

# The Comparison of Sino-American Genius Education

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In the 21st century, many countries in the world face the situation of talent contest. As a result, genius, especially supernormal talent is sure to become the commanding height of the contest for all countries in the world and determine the rise and fall as well as the ranking in the aspect of the development of China. Therefore, talent education is of strategic significance and worthy of further discussion. Since the first ShaoNianBan was founded in 1978 in Mainland China, genius education has gained a great popularity. Over the last 30 years, genius education in China did make some achievements, but it still marches difficultly in the wind and rain. In contrast, American genius education system has developed to a more mature degree, which has gradually formed the independent legal and specialized service management institution, and shaped a number of stable researching teams and the perfect resources supporting system. As for genius education in China, a lot of perspectives of American genius education are worth studying and borrowing.

*Keywords:* genius education, supernormal children, special children's committee, American national research center of genius

## Introduction

### The Rationale

Genius, just as its name implies, refers to those persons that are born with great talent or show special talent in certain aspects. With the rich material conditions and improving education means, all kinds of genius have emerged gradually. The education applied for these special groups is called the "genius education".

America, as the most developed country in world's education, it has been nearly 140 years since its collective genius education was launched by the principal of Louis Public School named William Harris. Since then, various forms for training genius have been in their existence. During its development, genius education also has rise and fall, but the general trend is very good that America has paid more and more attention on it and has obtained remarkable results. Talent education has become one of the characteristics of American education. As early as in 1958, the federal government passed the national defense law and clearly indicated that the cultivation of first-class talents was strengthened and genius education was actively promoted to regularization starting with the screening, selection, and special education. At present, more than 90% of the states pass the bill in the form that genius education is put into the orbit of legal system. In addition, there are a large number of research institutions, Websites, and services providing the necessary consulting service and rich learning resources for genius.

In China, the collective form of genius education started a little late, so it has been 30 years up to now. It is until 1978 that China owned the first institute to train genius children, whose name is ShaoNianBan of

Science and Technology University of China. During the last 30 years, genius education has a tortuous development. ShaoNianBan of universities in the 1990s was reduced from 13 to only two at the beginning of the 20th century, and researchers who engaged in genius education are lack in number, and relative Websites and journals are also down several times. More importantly, the system of Chinese genius education is still in a blank, and there is no formal law for genius education, which results in the rough development of genius education in China. Such results are not only for the lack of law, but also due to the deficiency of domestic official Websites as well as the special research institutions and teachers' training base for genius. The situation of lacking faculty that engages in genius education does not match with the fact that China is a great country with a super education.

From above, it can be seen that the gap between Sino-American genius educations is very obvious. The genius education of American is much more mature than that of Chinese, no matter in the perspective of system or practice. Consequently, it is necessary for Chinese genius education to learn and borrow from American advanced genius education.

### **Methodology**

The methods of this study are as follows:

(1) The literature analysis method: Literature is the basic method of historical research. In the process of writing, historical facts need to be respected and subjective tendency need to be overcome;

(2) The comparative research method: This paper mainly focuses on the present situation of both American and Chinese genius education by the way of comparing the legal policy, management institutions, research field, curriculum mode, etc., between the two countries;

(3) The historical analysis method: In this paper, a historic analysis and review of genius education between China and America is presented, which clears up the basic education development of the two countries and lays a good foundation for further analysis;

(4) Case studies: Owing to space constraints, this paper cannot exhaust all the education policies and training mode of every state, so two states as representatives are chosen to have an in-depth study.

### **The Demarcation of Key Concept**

Now, NAGC (National Association for Gifted Children) in America still follows the definition given by the Department of Federal Education in the 1970s. They defined gifted children as "the children who show the paranormal forces or potential in one or more aspects".

In China, Shi Jian-long, a professor of Psychology Institution of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, has put forward five standards to define genius: Academic performance is beyond standard deviation; the performance is better than the group level that is two years senior; the IQ (intelligence quotient) is above 130; their performance is beyond 95% peers; they have a very special talent. In his research field, supernormal children that meet such standard account for about 2.25% of the population.

"Genius education" is "education of gifted and talented" in English. As for the meaning of "gift" and "talent", they both contain the meaning of endowments and talents. Their differences lie into the emphasis. "Gift" emphasizes an innate qualities and skills, which does not necessarily refer to the ability of creation, but can also be used for any significant or excellent individual ability. But "talent" refers to an extraordinary ability that can be engaged in the work or activities, which is a kind of natural ability. In the 1990s, the United States

Department of Education published an essay entitled “The national wealth: The case study of American genius”, which uses “outstandingly talent” and “exceptionally talent” instead of the word “gifted”.

