

MODERN APPROACHES TO PEDAGOGICAL WORK WITH GIFTED CHILDREN IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF MODERN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

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Abstract: The issue of working with gifted children in China became one of the pedagogical problems in China only in the second half of the twentieth century under the influence of Soviet pedagogical science. Most of the time, only a child's success in education was considered to be an indicator of giftedness, and, as a result, the opportunity to enter a university, party organisation, army, etc., that is, social success. Giftedness as an independent category (without a component of social success) has not been considered by Chinese scholars. Today in China there is a clear system of selection and work with gifted children, which in its structure almost copies the Soviet or American one: the initiative in the development and demonstration of gifted children belongs to parents who take the child to clubs and extracurricular activities, achieving their first results and achievements. After that, the child enters the state system of work with gifted children, which involves either their development in specialised educational institutions (sports, music, choreography, technical and including boarding schools) or this process is under close supervision of the school (in the case of social, empathic and communicatively gifted children). Since both non-formal education and work with gifted children in the Western sense of these concepts are new realities for China, these aspects have not yet been reflected in the state system of teacher training. The article attempts to fill this gap.

Keywords: Education, Chinese society, Gifted children, Opportunities, Pedagogy.

1 Introduction

The system of training teachers in the country traditionally trains "universalists", whose knowledge and skills will be sufficient to work with any category of students, and narrow specialisation is acquired during the first year of work. It was found that the main and promising forms of training future teachers to work with gifted children in modern China are training in the workplace, training abroad, social practice in non-formal education institutions during the period of specialised pedagogical education, self-education and training of future teachers in international educational corporations working in the non-formal education sector, such as Cambridge, Maggie, TOEFL, ESL, etc.

Gifted children are always seen as a national heritage for the formation of the intellectual, sports, creative elite of any nation. Recently, the whole world was struck by the so-called "Chinese miracle", when in just a few years the country has moved from a "developing country" to a recognised world leader in a lot of key aspects: economic and overall intellectual development, sport and scientific achievements, education and culture, creativity, etc. In the last decade (stable since 2003), Chinese athletes have risen to the top of international competitions and Olympiads, and Chinese students have become winners and prizewinners of recognised scientific events, especially those related to the exact sciences. The country's leadership considers this to be the result of planned pedagogical work with gifted children and youth, which began in the country with the beginning of the Policy of Reforms and Openness (1984) and has provided China with sufficient human and human resources to reform and introduce high technologies in all areas of social and technical life of the country [4].

2 Materials and Methods

Focus on China's equality in agriculture, industry, technology and trade with the rest of the world, which was identified as a task for the development of the Chinese state at the First Plenum of the CPC Central Committee of the XII convocation (1982), has led to significant changes in methods and forms of pedagogical work in the country as a whole, as well as to the emergence of targeted pedagogical work with gifted students and youth as a special activity of Chinese teachers, which should go

in two main directions: identification of gifted children (especially in rural areas) and development of special programmes to help gifted children and support their development [36].

Chinese culture, pedagogy, education, and public opinion have developed their concept of the "giftedness" of children, which largely defines the place of gifted children in modern Chinese society and the legal field. As for the Chinese education system, its main slogan in this aspect has long been: "there are no talentless and incapable, but there are those who make little effort." Therefore, curricula in the country were developed without taking into account the phenomena of "talent", "giftedness", "pedagogically neglected", "poorly educated", etc., and synonyms for the word "gifted" were "diligent" and "hardworking". [13] But today, both in the public consciousness and at the legislative level, there are qualitative changes for several reasons:

The Chinese community in its mass (especially in cities) has become more financially viable, and the economy - sustainable, which provides an opportunity for both society as a whole and the parents of each child to develop the humanitarian sphere;

The emergence of a large number of institutions and organisations that provide educational services have significantly intensified the education market in China and today provide many opportunities and forms of additional educational services and make the child more competitive in the labour market in the future;

The state and public order for a "highly cultured, educated, multifaceted person who can and is able not only to master the latest technologies in production and live in New China - the world's leading economy" [5] requires parents to prepare their children from an early age for such a mission, and the state contributes to this by providing opportunities in the sector of both formal and non-formal education, grants and quotas for training, specialised funding programmes at the national and local levels, the autonomy of educational institutions in choosing a specialisation and programme components, etc.;

