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A GLIMPSE INTO SERVICES FOR THE GIFTED/TALENTED IN WESTERN AND EASTERN CULTURES

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Abstract: *In this study the evolution of the gifted and talented education was explored, followed by a discussion of disparity between the western and eastern culture in terms of perceptions of the gifted and talented, diagnosis of the gifted and talented, curriculum options, and service delivery models in these two cultures. Disparity in gifted education between rural and urban areas in China was also discussed in this paper. Recommendations about how to properly serve the gifted and talented were provided.*

Keywords: *gifted diagnosis; available gifted programs; challenges; and future recommendations*

Introduction and Methodology

For the gifted and talented, there are programs that serve this group of children. Different countries may have different types of programs for them. In order to receive services, traditionally, there will be a diagnosis using an IQ test. Children who score two standard deviation above the mean will qualify for gifted education, for example. However, in recent years it is realized that a single IQ test can't capture a whole picture of intelligence. Plus, an IQ test isn't an exact science. There are multiple court cases proving that solely using anIQ test for diagnosing the gifted and talented lead to misdiagnosis. In U.S. special education legislation mandates use of multifactored, nondiscriminatory assessment for diagnosis of the gifted and talented. Therefore, instead of just using one assessment tool, other methods of assessment are recommended including but not limited to parents/caregivers and teachers' observations.

In addition, prior to formal diagnostic assessment teachers can differentiate instruction to accommodate these students in general educational settings. In other words, in order to avoid waiting time and cause a delay on appropriate services for this group of children, general education teachers can create tiers

and place these students in the appropriate tier before formal admission to the gifted/talented program, a.k.aprereferral intervention in Response to Intervention (RTI).

Given service provision to the gifted/talented differ in western and eastern countries, this paper discusses disparity in diagnosis, available programs, existing challenges, and future recommendations for the gifted/talented programs in these two cultures. Articles published in the past two decades on the gifted and talented were reviewed. Search engine include Google Scholar, ERIC, a university owned data base. The university data base has education source that contains full text from over 1,800 journals and 550 books on PK-12 and higher education. Key words used to search articles include “gifted and talented”, “gifted education”, “education for those who are gifted and talented”, “special education for the gifted and talented”, and “enrichment”. Thirteen representative research studies were found. In this study the thirteen research articles were analyzed and compared. Research findings include gifted/talented identification, service delivery, and curriculum options. Based on the analysis of the research articles, the following is a discussion ofthe differences between U.S. as representative of the western culture and China as representative of eastern culture in serving the gifted/talented and different curriculum models in these two countries. Hopefully this study can provide a window to understand how cultural differences impact gifted/talented service delivery.

Background of Gifted/Talented Study

In U.S. there are multiple versions of definitions in regard to the gifted/talented, among whichsome representative definitions include Renzulli’sthree-trait definition, Piirton’s and Maker’s definitions. According to Renzulli (Renzulli& Reis, 2018), giftedness refers to above average intelligence, high level of task commitment and creativity. Similarly, Piirto and Maker’s definition (Heward, Alber-Morgan, & Konrad, 2017) also consider intelligence, commitment, motivation, and leadership skills as essential skills when define the gifted/talented. The evolution of definition in gifted and talented impacts the instruction and the way teachers teach the gifted/talented. Teachers not only accommodate student academic needs, but their leadership, self-determination, management, commitment, personal management skills, as well as social, emotional needs.

