

## Teacher performance with gifted children in the assessments of children, parents and teachers

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**Abstract:** The relevance of the research issue is due to the fact that existing educational practices do not allow implementing new objectives of state education policy to improve gifted education. It is necessary to develop new approaches, concepts, models and measures aimed at addressing this problem. The purpose of the article is to identify issues and ways to improve teacher performance to work with gifted children. The leading approaches to this issue are activity-based, person-oriented, competence-based, integrative and variable, reflexive and activity approaches, and the leading research method is a questionnaire. The research is carried out in educational institutions of Yaroslavl Oblast (comprehensive schools, supplementary educational institutions, specialized centers for gifted children). 246 people, including 63 teachers, 129 students of these teachers and 54 parents participated in the study. The core results of the study are the problems identified and ways to improve teacher performance to work with gifted children; the proposed system of conditions (information-related, methodological, technological, organizational, and motivational) can influence teacher performance and his work with gifted children. The materials of the article can be used by managers and specialists of the education system at different levels, the teaching staff of higher, secondary and supplementary vocational education to develop regional, municipal and institutional programs to support the development of gifted children, training programs and professional advancement of teaching staff. **Keywords:** gifted children, teacher’s performance, impact assessment, conditions to improve teacher performance to work with gifted children.

### 1. Introduction

The Russian economy shows the increasing need for specialists with extensive knowledge and creativity. Therefore, identification and development of young talents is a necessary element of modernization of the Russian education system. The establishment of the national innovation education system, creation of new pedagogical conditions for the development of gifted children is especially relevant.

The research has shown that the problem of gifted education requires a serious and comprehensive analysis, scientific justification, best practice investigations, development of mechanisms for their improvement. There are some concepts and examples of efficient gifted education and experience in modern pedagogical science and practice, but they are not sufficiently studied, generalized, distributed.

Teaching staff is involved in gifted education in different departments and forms of ownership: teachers of comprehensive schools, preschool and supplementary education,

teachers of secondary vocational and higher education, teaching staff cultural and sports organizations, public and private and non-profit sector.

There are some pedagogical problems that teachers may face in the process of gifted education, including teacher performance and its improvement. Teachers, participating in the pilot study (89 teachers), mention widespread situations when they are not capable of performing the required work with gifted children (13% of respondents believe, 58% suppose that their plans are not fully implemented and only 29% of teachers give a positive assessment to implementation of their plans in gifted education). It is also alarming that only a little over half of the respondents (55%) are satisfied with the organization of work with gifted children. These data actualize the task of providing more effective conditions for teachers working with gifted children.

To study the above-mentioned issues, the following tasks have been identified and they are addressed in this paper: to conduct a theoretical analysis to justify the methodological approaches to the issue of improving teacher performance to work with gifted children; to develop tools and consider teacher performance and its assessment presented by gifted children, their parents and teachers; to present research findings in this paper.

## 2. Methods and materials

Recent analysis has been based on the development of gifted children and modern Russian and foreign research related to the factors for this development, their innate talents, interests and abilities, achievement motivation, desire for knowledge, educational needs, etc. (A. Bine, P. Blonsky, F. Galton, S. Rubinstein, B. Teplov, O. Dyachenko, A. Matyushkin, K. Heller, and others.) [3; 4; 7; 9; 19; 22; 24; 26; 29]; the development issues of giftedness, formation of self-concept, gifted children's behavior, the impact of teachers on the processes of their education, choice and implementation of pedagogical technologies, etc. (N. Leites, A. Matyushkin, V. Panov, V. Lebedev, Yu. Babaeva, S. Deryabo, V. Orlov, V. Yurkevich, E. Yakovleva, V. Yasvin, A. Savenkov and others) [17]. One of the most popular approaches to organization of work with gifted children in Russia can be considered "Working concept of giftedness" which reflects the common position of the leading Russian specialists in psychology of giftedness and provides a unified theoretical basis for solving the key issues of giftedness: definitions of giftedness, its types, ways of identification, etc. (D. Bogoyavlenskaya, V. Shadrikov, A. Brushlinsky, V. Druzhinin, V. Yurkevich, etc.) [21].