Educational opportunities of the child (those that parents can afford) as a factor of pride and arrogance of their family, an indicator of the social status of the family is a vestige of the policy "1 family - 1 child", which was proclaimed by the Government in 1997 and makes the field of additional and non-formal education in China as one of the most profitable and dynamically developing in the country [7]. Attending by a child in the city on average 3 (and in rural areas - 2) institutions of additional education per week (clubs, sections, volunteer classes, additional classes in the municipality, community, formal education, etc.) is an indicator of good child care by parents and prospects of the child for further education in secondary and high school;

1. Increasing divorces, parents employment (unlike in Ukraine, the Chinese consider it normal to move to other provinces and regions of the country if they are offered better working conditions) and raising large numbers of children by grandparents' generation (social orphanhood, which is an unrecognised problem in Chinese society today, and seen only in the perspective of "a person must first realise himself/herself as a professional - and then as a person" [12]), who, incidentally, recognise that their level of education and development does not meet modern standards and requirements in the country, forces the older generation look for alternative ways of "making" their grandchildren "busy";
2. The use of the phrases "education for gifted children", "gifted child", "school for the talented", "Montessori/Gestalt pedagogy/Waldorf school/Confucianism/author's methods" and others are very popular in China today in non-formal

education (especially if foreigners are involved in the reproduction of the educational process) because it gives a sense of "special features of the child" to her parents and relatives. [1, 11, 15, 16].

3 Results and Discussion

According to a survey conducted by the Chinese research organisation of Ar Wei University (Second University of Foreign Languages, Beijing) among residents of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chang Shi, Xi'an, Chengdu and Harbin, half of the children aged 4 to 12 attend various clubs in their spare time, and families with children under the age of 12 spend an average of 2,000 yuan (about \$ 300) a month on various sections for their children. Families living in big cities like Beijing or Shanghai spend even more (up to 5,000 yuan – about \$ 700). Of all children who attend extra classes/clubs, 48.9% spend 1-2 hours a week on them, 33.8% – 3-5 hours a week, 7.3% – 6 hours or more. This is the time of the lessons themselves, not including the time spent on getting to the place.

The survey shows that there are many types of clubs that children attend: from the most popular, which today are a must-have (English – 63.9%; aesthetic orientation (drawing, music lessons, choreography (European and ballet), the study of traditional Chinese aesthetic and ethical norms) – 53.8%), physical culture and sports (Chinese dances, wushu, Chinese martial arts, European sports, Taijiquan breathing exercises – 41.7%) and more exotic (preparation for the International Mathematical Olympiad – 8, 4%, traditional Chinese carvings – 5.3%), as well as sections on swimming, development of logical thinking, writing, playing Chinese checkers Guo and many others [3].

It should be noted that today in China, the number of classes and extracurricular activities attended by primary school students is an indicator of the inconsistency of parents in their parental responsibilities. Chinese society believes that attending additional classes, clubs, sections, etc. is also "a sign of responsible attitude of parents to the child, their efforts to ensure a decent future, and the state – a highly qualified person, a specialist capable of advanced technology [22]." However, it should be noted that the child's achievements in non-formal education are not recognised or replaced in a formal one and are solely personal achievements of the child, as well as the implementation of the efforts of parents.

Researchers note that all parents whose children attend various clubs and sections in their free time can be divided into several main groups:

1. Advanced parents (37.7%) are those parents who believe that in the future society there will be a very high competition, and the more skills and abilities their child will have time to master, the more competitive they will be;
2. The second group of parents (23.9%) is more concerned about the social recognition and development of their children's talents. They believe that for a child's development it is necessary to attend creative classes, where the child, firstly, can be provided with qualified assistance in the development of talent, and secondly – attending the club in some way "legalises" the child's creative efforts in the eyes of parents, relatives and society;
3. The third group of parents includes those who seek to help their children develop talents in those areas in which they are interested. These parents define their child in those sections and clubs in which the child wants to be engaged. Unfortunately, according to the survey, this is the smallest group and is 4.1%;
4. The fourth group includes parents who send their children to certain clubs only because the children of their neighbours/friends/colleagues attend them and they do not want their children to be worse (17, 3%);
5. The fifth group (6%) includes those parents who see in sections and clubs the opportunity to give their child the communication they lack in the family (especially for those families where there is 1 child and the parents themselves

were also one child in their families). These parents believe that it is becoming increasingly difficult for children in China to communicate with each other because they are limited in their peer-to-peer topics, such as school or computer games. Therefore, many parents see a way out of the situation by attending clubs;

