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Comparative Perception of the Position and Treatment of Gifted Children in the Czech Republic and the Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

In this paper we give an overview of the treatment and position of gifted children in the Czech Republic and the Republic of Macedonia in order to see the similarities and differences in the work with gifted children in both countries. Gifted children usually find the general education boring and unchallenging, because they are more mature than their peers. In order to make education of gifted children successful, it is necessary to put it on several pillars, so we can achieve the optimal development of gifted pupils. The comparative analysis is aimed at determining the following points: How is the educational system for gifted children in the Czech Republic and in the Republic of Macedonia? Do they have an individual educational plan? Identification of gifted children - How we can recognize gifted children? How we can find them? Are there some tests? Who can teach gifted children in the Czech Republic and in the Republic of Macedonia? Which problems can have these children? How successfully work with gifted children? Counseling for gifted children. All these questions are analyzed in detail and explained in the further part of the paper.

Keywords: Gifted children; Educational system; Identification; Teaching problems; Talent; Counseling.

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1. Introduction

The current valid legislation places gifted pupils on the same level as pupils with special educational needs. It is clear from this that pupils have a right to a special approach in education, we have to taking into account the type and degree of talent. The orientation of society in the Czech Republic prefers the education of pupils with special educational needs through integration. Typically, it is a form of individual integration. This trend is also applied with gifted children. Education of gifted pupils has no long tradition in the Czech Republic. In the previous regime, the speeches of any extraordinary talent were considered to be inappropriate superordinary. In the 1960s, selection classes were developed to focus on the development of certain areas (languages, mathematics, sport), but otherwise there was nothing significant about gifted education. In the 1990s, experts, especially psychologists, began to mention that talent should be taken into account in the educational process. It took a long time before these voices were heard, but today education for gifted children is already included in the school law. Very important is early diagnostic of these children. Parents are choosing the education way for their children after consultation with a teachers and psychologist. It is said by law that every schools have to make condition for all children to develop.

According to the Education Act, gifted children in the Czech Republic can attend:

- regular school,
- special classe in a regular school
- regular class, but they are going to the special classe for some (special) subject
- special school

It is important to mention that all of these types have their advantages and disadvantages. The suitability of the child to take part in a particular form of education then depends on the parent's preferences, the child's personal prerequisites and, last but not least, on the level of diagnosed talent. Compulsory primary and secondary education in the Republic of Macedonia is free. The preschool education last from two to six years old of a kid, then children starting attend elementary school which takes 9 years [1]. Gifted children in Macedonia attend public primary school and they are educated in regular class without individual educational plan. Teacher can prepare for those children some extra work or activities. But it depends on teachers motivation how much is he/she motivated to find gifted kid and work with him. These teachers don't have any extra money or time for this extra work and also special place where they can work with gifted children. In Macedonia we can find lots of private schools which can help kids with homework etc., but here is no special school for gifted children. At the age of 15 children get in secondary education. The secondary system of the Republic of Macedonia is composed of many categories - vocational education, art high school education, classical high school education, and high school education for disabled students. Secondary education last four years. Then follows universities education - bachelor, master and doctore degree [11].

1.1 Do they have an individual educational plan?

In Czech Republic an individual education plan (IEP) for gifted pupils is a document that takes into account the special educational needs of a particular gifted pupil. It is based on the current level of pupil's abilities, knowledge and skills and is aimed towards their further comprehensive development. IEP is part of the student's documentation [2]. It is necessary to emphasize the fact that the creation of individual educational plan for gifted pupils is a constantly ongoing process: it requires personal and open contact of a gifted pupil, schools, parents of the child and Pedagogical-Psychological Counselling Centr. It is advisable to continuously consult individual progresses and other steps to adjust individual educational plans according to the actual needs, claims and precondition of the child. Based on the results of a pupil's examination in a school counseling facility and on the recommendation of an expert in this facility, the pupil's legal guardian can ask the school head for an individual educational plan. Individual educational plan is created by class teacher together with a worker from the special pedagogical centre. Gifted children in Macedonia attend public primary school and they are educated in regular class without individual educational plan. There is no special national program to work with gifted and talented children. Teacher can prepare for those children some extra work or activities. But it depends on teachers motivation how much is he/she motivated to find gifted kid and work with him. There are no continuous trainings for teachers to work with gifted and talented children, and most often these trainings are at the request of the teachers themselves [17].

