



Teachers and Pedagogical Specialists in Gifted Education

Insegnanti e specialisti pedagogici nell'educazione della plus-dotazione

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to an important issue at the beginning of the 21st century – the work with gifted and talented children/ students and the competencies of pedagogical specialists for this work. The design, organization and conduct of gifted education trainings with several target groups of pedagogical specialists and students-future pedagogues are discussed. These trainings are implemented within a European partnership project, two national educational projects and one research university project. Examining the state of the problem of gifted children in Bulgaria is presented. Every training target group was include in a surveys of the need to develop forms of training for teachers and other educational professionals to develop the competences to work with gifted children and students; identifying problems, perspectives, new strategies, teachers profiles in gifted education. Research methods were used such as theoretical analysis of literature on the problem, an analysis of regulatory documents and curricula, interview of people involved in policy, research and practice of work with gifted children. Surveys results are discussed, compared and summarized. Some main problems and perspectives are defined. Conclusions about the coherence between policies, theories and practices are made.

L'articolo è dedicato ad una questione importante all'inizio del XXI secolo: il lavoro con bambini e studenti dotati e di talento e le competenze degli specialisti pedagogici per questo lavoro. Vengono discussi il design, l'organizzazione e la conduzione di corsi di formazione di talento con diversi gruppi di target di specialisti pedagogici e studenti-futuri pedagoghi. Questi corsi di formazione sono implementati nell'ambito di un progetto di partenariato europeo, di due progetti educativi nazionali e di un progetto universitario di ricerca. Viene presentato l'esame del problema dei bambini dotati in Bulgaria. Ogni gruppo-target di formazione è stato incluso in un sondaggio sulla necessità di sviluppare forme di formazione per insegnanti e altri professionisti dell'istruzione in modo da sviluppare le competenze per lavorare con i bambini e studenti dotati; individuazione di problemi, prospettive, nuove strategie, profili degli insegnanti in materia di istruzione dotata. Sono stati usati metodi di ricerca come l'analisi teorica della letteratura sul problema, un'analisi dei documenti normativi e dei curriculum, interviste a persone coinvolte nella politica, ricerca e pratica del lavoro con i bambini dotati. I risultati dei sondaggi sono stati discussi, confrontati e riepilogati. Sono definiti alcuni problemi e prospettive principali. Sono state eseguite delle conclusioni sulla coerenza tra politiche, teorie e pratiche.

KEYWORDS

Gifted and talented children/ students, teachers and pedagogical specialist, gifted education.

Bambini e studenti dotati e talentuosi, insegnanti e specialisti pedagogici, educazione dotata.

Introduction

Discovery, development and support of gifted children are concern and responsibility of the society, the educational institutions and organizations and the family. Gifted children are the richness of any nation. Knowing the legal framework in relation to gifted children, where the problem of gifted children in scientific research, in university programs and curricula is can help increase and use this wealth for the prosperity and confidence of the nation.

The Concepts about gifted children has evolved from antiquity to the present day, but a unified definition and classification is still not found. A modern definition formulated on the basis of a thorough theoretical analysis gives Dobrinka Todorina. According to her, "the gifted child is a child who shows higher remarkable achievements, general intellectual talent, special abilities compared to their peers in science, art or sport and shows them permanently." The definition focuses on defining the child's abilities in terms of the features, characteristics and qualities; on the comparison with his peers, in order to highlight the difference in the facts and manifestations; on the areas where the gifted child has specific features and opportunities and the timing and parameters of the manifestation of gifts (Todorina, 2009a).

1. Research of the State of the Problem of Working with Gifted Children / Students in Bulgaria.

1.1. Objective, Tasks and Methods of the Study.

From the purpose to examine the state of the problem of gifted children in Bulgaria arise the research tasks. They are establishment what is the legal framework for work with gifted children; what is their place in the national policies, theories and practices; where, who and how it works with gifted children; what are the main problems and prospects; what is the coherence between policies, theories and practices. Research methods were used such as theoretical analysis of literature on the problem, an analysis of regulatory documents and curricula, interview of people involved in policy, research and practice of work with gifted children.