## **The Comparison Study of Sino-American Genius Education**

### **Development History of Genius Education**

From the development history of genius education in China and America, it is not difficult to find that there are several differences due to different national situations.

**The development history of genius education.** America is a new immigration country, so its development history of genius education is short and school education for genius is no more than 140 years. But China has a long history and its genius education is over 2,000 years from the record in Western Han Dynasty. However, different history of the two countries did not make any differences. Chinese genius education develops slowly in the river of history, but America gets a relatively rapid development. Although the genius education of the two countries has frustrated for many reasons, it is found that the fastest developing period of genius education appeared after the intervention by government. This shows that a country's political factors have important influence on the development of talent. The reason why Chinese genius education is hard to be mature is the frequent political alternate and unrest in modern times, during which many political factors are mixed into genius education strategies. In contrast of America, the continuity and stability of the genius education development is guaranteed by the relatively peaceful development condition, human resource development strategy and fund support since its establishment. Therefore, the development of Chinese genius education depends not only on stable development environment, but also on government's strong concern, policy and financial support.

**The origin and purpose of genius education.** American genius education comes from ordinary schools, so teachers who are proficient in teaching and familiar with children's characteristics are the main promoters. But Chinese genius education is mainly promoted by the government, and special purpose classes are set up for central arrangement in its early development stage. This determines different value orientation towards the purpose of genius education of the two countries. As for training talents, St. Louis school considers children's learning needs and potential development and pays attention to individual value. However, in China, the purpose of genius education is mixed with political color and social values. To be more frank, China aims to take advantage of talents but ignores their hobbies and personality. Thus, in order to make Chinese genius education to be back on track, it is very necessary to adjust the purpose of genius education.

**The development direction of genius education.** American genius education complies with the development of law of education that starts from elementary school, and then middle school, finally university, from the normal school to special school, from the mundane to the special. On the contrary, Chinese genius education starts from the special training classes, from ShaoNianBan of university (in the 1980s), and then high school classes (in the 1990s), primary classes (the 21st century), finally the genius kindergarten (in recent years), which is a top-down model of development. Such development direction is inconsistent with the education law. Therefore, it is not accessional that the poor quality of recruit of ShaoNianBan has been stopped in the 1990s.

### **Educational Policy**

America has half a century of legal protection, and there are countless federal bills and state regulations

that are constantly update to be perfect. The government of Mainland China has supported for thirty years, but never put the regulations on its agenda. So the gap between the two countries is self-evident. It can be said that the lack of security system is the primary reason why Chinese genius education has crippled. Although the supernormal education of China has a 30-year history and the most massive scale, in fact, it is only a kind of folk behavior. The party and national leaders advocate and support a lot at the beginning period, but so far it is not on government's agenda, let alone in education regulations, outlines, and plans.

Due to no policy guarantee, the education funds of genius education cannot be ensured and education resources cannot be enriched, so the enthusiasm of social education is restricted. Without policy guarantee, the plan of genius education cannot get extensive practice and most supernormal children cannot be identified. Without policy norms, it is likely that teachers and schools pay more attention to the results rather than talents, which will stimulate the short-term behavior. There is no specialized teaching plans, teaching requirements, and teaching material, so most of the primary and secondary schools do not have specific training plans or materials. To sum up, the problems existed in Chinese genius education are all subject to system construction.

### **Education Management and Service Organization**

In America, the State Ministry of Education has set up genius education advisory council for the management, and children's association, and special committee of association that serve for genius. This is also true in Hong Kong and Taiwan, but there is no such management organization in Mainland China.

Genius education in China has been ruled over by the Ministry of Education, but the fact is that it is excluded by both basic education and special education. Because of this extensive management, no uniform standard practice and feasible plans are set up, which leads to the confusion of management. There are neither special teaching plans nor materials for supernormal children nor specific requirements. The education mode of each school is in disorder and some schools lack of effective operational procedures, rules, and individualized education mode. Though some schools have special classes for children like "excellent classes" and "experimental classes", it is not the supernormal education. Therefore, it is urgent to establish special management institutions to monitor genius education.