Gardner’s multiple intelligence also pave the foundation for teaching the gifted/talented. According to multipleintelligence theory intelligence can manifest itself in multiple areas including athletic skills, linguistic skills, logical/mathematical skills, naturalistic/spatial, and musical skills. In

addition, there is a cultural aspect and the intelligence is determined by cultural factors in the environment (Manic&Randelovic, 2017). Talents don't come in one size, one type, and some children can be double exceptional, in other words, they could be talented and gifted on one hand, and have exceptionalities on the other hand. For instance, some children who have Asperger's may have giftedness/talents in math and technology, in this case, both the special needs and talents will need to be addressed and accommodated that they can be enrolled in both special education and in gifted education. Gardner's multiple intelligence also impacts instruction for the gifted and talented, that is, promotes the initiation of the differentiated instruction. The rationale behind this is children with different talents can benefit from different special programs targeted at different areas of talents the students have. Even before the formal diagnostic assessment when children show excellence in different areas, they could benefit from differentiated instruction in general education program according to the RTI.

Gifted and Talented Diagnosis

Traditionally IQ test is administered to diagnose the gifted and talented. In order to qualify for the gifted and talented, the IQ must be at least two standard deviations above the mean, 100, so the minimum requirement for the gifted and talented is 130 in an IQ test. Intelligence is defined as with excellent memory, mastery of knowledge at a fast pace, having skills to apply knowledge, generalize information to use in different situations, and synthesize information to make decisions. The operational definition of the gifted and talented impact assessment criteria that an IQ test could consist of questions like recognizing patterns, analytical skills, visual spatial organization, short term memory, reasoning, comparing/contrast. Traditional use of IQ test includes Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, WISC (Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children).

Although the IQ test has been used for a long time to diagnose the gifted and talented and has been used to be served as the only criteria for diagnosis there are criticisms of solely using an IQ test for diagnosis of the gifted and talented. Some criticism includes IQ not as an exact science, not accurately reflecting a child's talent; instead, it only reflects a child's intelligence during a specific time period in the child's life; children's intelligence cannot be accurately tested; and the older the child is, the harder, because when the child is older, it is hard to get a picture of the child's IQ without being influenced by the child's experience, the external factors. Therefore, it is highly recommended to refer the child earlier if there is an early sign of exceling in certain areas. Another suggestion is instead of using a single assessment method, there should be other assessment methods including but not limited to parents/caregivers' observations, use of the

child's portfolio that reflect the child's performance in different areas, curriculum assessment, portfolio assessment that truly reflect the child's performance in everyday natural environment. This was reflected in recent legislation such that the IDEA requires nondiscriminatory multiple assessment be administered to assess children rather than solely using one assessment for diagnosis. Therefore, in addition to IQ test, other methods of assessment are also used for diagnosis. These include but are not limited to teacher observation, portfolio, writing samples, videotaped activities.

Comparison of the Gifted and Talented in China and U.S.

Children with exceptionalities are entitled to special education in the U.S. and they are entitled to a free, appropriate public education same as children with other categories of exceptionalities. This was mandated in both special education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB). With the legislative support gifted programs receive funding to support the qualifying children (Hodges, 2018). Agifted individualized education plan (GIEP) is implemented that enable the qualifying students to receive additional support and resources to keep them engaged, challenged. The GIEP is in the same format as IEP for children with other types of disabilities. Additional support such as enrichment programs can be provided to the qualifying children. Gifted teachers and general education teachers collaborate to provide services for the students who qualify for gifted education. Similar to the IEP, the GIEP also requires specially designed instruction for the gifted and talented.

In eastern culture, for instance, in China, it is a different story. In China since the gifted and talented is not part of the special education, there is no comprehensive evaluation system diagnosis purpose. If the students excel academically, they could receive services through theafter schoolprograms, if there is after school enrichment program available. For instance, in schools who have more resources, students could receive services through clubs, after school programs, camps, while in regions that do not have much resources for the gifted/talented, children won't receive any extra services. So, in China there is a discrepancy of services available for the gifted/talented between rural and urban areas with more resources in urban and suburban areas than rural areas. Due to the lack of available services for the gifted and talented in general, there are fewer children diagnosed in the rural areas compared to the urban and suburban areas. Many children in rural areas are neglected and not identified, even when children are identified, they may not receive services that challenge them because there are no services available and teachers are not well trained to work with the gifted and talented.