6. The sixth group (11%) includes parents who dream of seeing in their children those who they have not become, or, conversely, that children attend the same clubs as their parents did. These parents usually give their children to those clubs and sections that are of primary interest to them. Unfortunately, this practice of self-realisation through the child while levelling the interests of the latter is due to the social tradition of the Chinese (children should follow their parents) [28].

Chinese society has a dual position on gifted children: on the one hand, all parents want their child to be recognised as gifted and invest a lot of money in interest groups, extracurricular activities, children's clubs, etc., and on the other hand, unlike others, Chinese society does not consider it necessary to support state and education initiatives to enable gifted children to finish school early and enter higher education through the need for changes in legislation that should precede this initiative: early school leaving means starting working early and possibly retirement, additional benefits or restrictions due to the physical age of such an employee, other cases that must be provided by law and "inscribed" in it. In addition, Chinese society fears that children and adolescents themselves will not be psychologically and physically ready for the amount of information that this type of work with the gifted ones provides. Also uncertain is the issue of granting the status of "gifted" and "talented" child (criteria and competencies of the authorities), etc. Therefore, the possibility of early release for gifted children (leaping over a study year, externship and other forms) is very interesting for Chinese theorists and is actively developing in specialised pedagogical and methodological literature, but meets with harsh criticism in the media and society. This problem can be quite a challenge for Chinese society and legislation given the population of China and the number of children and young people who could potentially receive such status.

Today, the experts in scientific and social practice of PRC on gifted children in PRC are conducting their research in three main areas, which are defined in the "Strategic Plan for Reform and Development of National Education of China 2010-2020":

- Clear definition of the concept of "giftedness", harmonisation of the conceptual apparatus of the pedagogical and normative (legislative) field and making adjustments to the current legislation of the PRC at all levels;
- Creation, approbation and correction of a single system of measures for the search and selection of talented children and youth at the national and local levels;
- Creation of a system of practical pedagogical work with gifted children and youth [25].

As for the definition of "giftedness" in modern scientific and pedagogical thought of the PRC and approaches to this social reality, Chinese science has chosen the basic direction, which is related to the "g-factor (general) concept" or "theory of general giftedness". General giftedness determines the level of achievement in a wide range of activities. The concept of general giftedness largely intersects with the concept of intelligence. Thanks to the research of D. Guilford, P. Torrance, D. Bogoyavlenskaya, and others, the idea of 2 types of general talent has become entrenched in world scientific thought: intellectual (in a more specific sense – to the subjects of the exact cycle) and creative (to the subjects of the humanities). The high level of development of general abilities determines a wide range of activities in which the child can achieve great success [6]. It can be assumed that the theory of general talent, developed by S. Rubinstein, penetrated the PRC and the USSR in the mid-50s of the twentieth century, when Soviet specialists worked there, helping the Chinese to develop all spheres of life,

pedagogy and other humanities, including. Due to the fact that the external manifestation and measure of a child's giftedness for the Chinese has always been a success in school (and later – the social success of man), the very provisions of this concept are most consistent with the Chinese perception of giftedness.

Today, the Chinese system of pedagogical work with children and youth is mostly based in its practice on the concept of general talent and its purpose is to select students who have a high g-factor, giving such students preferences about the place of study. Indirect dominance of this approach to the concept of giftedness in China is facilitated by the fact that formal education is the only form of educational service in the country that has social and legitimate significance, and excellent performance in all school subjects is not only an indicator of giftedness but also a guarantee for her to obtain the opportunity to enter a prestigious higher education institution (also public) and employment (preferably – in the civil service). The child's achievements (excluding art (music, graphics and drawing) and sports) are additional skills that do not have much social recognition (and, consequently, values) until the gifted person gains recognition at least regionally. The development of such additional abilities is also at the expense and initiative of parents.

