TEACHER - RESEARCHER IN WORK WITH GIFTED STUDENTS

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Abstract

Purpose of the Study: The reforms occurred in foreign and domestic education systems over the past decades and the focus on humanistic, student-centered, and developing educational technologies have changed attitudes towards students exhibiting extraordinary abilities. Educational institutions, educational and social programs, public organizations, and foundations have emerged, which have identification, training, and development of gifted students as their main goal. Nowadays, working with gifted students appears to be an important and prioritized educational policy worldwide. The purpose of the article is to identify a new type of teacher-researcher who will be able to work with gifted students and analyze his or her professional skills.

Methodology: The leading approach to the study of this problem is a method of historical and logical analysis of regulatory documents of foreign governments and research papers of leading scientists dealing with gifted education issues.

Results: The main results of the study are identifying the teachers’ professional and personal positions to work with gifted students and revealing the pedagogical conditions to create educational environment for the development of students’ talent. The readiness of a teacher to work with gifted students has been considered.

Applications: The authors focus on the specifics of working with gifted students as well as on the analysis of problems of gifted students’ education in different countries.

Novelty: The article can be useful for professors, teachers, students, and readers who are interested in the problems of gifted students’ education.

Keywords: Gifted Students, Teaching, Requirements, Creative Abilities, Intellectual Development.

INTRODUCTION

The problem of gifted students’ education has acquired a special significance at the beginning of the twenty-first century, although the problem of giftedness has been relevant since ancient times. Confucius, Ovid, Plato, Jefferson and others focused on the formation of intellectually gifted young men and women. The history of development of civilization has repeatedly proved the importance of discoveries and inventions made by talented people for the development of society, which made them socially significant. An analysis of the problems of gifted students has shown how much each country needs a radical restructuring of the education system that would allow a gifted child to develop his or her talent and unique personality.

We agree with many authors that only a gifted teacher who is widely erudite and flexible in behaviour, enthusiastic, able to arouse interest in students, easy to communicate, and possesses creative thinking can work with gifted students. It should be noted that the creative personality of a teacher includes the reflectivity of thinking, intellectual activity, ability to model, critical thinking, pedagogical thirst for new knowledge, independence, demandingness, and self-reliance. The using of modern information technologies, as well as knowledge of foreign languages is also very important. In addition, a number of foreign researchers emphasize that the teacher should be able to plan his or her work with students with a mindset to arouse interest, create necessary conditions for the child’s mental development, and use an individual approach (Combs, 2009; Delishe, Lewis & Lisovskis, 2002; Clark, 1992).

Educational institutions, educational programs, social programs, public organizations, and foundations have emerged with their main goal being the identification, training, and development of gifted children. An important and priority task of educational policy is to work with gifted people. Teachers hold a key place in the organization of creative educational environment intended for the development of students’ talent. In this regard, the questions that arise are: What kind of teacher should accompany a gifted child in his or her formation? What are the requirements of the teacher’s personality?

As for a teacher working with gifted students, it should be noted that much attention is paid to his or her positive self-concept. Many foreign researchers believe that teacher’s positive self-concept is related to his or her friendly attitude towards children (Cox, 2019; Coopersmith, 1967; Jerslid, 1965).
Robinson, Shore, and Enersen emphasized that more teachers began to understand the importance of self-concept, which opened up new horizons for individuals (Robinson, Shore, & Enersen, 2007).

According to Renzulli, a teacher who works with gifted students must be persistent, purposeful, and circumstantial, and must possess above-average intelligence and a creative approach (Renzulli, 1977).

Bishop noted that good teachers working with gifted students have a strong desire to achieve the goal of high perseverance and determination, as well as understanding and meeting the interests and needs of students with extraordinary abilities (Bishop, 1975).

The next important quality of teachers working with gifted students is their pedagogical maturity. The authors of the “Astor” program pay special attention to work experience, as practice shows that inexperienced teachers are usually not ready to work under a special program for gifted students. According to this program, a characteristic feature of professionally and emotionally mature teachers is that they clearly know their goals and objectives, they are not afraid of gifted students, have extensive knowledge and experience in applying teaching methods and strategies, and are able to find the right approach to any child (Enrlich, 1978).