In summary, the western and eastern culture differs in many different ways in terms of the gifted and talented education but in the meantime, they share some similarities as well. For instance, both western and eastern cultures consider the importance of early education. There are multiple research studies about early education, importance of early intervention, involvement of parents' roles in early education for the gifted and talented. Both cultures consider importance of gifted education, there are multiple studies of gifted education in both western and eastern cultures. On the other hand, western and eastern cultures differ in perception of gifted education, identification, and education of the gifted children. Western culture more of letting the child unfolding by itself, whereas in eastern culture like China, there is a concept of start educating children earlier, providing education program earlier, and developing well-rounded kids by providing all kinds of resources. One example isthere are arising number of early programs who teach young children foreign language at a young age, so are art and music programs for young children. Most of these programs are available in urban areas, whereas fewer opportunities like this in rural, underdeveloped areas.

To analyze what cause the disparity in gifted/talented between the western and eastern culture we realize that the Chinese culture is mainly influenced by Confucian's perception of education. They see more of gift and talent derive from nurture rather than nature. The perception is with appropriate training, early education and development, the child can advance academically and may qualify for gifted program. Influenced by this perception there are rising number of early development programs, such as foreign language camps for preschool age children, painting, drawing camp for raising academically proficient kids. Parents especially those with high educational attainment, put more emphasis on their children' education and development, they are more likely to enroll their children in academic camps as well as after school programs. Another exception when comparing between the U.S. and China in regard to the gifted and talented educationis we can't avoid discussing the situation in Hong Kong. The gifted/talented program in Hong Kong is different from what observed in China. Both western and eastern culture has an impact on Hong Kong's educational pedagogy. Hongkong not only follows some traditions of eastern culture, but also the western culture, which also favors differentiated instruction. The western definition of gifted education has been adopted by Hong Kong since 1997 (Tommis, 2013). Hong Kong follows multiple principles of gifted education including: nurturing multiple intelligence, gifted education be part of quality education, recognizes multiple needs including intellectual, social, emotional as well as adopt a tiered support for the qualifying students.

Gifted/talented Curriculum/Programs

Based on these variety of definitions of gifted and talented and Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, multiple gifted/talented programs have been designed and become prevalent in recent years, including, but not limited to, the acceleration and enrichment. The acceleration is fast paced introduction of content to students who are gifted and talented, such as the younger children receive early childhood education at an early age, newer content being offered to the younger children because they can master the contents at a faster pace and an earlier age. Advantages of this model is since the gifted and talented master new knowledge at a faster pace, the accelerated model can keep the child challenged and engaged. Another advantage of accelerated program is the student get to finish the program at a faster pace, so they can have some free time for more exploration, or more deeper understanding of the content covered. According to Zhang' (2017) study, acceleration in curriculum was widely used to teach the gifted/talented children, that provide new content to children at an earlier age. Some previous studies show models of expose younger children to academic content. The acceleration model is the one that most commonly used in China as well. In some China's universities, they have similar program like this that provide accelerated program for the gifted/talented students. The thought behind this is they want to cultivate contributing members to the society, advanced scholars that can contribute to the technology, science, mathematics areas.

Another model is the enrichment program that offers more in depth content. Examples include independent study on certain topics of the students' interest. Enrichment model means provides more in-depth content to students based on their learning differences, current level of abilities, potential, and interests. Enrichment program also can be individualized based on each individual child's different situations. Enrichment differs from the acceleration in that it doesn't speed up the instruction, instead it guides students to explore, deepen their understanding of the content and broaden their horizon. One example of the enrichment program in China can be found in Zhang's (2017) study. Zhang's study mentioned the one school that is affiliated to Renmin University of China offers additional programs, resources, and materials to gifted children. In this high school specialized program/curriculum was designed for these students through teacher team building effort. However, this type of program is limited in number in China.