It should be noted that today Chinese scientific thought has expanded the range of issues it considers in the aspect of working with gifted children: new approaches, models of practical work are being introduced, albeit slowly, but the concept of giftedness is being revised. For example, such practising educators as R. Li, R. Jie, Z. Rao, F. Zhao, L. Lu, and F. Liang in their publications introduce the concept of "communicative" or "social" talent into the Chinese scientific space to characterise people with high social responsibility, those who show high social activity (which has always been and is a priority of Chinese society), high organisational skills [17]. Communicatively gifted children are a special category of gifted children, as the processes of working with such children are systematic in the process of obtaining general education and do not involve the exclusion of communicatively gifted children from the children's team for further transfer to specialised institutions or classes. The Chinese education system is interested in the early detection and development of such children, as they are later considered to be the personnel reserve of the party and social movements of the country [33].

Also, close in its idea and one that organically complements the dominant concept of g-giftedness in Chinese theory and practice was the three-ring model of H. Renzulli, whose first analysis appeared in China in the late 90s twentieth century and was critically considered by Chinese experts in 2010 (it was recommended to introduce and study in Chinese universities and expand its provisions on practical measures for the selection and work with gifted children in the country [24]) due to the large number of Chinese young people studying abroad and also foreigners from among the professors who were invited to teach in the RPC. Appropriate and suitable for use in Chinese pedagogical practice were the provisions of the threefold model of giftedness Renzulli on the intersection of three human qualities: high ability, determination and creativity in defining the concept of giftedness, as it corresponds to the Chinese nation's notions of diligence and perseverance, under certain conditions, it is possible not only to compensate, but also to exceed innate talents (traditional Chinese concept of giftedness: we have no ungifted, but only those who do not make enough efforts) [18]. Also in use in Chinese practice was the "School Model of Enrichment" for the development of children's talents in school, which was proposed by Renzulli in 1978 as a summer camp programme, and then became part of the practice of working with gifted children and students of many countries around the world. The programme's position that "children with high abilities can only turn their abilities into talent when their environment encourages them" [20] naturally correlates with the provisions of China's approach to raising children and youth in a country where public education prevails, a centralised support system and motivating young people etc. [2]

Indirectly, the modern concept of giftedness in China also includes the provisions of the "Munich model" of K. Heller, at least on the typology of types of giftedness. She expanded the list of talents that have dominated Chinese pedagogy and psychology since the 1950s: scientific (sciences), creative (humanities and arts), and sports [21]. Following Heller, the modern concept of giftedness also recognises the following types of the giftedness of the child and students which need to be developed in the school, and, therefore, are socially recognised and in-demand:

- Intellectually gifted – their ability to sciences exceeds the average. This type of talent also includes children who show abilities and skills in computer science, programming, etc.;
- Humanitarianly gifted – school subjects of the humanitarian cycle and such creative directions, literature, journalism, journalism, rhyming, etc. In this area of talent (as opposed to artistic talent), it is welcome to mix styles and types of literary art that have traditionally been characteristic of certain eras, creative search and mixing of forms. However, the child's productivity (number of written works), age, social themes of works and reflection of purely Chinese socio-cultural values, especially in the genres of fantasy and poetry, are also recognized as a qualitative indicator of a child's talent. Another factor in a child's literary talent is the ability to write their works in Chinese and a foreign language (be almost a "translator" of their literary works, which are published in two languages and can promote Chinese themes in the world);
- Socially gifted – social giftedness covers a wide range of social relations at the level of "man – man", involves the innate ability to establish contacts, understand human behaviour, quickly and accurately express judgments about people, understand and predict other people's behaviour and build quality interpersonal relationships. Socially gifted people are characterised by a high level of intelligence, developed intuition, understanding of the feelings and needs of others, the ability to empathise, bright sense of humour that helps them get in touch with other people and like them [23]. Social giftedness is an integral part of leadership as a personal characteristic of a person, which is the subject of special attention of the system of pedagogical work with children in China today. The PRC uses the most modern methods of finding and developing socially gifted children, as it sees in them the potential that meets the social order of Chinese society and the party for socially active managers who will be able to lead the nation, make the socially balanced decisions. Socially gifted children are considered to be a personnel reserve of the party and public organisations, social movements of the country [34];
- Artistically gifted – drawing, graphics, visual arts, music. It should be noted that the development of this sphere of talent is based on imitative positions, not on the child's creative abilities: high quality of imitation of works of Chinese classics and established canons is appreciated and recognised (speed of fingering when performing musical works of famous Chinese and foreign composers, writing paintings in the manner of famous artists, etc.). Chinese scholars also include the ability to write beautiful hieroglyphs to this type of talent. On the one hand, hieroglyphics has always been considered as a form of traditional Chinese graphic art, and on the other hand, today Chinese educators note a decrease in the number of young people who can write "by hand" and who want to do so due to the dominance of typing on computers and mobile applications. Due to this tendency, hieroglyphic art and in general the ability of young people to perceive and use handwritten fonts of hieroglyphs are dying out [36];
- Psychomotor gifted – it is an analogue of sports talent. Physical development has always been valued in China, and sports (both foreign and purely Chinese) are the norm. Sports talent is determined by Chinese experts through the number and consistency of positive dynamics in achieving sports results. It should be noted that psychomotor gifted

