Historic overview of gifted education in foreign countries

Elena Semenovna Vainer
Lecturer of the English language department for humanities
Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia
Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies
E-mail: vainere@mail.ru
Contact: +79033878087

Dr. Gulnara Faritovna Gali
Associate Professor of the English language department for humanities
Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia
Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies
Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia
E-mail: gulnaragali@mail.ru
Contact: +79375295596

Dr. Irina Zinovievna Shakhnina
Associate Professor of the English language department for humanities
Kazan Federal University, Kazan, Russia
Institute of International Relations, History and Oriental Studies
E-mail: voda-2005@mail.ru
Contact: +79872967051

Abstract

The urgency of the problem under investigation is due to the fact that the issue of gifted students’ education is one of the most difficult and interesting aspects of contemporary Russian and foreign pedagogy. Nowadays working with gifted students appears as an important and priority educational policy worldwide. The analysis of the research literature shows that the problem of talented students is constantly attracts the attention of educators and psychologists. The purpose of the article is to describe comprehensively the achievements in the field of gifted students' education starting from ancient times up to the present in different countries. 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. The main results of the study are the historical and theoretical analysis of the socio-political, psychological, and educational literature. The process of formation of the system of gifted students' education in foreign countries has been considered. Materials of the article can be useful for professors, teachers, students and a wide range of readers interested in the problems of gifted students' education.

Keywords: University education; gifted students’ education; educational establishments; associations; learning programs.
Introduction:

The history of civilization has repeatedly shown that social development depends on important inventions made by talented people. The reforms that have occurred in foreign and Russian education system over the past decade focus on humanistic, student-oriented and developing educational technology. These reforms have changed the attitude towards students with extraordinary ability (Clarín, 1994; Belyaeva, 2013; Kara, 2011). Educational institutions, educational and social programs, public organizations and foundations have appeared and their main goal lies in the identification, training and development of gifted students (Jurkevich, 2000).

The analysis of the research literature shows that the problem of talented students is constantly attracts the attention of educators and psychologists. In spite of the fact that the problem has a very ancient history it is rather acute nowadays. The theme of the selection of gifted students is closely connected with well-known names as Confucius, Ovid, Plato, Thomas Jefferson and others. They isolated a particularly gifted children and found that it was necessary to take special measures to promote their abilities (Wolfson, 2003). The problem of gifted students’ education has acquired a special significance in the late XX century and affected many countries such as USA, UK, Germany, France, Japan, and others. This is due to the dynamics of the development of modern society. This fact, in its turn, changed the outlook on education of gifted students (Dzhurinskiy, 1990). In this regard, we believe that a historical review of gifted students’ education in foreign countries is of interest in the setting up of the system of education of gifted.

Methodological Framework:

The methodology of research approaches allows us to see the main trends of development of the system of gifted students’ education in foreign countries from ancient times up to the present. The methodological principle of the unity of the historical and logical approach allows us to study the current state of the research issue in relation to its history and development prospects. Furthermore, in our study we have relied on the principle of the relationship and the influence of the economy, politics, education and culture, which can reveal the social conditionality of the many psychological and pedagogical processes.

The theoretical basis of the study were the fundamental works of many foreign and domestic scientists in the field of education and psychology, in particular: B.Blum, Dzh.Gilford, Dzh.Renzulli, L.Termen, A.N.Dzhurinsky, E.B.Lysova, A. M. Matyushkin, V.I.Panov, F.L.Ratner, A.I.Savenkov, B.M.Teplov, N.B.Shumakova, E.I.Scheblanova, etc.). Using the methodology and methods of existing research works contributes to the development of scientific thought in the sphere of gifted students’ education, methods and techniques of research in this area.

The method of historical and logical analysis of regulatory documents of foreign governments and research papers by leading scientists connected with educational issues of gifted students provided an opportunity to review a complex system of education for different kinds of schools.

The method of theoretical analysis and synthesis of social, political and psychological-pedagogical literature is of great importance. It allows us to trace the interconnections between the phenomena of historical and political life and the development of education for gifted students in different countries.

RESULTS:
The origin of the elements of educational theory in ancient civilization and the development of science in the Middle Ages.

