

**Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
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**Educational Studios:
Theory and Practice**
Monograph

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1.9. MODERN APPROACHES TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS ARE TO WORK WITH GIFTED CHILDREN IN THE SPHERE OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION (EXPERIENCE OF PR CHINA)

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Abstract. *Informal Education is a general term for education that can occur outside of a structured curriculum. China today also uses such kind of providing educational services mainly for children and youths. These activities are seen by the state educational system as the basic level of gifted children`s detection and separating them from the other ones. Modern Chinese educational theory has its own ideas as to the problem of gifted children starting from the definition of giftedness and up to requirements forced to teachers as well as to the system of such teachers` trainings. The article describes contemporary approaches in the teachers` training system in modern PR China and represents the practical steps of the Chinese government that lead to the development of teachers able to work with specific categorieas of children both in the system of formal and informal education. The special attention in the article is payed to the state requirements as to the teacher as well as to the whole system of teachers` training. The Chinese national teachers` training system now is characterized by total state suppot, cjinpetative relations between state and non-formal educating institutions both as working place of a well-qualified teacher and the body, that provides training services for teachers, control over the content and form of teachers` training educational activities from the state, wide means of self-education and self-development, ideological and citizenship orientation of educational work, active borrowing*

forms of educational work from abroad and adapting them to the Chinese needs.

Key words: *PR China, teachers` training system, self-motivation, self-development, non-formal education, gifted children.*

Educational reforms of late 80th-early 90th of the 20th century faced the educational science of China with the need to create a totally new teachers`training system which would take into account three important factors: borrowing international experience, making maximum use of the traditional Chinese educational system`s achievements and taking into account requirements of the official ideology of the country as well as the reality of non-formal education. The historical realities of the the Chinese state`s development as well as peculiarities of the national mentality of Chinese always have seen the panacea for many "diseases" of the society in the work of educators and educational institutions as the official representatives of the state. That`s why "educating of educators" is seen by the Chinese as the basis for the development of the society, quality changes of the society and one of the main tasks of the educational process in the country in general.

Gifted children are always treated in China as the national property to form the intellectual, sport, creative the elite of any nation. Recently the whole world was impressed by so called "Chinese miracle" when the country just in some years turned up to be not the poor developing one, but a rapid leader of the world. Each country solves the problem of educational work with gifted children basing upon its educational traditions and national concept of giftedness. China goes the way of non-formal education institutions for such children with the idea of well-prepared teachers trainees to work with gifted children according to rules and principles used common for the world non-formal education practice which is quite new for China.

The aim of this article is to represent the experiences of China as to organization of the system of the educational work for teachers are to work with gifted children paying focused attention to the potential and opportunities given by the non-formal education. **Methods** used: scientific methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization) to study the encyclopedic, psycho-pedagogical and methodological literature on the point of the research; problem-target methods to analyze scientific and methodical literature, periodicals and regulatory guidance educational documents; comparative pedagogical for comparing the theoretical ideas and practices of China.

Moreover, such methods as observations of the authors` personal internship and work in the education system of China, interviews with teaching staff, summarizing the data of official statistics were also of great use. Novelty of the research is represented by the Chinese concept of gifted children appearing in the Ukrainian professional education literature for the first time and developing of the non-formal education idea from the Chinese point of view.

Chinese educational theory and practice today still has no strict peculiarities as to training systems of teachers are to work in the sphere of formal and non-formal education (unlike the Israeli one). Also it does not see the difference between work with different specific categories of students (like gifted, educa-

tionally non-socialized etc). the Chinese theory and educational practice follows the idea that teachers training formal education system (the only one's graduates are able to work in any types of educational institutions in the country) is to give some universe and common knowledge and skills for the teachers-to-be. This set of knowledge and skills is to be added by some specific ones fulfil the particular needs of the teacher and the working place by the means of self-education and working-patronage.