children today also include those who have achievements and skills in dance and choreography. For dance-gifted children, the clear performance of dance movements while performing choreographic compositions is more valuable than one's creative vision of dance. Modern trends in dance art (hip-hop, twerk, Zumba, disco, etc.) are not considered dance art and important for the child's recognition of dance talent are his achievements in classical ballet, Chinese national dances (classical) or dances of minor nationalities of the PRC [27].

It should be noted that the traditional pedagogy for the PRC is an exclusive type of work with gifted children, which involves their upbringing and education in specialised educational institutions, mostly boarding schools (especially for the artistically and psychomotor gifted). However, socially gifted children study exclusively in secondary schools and general education institutions. The teaching staff has to select such socially gifted children and monitor their development in this regard. Usually, such children are appointed and recommended to student self-government bodies, to the positions of teacher's assistant, to class assets, to pioneer and party organisations, etc. [35].

The ideas of H. Renzulli and K. Heller today are the resources that organically complement the traditional for China concept of comprehensive human talent, which was formed under the influence of Soviet scientists in the 50s of the twentieth century. Also, in the active analysis in the scientific space of modern China, the following should be mentioned:

1. The concept of Alice Paul Torrance, the main idea of which is the position that successful children are not those who are well educated and not those who have a high IQ. These conditions may be present, but they are not the only conditions. Torrens' concept of giftedness has a triad: creative skills, creative abilities, and motivation. In Chinese scientific literature, creative motivation refers to a child's inner need to create and create beauty in combination with the material and social bonuses [26] provided by parents and the school (in the early stages, before the school is recognised as gifted in a particular field) and the state (later). Mostly considered in the perspective of working with creatively gifted children;
2. D. Feldhusen's concept of giftedness, which complements H. Renzulli's model with the concept of "I-concept" and self-esteem. It is similar to the Renzulli model, but has its characteristics: the category of general abilities includes creativity and its motivation of another type - the motivation to achieve. This concept is "close" to the Chinese in the perspective of the implementation of civic (social) education in the country and its position of self-esteem as a representative of the Chinese nation and country. As for the "motivation to achieve" the Chinese are traditionally focused on achieving results in any action, rather than the process of its passage;
3. "Multifactor model of giftedness" by F. Monks, who supplements the provisions of the theory of J. Renzulli with the main officials of the micro-environment (family, school, peers), as if they add to the recognition of that development of the giftedness of the child. This model is brought up to the so-called "dynamic" as if one looks at the giftedness not as a static, but as a dynamic characteristic, it is assumed that it is socially sharpened by this factor, which can be developed, so the lack of giftedness, I will put in the child. Being a social nation, the Chinese ceramicists (even in the historical process) gave more respect to the development and development of the nation as a whole, than to the processes, related to a particular personality, respecting whether a person is a product and a representative of society. It is understood that "skill forms that unique personality" [9] in the PRC is considered to be one of the fundamental ones, and the model is also given its place in the process of renewing the scientific concept of "giftedness" in the modern PRC [14].