### **Education Research Power**

Chinese genius education has made great achievements and a group of scholars and experts appear gradually. In recent years, there is a good trend that Mainland China has cooperated with Hong Kong and Taiwan and had close international academic exchanges. But compared with the developed countries, there are some problems which still exist in the following questions:

**The unbalanced research strength.** Most experts engaged in supernormal education are from psychology, and pedagogy is less engaged in the study. Thus, the achievements also come from the psychological fields which give detailed description of genius identification, genius characteristics, and genius experiment. But the studies from pedagogy perspective is mainly focus on translation or introduction primarily, which lack of in-depth reflections. Consequently, genius education research should be the combination of pedagogy and psychology, not in a separated way.

**The over centralized research.** Chinese researches mainly focus on foreign genius education history and introduction of current situation, nearly neglecting the education principle, mode of running school, management system, education law, and other fields. Some American research fields, such as a disabled child genius, poverty genius, women genius, multicultural genius, the genius of family education, and so on, are

almost blank in China. Besides, some important theoretical studies are insufficient. For example, the power for the development of supernormal children, the psychological problems and environmental problems affected the development of supernormal children.

**The inconsistent research.** According to the development of the students, it can be divided into “supernormal infants”, “supernormal primary school students”, “supernormal high school students”, and “supernormal adults”. Among them, the development of supernormal infants is backward but middle school education practices the most. So, it forms the situation that the studies of genius education have their own field and lack of inconsistency.

**The inadequate guidance of research on practice.** Through reading Chinese literature on supernormal education, it can be found that many literature is pure theoretical, talking about the characteristics of genius, teaching principle and teaching model, but few practice and case studies.

**The weak research power.** At present, experts and scholars engaged in researching supernormal children are not less in number. Chinese supernormal talent Internet announced that the whole experts of genius education institutes (plus Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan experts) only nearly 50 people, even with school teachers of experimental classes, it still no more than 100. Even most members of supernormal committee are not full-time researchers, and they have other work like teaching, administrative and other research projects. Such situations restrict the speed and quality of research results. Supernormal education association has been stagnant since its establishment at the beginning of 1995 to 2001 mainly owing to inadequate experts and scholars and professional personnel management.

### **Learning Resources of Genius Education**

The big gap between China and America in genius education primarily is the immature system that cannot ensure all kinds of supporting resources. To sum up, there are a few aspects of the shortage of resources in China as follows:

**The inadequate learning resources and Website construction.** First of all, learning materials provided for special genius are rarely seen. In addition, people hardly have access to psychological development and education research papers, even if they are looking for them from various magazines. Secondly, social activities that genius can participate in are also limited. In Taiwan, the library, cultural center, planetarium, art galleries, or museums are all places for genius students' extracurricular activities. Besides, civil society and foundation will organize some competitions for gifted children to participate in, but in Mainland China, social resources are not open enough for genius students. Finally, some resources are repeated to use but with a low efficiency. Apart from the study group of supernormal students, certain authoritative and professional information is given by Chinese Supernormal Talent Professional Committee, other Websites are for the people or the publicity of schools. Therefore, it is urgent to build more service Websites for gifted students.

**The inadequate education funds.** Genius education costs much but it is hard to see results. It needs to be equipped with the first-class teaching equipments and arranged excellent teachers in class, even some academicians and experts. The National Ministry of Education did not make clear a regulation on the expenditure of genius education, so most schools have independent budget and sources and seek for help from ordinary education funds and corporate sponsors. Obviously, there is neither a fund nor guarantee. So genius education in China just exists in some schools without a massive popularization. Moreover, genius education institutions run by individuals still mainly rely on personal power, without any national subsidies;

**The inadequate teacher resources.** In the system of training teachers for genius education, many candidates in Chinese higher education in special normal colleges come from high school graduates who pass the university entrance exam. So many college students have no experience of communicating with the disabled children or other professional training.

Although the amount of genius and special education schools in China are much more than that in America, the ratio of training teachers for special education is much lower. In addition, it is not insufficient to train teachers engaged in genius education. Most teachers have no experience in genius education before they engage in it. Some schools pick out the best teachers for genius generation, but after all, it is a special career, requiring special way of thinking and superb education teaching skills.

### **Training Mode**

Based on the introduction of Sino-American training mode, it can be concluded that four differences existed in Chinese and American genius education:

**The single training mode for genius.** The practice of Chinese genius education has been walking in the front of its research, but it primarily adopts a way with centralized resettlement. There are many kinds of classes like ShaoNianBan of university, youth ready class or exceed constant class, national mathematical school, as well as some classes organized by ordinary schools in summer or winter vacations. However, they all aim to accelerate learning speed. Such means does help explore the potential intelligence of children, but it is hard to expand due to the substantial investment and shortage of special teachers. Compared with American centralized and decentralized combination of resettlement way, Chinese genius children cultivation mode is slightly single, and is not good for the all-round development of genius.

