

**A Tribute to:**

# **Prof. Dr. Joan Freeman (1935 – 2023)**

**Sandra Linke**

The International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE); Ulm-Germany

---



Pathbreaking psychologist and researcher, Professor Dr. Joan Freeman, died on 2 July 2023. She was 88.

Joan Freeman was born Sally Joan Casket in 1935. Apart from the five years she spent as a child evacuee in Canada during the war, Joan grew up in Manchester, England. She received her Ph.D. in 1980 from the University of Manchester and became a chartered psychologist in 1988, licensed to practice by the British Psychological Society. Dr. Freeman was awarded a visiting professorship at the University of Middlesex in 1991. During 1989-2020 while living in London, Dr. Freeman served as a consultant to several agencies and universities while maintaining an active research agenda and a private practice working with children. She was the author or editor of 17 books and over 150 peer-reviewed publications.

Professor Freeman was married to Professor Hugh Freeman, M.D., editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* (Dr. Hugh Freeman died on 4 May 2011). Joan Freeman is survived by two sons and one daughter. Her son Tony Freeman passed away shortly before his mother.

Dr. Joan Freeman was a distinguished scholar and academic whose profound contributions to gifted education have left an indelible mark on the world of gifted education

---

---

and research. Her intellectual curiosity and dedication to knowledge were evident in her prolific body of work, which has inspired countless students and colleagues over the years.

Joan's academic journey was marked by excellence and innovation. She was always seeking new ways to advance understanding and push the boundaries of talent development in general and gifted education in particular. Her rigorous research and insightful publications have become essential references. Collectively, her scholarly works reflect her commitment to scholarly rigor and integrity.

Professor Freeman was a pioneer of the longitudinal research approach to studying gifted children and their families. In the course of her career, she served as a consultant to universities and research centre in several countries, including: The International Centre for Innovation in Education (ICIE); the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Prague, Arabian Gulf University, Yale University, the University of Alberta, and the University of Stockholm. Professor Freeman was in regular demand as a speaker around the world.

In 2007, Joan won a Lifetime Achievement Award from the British Psychological Society. The award is given to psychologists with an outstanding record of personal achievements who have also made significant contributions to the advancement of psychological knowledge. In the year 2010, she earned the ICIE award for excellence in gifted education.

As an educator, Professor Freeman had a unique ability to ignite a passion for learning in her students, encouraging them to think critically and explore new ideas. Her mentorship extended beyond the classroom, as she guided and supported emerging scholars with generosity and wisdom. Many of her students went on to achieve great success, a testament to her influence and the profound impact she had on their academic and personal lives.

Joan Freeman's legacy as a scholar and academic expert will continue to inspire future generations. Her contributions have laid the groundwork for ongoing research and development, ensuring that her impact will be felt for many years to come. We honor her memory and celebrate her life, grateful for the knowledge, inspiration, and wisdom she shared with the world.

---

In the year 2018, Prof. Dr. Taisir Subhi Yamin (see; *IJTDC*, 6(1&2) 2018: 2023-2011) interviewed Joan Freeman. She explained what motivated her to enter the field of gifted education:

My motivation to enter the field of understanding and helping lively minds to develop has deep roots in my own early observations and feelings. I know that a bright child can get by in the world without an appropriate education. But when high level opportunities and encouragement are absent, achievement is lower than promise and catching up on some early steps in learning can be almost impossible.

Yet, being intellectually gifted (as I suppose I was) was unusual where the other children merely did their time at school to leave at 14 to work the land, tend the animals and spread the gospel of Jesus, eagerly anticipating his second coming. I had to tread carefully, though, after my stories were held up in front of the class as examples of good

writing and imagination: the boys indicated that I should have known better than show them up.

Other than that, I did not receive any recognition of high level potential. But then, I never experienced any of the complaints which are so often presented today as essential signs of giftedness. I was never ever bored. A shelf in our two room wooden home held the Bible and a Sears Roebuck mail order catalogue on both of which I spent a lot of time. In spring the new calves were there to nuzzle and in the winter when the outside pump was frozen I was busy breaking icicles to bring in and melt for house water. There was fun at interchurch meetings and designs to work out at quilting parties.

Rest in peace, Joan. Your scholarly brilliance and compassionate spirit will forever be remembered

