



Campus News

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NEWS RELEASES

Renowned Education and Psychology Expert Advocates for 'Academic Talent Development'

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ST. AUGUSTINE



Professor Frank Worrell, Distinguished Professor at the University of California, Berkeley with appointments in Education and Psychology.

St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, July 30, 2024 – Education is evolving rapidly, and the School of Education (SoE) at The University of the West Indies (The UWI), St. Augustine, continues to lead the charge in shaping the future of learning. On April 11, 2024, the SoE hosted its Second Virtual Public Lecture, drawing 124 participants from various educational backgrounds to explore the topic "Why I Prefer 'Academic Talent Development' Over 'Gifted Education'," presented by Professor Frank Worrell from the University of California, Berkeley.

Professor Worrell, a renowned expert in Education and Psychology, engaged the audience with his extensive knowledge and expertise. With over 300 scholarly works and recognition from prestigious institutions such as the American Educational

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Research Association and the American Psychological Association, Professor Worrell's insights were highly anticipated and did not disappoint.

During the lecture, Professor Worrell explored the intricacies of academic talent development, challenging conventional views on giftedness and introducing innovative models for nurturing academic excellence. Key topics included strategies for motivating talented students, promoting inclusivity in education, and understanding the interplay between inherent abilities and environmental factors.

Professor Worrell identified four common views of giftedness. These are, 'giftedness as trait', 'giftedness is IQ', 'gifted individuals are good at everything', and 'giftedness as the outcome of practice'. He then delved into why he preferred talent development over gifted education. While he acknowledged the importance of practice in talent development, he stressed the need for practice to intersect with ability since according to him, practice is necessary but not sufficient. In so doing he hypothesised a classroom scenario:

"In many cases, there are pull-out classes for part of the day and then there are project-based learning on art, science, and a variety of topics. These projects are often related to the teacher's knowledge. Therefore, if a teacher is very good at writing, they are going to do practice based on writing. But again, the kids they have engaged in writing practice may be talented in mathematics..."

He described learning as the outcome of a talent development journey, stating that: "[W]e are starting with kids who have ability or potential. We don't know what that potential is going to turn into as an adult. That's what education is for, that's what training and coaching are for. We move from ability and potential to competency and ultimately to expertise. Think about expertise because that's what adult talent looks like."

He recognised the need for society to provide opportunities to individuals from low-income backgrounds since many parents may not be able to afford the resources that talent development requires. Additionally, he outlined the student diversity present in most gifted education programmes:

"In many of our gifted education programmes, we have kids who have high opportunity, and high motivation. One of the things we need to do is to provide talent development opportunities for kids who have high motivation and low opportunity. For kids who have high opportunity and low motivation, we need to increase their motivation. And for kids who have low opportunity and low motivation, psychologists have to do a lot of work with them to get them ready to work toward success."

A stimulating discourse between Professor Worrell and participants followed the thought-provoking lecture. It included how to motivate students, whether Trinidad and Tobago's education system was structured to best develop the talent of the population, how academic talent development promoted inclusivity and equity compared to traditional gifted education programmes, measures that the authorities need to think of adopting to ensure that there are opportunities for students/parents

who do not have resources to promote talent development and whether most gifted talents are innate or learnt; further, which influence is greater, nature or nurture.

The Director of the School of Education, Dr Rawatee Maharaj-Sharma expressed her satisfaction with the lecture. She indicated that it provided an “opportunity to educators & teachers to address the academic, psychological, psychosocial as well as the non-cognitive needs of a wider range of learners”. She expressed that it served to raise awareness and provoke reflection, which is one of the objectives of the public lecture series at the School of Education.

Looking ahead, the SoE is excited to continue its intellectual journey with its next event scheduled for April 2025. Committed to cultivating a vibrant community dedicated to advancing education globally, the SoE remains at the forefront of educational innovation and excellence.

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Source:

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Notes to the Editor.

About The University of the West Indies

The UWI has been and continues to be a pivotal force in every aspect of Caribbean development, residing at the center of all efforts to improve the well-being of people across the region for over 75 years.

From a university college of London in Jamaica with 33 medical students in 1948, The UWI is today an internationally respected, global university with nearly 50,000 students and five campuses: **Mona in Jamaica, St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago, Cave Hill in Barbados, Five Islands in Antigua and Barbuda** and its **Global Campus**, and global centres in partnership with universities in North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe.

The UWI offers over **1000** certificate, diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate degree options in **Culture, Creative and Performing Arts, Food and Agriculture, Engineering, Humanities and Education, Law, Medical Sciences, Science and Technology, Social Sciences, and Sport**. As the Caribbean’s leading university, it possesses the largest pool of Caribbean intellect and expertise committed to confronting the critical issues of our region and the wider world.

The UWI has been consistently ranked among the best in the world by the most reputable ranking agency, *Times Higher Education (THE)*. Since The UWI’s 2018 debut in THE’s rankings, it has performed well in multiple schemes—among them

including World University Rankings, Golden Age University Rankings (between 50 and 80 years old), Latin America Rankings, and the Impact Rankings for its response to the world’s biggest concerns, outlined in the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Good Health and Well-being; Gender Equality and Climate Action.

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