In addition, differentiated instruction was discussed in Sekowski and Lubioanka's (2015) study that was implemented to encourage students of different ages to develop individual abilities in areas of their strengths. For instance, for elementary school students gifted education can be in separate setting that cater to their unique talents, for secondary education students

gifted education can be in a format of extended curriculum of particular subjects or individual program. Other format includes non-school based activities in extracurricular clubs, or through participation in competitive exams and the purpose of these activities is to develop students' abilities including summer schools, special courses, classes held at art centers, etc. Another model is independent study that the program is designed based on individual student's level and individual strengths and needs. Zhang's (2017) study reported one of the contributions of China's gifted education is an emphasis on the role of "effort and environmental influence in success and high achievement" (p. 10), whichis believed that nurture plays a major role in preparing the gifted and talented. However, recently impacted by western culture, there is a mixture of perceiving both nature and nurture contribute to the gift/talent. Zhang's study summarized that the scale of gifted education in China is small as compared to China's population.

Challenges Encountered in Gifted/Talented Education

Challenges exist in teaching the gifted and talented in both the two cultures. Research (Demirbaga, 2018) indicates that there is a lack of agreed upon understanding/concept of the gifted and talented among the gifted and regular teachers, this in turn influences the teachers' identification process and identification criteria. Therefore, teachers should be well trained to develop an understanding that they not only teach the kids content but also go beyond to expand students' understanding of themselves and their surroundings, their social, emotional well beings (Demirbaga, 2018; Russell, 2018). Below is a summary of the challenges in teaching the gifted/talented.

Challenge in Socialization: Socializing with peers is a big challenge in teaching the gifted/talented. Because sometimes the gifted children experience social isolation, unable to fit in group activities. Teachers should not only address the gifted and talented academic needs but also the social needs. Since the gifted/talented are more advanced academically than their peers, this may lead to difficulty interacting with peers if they do not know how peers struggle academically, even if they were provided opportunities to assist their peers.

Challenge in Disparity of the Gifted/Talented Education between Rural and Urban Areas: Challenge also exist in disparity of the gifted/talented education between rural and urban areas. The Rasheed's (2020) research synthesis on rural gifted education found that gifted curriculum varies from state to state due to the funding, staffing, leadership philosophy. Similarly, gifted education in China also varies from rural to urban areas due to different resources and teacher qualifications. For instance, in China since the gifted/talented is not part of special education, there is no official funding for the gifted and talented. In urban areas, there are more opportunities for

the gifted/talented to develop their academic, artistic, musical, athletic skills compared to children in rural, underdeveloped areas. According to Rasheed's (2020) study, challenges include access to resources and opportunities, staffing and funding in rural areas. This also reflects the scene of challenges experienced by rural programs in eastern cultures, like China. There are less resources for the gifted in rural China as compared to urban areas. Also, there are less parental involvement among parents with lower educational background versus those with high educational attainment. Parents with higher educational attainment are more likely to be supportive to their children's education, more supportive of their choices in extracurricular activities.

Challenges in Diagnosis: Although it is recommended to use other criteria to diagnose the gifted and talented, IQ still serves as the main assessment criteria to diagnose the gifted and talented. Mainly using one assessment to diagnose gifted and talented has a lot of disadvantages. The one disadvantage is if the child doesn't do well in one test, it wouldn't be able to pass the assessment test, so they won't qualify for the gifted/talented education, therefore misrepresented. In addition, for children who have talent in other areas other than excel in IQ test, their talents are often neglected because the IQ test can't pick up talent from other areas and if none of other assessments were used, it is hard to diagnosed children who have talent in other areas as talented/gifted. Therefore, it is not uncommon that the talented and gifted are underrepresented in special education, as the IQ test often can't accurately capture the extraordinary intelligence and talent in other areas.

