

VII International Forum on Teacher Education

Scientific Interpretation of Films about School as a means of Overcoming Challenges for Teachers in Their Work with Gifted Children

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Abstract

Feature films about gifted children have a significant potential for resolving challenges the teachers face in their work with gifted children. Such films portray various types of gifted children, show models of their upbringing and education in school and family, demonstrate the challenges of their socialization and education. However, teachers rarely use the potential of such feature films in their work with gifted children due to the lack of methods of their scientific interpretation. Based on the above, we set the goal of the study – to analyse the practical aspects of using films about school by teachers in solving challenges they experience while working with gifted children, to identify the pedagogical conditions and methods of scientific interpretation of feature films about school by teachers. Research methods: generalization of Russian and foreign research on the problems of organizing of work with gifted children, the use of feature films in such work; selection and systematization of films that can be used by teachers in solving problems and difficulties that they go through while working with gifted children; teacher surveys; design of pedagogical conditions for teachers to scientifically interpret films about school in the process of resolving difficulties arising in their work with gifted children. The results we arrived at demonstrate that the scientific interpretation of feature films about school by teachers can be a means of resolving of a number of challenges that teachers experience in their work with gifted children. The pedagogical conditions for such an interpretation are the selection of films according to the criteria of “high cultural level; positive content; relevance of the content to the existing difficulties; the presence of a valid pedagogical idea; problematic aspects; humanistic orientation”; mastering the experience of scientific and pedagogical interpretation of films in the form of a film training masterclass; exchange of experience with colleagues; creation of a film library on the school website.

Keywords: gifted children, gifted education, challenges for teachers, supporting of teachers, non-formal education, film classes

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Published by Kazan Federal university and peer-reviewed under responsibility of IFTE-2021 (VII

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International Forum on Teacher Education)

Introduction

The context for *modus operandi* of a teacher is constantly becoming more complicated nowadays: a teacher has to work in conditions of high workload and psychological stress, expansion of professional functions; decline in the social status of the teacher in society, high competition with other sources of knowledge and agents of socialization; growing social and cultural variety and special educational needs of students; constant modernization of education, changing norms and requirements for teaching activities, methods of their assessment, to build pedagogical interaction with generation Z, many of which are characterized by hyperactivity, impressionability, pragmatism (Gavrilova, 2016).

One of the difficult areas of pedagogical activity is work with gifted children, which is connected with the pronounced individuality of such children, the presence of special educational needs that require the creation of special pedagogical conditions, the high responsibility of the teacher for the education and upbringing of such children, the creative nature of working with them, necessity of a constant search for new ways of teachers' cooperation and support.

Problems and difficulties arise often in the practice of teachers working with gifted children, for the solution of them scientific knowledge obtained in refresher courses and as a result of acquaintance with scientific and methodological literature is not enough, and it is necessary to attract knowledge from non-traditional sources, such as personal experience and intuition, the experience of colleagues, folk pedagogics and folklore, canonical texts, art books and films about the school. These problems can be associated with the value self-determination of the teacher, understanding the individual characteristics and special needs of gifted children, predicting their behavior, building pedagogical interaction with "difficult" gifted children, conflicting parents of such children, resolving unusual, psychologically difficult situations, searching for new pedagogical means, not described in pedagogical science, with a long-term presence of the teacher in a state of mental stress, overwork, which becomes the cause of impulsive actions based on emotions; with the need to make non-standard pedagogical decisions in conditions of lack of time. One of the ways to solve such problems can be the scientific understanding of films about the school, the heroes of which are children with demonstration of giftedness, their teachers and parents. Both in domestic and foreign cinema there are many feature films about gifted children. They present the images-types of such children, their experiences, successes and difficulties, models of their upbringing and education in school and family, outlined the actual problems of their socialization and education.

However, nowadays, science has not studied whether teachers are familiar with such films, whether they are used in their work with gifted children, whether they are interpreted from the standpoint of scientific theories, under what conditions such an understanding is possible.

Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the research is to analyze the practice of using films about school by teachers to solve challenges that they face while working with gifted children, to determine the pedagogical conditions for the scientific interpretation of such films by teachers.

Research objectives: (1) to identify what difficulties and problems are most often encountered by teachers when they work with gifted children, which sources of knowledge about pedagogical reality they refer in the process of resolving them; (2) to study the interest of teachers in Russian and foreign films about gifted children, assess the capacity of use of such film in their work with gifted children; (3) to determine the pedagogical conditions and methods of scientific interpretation by the teacher of feature films in order to solve problems and difficulties they face while working with gifted children.

Literature review

Currently, research has been carried out on the evolution of the public image of school and gifted children in Russian and foreign cinematography and mass media (Arcus, 2010; Dennis & LaMay, 1993; Maeroff, 1998).