1.2. Results and Discussion

1.2.1. Place of work with gifted children in the legislation, science and practice in Bulgaria

In the analysis of accepted in Bulgaria over the last 15 years normative documents it can be seen an attempt to cover the problem of the gifted children. The aims, regulations, principles, roles of the institutions, financial support for gifted children are outlined. The state policy concerning the child in the field of protection, education and development of the gifted children is realized on the basis of: The Law on Child Protection; The Implementing Regulations of the Law on Child Protection; The Ordinance on the conditions and procedures for the protection of gifted children from public schools. Other documents are The National Program of the Measures for the Protection of gifted children; The Nation-

al Strategy for Children (2008-20018), adopted by the National Assembly; Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations; Directive 1248 for the education of gifted children of the European Union, 1994.

Some characteristics of the work with gifted children could be seen in The National Strategy for the Child. This strategy states, "The special protection of gifted children is a system of measures aimed to ensure the development of their abilities, providing financial support and opportunities so that they can express themselves."

The humanistic approach and the democratic decisions, providing equal opportunities for the development, are achievable through better organization and management of the internal reserves of the country and society. Working with gifted children is executed within three phases: identifying the characteristics of gifted children; early detection and identification of gifted children and their stimulation on a national and local level.

The humanistic and personal approach marks the overall state policy for development and self-expression of the child's personality. It is based on the understanding that any healthy child has talents, but they are in different areas and with a different range of development. State education policy is oriented to all of the children, enabling them to realize their talents and abilities in the conditions of the educational environment which is rich in positive incentives, seeking a correlation between genetic, socio-cultural and educational prerequisites.

It is assumed that the age between 2 and 12 is a sensitive period for the development of the abilities. Emphasis is placed on the favorable interaction between the individual and social factors to stimulate and develop giftedness as potential talents. It is assumed that individual differences and the pace of development of giftedness occur at a very early age, but at the same time the focus is on identifying talents and abilities in a later stage of the development age.

On the basis of the above documents, and particularly in the light of the European Directive (the legislation), special provisions for gifted children have been adopted, formulating relevant concepts and policies in the educational system. The idea of working with gifted children develops in the pedagogical theory and practice. In Bulgaria a number of university teachers in pedagogical faculties and representatives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (Dobrinka Todorina, Luben Desev, Evgenia Sendova, Plamen Gramatikov etc.) research and develop theoretical concepts regarding gifted children. Extremely valuable is the experience of the South-West University "Neofit Rilski".

Dobrinka Todorina devoted many publications on the gifted children. She developed a strategy for development of the gifted students and a technology model for training future teachers to work with them. She gives a modern definition of a gifted child. According to her, "the gifted child is a child who shows higher remarkable achievements, general intellectual talent, special abilities compared to their peers in science, art or sport and shows them permanently." The definition emphasizes on the determination of opportunities to the child in terms of displaying features, characteristics and qualities. In comparison with his peers it highlights the difference in the realities and manifestations; on areas where they exhibit specific characteristics and abilities of gifted child, and time parameters and display of gifts (Todorina, 2009 b).

1.2.2. Working with gifted children – where, who and how?

The work with gifted children is done in state schools, private schools, municipal and schools with public and private partnership, centers for extracurricular activities, and non-governmental organizations (NGO).

State schools are pre-school education, secondary schools, and profiled schools. Pre-school education includes children between 3 to 6/7 years of age and is compulsory only for 6-year-old children. The 5-year-old children are about to be included in the near future. Secondary schools include primary school level – grade 1 to grade 4, lower secondary level – grade 5 to grade 8 and high school level – grade 9 to 11th grade. Profiled schools are profiled schools with intensive foreign language teaching (language schools) – the entrance is after completing the seventh grade and a competition (from 8 to 12/13 grade); profiled schools – the entrance is after completing the 7th grade and a competition (with the study of science and/ or mathematics, the humanities, sports schools, art schools, etc.) (8 to 12/13 class); National secondary schools.

Municipal and schools with public and private partnership, centers for extracurricular activities include Municipality Activity Centres, Children's Centres, Astronomical Observatories, and others.

People who works with gifted and talented children are teachers, educators and specialists with a special attitude to education – consultants, scientists, artists etc., and parents work with gifted and talented children. The issues about teachers' education and training is very important (emphasis on working with gifted children). The basic training in the University includes subjects related to gifted and talented children, postgraduate programs and scientific forums. The continuing education has many forms: short forms – training courses, seminars, workshops; specializations; forums for exchange of good practices; scientific and practical conferences; projects of the ministry of education for qualification of pedagogical specialists; European projects. For example, the project "Training of teaching professionals" covers six areas, among which the Project "Training of outstanding teaching professionals" – the target group being gifted and talented students.