The problem of studying the psychology of giftedness, identification and education of gifted students has its own history and traditions in different countries. Education has a long history. In
ancient society the children were brought up to be very active from the early age. They were involved in different forms of activities: hunting, fishing, fighting, shooting, riding, farming, caring for animals, etc. The tribal community committed senior, sophisticated people to acquaint the younger generation with the rituals, traditions and history of the race, religious beliefs. There was a time when education and training began to play a very important role in people's lives and there was a need to summarize the experience of education in the creation of educational institutions for the preparation of young people for future promotion.

In the history of education there is an evidence that in the slave-owning states of the Ancient East, Greece and Rome the starting point of family and social education began to exist. In these conditions preference was given to young people with extraordinary abilities.

Emergence of elements of educational theory associated with the training of gifted students can be found in historical materials, subsidized BC in ancient thinkers' works such as Socrates, Plato, Democritus, Aristotle, and others. Their works were devoted to the important ideas of bringing up of a human being. And especially they greatly focused on gifted students' education.

Ancient Rome was also characterized by significant progress in the fields of science, law, literature, philosophy and arts. The most famous Roman orator and educator Marcus Fabius Quintilian attached great importance to people with extraordinary abilities.

In early China talented children were focused and appreciated. Achievements in the field of literature and art were particularly noticeable during the reign of the Tang Dynasty. In China, as well as in other countries, there appeared an idea that national prosperity depends on education of people with high mental abilities. So, gifted students were given possibilities to get education in the field of medicine, law and education at the Imperial Palace. And here it is important to notice that Confucius's ideas (551 - 479 BC) of gifted youth education greatly influenced on Chinese civilization development.

In the framework of this paper there is a great interest should be given to the Japanese experience. There was such an educational seat of learning which was called "Academy of feudal Japan". It provided an opportunity for promotion on the basis of talent, but not social status. There were different types of clan school curriculum that included subjects of philosophical and ethical direction, as well as study of history, medicine, military science and foreign languages.

Middle Ages are known as Renaissance, characterized by the support of the government and private sponsors to those who showed creative talent in art, architecture, literature and etc. The golden age of progress made a significant contribution to culture and education. There were a lot of brilliant artists, painters, writers and architects, including Leonardo da Vinci, Dante, Boccaccio, Michelangelo and others.

Historical approach to the problem of education and development of gifted students in foreign countries in XIX-XXI centuries.

The history of pedagogy education is closely linked to the socio-political situation in a particular country. One of the most important documents was the bill "The spread of education" proposed by US president Thomas Jefferson, which mainly reflected the issues of talented youth training at the state universities expense (Onuf, 2014).

In the XIX century L. Termen was known as the "father" of gifted students’ education. L. Termen, an American psychologist, professor at Stanford University, was engaged mainly educational psychology, tests and problems of intellectual development of the child. He developed a test that measured human intelligence, known as the "Stanford-Binet scale." In general, L. Termen believed that the main factor of talent was heredity. L. Hollingworth, an American psychologist, was a pioneer in the field of gifted students’ education. She made a great contribution to the
development of child psychology problems. She marked that children with a high level of intellectual development could suffer from serious emotional disorders.

In the 1930s there were additional educational programs for gifted students in secondary schools in America. In various parts of the country there were created exclusively special schools for gifted students. In the 1950-s the famous American psychologists L.Thurstone and J.Guilford worked out creative tests. (Akimova, 2005). Education Act passed by the US Congress in 1958 played an important role in the development of gifted students’ education. In 1972 S.Marland submitted his report to the US Congress. In this report he gave a general definition of giftedness for the first time, which included the following aspects: leadership skills, visual and performing arts, creative or productive thinking and psychomotor ability (Marland, 1972).

The further development of the theme of education of gifted students sounded most clearly in the joint project "Spectrum" carried out by X.Gardner and D.Feldman. The scientific importance of this project was the fact that firstly in pedagogical literature there appeared information of intellectual development of preschool children. The most significant aspects were highlighted: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence (Saveliev, 2001).

In the late 1990s, and in the early 2000s, the US Congress placed great emphasis on the training of gifted youth by financing national projects (about $ 9.6 m.). There were developed great number of different activities which were organized on national level. (Jacob, 2007).

Research centers in almost all major US universities (the University of Connecticut, the University of Virginia, Yale and Northwestern University) played particularly important role in working with talented youth. In the same years there were adopted laws and government programs. In particular, on April 18, 1991 the administration of US President issued a program «America-2000: An Education Strategy.» (America – 2000, 1991).