Discussions

The western and eastern cultures have differences in terms of perception of gifted education, the two cultures share some similarities as well. Below are some recommendations about the gifted education followed by implications for gifted education. Previous studies on gifted education shows general education and gifted education teachers should collaborate in educating children who are gifted and talented. There are benefits in this collaboration because when general education teachers and gifted teachers collaborated, there is a perceived growth in teachers' competence of differentiation and growth in student learning (Mofield, 2019). However, Mofield's study shows there are roadblocks that pose threat to this collaboration: it's hard to find a common time to schedule co-planning time, general education and gifted education teachers hold conflicting assumptions about gifted education. Administrators can emphasize the importance of collaboration, communicate clear purposes and rules and build trust between general education and gifted teachers.

Next recommendation is to tackle the misdiagnosis of the gifted/talented: gifted/talented education should start early. This is true in both China and U.S. Early signs of gifted and talented should be recognized, assistance provided and early identification test be administered. It is caregivers/early child education teachers' job to start modifying course materials and documents to challenge the children when they show early signs of excelling skills in different areas. This is as known as response to intervention (RTI), which provides differentiated instruction to accommodate the child's exceptionalities in regular classroom settings even before an official diagnosis. Teachers and caregivers should keep a close eye on the child's performance during this time and if it is confirmed that the child excelled in certain areas, they should be referred to gifted/talented diagnosis and then assessment should be arranged. RTI is mandatory in the U.S., however, it is not in China. In China, since the gifted and talented are not part of the special education, there is no official program for them, nor are there any RTI available for them. However, with the pre-service and in-service teacher training programs, it is recommended that a similar program like RTI could be provided.

Gifted education should not only focus on academic but also social emotional development. This is more emphasized in the western culture than in eastern, but recently more and more attention has been added to the social, emotional development of the gifted and talented in China as well. Traditionally the gifted and talented were identified through IQ test, they must excel in IQ test, it is critically important to challenge them academically, offer them individual based project that suits their needs. In western cultures, gifted and talented education is part of the special education, so these children receive additional support outside of their regular educational setting, that are funded by the Office of Special education of Department of Education with federal funding.

Another suggestion is encouraged both professional and parental involvement in educating the gifted and talented. It requires a village to raise a child. For gifted and talented it is true that the kids require multiple professionals' collaboration to raise the gifted and talented as well. This is true in both of the two cultures. As there are an increased attention made to education, parents want their children to be successful, there are increased attention from parents who hope their children achieve more, to be successful. Therefore, in rural areas there are more and more parental involvement in assisting their children when parents are educated. However, this is not true in families when parents do not have adequate educational background.

Parent and professional collaboration is a fundamental principle in western special education field. Special education mandates parental rights,

such as parents sign the consent form before the special education diagnosis procedure starts, parents should be notified if the child is referred for special education diagnosis, parents should be involved in decision making when discuss programs for their children. At year end, they will be invited to annual GIEP meeting to go over the child's progress in the past year and at the beginning of each year, parents will be invited to come in sharing their decisions, intervention strategies for their gifted/talented children. Some parents may even volunteer in their school programs, to be closely involved in their children's education. For the gifted and talented, it is the same, also requires parents, guardians, paraprofessionals, professionals, classroom teachers, experts' assistance to teach the children and improve their development academically and socially.

Conclusion

There is an evolutionary understanding of the gifted/talented, adoption of multidisciplinary assessment of the gifted/talented, and increased number of programs available for the gifted and talented. In addition, the current study discussed potential challenges existing in the gifted/talented education, this include if using one assessment it may lead to misdiagnosis, the gifted and talented is still underfunded, discrepancy between the urban and rural areas in resources benefitting the gifted/talented, inadequate facilities, programs, and resources for the gifted and talented in rural areas, misconceptions and adol feeling for the gifted and talented in eastern cultures. In order to combat the challenges and potential barriers posed against the gifted and talented, suggestions such as RTI model adopted by the western culture could be an option for the eastern culture, emphasizing both nature and nurture when working with the gifted and talented, and increase collaboration between the professionals and families in serving the gifted and talented children.

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