The career development of teachers is connected with a career development system with evaluation criteria for teachers. Ordinance No5 of the Ministry of Education regulates five professional qualifications. The acquisition of these stimulates: developing a teacher's portfolio as a tool for reflection, evaluation and professional or personal development; a diagnostic procedure (called Second Professional and Qualification Degree) – a study of the pupils' capacities; exchange of good practices (called First and Second Professional and Qualification Degree).

According to how the actual work is done, there are different forms of work: in the classroom; national contests, competitions and other events (with preliminary school and regional circles conducted in advance); global and international competitions (the majority of the gold and silver medals have been won by the teams of Mathematics and Informatics). Valuable opportunities give projects (The Project called "SUCCESS" covers all schools in Bulgaria and offers activities catering for different interests), workshops and others.

1.2.3. Good practices examples

Some of the profiled *state schools* are the national secondary schools. Good examples of them are The National Science and Mathematics High School – Sofia, The National School of Performing and Screen Arts – Plovdiv, The National

School of Fine Arts “Tryavna School of Arts” – Tryavna, The National School of Music and Performing Arts – Stara Zagora, The National School of Fine Arts – Sofia, The National School for Ancient Languages and Cultures – Sofia, The National School of Music – Shiroka Luka. The above schools issue a National Diploma – a prestigious diploma, issued by the Ministry for excellent performance at competitions.

One of the *private schools* is the School for Talents” (acting). This school presents itself to students as follows: “This is a place where you will find your talent. This is the place where we will develop your skills. This is the place where we will give you a chance to perform.”

Many international and national NGOs contribute greatly to the enrichment of the work with gifted children. The most significant international NGOs are MENSA Bulgaria, which is a member of the World Organization of people with high IQ Mensa International, ECHA (European council for High Ability), and National Organization for Gifted Children – NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children), covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but also an open organization for all European countries. The most significant of the national NGOs are the Foundation “St. St. Cyril and Methodius”, Evrika Foundation, Foundation “Future for Bulgaria”, The “Future 21st Century” Foundation, The “Paideia” Foundation, Foundation “Youth Tolerance”, National Student Association for Educational Exchange AISEC Bulgaria, America for Bulgaria Foundation.

The St. Cyril and St. Methodius International Foundation encourages the development of gifted young people by providing equal opportunities depending exclusively on professional abilities and skills, and sponsors their education, professional training, and career development. The foundation has a program for Bulgarian teachers. Its major objectives are: identification and encouragement of excellence in teaching professionals; stimulating development of the educational environment; identification and development of young talented students. This program is jointly administered with the Unions of Mathematicians, Chemists, Biologists and Physicists. After nationwide competitions the Foundation’s Awards for discovering and encouragement of young talents to teachers in mathematics, informatics, physics, chemistry and biology are publicly announced and presented.

Evrika Foundation is established to support talented children and young people in the implementation of projects in the field of science, engineering and management; to support young innovators and entrepreneurs. One of the Evrika Foundation’s programmes is the program “Talents”. The programme aims to identify talented youth in the fields of science, engineering, technology and management. Activities funded under this programme include training of talented youths, supporting their participation in national scientific and technical events, stimulating the organization of specialized schools, universities, etc. and in this way accomplishing a phase of the process of constant learning and including activities of the Foundation as an element of the economics of knowledge.

Foundation “Future for Bulgaria” assists the spiritual and intellectual development of the personality of the Bulgarians, the raising of the educational level of young and talented Bulgarians.

The “Future 21st Century” Foundation – Bulgaria provides support to talented children and young people through training programs and development projects.

The presented NGOs illustrate are a wealth of opportunities and solutions aimed at fostering the creative potential of the nation.

2. Research of the Need to Develop and Offer Qualification Forms for Pedagogical Specialists in Relation to Work with Gifted Children

2.1. Research Background

The study was carried out during the implementation of a national training program in Bulgaria named “Training of outstanding pedagogical specialists to promote and support their professional development”. The training program is structured in three modules:

- First module “Psychological factors: autonomy and motivation of learners and teachers”. Teachers acquire skills to recognize the individual abilities and talents of students in order to motivate them by applying an individual approach and support compliant to their age characteristics.
- Second module “Pedagogical factors: cooperative learning”. The purpose of the module is to present the capabilities of team and group work to provide mutual assistance and assistance to achieve common learning goals. Pedagogical specialists are expected to learn to practice cooperative learning.
- Third module “Good practices”. Within the module, skills for discovering and describing a positive pedagogical experience were developed (Ivanov et al., 2013).