1.2 Identification of gifted children, how we can recognize and find them?

Every kid is individual also the kids with above-average abilities. Not just during the identification but also during the process of education gifted kid is required cooperation of teachers with educational consultant and other persons and institutions (school psychologist, parents, leaders of free time activities, Educational and Psychological Counselling, professional medical institutes etc.) [3].

Typical manifestations of cognitive behavior:

- Rich vocabulary - we can see this already in the first year of a kid. Gifted children know (can pronounce) or get to know (identify) lots of objects, things, toys, peoples etc. Their vocabulary is expand from this time very fast
- Reading - lots of them know how to read from early preschool age. Lots of young gifted children cannot speak, but they know alphabet. Many experts agree that the ability to read before the 4th year is a sign of exceptional intellectual gifting
- Desire to know how things work, have a range of interests, or just a few basic ones that they are able to process step by step - interest of these children are different than the interest of the kids of the same age. From the preschool age it is usually intellectual interest - they wanted to read encyclopedias, want to know how the universe originated, how the electricity works etc. They also prefer another type of toys - books, atlas, chess, computer

- Associating seemingly unrelated things into a meaningful whole - Creative children with a good sight can surprise their parents with interesting constructions or with experiments from usual home materials. Verbally gifted children can have interesting words construction, phrase, writing stories etc.
- Gifted children like to spend their time with adults or with older friends
- Big eager to get new information – from the age of 2 they started to have inquisitive questions – how, when, why
- Excellent concentration of attention – long concentration of attention is typical characteristic of gifted children from early age. This is a reason why they don't like frequent changing activities (writing, reading, counting...). These children have a ability to concentrate to various things at the same time.

Giftedness may manifest in one or more fields such as; intellectual (most scientist agree that intellectual ability must include high IQ scores, high level of abstract reasoning and thinking skills, high levels of vocabulary and memory), creative (e.g. critical thinking, independent/original thinking), artistic (art, music, dance, drama etc.), leadership (they are more mature then their peers and have a natural organizational abilities), or in a specific academic field (e.g. language, mathematics, art or science), psychomotor abilities (e.g. physical skills, coordination) [4].

1.3 Are there some test?

In this time in the Czech Republic are few methods in proces:

- Test to identify gifted pupils in Mathematics (TIM)
- Czech rating scale for parents to identify gifted preschool children
- Gifted Rating Scales – School From (GRS-S)

Test to identify gifted pupils in Mathematics (TIM)

This test is developed by Straka, Jabůrek, Cígler and Portešová. In a present time is determined for pupils from 3rd to 5th grade of elementary school. TIM has two parallel form, everyone is compound from 25 item with free answer. Items are aimed to the one of following field - mathematical-logical, geometric and algebraic tasks. The evaluation (Paper-pencil administration) takes one teaching hour (45 minutes). Development of rating scales for identifying gifted children Rating scales are questionnaires which consist questions about the (special) behavior of the kid. Parents and teachers evaluate this behavior on scale according to intensity and how often they can observe this behavior. According to the result children which could be gifted are sent to the Educational and Psychological Counselling to individual investigation. *Czech rating scale for parents to identify gifted preschool children* This scale is specified for a parents for evaluation of the kids of the age 4 – 6. In a year 2013

was the rating scale adjusted to current look with 26 items, which has two parts. One is focused to the development of a kid - in which age started to show specific skills or behavior. Second part is focused to the judging kid in various fields on four-point scale, from "definitely yes" to "definitely not". *Gifted Rating Scales – School Form (GRS-S)* This scale is specified for pupils of the age 9 - 13., when teachers evaluate children in 6 dimensions (intellectual abilities, schooling skills, creativity, artistic talent, motivation and leadership). Every dimension is consist of 12 items, which are evaluated on nine-point scale divided into 3 sections. In the primary education in the Republic of Macedonia there is no early detection system and working with gifted students. There are no specific test for detection of gifted child. In schools, there are no concrete programs or initiatives. Often, the discovery of gifted students is done individually by the teachers, or by leader of some club which child attend in a free time, and according to their ambition these students in as additional way develop their talents [5].

