younger age of teachers and fewer college credits earned were the other variables that contributed to the model significance. The significance of the data and the implications they have on the future of professional development for gifted educators is critical. These study findings may influence teachers, administrators, professional developers of school districts, and the gifted community in promoting further evaluation of G/T professional development practices.



## Results

The study had only one dependent variable: Desire for Professional Development in Gifted Education Scale (DPDGES). The descriptive statistics for the DPDGES are presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
Descriptive Statistics: Desire for Professional Development in Gifted Education Scale

Desire for Professional Development in Gifted Education Scale (DPDGES)	M	SD	Min	Max	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Desire for Professional Development in Gifted Education Scale (DPDGES)	76.73	11.84	45.00	112.00	.92

Note. M = mean, SD = standard deviation, Min = minimum score, Max = maximum score. The potential range of scores for this scale is 4.00 to 112.00 points.

These study findings may influence teachers, administrators, professional developers of school districts, and the gifted community in promoting further evaluation of G/T professional development practices.

## Discussion

The researcher recommends study findings be used to stimulate ongoing scholarly discussions about G/T professional learning. Another recommendation from the scholar is to further explore teaching area C (Other: Special Education, Media Specialist, ESL, and Guidance Counselor) in detail to analyze specifically. Another recommendation would be the completion of future research efforts to focus on the examination of the significant role continuous and pertinent professional learning has on secondary educators of G/T learners and student achievement. Specifically, exploring secondary teachers' of gifted learners perception of professional development and their preference for gifted educator's training. A third recommendation is for applications of the study results to encourage ongoing scholarly discussions for the development of high quality, meaningful professional learning for teachers of G/T learners. The study results and recommendations will lead to advanced research efforts concerning this unchartered topic (Dixon-Brown, 2017).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the research study findings reveal a significant correlation between teaching concerns and the dependent variable, the Desire for Professional Development in Gifted Education Scale (DPDGES). Overall secondary teachers of G/T learners expressed an elevated desire and interest in professional learning in the competencies needed to teach gifted learners. No other studies have been conducted in any other state regarding the desire of secondary teachers of G/T learners to attain further PD. Finally, the study has established that these predictor variables significantly impact the dependent variable and influence teachers' desire to attain PD in G/T education. As a result, the findings may contribute to limited scholarly research currently available throughout the United States (Dixon-Brown, 2017).

## References

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