The performance of any activity is closely related to the concept of goal implementation, its efficiency and the use of resources in achieving this goal.

Theoretical analysis allowed identifying the following types of *teaching performance*:

- *performance targets* are connected with target achievement rates, completeness, measurability, operationality, achievability;

- *educational performance* is characterized by a set of educational results that a child achieves interacting with teachers in the process of educational programs development. In accordance with modern requirements of state education policy, learning outcomes as well as upbringing and development; or subject, interdisciplinary, personal results can be attributed to a range of educational results. Educational performance can be assessed by indicators such as depth and systematic knowledge of various subjects and activities; achievements in olympiads, festivals, competitions, etc.; the ability of children to apply integrated knowledge in practice; an increased level of overall development and upbringing, ability of children to build a personal learning path, etc.;

- *socio-pedagogical performance* can be represented by such indicators as the ability of children to build their own individual training models, life plans, self-determination, self-

improvement; an increased level of responsibility for children's well-being, their authority and other indicators;

- *social performance*, as satisfaction of participants of educational activity with its process and results [13].

Thus, *performance* characterizes the ability of the education system to obtain learning outcomes using certain resources. In other words, the establishment of conditions (resources) to achieve the objective, including regulatory, motivational, organizational, technological, information-related and other conditions, will affect productivity.

Person-oriented, competence-based, integrative and variable, reflexive and activity approaches have been used as the basic methodological approaches to the problem of *improving teacher performance to work with gifted children* [1].

*Competence-based approach* appeals to the contemporary paradigm of interdisciplinary education and it is regarded as a kind of tool for developing an ability and willingness of a person to act in various problem situations (V. Baydenko, D. Ivanov, K. Mitrofanov, A. Sokolova, I. Zimnyaya, and Yu. Tatur) [2; 14; 23]. The concept of competence in this case includes not only cognitive and operational and technological components, but also motivational, ethical, social and behavioral [11]. Competence, as an integral property, allows a person to implement any activity in a self-motivated and effective way to improve its efficiency. The implementation of the competence-based approach to improve the teacher performance to work with gifted children should ensure the achievement of both certain knowledge, skills and willingness to use them to address specific situations; consider personal and professional competences not as an immovable formation, but constantly changing, developing, demanding continuous improvement from a person (a teacher and a child); assess competences on the basis of objective and subjective performance indicators.

*Activity approach* is based on the research of A. Leontiev, L. Vygotsky, S. Rubinstein and others in psychology and pedagogy [18; 6; 22]. Activity approach, in general, comes from the attitude of identity and activity unity; it is manifested in the fact that an individual changes as a result of activities and an individual, in turn, chooses appropriate types and forms of activity and transformation of activities that meet the needs of personal development. The implementation of activity approach to improve teacher performance to work with gifted children should consider the activities from external and internal sides, and, therefore, the teacher performance should be represented by at least two groups of indicators – external manifestations and internal conditions that ensure effectiveness of these manifestations; ensure the subjectivity of participants, in this case – teachers and gifted children and teacher's performance measurement by both groups of participants – adults and children; achieve the consideration of interests and motivation of teachers and students to ensure its effectiveness.

*The person-oriented approach* in pedagogy was studied by E. Bondarevskaya, E. Zeer, T. Kalugina, I. Yakimanskaya [5; 10; 15; 27] and it suggests the possibility of free choice of education priorities, individual ways for gifted students and their personal experience. The implementation of a person-oriented approach to improve teacher performance to work with gifted should consider professional and personal development of a teacher and students as a prerequisite for improving teachers performance; ensure the consideration of existing participants of the education process and their level of development, motivation, dominant interests, personal qualities, experience gained; create conditions for real interaction in the process of joint activities, adaptation to each other (a teacher and a gifted child); consider age-related, professional and individual development of teachers and children for the effective educational activity, as well as their regular monitoring to make the necessary adjustments.

In gifted education, it is important to consider the possibility of an excessive educational space and its formation from the perspective of implementation of *an integrative and variable approach* (A. Zolotareva). It is important that integration is an important indicator of the system, as it leads to its integrity. A holistic personality is formed only in the holistic educational space. An integrative and variable approach makes it possible to increase the performance of teaching activities through the process of gifted children support on the basis of variants for the integration of educational institutions, entities, programs, technologies, and conditions to find the optimal ways to achieve the objective and effective provision of the child's right to choose an activity to ensure its diversity, integrity, continuity [12].

