Perceptions of disabilities, giftedness and achievement

Michelle Ronksley-Pavia

Twice-exceptional children are generally misunderstood by those around them, particularly their teachers and frequently their parents, and this interferes with their achievement. Since the 2001 Australian Senate review into gifted education Australian schools have struggled to understand the diverse nature of gifted children even though inclusivity and equity in education have become the policies of choice for 21st Century education. There are numerous empirical studies which assess interventions and identification for twice-exceptional students however what appears absent are explorations which examine the lives and experiences of twice-exceptional children, being children first and twice-exceptional second; their experiences in the education system, at home and outside school, and their stories, to elucidate what may work and what may not work for their education. Additionally how they have been marginalised as a sub-population both of the gifted and of those with disabilities. Many researchers incorporate psychological and educational theory in their research but there is a deficiency in applying disability theory as a lens to examine the lived realities of children identified as twice-exceptional. This presentation will outline Michelle’s current PhD research aimed at examining, and comparing current legislation, policies and recommended best practices in education, to the lived realities of twice-exceptional children (children who are gifted and have a disability or disabilities). Additionally parental perspectives and perceptions will be explored in the research project.