Numerous works written by English teachers and researchers have shown an increased interest in many aspects of studying of a teacher’s personality and his or her readiness for working with gifted students. The attention of English scientists is attracted by issues of personal qualities and psychological properties that need to be possessed by such teachers. According to Zeigler and Raul, the following are the important features of a teacher working with gifted students:
- promoting the overall progress of gifted students;
- monitoring and recording personal and social needs of students;
- providing guidance to students on educational and social issues, further education, and future career;
- establishing contacts with parents (Zeigler & Raul, 2000).

The formation of teachers’ personality assumes the main place in the works of the English researcher Norman. In his opinion, a teacher for the gifted students should have the following characteristics:
- he or she should aim at students, their problems, and successes, and tend to be more like a tutor, a training manager, a coach, rather than just being a teacher;
- he or she must be constantly in search of new teaching methods and assessment systems to encourage and reward students, and work on the problem of perception of knowledge in a new interesting way;
- he or she must improve didactic skills and must be open to criticism, self-criticism, and reflection (Norman, 1996).

It is also very important that the activities organized by the teacher are diverse and combine a wide range of forms, methods, and techniques. In order to do this, it is necessary to master the analytical, diagnostic, and design skills, and use the learning and educational situation appropriately to achieve the students’ development goals. The tasks include regulation and adjustment of the students’ activities and development, assessment and encouragement, modelling of developing situations, and mobilization of students’ energy resources (Fakhurtdinova, Fakhurtdinova & Severyanov, 2013).

It should be noted that a successful teacher for gifted students must be, first of all, an excellent subject teacher, who deeply knows and loves his or her subject; capable of conducting experimental, scientific, and creative activities; has knowledge of features of gifted students, and knows the possible ways of manifesting giftedness. It is important that the teacher has all such qualities that are essential in communicating with a gifted student. The interaction of the teacher with gifted students should be directed towards the optimal development of their abilities and the teacher must possess a helpful, supportive, and non-directive character. The conditions for a teacher’s effectiveness regarding gifted students are as follows:
- the teacher must be able to direct discussion to analysis and search for new non-trivial solutions;
- the teacher must be able to predict the students’ actions and their development in general;
- the teacher must be able to plan his or her activities and teach students to plan their activities;
- the teacher must be able to find and evaluate the positive moments, even in the wrong decisions of students, for whom mistakes are one of the ways of knowing and forming the research character (Tarasova, 2005).

In addition, it should be noted that the quality of a teacher of gifted students is the ability to self-analyze, that is, the teacher's ability to analyze and evaluate his or her feelings, strengths and weaknesses of his or her personality, and...
motivation. Nelson notes that a person is not able to understand the needs, feelings, and behaviour of other people if he or she cannot understand himself or herself (Nelson, 1975).

An analysis of foreign and domestic literature on this issue has showed that it is the teacher who acts as the organizer of the creative environment in the classroom. In this regard, it is important to note that the formation of child giftedness depends on teachers’ qualifications, skills, subject knowledge, and human qualities. In our opinion, the teacher should “create” together with gifted students and it is obvious that such a teacher should have intellectual abilities and good educational preparation. If a teacher has talent in any of the areas like music, art, drama or dance, etc., then such a specialist would be optimally suited for working with gifted students (Gali, Shakhnina, Mukhametzyanova & Chugunov, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

The objects of our investigation are: 1) to determine the current requirements for professional and personal qualities to work with gifted students; 2) to study the international experience of working with gifted students and enhance the effectiveness of gifted students in the national education system.

For the confirmation of the hypotheses, we need to turn to a variety of methods:
- the method of historical and logical analysis of regulatory documents of foreign governments and research papers of leading scientists connected with educational issues of gifted students’ education;
- theoretical analysis and synthesis of social, political, and psycho-pedagogical literature;
- analysis, comparison, synthesis, and generalization of innovative foreign and domestic pedagogical experience;
- comparison of data of foreign and domestic research on this issue.

The fundamental works of foreign and Russian scientists in the field of pedagogy and psychology (Combs, Delishe, Clark, Bishop, Renzulli, Taylor, Tarasova, Fakhruddinova, etc.) were the theoretical basis of the present study.

The usage of the methodology of existing research contributes to the development of scientific thought in education for gifted students, methods, and techniques of research in this area.

It provides the opportunity to address the problem of gifted students’ education in a comprehensive manner.