It is also important to use *a reflexive and activity approach* to improve teacher performance. The works of foreign and domestic researchers (D. Schon, R. Ross, Kemmis and McTaggart, V. Luden, J. Moon, A. Karpov, I. Skityaeva and others [28; 16]) are analyzed among modern ideas of "reflexive teaching". The implementation of reflexive and activity approach will create conditions for conscious goals and objectives, performance, its monitoring and analysis; organize continuous self-observation, self-examination and critical self-assessment of own activity by both teachers and students.

Thus, teacher performance is determined by many factors and conditions. It has been determined that *the system of conditions* presented below will affect and improve teacher performance:

1. *Regulatory conditions.* A teacher working with gifted children should be ready for professional activity in accordance with legal documents in the sphere of education. Teachers should know the main priorities of public policy in the area of work with gifted children to improve performance, they should be able to find the requirements for the work with gifted children, including the emergence of new trends (variability, the emergence of new forms, activities); the need for certain forms and areas of support for gifted children; development of support system for institutions, centers and teaching staff accompanying gifted children. It is also important for teachers to understand that the current legal and regulatory framework and database are aimed at achieving a new level of work with gifted children.
2. *Information-related conditions.* The contemporary educational paradigm suggests that from the study of new information technologies we move to the organization of learning process with their help. They allow teachers and students to be involved in real-time joint work with permanent virtual connection. This collaborative (social) approach to the education process allows teachers to move from being knowledge providers to navigators and designers of educational trajectories. Information-related conditions for improving the work with talented children and youth and its performance are conditioned by external and internal prerequisites. External prerequisites include, first of all, material, technical and software support of the educational process, as well as an opportunity to improve skills and acquire necessary competencies. The internal conditions include a professional level of training, which consists in knowledge, possession, skills, as well as awareness and motivation for self-improvement of pedagogical activity in this direction.
3. *Organizational conditions.* Organizational conditions are necessary to improve the work with gifted children and its performance, they include: interaction and development between administration, teachers and support staff (psychologist, facilitator, tutor, etc.) of educational institutions and a gifted child, determination of their rights and obligations; organization of cooperation with social partners, sponsors, with the goal of maintaining



and identifying children's giftedness; provision of appropriate resources (material, personnel, methodological, informational, etc.) to work with gifted children; formation of an "excessive" educational and spatial environment, based on integration of formal and informal education, providing a choice, a real variety of educational content for a gifted child [8]; establishment of interaction between a teacher and a gifted child, which will be effective for a particular child; formation of organizational culture of educational organization as a set of values, visions, norms, traditions, rules, customs accepted and shared by parties involved in the educational process regarding gifted children.

4. *Methodological conditions.* The methodological conditions include: creation of a complete, full-fledged educational-methodical complex, which allows the teacher working with gifted children to realize the goals and objectives of support; creation and active use of methodological materials – the products of methodological activities (guidelines, teaching aids, structural and logical schemes; reference signals/ posters; keys); the creation of new forms, methods, technologies, their implementation in teaching practice with gifted children.
5. *Technological conditions.* They are related to improvement of development and its performance, as well as effective pedagogical technologies for work with gifted children. When working with this group of students, it is important to answer the question "how to teach?" because it is appropriate to look for such ways of organizing the activities that will maintain comfortable conditions for children's development (despite the variety of content). Competent selection and implementation of technologies contribute to a high level of satisfaction with activities and teacher performance.
6. *Motivational and stimulating conditions.* One of the most important components of pedagogical activity is motivation, which is understood as a set of internal and external driving forces that encourage a person to act. Motives of educational activity can be considered as all the factors that determine its manifestation: requirements, goals, attitudes, sense of duty, interests, etc. Motives are determined by intention and desire for a certain action. It is noteworthy that motivation of gifted children has its own distinctive characteristics: they are more sensitive to signs, sounds, color, technical devices, etc., physical, cognitive activity, etc.; demonstrate insatiable curiosity; take the initiative; express an increased interest in various fields of activity; they are interested in contradictory and uncertain information and they do not accept standard requirements [20]. Thus, a teacher is faced with the most important task of creating a positive motivation for gifted students and their educational activities [25].