2. Who can teach gifted children in Czech Republic and in the Republic of Macedonia?

In Czech Republic gifted children in regular school are educated by regular teachers. The good benefit is if this teacher has knowledge's or course from the field of special education, about work with children with special educational needs. In special schools for gifted children are these children educated by the teachers who have special education in the care and education of gifted children. Mensa CR for gifted children offer many educational events, for example: Seminar - Course for School Coordinators of Gifted Care, Project – Supporting Gifted Children for the Future, Conference - Mensa for talent development, lectures and seminars in schools [6]. *If the gifted children are in regular school/classes, do they have some extra work?* Teacher in regular school should be prepared that gifted kid in his class will be ahead before his classmate with finishing work. In this cases, teacher should have prepared some activity or work which could keep the child busy (for example extra grammar packets or bonus spelling words). In the Czech Republic, this area is not processed in any documents, which is mean that every school, class is individual [7].

2.1 Can these children skip some classes?

The school, which accepts a pupil with an individual educational plan (recommended by pedagogical-psychological counseling), is obliged to provide to this kid with an optimal way of teaching. This means that the child, for example, can be transferred to a higher grade. For the transformation to the higher grade is necessary written request from parents, statement of school consulting institute and statement from a pediatric. Condition for a skip s class is to pass exams from the subject (in the class) that they will skip. Final decision is up to a principal of a school. Another option is acceleration. This option enable education in some subjects in a higher grade. The advantage of acceleration is that kid has lots of stimulus and during the school break he/she is going back to his/her class, between the children of the same age, where he/she can play. This satisfy his/her educational and social needs. Decision is also up to a principal of a school. For both options, transformation to a higher grade and acceleration is good some test period. In addition, after this period make an evaluation and choose the best way of education for a kid [8]. In Republic of Macedonia we can find four public Universities in Macedonia which are concerned to the education of a future teachers. But there is not specific training for working with gifted children. Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje This University has two faculties

when teachers can get their education. St. Kliment Ohridski Faculty of Pedagogy, with two study programs - Primary Teacher Education and Preschool Teacher Pedagogy Education. The second faculty is Faculty of Philosophy (Department of Pedagogy) with Pedagogy study program. St. Kliment Ohridski University in Bitola Faculty of Pedagogy offers two study programs - Primary Teacher Education and Preschool Teacher Education. Goce Delcev University in Stip In Stip students can get education on a Faculty of Educational Sciences in Primary Teacher Education or in Preschool Teacher Education. State University Tetovo On this University we can find education for future teachers on Faculty of Philosophy, which offers three study programs - Primary Teaching, Preschool Teaching and Professional Pedagogy [18].

3. Which problems can have this children?

Between main types of problems, we can put for example:

- Relations with the kids of the same age - gifted children mature earlier than the kids of the same age. Therefore, they very often stay in company of the older children or adults. Gifted children trying to devise new (their own) rules and await they everybody will be accept their rules. This can be start of conflict between them and their environment
- Self-criticism and perfectionism - gifted children very often determine high goals - demanding and hard to solve. After that, they are disappointed that they cannot reach their goals
- Uncertainty - in the older school age children starting to choose in which field they would like to work. For gifted children is not easy to choose between rich variety of interest and hobbies in which they are successful. It creates anxiety and these children are uncertain with making decision about their own future
- Depression - If gifted children cannot develop their abilities, they are getting to the depressive phase
- Intellectual curiosity - they need to understand everything
- Attention - gifted children often have trouble paying attention in class. When gifted children are not provided with challenging material, they naturally become bored and look for other things to occupy their minds or simply daydream to pass the time. They are sometimes misdiagnosed like children with ADD or ADHD [19].