2.2. Basic Parameters of the Study

The aim of the study is to identify the need to develop and offer qualification forms for pedagogical specialists in relation to work with gifted children.

The following tasks arise from the objective:

- to identify how well teachers have knowledge of diagnosis of gifted children.
- to identify how well teachers know the specific characteristics of gifted children.
- to identify how well teachers know and use methodologies for the development of gifted children.
- to identify key issues related to working with gifted children.
- to outline perspectives for working with gifted children.
- to identify the significant personal qualities of the teacher working with gifted children.

The target group of the survey includes pedagogical specialists (teachers, directors, pedagogical counselors) called “distinguished pedagogical specialists” due to the high achievements of their students – winning first places at national Olympiads, competitions or prizes and participation in international ones. This means that the educated pedagogical specialists have experience of working with gifted children – finding, motivating and developing the gifted children, creating methodologies for working with them. Reflection of pedagogical specialists on the training provided helps to form an opinion on what forms of continuing education they need in order to increase their competencies for working with gifted children.

The research methods used are: included observation, discussion, interview. Discussion and interviews take place after brainstorming, SWOT analysis, group work, individual and group counselling to identify and describe their own good pedagogical practice.

For the effective application of the research methods, very important is the methodological basis of the training – “social constructivist pedagogy”. It includes five interrelated ideas:

- Social constructivism – people come to knowledge by interacting with their constructive environment. Any new knowledge is associated with previous knowledge and experience. Knowledge is reinforced if it can be successfully used in a wider context.
- Creativity – learning is effective when we create something to be used by others. This happens as learners have the opportunity to expose their knowledge to others.
- Connectivity – Training takes place in a small group where specific connections and relationships are obtained and a shared group culture is formed.
- Sharing – behavior of learners implies the specificity of attitudes towards the experience of others and the discussion on this basis, active cooperation in group and joint activities.
- Coaching – the teacher is a coach, who, unlike counseling and training, does not offer ready solutions but stimulates to take independent decisions. The models or ideas of the program should not be imposed on the learner, but he/ she, if he wants to make a conscious choice to work with them. The learner has all the resources, including the ability to discover and use these resources to achieve his goals, but is usually limited by his professionalism. The coach has to get him out of his comfort zone, to stimulate the discovery of new perspectives (Gurova et al., 2013).

2.3. Results and Discussion

The results of the survey can be structured in several groups – competencies of pedagogical specialists for work with gifted children, problems and perspectives in working with gifted children, personal characteristics of specialists working with gifted children.

In presenting a set of diagnostic tools to study the individual peculiarities of the students it was found that in general the teachers did not know the presented tests and that they had little experience of using some diagnostic tool. They note that the diagnosis of gifted children is not required by them and that they have no competence in this area.

In relation to the specific characteristics of gifted children and pupils, they point out that rather on the basis of their practical experience of working with gifted children, they can infer their characteristics rather than on the basis of systematic scientific training on the problem.

In connection with the use of methodologies for the development of gifted children, some of the teachers have applied methodologies from the specialized literature from their subject area, methodologies, learned through exchange of good practices, participation in conferences and seminars. Most of them point out that their successes are the result of the use of author's methodologies, which through this training are unified, described and popularized.

Personality of teacher / worker with changed children. The personality of the teacher / worker with gifted children is crucial in working with gifted children. Gencho Pirjov (Todorina, 2009a, p.121) examines the positive qualities of the teacher working with gifted children, graded in five categories:

- very important – believes in his/ her students, thinks of them as valuable, likes to be with them, is willing to help whenever he/ she needs, recognizes his / her mistakes;
- too important – he is proud of his students with friendly personality, has a good sense of humor, shows patience, tactility, wits, expresses himself clearly, has diverse interests, is accessible for conversation;
- quite important – ready to fight for the rights of their students, showing firmness;
- not very important – often enthusiastic, with good manners, physical attractiveness, high intellect, serious at all, does not raise tone.

The teacher becomes a role model. Participants in the study believe that a teacher working with gifted children is particularly important to be positive/benevolent, empathetic; to show a sense of humor; to know very well the psychological characteristics of the children; to be enthusiastic, cheerful, and energetic; to be an innovator; to have an original thinking and a nonstandard individual approach. The teacher have to be flexible, to make creative use of any situation. to be a coach – to ask more questions than give ready answers; to stimulate self-assessment, request and feedback; to use formative assessment; to communicate with children outside school, to be interested in their world, to know their parents and to cooperate with them.