*A study of teacher performance and gifted education* was initiated. *A questionnaire* was used as a tool for this research.

A set of questionnaires for teachers, students and their parents were developed for the study, aimed at identifying subjective performance indicators and assessing external conditions for its improvement [17].

*The questionnaire for teachers* consists of open and closed questions; it contains two sets of questions. *The first set* includes issues related to the assessment of: staff motivation to work with gifted children; success in professional activities and workplace partnership; professional growth and job satisfaction; teachers' achievements and rewards for this work.

*The second set* contains issues related to assessment of conditions aimed at improving teacher performance:

- *technological conditions*. What technologies a teacher uses in his work with gifted students and develops independently, which contributes to achievement of improved outcomes; what difficulties he experiences in selecting educational technologies;
- *information-based conditions* – what new information technologies are used by a teacher for projects, research activities of students; what motivates a teacher to develop new information technologies; what difficulties he is experiencing;
- *regulatory conditions* – what normative documents and local acts are used for the work with gifted children; whether teachers develop regulatory documents themselves, how often they discuss collectively; what problems they face;
- *organizational conditions* – how a teacher manages the student participation in contests and competitions; how a teacher is rewarded for achievements; how a teacher establishes relationship with management, colleagues, children and parents; educational resources of what organizations he uses in his work; what problems teachers face when organizing work with gifted children;
- *human resources conditions* – how a teacher assesses opportunities to improve his professional skills, creativity and abilities; what role a teacher demonstrates and develops in working with children; what problems he faces.

*The questionnaire for parents* of gifted children also consists of open and closed questions and two sets of assessments. *The first set* contains questions, including statistical information, assessment of teacher-child relationships: goodwill, justice, integration of individual children's characteristics; opportunities for physical development and health; opportunities to develop parent-teacher partnership. *The second set* contains questions, including assessment of used forms of work and their performance; new educational technologies and information resources in the work with gifted students; assessment of child's achievements and opportunities to obtain them; methods of stimulation and motivation; conditions for development of giftedness; assessment of parent-teacher relationships.

*The questionnaire for children* aged 11-18, as well as previous questionnaires, provides open and closed questions, answers to which make it possible to evaluate teacher-student relationships, child's satisfaction with teacher cooperation; teacher's impact on learning outcomes; types of learning activity, educational technologies and information resources that the teacher uses; a child's ability to participate in contests and competitions; what achievements a child demonstrates and teacher's influence on them; what roles and positions a teacher demonstrates most effectively to assess students.

### 3. Results

The study was carried out in educational institutions of Yaroslavl Oblast (comprehensive schools, supplementary education institutions, specialized centers for gifted children): interregional resource center for support of gifted children and adolescents at Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University named after K.D. Ushinsky, municipal educational institution "Secondary comprehensive school №74", regional scientific and educational center "LOGOS", educational institution of supplementary education "LAD", "Young talents" center, educational institution of supplementary education "Ascension", Yaroslavl city palace of pioneers. The study involved 246 people, including 63 teachers, 129 children studying with these teachers and 54 parents.

Due to the limited volume, this article will present only a part of results, which summarize the opinions and compare some of the assessments of children, parents and teachers.

One important result is stakeholder satisfaction with the process and results of joint activities.

88.7% of teachers take pleasure in the process of working with gifted children; it indicates a high level of their motivation to work with gifted children. At the same time, 70.9% of teachers note that it is important to interact with gifted children.

81.4% of students consider their teacher as a favorite educator. Moreover, 90.7% of students confirm that they are pleased to have classes of this teacher; they note that they can always ask him for advice and help. Children are often in a good mood in training activities (93% of respondents believe). Parents are satisfied with the teacher's attention to their child. 98.1% of parents agree that the teacher shows a friendly attitude to their child.