The possibilities of using feature films in both their work with gifted children and in preparing teachers for such work are being studied by psychology and pedagogy.

The following areas of research were identified:

Cinema art is studied as a means of upbringing and educating children and youth (Baranov & Penzin, 2005; Zhmyrova & Monastyrsky, 2012; Penzin, 1987; Marcus, Metzger, Paxton & Stoddard, 2018). Within this direction, the theory and practice of media education has recently been actively developing (Maximova, 2005; Plotnikova, 2019; Ryzhikh, 2011). It is proposed to use films created by professional directors for the purpose of teaching and upbringing of gifted children, as well as films and videos created by gifted children themselves (Jafarova & Mikhailova, 2017). The singularity of teenagers' perception of some feature films (for example, the film "Scarecrow") have been studied (Sobkin & Markina, 2010).

Opportunities are considered, methods of using feature films in psycho–correctional work with children are being developed: helping them in self-education and self-development, disclosing internal reserves and personal potential (Deryabina, 2020), in actualization and living through some emotions (Lavrent'ieva, 2020), developing reflexive abilities (Bakakina, 2019). Cinema therapy techniques have been developed to solve these problems (Berezin, 2003; Karpova, Danina, Kiselnikova & Shuvikov, 2011), animation film therapy (Ashitko, 2015), film training (Pleskachevskaya, 1998; Trus', 2011), onto-psychological cinemalogy (Meneghetti, 2001). The features of their application in the work of a school psychologist are revealed (Bakakina, 2019), class teacher (Schmidt, 2007) to solve the problems of various categories of children – with disabilities (Ashitko, 2015), drugs addiction (Berezin, 2008), stuttering (Karpova, Danina, Kiselnikova & Shuvikov, 2011) and others.

Methods of using feature films in the training of future teachers and psychologists are proposed in order to illustrate theoretical knowledge (Kon'kina & Shavrygina, 2017), establishing interdisciplinary connections (Kuznetsova, 2018), organizing students' independent work (Berezin, 2005).

The potential is being investigated and methods are being developed for the use of feature films as a means of psychological and methodological assistance to practicing teachers in their work with gifted children and children with disabilities. Bystritskiy (2007) substantiated cinema therapy as an effective means of increasing the psychological competence of teachers in working with gifted children. It shows its capabilities in the development of teachers' personal qualities, intellectual and observation skills, the ability to analyze the logic of students' actions, to see their hidden motivations, to explain behavior based on their characteristics, and not on their projections, in expanding the set of stereotypes in teachers that are relevant for their work with gifted children, mastering social and cultural values and moral norms. Ertanova and Mikhailova (2011) presented the film library as an additional methodological resource for teachers of inclusive education. The described studies create preconditions for studying the existing practice and pedagogical conditions of scientific interpretation by teachers of films about school in order to resolve difficulties and challenges that they face while working with gifted children.

Methodology

The methodological basis of the study was made by ideas about the diversity of knowledge about pedagogical reality (D'yachenko, 2006; Kraevsky, 2009; Lyz', 2014); research revealing the possibilities of feature films in resolving the problems of teachers in working with gifted children (Bystritsky, 2007); approaches to the teacher's scientific understanding of extra-scientific knowledge about pedagogical reality (Belukhin, 2006; Ovchenkova, 2006; Robotova, 2008; Shurukhina, 2000).

To achieve this goal, the following methods were used: generalization of Russian and foreign research on the problems of organizing work with gifted children, the use of feature films in such work; selection and systematization of films that can be used by teachers in solving problems and difficulties that arise in their work with gifted children; anonymous surveys of teachers from different regions of the Russian Federation using a questionnaire posted in Google form (<https://forms.gle/MaMNKyQPqnhEFrSS9>). 46 teachers took part in the survey. The sample was formed according to the principle of representation in it of all categories of teachers working with gifted children (table 1); designing pedagogical conditions and methods of scientific understanding by teachers of films about school in the process of resolving difficulties that they have while working with gifted children.

Table 1. Survey representation of the general population of teachers working with gifted children

Age of respondents	Proportion, %	Pedagogical experience	Proportion, %	Position	Proportion, %
from 20 to 30 years old	5	from 1 to 3 years	7,3	subject teacher	26,8
from 30 to 40 years old	12,5	from 4 to 10 years	7,3	primary school teacher	7,3
from 40 to 50 years old	45	from 10 to 20 years	24,4	additional education teacher	19,5
over 50 years old	37,5	more than 20 years	61	teacher–psychologist	2,4

Results

Difficulties in working with gifted children arise in 71,1% of teachers, of whom 5,3% constant, and 65,8% sometimes.