Today in China, the training of pedagogical personnel (teachers, educators, senior teachers, tutors, mentors etc.) is carried out in the system of teacher training institutions, which include Normal Universities, Institutes of education attached to Universities and institutes of advanced teachers' training. The system of higher pedagogical education in the country consists of courses with special educational programs (duration 2-3 years), bachelor's degree (4-5 years) and magistracy (2-3 additional years). Educational institutions above mentioned do not provide their students with special trainings for working with different categories of children (small, those who have special needs, gifted, etc.). It is considered that the state teachers' training system provides its students with a universe and sufficient set of knowledge and practical skills that let them equally effective work with any group of students. Also, unlike Ukraine, Normal Universities do not have in their schedule special time for students to have active pedagogical practice at schools and other educational institutions. Students by themselves in free time can have some volunteer work on different courses, circles, day care center etc. It is called "social practice" and aims to provide students with work experience and additional recommendation letters which could help them to have better work place in future. This social practice is not obligatory one for the students. It is assumed that the University is to provide students with theoretical knowledge and working algorithms to be used in their practical work as well as diploma to fulfil the state requirements as to the teachers. Practical skills needed for the particular working place a student would gain while working as an "assistant teacher" or "senior teacher" for a term from 3 months to 2 years at his/her first working place.

In recent years, there has been a tendency to train teachers and educators in non-pedagogical educational institutions of the country (the most famous are the Yoncheng University, the Chinese Radio and Television University, the University of Shengxi, etc.). In the non-pedagogical universities of the country, were established pedagogical and psychological departments which allow people with other basic education to obtain the necessary knowledge and skills for pedagogical work with children and young people. At Normal Universities of the country were also established consultative points and centers for passing examinations for pedagogical qualification (for those who acquire a pedagogical education in the system of distance learning, through self-education, etc.). The diversification of the ways of obtaining higher pedagogical education in China can be attributed to the organization of higher education for adults, which is coordinated by the Commission for Adult Education (since 1986) (Dzhgun, 2012, p.76).

There are no unified programs for Normal Universities in China - they are

made directly in the university, taking into account the recommendations of the Ministry of Education of PR China, local needs and analysis of the vacancy market for graduates of higher education institutions on the particular major. The programs of Chinese universities are distinguished by the subject of courses and the methodology of teaching, but the state controls their work and develops general guidelines over the content and technology of the educational process. Content variability of the curriculums can also be explained by the practice of "custom programs" in higher education institutions of the regional level: a local community or a working unit can place an application for training specialists of the appropriate level and qualifications for their needs and pay for it. Especially for such "custom" groups, a training course is developed, if necessary, teachers and other specialists from other educational institutions of the country and from abroad are invited.

To ensure that the higher pedagogical education in China meets the requirements of the current situation, the Chinese government constantly encourages reforms in this area. The Fifth All-China Conference on Vocational Education (2009) adopted a comprehensive plan for reforming and developing higher pedagogical education in China in the first half of the 20th century, based on the principle of quality education. The decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council adopted the "Memorandum on deepening the reform and comprehensively stimulating qualitative parameters of pedagogical education" which contains the following norm: "Achieving high-quality parameters of pedagogical education means comprehensively implementing the state course in the field of vocational education and aims to improve the qualitative characteristics of the Chinese nation through forming the corps of educators who have quality new personal and professional characteristics: ability and will to self-education, self-development, self-discipline and self-realization, high level of education and practical skills, ideology, morality, culture, loyal and directly-formed proper tastes, conscious civil position and a high level of social responsibility" (Mei, 2009, p.16) To achieve this goal, the Chinese government plans to deepen the reform of the teachers' training system in the following areas:

- Constant increase of additional funds to improve the material and technical basis of Normal universities;

- Reform the teachers' training system to train a large number of primary and secondary school teachers for rural schools. Force the local communities and authorities to establish high pedagogical courses to fulfil the staff deficits in the educational institutes on their territories;

- Provide applicants who passed the Unified State Exam with high scores and motivatedly chose Normal Universities to entry with certain benefits (no entry exams, preferences as to vocational and part-time work etc.);

- Support at the state level the high status of the teaching profession, concern for the material well-being of teachers, moral and non-money encouragement of qualified specialists;

- Increase attention to professional growth and professional development of teachers;

Continuous improvement of scientific and technical equipment of institutions of advanced training and postgraduate education of teachers and pedagogical staff by using the latest achievements of science and technology and improving communication tools (Shatska, 2011; Vu, 2000; Green paper on special education in China, 2012; Report of the State Commission on Party Administration on the state in the field of education, 2014).