The teacher plays an important role in stimulating students to learn. The surveyed teachers accept the vision presented that the teacher should play the role of a motivational mentor (Ivanov et al., 2013). This teacher helps students in formulating their personal purpose; expresses high expectations for all students; encourages students to excellence; involves students in self-assessment process; demonstrates a variety of training models and approaches; involves students in the planning of the learning process and other class actions. He encourages students to insistence; trains social skills through cooperative tasks; impact on changing students' opinions; plays a role of behavior model for students, which is constantly improving; demonstrates and stimulate interest, spontaneity, creativity, and helps students to see the world differently.

3. Teacher Training Design, Implementation and Evaluation

3.1. Project Description

Next study is connected with European partnership – Project GATE – membership in international expert team in UK for course design and course implementation in Trakia Uiniversity, Bulgaria. The Leonardo da Vinci partnership project “Gifted and Talented Children Teacher’s and Parent’s Training – GATE” is a “gate” provided to teachers, parents and all concerned actors in the educational community regarding the gifted and talented students, which special educational needs not always find an adequate answer and support. Through common joint work and mutual learning mobilities, the involved partners from Spain, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania and United Kingdom researched which the existing educational resources on this topic are and offered a new educational tool to support them in their individual pathways to guarantee the “jump” between the school and the labor market.

The framework of training course of teachers of gifted and talented students (“GATE” course) is based on a theoretical research on the field of gifted and tal-

ented children and modern constructivist teaching. It is described in the project guidelines (GATE, 2015). Some project partners have special contributions – the UK partner with the concepts about Participatory and Appreciative Action and Reflection Approach and six step Strength-based Development Framework (Ghaye, T. et. al., 2008; Ghaye, T., & Ghaye, T., 2011), the Bulgarian partner with concepts about the gifted children development (Todorina, 2001; 2009a; 2009b) and understanding strengths (Sharlanova, 2009).

The designed “GATE” course is divided into three main parts with an action planning to conclude: 1) presentation – developing knowledge; 2) active learning – developing the skills of teachers with the objective of learning how to “spot” GAT-children; 3) discussion – developing a positive and open attitude to GAT children; 4) action planning.

The designed “GATE” course was implemented at Trakia University. The course participants were school principals and teachers from different subjects, participating in one-year pedagogical specializations.

The course overall aim was to support teachers of GAT students through the existing educational resources and innovative methodologies to work with such kinds of students. Expected results were knowledge and skills of teachers how to ‘spot’ GAT children and positive open-minded attitude to GAT children.

The course content included: who are the gifted and talented (GAT) – definitions; GAT-characteristics; teacher’s personality; the situation of GAT in the country – problems; perspectives; personal future plans how to work with GAT children.

The used methods and techniques (technology) were: a presentation, active learning activities, brainstorming, discussion, reflection, moderation cards, SWAT-analyses, thinking with six hats (Eduard de Bono), basket “Food for thoughts”, pair and group work, handouts.

The learning activities for teachers address the three dimensions of support in different ways: 1) “Learning by”- learning by what is said to G&T learners; what teachers do with G&T learners; how teachers relate to G&T learners. 2) “Learning through” – learning through meaningful conversation and communication; opportunities for creativity and expression; positive real and virtual relationships. 3) “Learning that” – learning that improves self-expression; enhances a feeling of self-efficacy; empowers and strengthens teachers. The activities are to support teachers in their role/s with G&T learners. The activities are designed not to ‘tell’ teachers what they ought to know and do, but to enable them to use their own experiences and skills to be the best they can be, with the young G&T learner/s in their ‘care’ (GATE, 2015).

One of activities aims to induce the teachers to think in terms of strengths and potential; to get them thinking about the language involved with strength-based discussions. This involves questions around “what is strength”, “can weakness be a strength and vice versa”, and the issues associated with identifying strength. At the end of the exercise, the trainer has to know whether the participants changed their understanding of strengths or whether they modified their attitudes to it.

Another activity is “Identifying my own strengths”. This aims to engage teachers in an activity associated with positive self-reflection and to demonstrate the potential of positive self-reflection.

The results of the activities are evaluated by written questionnaire at the end of the course. The facilitator asks free opinions at the end.

The action planning includes discussion surrounding three key questions “What are you going to start doing now?”, “What are you going to do more?”, “What kind of support do you need?”