4. How successfully work with gifted children

It is often assumed that gifted and talented people "handle themselves" without the need for professional support or leadership. This assumption is very unjustified because, despite congenital characteristics or talents, these children never reach a high level of ability unless they are provided with a system of long-lasting intensive support and education. Special approaches, methods and forms of education and a good range of out-of-school

activities are required.

4.1 Possibilities and forms of work with 'gifted student in a school

The principles for adjustment of teaching of gifted pupils can be divided into several areas - modifications within the content of the teaching, the educational process, the learning environment and the evaluation. In the modification of teaching content, we can include acceleration and enrichment. By modifying the educational process, we mean changing the procedures for guiding the gifted pupil through different methods and forms. For example: working with text, brainstorming, free writing, didactic games (except competitive games), discussion, project teaching, peer learning, group work (place-gifted students with other high-achieving students as well as with less able students), and individual work of the pupil. Modification of the learning environment takes place through the organization of trips, the establishment of libraries and laboratories in the school, the possibility of participating in competitions and Olympiads, Internet courses, weekend programs and summer courses. If a gifted pupil is educated in a regular school, verbal evaluation and/or a combination of marks and verbal evaluation is recommended. Teacher should work closely with parents of gifted children, so that you can fulfill each Child's needs.

4.2 Counseling for gifted children

In a current system is counseling focused mostly for children with some disabilities and students with specific needs like gifted are not seen as primary candidates for counseling. Most of the educational work with gifted students should focus on their differentiated characteristics and needs. In a field of counseling, we should focus to these areas - education, life planning (career) and psychosocial area. In every school should be school counselors, which provide counseling not just to students, but also to the teachers and other people that are in touch with children with special educational need. It would be highly desirable if a teachers would be able to provide basic counseling in their classrooms. In this field would be necessary to provide some trainings where teachers could get to know with variety methods and techniques of counseling.

5. Discussion

Giftedness and talent are usually recognize during the compulsory school attendance and it is the right time for the developing potential opportunities. Identification and afterwards teaching is in competencies of a teacher. It is necessary to try to find the best way to develop this kid. Good teacher should create a positive atmosphere in his class where every kid will be welcome. The teacher cannot forget that a gifted child has the right to be taught and not to be used as a tutor or teacher's assistant during most of the school day. It is beneficial for a gifted pupil if they can be in contact with other gifted children at least in some parts of the lesson so that it can be supported and stimulated. During the recognition and future work with gifted is very important cooperation between school (teachers) and parents of the gifted kid. Not everybody from gifted child's environment understand that they are not gifted in everything. They can be excellent in Math, but they can be bad in English. Moreover, every kid, no matter how gifted he is, needs people who understand him, family which will support him.

It is a fact that in the Republic of Macedonia we do not have any legal regulations at all, and in practice we are talking about identification of the talent from the youngest age. This is not solved by programs and curricula, but should be profoundly within the competence of anyone working with a child. These are tutors, teachers, parents.

6. Conclusion

What is the last process of treatment for talented children? We have nothing more than regular instruction. There are some extracurricular activities, extra classes for a particular field. The new trends are interdisciplinary and a holistic approach in which the child will give the maximum in his development. We are talking about a differential approach, where the program is adapted according to the needs of talented children. Where there is an intensive process of student acceleration, more and more optional subjects where talented children can find themselves. Each teacher who has been in the classroom for 10 minutes can evaluate which children are talented. But it raises the question of motivation of teachers and professors.

- Mentoring support for teachers is needed. Because they recognize the students, but they do not know how to work with them. In addition, their activities involve additional hours, weekends, and this is not paid at all.

7. Recommendation

The state does not have a developed collective system, but it needs to start building and developing, changing institutional education, adapting and involving in various processes, projects and trainings of children, offering opportunities and tools for developing the interests. Work conditions need to be improved and strategies developed for such students. Institutions should stimulate these children by providing the necessary materials and working conditions, or opportunities for upgrading, courses and trainings from creative industries, granting grants, establishing themselves in the culture environment, opportunities for presenting international conferences, symposia, and fairs.

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