Parents demonstrate confidence that the teacher gives the child deep and solid knowledge (94.5% of parents agree). There are no negative responses. 74% of parents has no doubt that the teacher cares about physical development and health of their children; 92.6% of parents note that the teacher creates conditions for manifestation and development of children's abilities.

96.3% of the parents have mutual understanding in their contacts with the teacher. Students also note that the teacher maintains a friendly attitude (92.2% agree). Nobody has taken "no" for an answer. Considering that 75.8% of teachers create a positive climate for communication with parents of gifted children, it can be concluded that in "parent - gifted child - teacher" relationship mutual understanding is the key to success and development of children's talent.

Parents estimate workload of their child when they interact with teachers as adequate; they believe that a student is not distressed by educational activities and homework (74.1% of respondents). Parents entrust teachers to develop the child's personality. 35.2% believe that the teacher takes into account children's individual characteristics, 55.6% agree, 5.6%, find it difficult to answer the question. And only two parents (3.7%) do not agree with this statement.

86.8% of children confirm that the teacher provides an opportunity to participate in various competitions. Students (81.3%) are sure that their achievements are teacher's contribution. One respondent has left an emotional message: "How can I answer this question? My success is a synthesis of my work and work of teachers. It is difficult to answer who has helped more".

The low choice of parents and students of the option "The score of the State Final Certification and the Unified State Exam is above average" can be considered as illustrative, because it is not the priority for gifted education. Children's assessments coincide with teachers' opinion. It is important that the children note the importance of practical skills and their acquisition: "I just like it", "Now I understand physics", "I have become quite good at sewing", "I have learned to defend my project"; "I get an opportunity to participate in competitions, to conduct master classes", etc.

Teachers use a range of appropriate criteria to choose educational technologies for working with gifted children, it indicates a serious attitude to work and a sufficiently high level of preparation for it: the level of training for the subject, their intellectual capacity; the level of student interest in the material; specific tasks for studying the topic, section; availability of equipment and teaching aids; the goals of education and training; complexity of the studied material, etc. It is particularly important that characteristics of children come first, rather than teachers' interests.

The comparison of educational technologies according to teachers, children, and parents is presented in figure 4. Gifted students choose the following types of joint activities, first of all, participation in projects – 45%, in games – 41.1%, in discussions (debates) –

34.9%, in research – 33.3%, work based on computer technology – 32.6%, lectures and seminars – 27.9%, in addressing research tasks – 20.9%, in the development of personal “portfolio” – 20.9%, training through distance education – 8.5%. Students also mention other activities: team games, city tours, workshops, competition, and creation of new collections. Assessments of teachers, children and parents mainly coincide. The respondents support game and project methods, research work. When determining the theme and content of projects, survey participants are guided, first of all, by their interests in a particular field of activity (62.8% of students indicate).

At the same time, it can be noted that teachers are not actively developing technologies themselves, they try to use available experience. Much attention is still paid to lectures and seminars. The use of discussion, computer technologies and distance education are insufficient. Probably, they are not proficient in them. In addition, it can be noted that children would like to be more involved in discussions, providing an opportunity to express their views and present their experience.

Students support computer technology. At the same time, the results of the study indicate that only a small number of teachers (8.1%) consider that they are not motivated to develop new information technologies. At the same time, students believe that information technology is used by a teacher only selectively. The most popular children’s answer is “none”, which generally corresponds to assessments given by teachers, and emphasizes the need to improve their skills in this area.

Students like to participate in video conferences (22.5%). Other technologies include Adobe Photoshop, lightroom, CorelDraw, graphics editors, Power Point, and video tutorials.

Social networks, which, according to students, are used by teachers, are formed in the rating, in which the social network “Vkontakte” is the leader (50.4%). Unfortunately, the second popular answer is “no one is used” – 43.4%. Figure 6 shows an overall assessment of social networks based on choices of teachers, students and parents, which are mainly the same.

A sufficient number of parents find it difficult to answer this question (27.8%). This may indicate that they have little control over their child’s remote communication with a teacher or do not use Internet telecommunications. Social networks provide additional information about a person, so teachers are actively involved in communication, see interests of students, and open their personal lives for discussion and participation. This brings together and helps to motivate the child to new challenges. Perhaps a new generation of teachers fills this gap.