RESULTS

The analysis of scientific papers reveals that there is a need for a new type of teacher-researcher, who would not only be able to work in the mode of developing innovations and mastering their diversity, but also create his or her own pedagogical innovations and apply them in the pedagogical activity to work with gifted students. The analysis of domestic and foreign studies proves that the greatest success in teaching is achieved by those teachers who have moved away from traditional ways, those who work on innovative authoring and experimental programs, those who are not afraid to experiment, and those who participate in contests, conferences, and competitions. The work with creatively gifted students in the conditions of a mass school naturally requires systematic differentiation and individualization of their training and education. At the same time, there are quite a few teachers, both here and abroad, who believe that creatively gifted children and students need their own curriculum and special educational content, and most importantly, the conditions should be created for the pedagogical stimulation of their creative self-development. The process of development of students’ creative abilities is possible only through the interaction of a teacher and a student. In a joint creative activity, the teacher chooses such kind of interaction, during which the development of cognitive processes, structure of motivational sphere, and formation of individual “I-concept” takes place. Domestic researcher Andreev formulated the law of co-creation, which acts in the process of creative self-development (Andreev, 2013). He argues that the effectiveness of creative self-development of an individual is directly dependent on its productivity in the process of co-creation and cooperation in solving creative problems.

The readiness of a teacher to work with gifted students is also determined by his or her creative thinking, deep subject knowledge, psychological competence, and pedagogical competence. The following distinguished qualities are necessary for a teacher to work with gifted students: sensitivity, goodwill, high level of intellectual development, optimistic attitude to reality, a sense of humor, a positive self-concept, personal maturity, and emotional stability. The most favorable style of work of a teacher is the joint work with gifted students. It should also be noted that the teacher must be able to plan the work with students, display an attitude to increase motivation and interest, use an individual approach, and create the necessary conditions for the mental development of students. Teacher creates an atmosphere that inspires or destroys students’ self-confidence, encourages or suppresses their interests, and develops or ignores their abilities. The success of
a teacher’s work with gifted children depends largely on the correctness of the chosen strategy for working with them (Fakhrutdinova, Gali & Shakhnina, 2017).

In this regard, it is important to note that a successful teacher for the gifted students is, first of all, an excellent subject teacher, who deeply knows and loves his or her subject; capable of conducting experimental, scientific, and creative activities; having knowledge of the features of gifted students, and knowing the possible ways of manifesting giftedness. It is very important for the teacher to possess the qualities essential in communicating with a gifted student. The interaction of the teacher with gifted students should be directed towards the optimal development of their abilities and the teachers must possess a helpful, supportive and non-directive character. The conditions for the effectiveness of working with gifted students manifest in the teacher’s ability:
- to direct the discussion to analysis and search for new non-trivial solutions;
- to predict the students’ actions and their development in general;
- to plan his or her activities and teach students to plan their activities;
- to find and evaluate the positive moments, even in the students’ wrong decisions, for whom their mistakes are one of the ways of knowing and forming the research character.

It is important that the teacher maintain a comfortable psychological climate in the relations with gifted students, which can be achieved by:
- creating successful situations and an atmosphere of mutual aid, goodwill, freedom, and looseness;
- eliminating the possible elements of competition under the assumption of competition;
- praising without re-raise and opposition to others;
- comparing with self in the past and the present;
- giving a high assessment of students’ activities and showing interest in their activities;
- encouraging the attempts of gifted students to help others and their joint activities;
- demonstrating his or her own enthusiasm and joy for the success of students;
- tolerating the possible confusion and errors in details;
- guaranteeing students their right to seek and make mistakes without lowering their grades;
- forming confidence in the feasibility of problems to be solved now or in the future;
- developing self-discipline and independence;
- forming a real picture of themselves and their abilities, and removing internal contradictions.

The American researchers Hallman and Ireson point to the following principles for the selection of teachers to work with gifted students:
- the teacher is a key figure in the gifted students’ education system;
- establishing increased demands to teachers working with gifted students;
- a positive self-concept is one of the most important characteristics of a teacher working with gifted students, since a teacher with a low self-esteem, as a rule, is fearful in front of his talented students;
- the important qualities of teachers are maturity, successful experience of pedagogical work, emotional stability, dedication, and creativity;
- the professional competence of a teacher of gifted students is based on his or her special theoretical training;
- teachers should be able to work with students with different abilities and characteristics, as gifted students are usually taught in the same group along with other students;
- in order to develop programs, teachers need to understand a wide variety of disciplines;
- teachers working with gifted students must properly select the educational material;
- the concept of teacher necessarily includes the ability to properly assess the success of gifted students;
- when selecting teachers for gifted students, one should consider the possibilities of their belonging to the same culture (Hallman & Ireson, 2005).