As for the Chinese state system of pedagogical work with gifted children, its main forms in formal education can be summarised as follows:

- Higher education classes for gifted children;
- Boarding schools for gifted children;
- A system of competitions and tests for gifted children and young people.

It should be noted that the expansion of forms of work with gifted people in the country today is at the level of finding and selecting talented youth by activating the non-formal education sector: a large number of private schools, clubs, additional primary schools and extracurricular education institutions, sections etc. All the above forms of work with children in the non-formal education sector in the country are considered exclusively additional and cannot act as an alternative to formal education institutions in the country.

Concerning the sector of formal education, we can note the emergence of practices of author's methods, which are used to develop certain abilities of young students in primary and further school education. However, given the specifics of China as a state system and the dominance of the vertical system of organisation of the educational process, any author's methodology planned for use in Chinese schools must be approved by the Ministry of Education of China as a final instance. Before that, the method must be described, its effectiveness and expediency proved theoretically (usually in comparison with the methods which have been already used), to be discussed in the relevant departments and universities of the provincial level, and so on. After agreeing on the theoretical aspects of the new methodology, the author is provided with an experimental site from peer schools in different provinces (usually 7 to 15) and a 5-year trial period. If during this period the results of classes taught by the author's method tested are consistently higher than the results of classes studied by traditional methods (the criterion is the achievements of students in the state annual exams), the method is allowed for use and its study is introduced into the teacher training programme and teacher training programmes in getting a higher qualification [32]. Given such a complex process, China today uses a relatively small number of Chinese authoring techniques in the formal education sector. Foreign author's methods and pedagogical schemes are used exclusively in the non-formal education sector. Over the past 15 years, only 3 author's methods have been introduced into the active pedagogical practice of China [29]:

The Rhymed Literacy Method was first introduced by Liaoning Province Primary School Director Jiang Zhaocheng in 1986 and was recommended by the Higher Teacher Education Committee for use in public schools in China in 2017. This method improves China's traditional literacy method (direct learning) and allows a 6-7-year-old child to recognise more than 2,000 hieroglyphs in one year with the usual approach to the educational text. The effectiveness of this method has increased the quality of education fivefold compared to previous ones [10];

The Situation and Emotions Method, which has been tested in 10 schools in China for the past 20 years, has been recognised as one of the most effective methods for developing a child's potential in Chinese kindergartens and primary schools. This method of the score was proposed by the famous Chinese teacher Li Jilin and is based on the theory of suggestopedia of the Bulgarian researcher G. Lozanov. The method of situation and emotion is used in working with children in the process of learning languages and social sciences. It stimulates the feelings and emotions of students, activates their cognitive activity. The method of situation and emotions is aimed at cultivating feelings and emotions and thus has a beneficial effect on the child's consciousness, acts as a filter that rejects negative emotional factors and preserves positive ones. It also provides a positive emotionality to the child, promotes the training of creative thinking of students and fosters their adaptability [8];

The method of trial learning (trial-based learning method) was proposed by Qi Xuehua scholars and practitioners in 2000 at a conference at Zhejiang Pedagogical University and approved by the Higher Education Committee of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China in 2016. It is often used in mathematics and training thinking from different fields of knowledge (mostly sciences and technical subjects). This method emphasises the importance of trying in the learning process because through trials and errors people learn about the world.

4 Conclusion

"Both educators and students should focus on the trial-based learning method to be able to learn so that fear of error does not lead to an important discovery not being made," said Li Minqiao [30], chairman of the Higher Education Committee. Trial learning differs from the acquisition of knowledge, skills, abilities by students in principles and approaches to the learning process itself (not obtaining knowledge from the teacher, but extracting it from their practice), which is also innovative for Chinese pedagogical practice [19].

It should be noted that the above-mentioned author's methods are not aimed exclusively at gifted students, but are recommended for use "for the development of creative and intellectual abilities of Chinese children and youth in general." [31] Solving the current problems of formal education in teaching children hieroglyphs, increasing their adaptability, forming a positive attitude to learning as an activity, etc., these authorial approaches significantly expand the tools of teachers in particular with gifted children.

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Primary Paper Section: A

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