One of indicators of teacher performance is an assessment of their achievements. Students, participating in the research, agree with the teacher’s assessment. 89.9% consider that it is fair. Their parents agree with their children (79.6% of parents agree with this statement).

According to children and parents’ evaluation, a teacher provides an opportunity for students to participate in various competitions (83.3% agree). There is a noticeable coincidence in the answers of children and parents. This may prove that parents are aware of their children’s participation in competitive trials and competitions.

According to children and parents, a teacher encourages students for the results achieved, mainly by declaring gratitude (in written or oral form), involving in Olympiads, contests, competitions. Less frequently a teacher uses such incentives as an opportunity to implement additional projects, to give students an award nomination (diploma), to suggest options (for example, a summer camp in Sochi, various material incentives (gifts, prizes).

A teacher performs different roles in the work with gifted students. A child often perceives his teacher as a mentor and advisor; a teacher positions himself as a tutor and



partner. Probably, a teacher creates his wishful thinking; he wants to accompany a child, but he actually directs him.

The question “The resources of which organizations do you use when implementing projects, carrying out research?” has revealed interesting information. An undisputed leader, according to children and parents, is a library (60.5% of respondents note it). Students’ own version (27.9%) ranks second, they consider the Internet as the most popular version, as well as city tours, archives, and a mother as the main source of information. Comparative analysis of such a question provides insights into the most available sources and teachers make a choice based on experience and quality of information obtained from this source, so museums, universities, scientific laboratories seem more effective than the Internet.

#### 4. Discussion

Summing up the results of comparative analysis and teaching performance assessment represented by gifted students and their parents, it is possible to make the following observations.

Gifted children appreciate interaction with teachers and supplementary education teachers. Teachers are a source of good mood, pleasure and success for them. Their parents generally agree with this assessment. Students associate their achievements with activities of their teacher. They have mutual understanding and teacher’s friendly attitude. Most of the children surveyed consider a teacher’s position to be an important determinant for choosing the topic and content of educational projects.

Students are guided in their activities by their own interests, which is supported by their teachers. An important aspect is the organization of pedagogical activity: projects, research work, games. Comparative analysis shows the linkages between these results and criteria that teachers take into account when choosing educational technologies. The use of educational resources and information tools in the work is evaluated differently by gifted children, their parents and teachers; there are development prospects in this matter. Thus, it is possible to observe a rational basis in relations with gifted children.

Parents also mention a group of conditions that a teacher creates to improve teaching performance: formation of positive learning motivation; organization of activity in the educational process; focusing on child’s strengths and independence, etc. Parents are informed about content, means of pedagogical activity. The presented rating indicates recognition of teacher’s professionalism.

At the same time, only some parents are clearly aware that they must support their child in any situation, only 20% have increased requirements for both a child and a teacher. This confirms the importance of child’s education for his parents and their great expectation regarding highly qualified teachers, which corresponds to global trends.

Some teachers note that they have succeeded in their profession in recent years; moreover, respondents point out that their professional knowledge is growing every year. The results of the study have revealed what success teachers have achieved in their profession in recent years: open classes, workshops, creative reports (national, regional, municipal level); participation in professional competitions, grants, scientific and practical conferences (national, regional, municipal level); presence of scientific articles and methodological development; implementation of educational programs (program and expert conclusion), etc.

Teachers also note situations when they cannot complete the work with gifted children, that their plans are not fully implemented (only 29% of teachers evaluate positively their plans implementation in working with gifted children). It is also important that teachers believe that a level of qualification should be sufficiently high. 75% of teachers are ready to improve their professional skills.

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, the study confirms possibilities to improve teacher performance to work with gifted children. Responses of children, parents, teachers and their assessments indicate reliability of the proposed research tool and achievement of appropriate results. It can be concluded that the proposed system of conditions, including informational, methodological, technological, organizational, motivational conditions can influence the teacher performance in his work with gifted children.

The study and its materials are of interest to managers and specialists of educational authorities, managers and teachers of educational organizations, teaching staff of organizations of higher, secondary vocational and supplementary professional education. The results of the study can be used to develop regional, municipal and institutional programs to support development of gifted children, education programs and professional development of teaching staff.

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