3.2. Results and Conclusions

The reached results of the designed course implementation are:

1. Knowledge of modern concepts on which children are gifted. A comparative analysis of definitions was made.
2. Knowledge of the problem status of the working with gifted children in different European countries.
3. Knowledge of the nature and application of the strengths-based approach rather than deficits-based approach.
4. Main problems in working with gifted children at home were identified. The necessity of unity of theories, policies and practices was reasoned.
5. Results related to the personality of the teacher.
6. The qualities and skills of teachers working with gifted children were ranked in order of importance.
 - The role of the teacher as motivational mentor was described.
 - The role of the teacher as role model was described.
7. Results related to the perspectives for development.
8. Certain prerequisites for the successful development of work with gifted children were determined.
9. The vision of perspectives was presented.
10. Participants' self-knowledge was improved. Teachers and principles have learned more about their strengths, talents and achievements.
11. Personal Action Plan – participants have presented ideas for future work with gifted children.

3.3. Follow-up activities

The follow-up activities are connected with a training of students-future teachers from higher education. The Bulgarian GATE-project team analyzed the training results, the results of partners' project meetings, visits in schools with gifted children and the meeting with teachers with high achievements in working with gifted and talented children. The team decided to continue to work on the same area. A new research project in Trakia University was developed – "Methodology for Talents and Strengths Development".

This project's aim is to develop methods to detect and develop talents and strengths of educators, students, teachers, children and students. It is expected that the application of the methodology for the development of talents and strengths will lead to the development of competencies to identify and develop the talents and strengths of current and future teachers and students with whom they work.

4. Summaries about Problems and Perspectives for Development

Based on the conducted studies outline some major problems with gifted children:

- Today, the work with gifted children is not a priority in Bulgarian secondary education. ("Gifted children are neglected although they are a national treasure for each country and an important factor in its economic, social and cultural growth.")

- Teachers do not have systematic training for work with gifted children, the acquisition of higher education, and through additional qualifications.
- Do not promote and implement methodologies for diagnosis and development of gifted children.
- The material and technical base of schools is not adequate to work with gifted children.
- The large classes makes the work with gifted children difficult.
- The gifted children have problems arising from their specific characteristics.
- The vision for the perspectives can be summarized:
 - Developing national frameworks in accordance to the basic documents of the European Union for work with gifted children.
 - Development of students' learning skills and understanding of their learning styles.
 - Forming teachers with psychological, pedagogical and methodological competencies for work with gifted children.
 - Building a positive, supportive, creative educational environment.
 - Implementation of personal oriented educational process, including individualization and differentiation of training, diagnostic and developing tools of gifted children, targeted development of the cognitive processes, a lot of individual work and creative tasks.
- Involvement of the Syndicate of Bulgarian teachers with the problems of gifted children and their education.
- Continuing training of the pedagogical specialists.
- Participation of the pedagogical specialists in various forms of exchange of best pedagogical practices.
- Development of specialized websites/ web portal with resources about work with gifted children.
- Conduction of video conferences, annual meetings and other forums dedicated to work with gifted children.
- Media presentation of the processes of identification, development and expression of the gifted children.
- Issuance of compendia/ proceedings of good pedagogical practices.
- Organization of various modern forms of expression of gifted children.
- Update the curricula and programs in universities in relation to work with gifted children.
- Development of scientific and educational projects and international cooperation in relation to work with gifted children.

Conclusions

The analysis of accepted in Bulgaria over the last 15 years normative documents shows that a big step is made to gifted children protection. The legislations outline the aims, the regulations, the principles, the role of the institutions and the financial support for the gifted children.

On the basis of these documents, and particularly in the light of the European legislation, special provisions for gifted children have been adopted, formulating relevant concepts and policies in the educational system. The idea of working with gifted children develops in the pedagogical theory and practice.

The perspectives for development of working with gifted children suggest interdependence between education policies, theories and practices. They cover the creation of modern legislation, personal development of teachers and

students, the educational environment and learning process, forms of identification, development and expression of gifted children, work on educational and research projects, scientific and methodological provision of teachers' qualifications.

In general, teachers cannot say that they have no competence to diagnose gifted children. They are not well aware of the scientific perceptions of the peculiarities of gifted children, but they have opinions based on their personal experience with gifted children. Regarding the development of gifted children, they create their own methodologies and less use the achievements in theory and practice. By reflecting on and understanding the achieved learning outcomes, they state the need for continuous training in working with gifted children and outline its basic parameters – principles, approaches, methods and forms, content. Thus, the research has confirmed the need to develop qualification forms for teachers to work with gifted children.

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