In addition, the pedagogical administration should not only select specialists who meet the requirements as closely as possible, but should constantly engage in special personnel training (advanced training), organize special seminars and meetings for teachers of methodical associations and creative groups.

Thus, the professional skills of a teacher are based on the following skills: to train in accordance with the results of a student’s diagnostic examination, to modify curricula, to work according to a special curriculum, to advise students, and to assist in self-learning. In our opinion, teachers’ deep knowledge of the characteristics of gifted students, and ways and conditions of their development also play an important role. The work with a gifted student is often a peculiar exam for
both teachers and psychologists, as gifted students or their behavior represent such non-standard situations for which the previously created stereotypes of “teachers” are not useful. It is obvious that the main components of a teacher’s professional qualification for working with gifted students are, on the one hand, psychological and pedagogical knowledge and skills, and, on the other hand, the teacher’s professional and personal positions. The insufficient psychological level of teachers to work with gifted students, who have an irregular behavior and thinking, leads to the fact that in the process of evaluating their students, teachers point out demonstrativeness in them, the desire to do everything in their own way (stubbornness), hysteria, unwillingness and inability to follow positive samples, etc. (Gali & Vainer, 2017). Many psychologists believe that such assessments are often the results of a teacher’s inadequate understanding of the personality and development of a gifted student. A review of the research literature on this topic has shown that teachers working with such students should undergo special post-graduate training. Unfortunately, not all teachers possess such kind of preparedness. Teachers unprepared in this regard often cannot reveal gifted students, do not know their peculiarities, and do not understand their problems. Sometimes, unprepared teachers can be hostile to outstanding students. Such teachers often use the tactics of quantitative increase in assignments, rather than their qualitative change.

DISCUSSION

The basic reason to make a detailed analysis of pedagogical conditions for gifted students’ development and education is the specificity of gifted education. The research has shown that the problem is considered as one of the most important in the world. Of course, the special teacher training, i.e., professional and personal qualifications of teachers contribute to the effective solution of the problem of gifted students’ education and development.

Various aspects of the problem of gifted students’ development and education are reflected in the scientific work of foreign researchers: Combs, Delishe, Clark, Bishop, Renzulli, Taylor, Tarasova, Fakhrutdinova, and others. However, analysis of scientific papers on this issue showed that this problem is not sufficiently considered.

SUMMARY

The teacher must know the many characteristics of a gifted child. Regardless of age and experience, he or she must constantly learn, improve the style of work, look for new, rational, and fascinating forms of work with a child, he or she must be able to control his or her emotions, and demonstrate moral maturity, competence, and culture. Endorsement of a gifted student should prevail over criticism, and stimulation must be over demand.

The teacher maintains a comfortable psychological climate in the relations with gifted students, that is:
- creation of success situations and atmosphere of mutual aid, goodwill, freedom, looseness;
- elimination of possible elements of competition under the assumption of competition;
- praise without re-praise and opposition to others;
- comparing students only with themselves in their past and present;
- giving a high assessment to students’ activities and showing interest in their activities;
- encouragement of attempts made by gifted students to help others and their joint activities;
- demonstration of his or her own enthusiasm and joy for the child’s success;
- tolerance to possible confusion and minor errors;
- guarantee of the students’ right to seek and make mistakes without lowering their grade;
- formation of confidence in the feasibility of problems to be solved now or in future;
- development of self-discipline and independence;
- formation of a real picture of student’s abilities.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it should be noted that the work of a teacher with gifted children is a complex, dynamic, and ongoing process. It requires from the administration, institutions, and teachers to possess good knowledge in the field of psychology and pedagogy and cooperate with psychologists, teachers, and the administration of other educational institutions, along with the parents. The teacher is required to constantly replenish knowledge, improve mastery, and flexibility. He or she must have creative thinking, be ready to revise his or her views, and must make continuous self-improvement. Is the teacher of a gifted student ready to enter the process of continuous self-development with his or her students? It is really not easy and not every teacher has such powerful creative resources. In our opinion, a special system of training teachers and improving their skills when working with gifted students is required.
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