Also there could be mentioned the activity of educational associations such as National Association for Gifted Children (Washington, DC), American Association for Gifted Children (North Carolina at Chapel Hill), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Washington, DC), Parent Teacher Association, the American Psychological Association (Washington, DC), and others (Gifted Education, 2000).

With regard to the UK school system, it should be noted that it has a long way of development. The theory of a rigid genetic determination of intelligence has had a great influence on the development of the education system in England. In 1944 there appeared an Act concerning three-typed school. According to this act each school had to meet three types of children abilities. The selection of these schools was based on the testing of students. Also in the middle of the XX century it was opened both private and public schools for gifted students.

In the 1960-s a great number of different educational public and professional associations were established. These organizations set the goal of attracting public attention to the problems of the gifted students, creating programs for their training, as well as material assistance to gifted students (NACE Challenge Award, 2006).

Public educational policy for gifted students was first formulated in 1991. In the following decade educational programs were introduced. Among them "Excellent quality in schools, 1977», research programs, also official commissions created the recommendations and monitored the training of talented students (House of Commons Education and Employment Committee , 1999).

In the UK, the main official approach to gifted education was based on the principle of inclusive approach. This principle focuses on improving education for all children so that gifted students can remain in comprehensive schools and be able to self-fulfillment. In England, there are no special schools for gifted children but there is a school of church-choir singing, music, ballet,
School of Dramatic Art, and others. The work of all types of schools in England is based on the profound differentiation of training in accordance with the students’ abilities.

It should be noted that the UK has initiated the creation of the World Council for gifted and talented children (NACE - National Association for Able Children in Education). Its opening had a great impact on the scientific community. The organization was founded in 1984 and united teachers, school administrators, parents of gifted children and researchers. The organization publishes its own magazine of scientific and practical orientation - «Educating able children”. National Association for the gifted children (NACE) focuses on the development of education for this category of students (www.nace.co.uk.)

Education of gifted students in France is connected with the name of the French explorer A.Binet. A well-known psychologist, doctor of medicine and law was the founder of the first French laboratory of experimental psychology. He is known primarily as the author (with T.Simon) of the first practical test of intelligence, called “Binet – Simon scale of mental development” (modern analog of IQ-test). A series of tests included various attributes: the time of reaction, the perception of differences colour, weight, memory, judgment, reasoning, ability to be attentive and others.

Nowadays in France, the problem of talented students is being solved. For example, there are so-called "model high schools," where a didactic installation taking into account individual characteristics of students was based on. The most talented applicants have an opportunity to compete for elite university entrance.

Germany also conducted research on the problem of giftedness. After the world wars the emphasis was made to be ensured with optimal conditions of every child on the basis of internal differentiation and the formation of elite special schools and classes. Nowadays gifted children are being identified at the age 10-12, using a special technique. There are also centers for the promotion of talented students and young scientists in universities in Germany.

There is a specially created European center for gifted students’ education. It was created in 1988 by the representatives of 11 European associations. It has three directions: legislative activities aimed at improving of the education system, taking into account the special needs of the gifted; research and development of the concept of giftedness and pedagogical approaches to gifted students; the practical support of gifted students (organization of special schools, summer camps, and others). (Monks & Pfluger, 2005).

DISCUSSIONS:

Various aspects of the problem of gifted students' education is reflected in the scientific work of foreign researchers: J.Kagan (2011), A.Passow (2009), J.Whitemore (2012), Dzh.Renzulli (1982) and others. This problem was also considered by Russian researchers: V.A.Andreev (2010), B.L. Wolfson (2003), A.N. Dzhurinskiy (1999), V.I.Panov (2003), A.I.Savenkov (2000), F.L.Ratner (2009) and others. However, analysis of scientific papers on this issue showed us that this problem is not sufficiently considered in Russian education system.

CONCLUSION:

Thus, the analysis of the peculiarities of education of gifted students abroad has shown that attention to gifted education can be marked from the earliest periods of history. Children's endowment is of great concern of educators. The interest towards talented children is explained by the society's needs for progress. Theoretical analysis of foreign education shows that there is a highly developed system of gifted people starting from kindergarten up to the system of higher education.
RECOMMENDATIONS:

The results can be used to enrich theoretical courses with information about theory and practice of gifted students’ education abroad. The materials of the article can be used by teachers, psychologists and other participants of the process of gifted students’ education.

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