Chinese culture, pedagogics, education system, and public opinion have developed their own concept of "giftedness" in children, which to a greater extent determines the place of gifted children in modern Chinese society. Perception of this or that reality in Chinese culture is most fully reflected in the hieroglyphics. If we take a hieroglyph-by-hieroglyph analysis of the word "a gifted child" (天才儿童), its interpretation is close to the notion of "a child who has a gift from Heaven". The Chinese traditionally perceived Heaven as the supreme deity, which gives a person destiny, talent, happiness and so on. The inner content of the concept is identical to "a child who was kissed by an angel", which is common among Slavic and European peoples. However, this interpretation implicitly hints that, because of God's gift, man's giftedness is a concept that is already full, constant and does not require additional development.

As for the Chinese educational system, the main slogan of it in this aspect for a long time was: "There are no ungifted or unprofitable, but there are only those who make little effort". Therefore, the curricula in the country were developed without taking into account the phenomenon of "talent", "giftedness", "learning disabilities", "poorly educated", etc., and synonymous with the word "gifted" were diligent "and" hardworking."

As to the Chinese society towards gifted children it occupies a dual position. In one hand, all parents want their child to be defined as gifted and invest big money in circles of interests, additional classes, children clubs etc. In the other hand, unlike other countries, Chinese society does not consider it necessary to support the initiatives of the state and the education system as to giving gifted children the possibility of early graduation from school and entering universities since earlier graduation means earlier start of work. The current legislation clearly defines the time when a candidate can be chosen for civil service, employment, retirement etc. Under such conditions, the working life of gifted children who are potentially entitled to graduate from high schools and universities is sufficiently resolved. Also, Chinese society fears that children and adolescents themselves will not be psychologically and physically ready for the amount of information that a university provides. Therefore, the possibility of early graduation for gifted children (jumping through the class, externship and other forms) is very interesting for the Chinese theorists and is actively developed in the narrowly specialized pedagogical and methodical literature, but meets rather harsh criticism in media and society (Zhang, 2000).

Traditionally, the development of giftedness in their own children in China was given to parents. Having a gifted, unique or talented child in the family has always guaranteed parents honor, respect and certain bonuses from the Chinese

society. Therefore, even now the Chinese parents take on the main work to identify and develop talents of their children: they lead them to all kinds of circles, additional classes, studios, experimental schools, etc. Today, this practice is widespread in cities. And also mainly the urban population has the access to such services. Although many educational institutions of the PR China now declare their experimentation and progressiveness, in most cases their differences are reduced to an improved material base, reorganization of the educational space of children according to the Western pattern (language classes, round tables for working in small groups) only, because there is no enough specialists know how to work with new experimental technologies or with gifted children in practice (Green paper on special education in China, 2012).

The system of non-formal education is also considered more attractive both for gifted children and for their parents due to the nature of the information and psychological climate. Because of the scarcity of resources, the selection of talented and gifted children for training in public top schools in China is mainly done through very rigid test methods and is not always objective. Also, the curricula in such schools is standardized by the state and do not take into account individual characteristics and peculiarities of a gifted child. As for the informal sector, teachers are encouraged to use the "Individual Development Plan" to track progress of a child. Completing the Plan, a teacher is invited in a free form to mark the progress of the student weekly, noting his creativity, initiative, goodwill and positive attitude towards teacher and other students. This technique encourages the teacher, parents and the student himself/herself to focus only on the strengths of the child, while traditional Chinese techniques used in public schools tend them to focus on identifying the child's weak points, focusing on what the students cannot cope with or cannot do properly (Theory and practice of the reform of Talent-oriented special education in China, 2007).

Conclusions. As a conclusion it should be noted that the Chinese national teachers' training system is characterized by dominance of group forms of education over individual, lectures on practical, activities, copying educational technologies without their theoretical comprehension due to the high involvement of students in extracurricular educational activities during the university period (it is believed that a student in practice will actively use only those forms and methods of education which once experienced himself \ herself), total state support, competitive relations between state and non-formal educating institutions both as working place of a well-qualified teacher and the body, that provides training services for teachers, control over the content and form of teachers' training educational activities from the state, wide means of self-education and self-development, ideological and citizenship orientation of educational work, active borrowing forms of educational work from abroad and adapting them to the Chinese needs.

The article can be seen as the point of further research in the field of non-formal education, gifted-children and talent-oriented education. Also it can be used for research in the sphere of comparative analysis as it shows modern trends in the Eastern education systems.

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