**The narrow scope of genius education in Mainland China.** In America, there are about three million gifted children who are included in genius education plan through school's rich promotion. In Mainland China, there are 240 million adolescents at the age of 1–14 years old. According to 1%–3% genius proportions, Chinese potential genius is two to seven million. Among them, only tens of thousands have accepted supernormal education. And supernormal children who received special education are only from developed cities. Evidently, its scope of popularization is quite narrow.

**The inconsistent cultivation of genius.** China has been lack of a kind of education institution that can cultivate a child from the kindergarten, elementary school, and middle school, but the training of talents is interrupted after university. Genius education is actually talent education and lifelong education. Before junior high school, high quality education also needs to be required and lifelong education is carried out after them entering society.

**The unbalanced cultivating stages of genius.** At present, Chinese children genius education is still not mature. There are only a few organizations for genius education all over the country. For example, Jinan Transcendental Kindergarten, FengDequan Baby Learning Research Institute, and Beijing Happiness Time Kindergarten. The genius education in universities is mainly called ShaoNianBan, but some of them have stopped recruiting students. In contrast, genius education in middle school has the longest history, biggest scale, and best teachers. The imbalanced conditions make a lot of genius lost opportunity to be identified and explored, and in the process of cultivation, talents are easy to lose because of the lack of consistent training plans.

## Conclusions

### The Analysis of Problems and Reasons

Through the above introduction and comparison of genius education in America and China, it can be found that Mainland China has a substantial gap in the genius education compared with America, even with Hong Kong and Taiwan, whether policy, management, research, resources, or training mode. This mainly displays in the aspects of genius education policy, lack of funds, and the top-down development way. There are several aspects for this:

First of all, the genius education of Mainland China originates from the primary stage of socialism and has a slow growth. Genius education belongs to the elite education that cultivates the top talent needing a lot of material and financial resources and manpower support. At the stage of reform and opening up in Mainland China, national strength is still relatively weak and special education resource is rare, and illiteracy problem is still not solved. Besides, national leaders only give some “spiritual care”. In the 21st century, China has been basically realized well-off. If the country turns a blind eye to genius education, it is very harmful for the development of genius education;

Secondly, Chinese traditional education system and uniform education equality has restricted genius education. China is a country based on socialist, claiming public ownership and advocates the faith of socialist. In addition, since the new China abolished the feudal system, the concepts of freedom and equality have become the mainstream of society. So equality education is advocated but elite education is against. Over the years, the country has focused on the popularization of education, showing a confused attitude towards genius education;

Thirdly, the conservative conceptions have restricted the growth of genius education. To begin with, parents are afraid to try due to the Confucius ideals. They wish their children to have a plain life without too much frustrations and attempts. Especially, the failure of gifted children is a big threat for parents to try bravely. And then, both teachers and parents have an incorrect understanding of genius students. They just think that genius students are naughty and hard to control. Thirdly, the society has damaged genius students, especially television and newspapers which will compete to report, resulting in children living in an unnatural environment and finally leading to some psychological problems. Furthermore, by the influence of the university entrance exam, many schools secretly change ShiYanBan into “top class”. These old ideas are all barriers for the development of genius that are more than lack of learning resources.

### Suggestions for China's Genius Education

(1) Establishing and perfecting laws and regulations for genius education: The policy and regulations for genius education need to be promulgated and the system of genius children needs to be perfected. Besides, the clear policy is given to both families and schools;

(2) Management and service for genius education: Special organization is required to be established for management. For example, National Education Ministry sets up the department of genius education that mainly in charge of all kinds of specific affairs;

(3) Research for genius education: First, a close relation is connected among psychology, pedagogy and talent choosing. Second, some experts and professional teachers are selected to study at abroad for a short time. Third, the study, search and selection of supernormal children need to continue;

(4) Supporting resources for genius education: The sources of funds for genius education are required to

be enlarged to a multi-channel. Besides, the research teams also need to be enriched and good teaching groups is trained urgently;

(5) Training practice for genius education: It is necessary to broaden the training mode and reform the cultivating ways. This is also true of enlarging the scale of educational objects and building a close relation among genius educations at every period.

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