The share of teachers who experience difficulties in pedagogical activity (69,8%) and experience difficulties working with gifted children (71,1%) is approximately the same, meaning, work with gifted children is not perceived by them as more difficult.

The difficulties of teachers in working with gifted children are often associated with solving design and prognostic problems: with an understanding of the individual characteristics and special educational needs of such children (42,4% of teachers), with the search for new ways of pedagogical influence and interaction with a gifted child (36,4 %).

A complete list of problems and difficulties encountered by teachers in working with gifted children is presented in Table 2.

The main source of pedagogical information about work with gifted children for teachers is the experience of colleagues (64,1%), as well as reflection on their own pedagogical experience (38,5%), in comparison with which reading scientific and methodological literature and refresher courses to some extent lose (46,2% and 33,3%, respectively).

Table 2. Problems and difficulties that teachers face in their work with gifted children

Content of problems and difficulties	Proportion of teachers, %
Understanding the individual characteristics and special educational needs of gifted children	42,4
Search for new ways of pedagogical influence and interaction with a gifted child	36,4
Building pedagogical interaction with parents of gifted children	24,2
Designing and organizing group interaction of a gifted child with peers	21,2
Selection of educational content that is interesting for gifted children	18,2
Adaptation of teaching methods and methods, educational content, standards to the special educational necessities of a gifted child	18,2
Building cooperation with gifted children themselves	15,2
Predicting the behavior of gifted children	15,2
Resolving conflicts with gifted children or their parents	12,1

When asked about the sufficiency of scientific knowledge obtained from formalized sources (additional education, forms of advanced training, scientific and pedagogical texts) in working with gifted children: 82,9% answered that such knowledge is not enough. 17,1% spoke in favor of the sufficiency of scientific knowledge to resolve the difficulties and problems that arise in their work with gifted children.

Non-traditional approaches and methods in working with gifted children are used by 35,9% of teachers. When working with gifted children, 20,5% of teachers turn to the analysis of their own children's experience, 17,9% – to the author's pedagogical ideas and systems, the experience of innovative teachers, 15,4% – to the pedagogical comprehension of literary works and films about gifted children, 10,3% – to folk pedagogy, folklore (2,6% use anecdotes).

Despite the fact that only 15,4% of teachers turn to pedagogical interpretation of films about gifted children in their work with gifted children, 70% believe that watching and pedagogical analysis of such films can help a teacher in building interaction with gifted children, 22,5% found it difficult to answer and only 7,5% do not see such an opportunity.

We found out which of the famous films, the heroes of which are gifted children, the teachers are familiar with. It turned out that the most popular is the film "Scarecrow" (Russia, 1983) – 76,9% of respondents watched it. The second place was shared by the picture "Schedule for the Day After Tomorrow" (Russia, 1978) and the animated film "The Little Prince" (France, 2015) with a large margin from the first film – 35,9% of teachers are familiar with them. In third place is the film "Certificate of Maturity" (Russia, 1954) – 28,2%. On the fourth – "When I Become a Giant" (Russia, 1978) – 25,6%. The fifth place was taken by the picture "Indigo" (Russia, 2008) – it was watched by 17,9% of respondents. Sixth – the film "Corrections Class" (Russia, 2014) – 12, 8%. As you can see, Russian films of the 1950s – 1980s are the most popular among teachers.

A number of interesting foreign films that raise urgent problems of working with gifted children, which can be used in overcoming difficulties that arise, are not known to most teachers: "Searching for Bobby Fischer" (USA, 1998) – 10,3%, "The Jester" (Russia, 1988), "Gifted" (USA, 2017), "Little Stars on Earth" (India, 2007), "The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet" (France, Australia, Canada, 2013) – 7,7%; "Billy Elliot" (UK, France, 2000), "Little Man Tate" (USA, 1991) – 5,1%; "Vitus" (Switzerland, 2006), "The Act" (France, 2006) – 2,6%.

Table 3 presents the comparative data of the share of teachers who are familiar with films about gifted children and the percentage of teachers who discover the capacity of these films in resolving difficulties that teachers face while working with gifted children.

Table 3. Teachers' assessment of the capacity of feature films in overcoming difficulties arising in their work with gifted children

Movie title	Percentage of teachers, who know these films %	Percentage of teachers, who think that pedagogical reflection of the film can help resolve difficulties in their work with gifted children %
Scarecrow (Russia, 1983)	76,9	52,9
Schedule for the Day After Tomorrow (Russia, 1978)	35,9	23,5
The Little Prince (France and Italy, 2015)	35,9	20,6

Certificate of Maturity (Russia, 1954)	28,2	23,5
When I Become a Giant (Russia, 1978)	25,6	8,8
Indigo (Russia, 2008)	17,9	11,8
Corrections Class (Russia, 2014)	12,8	11,8
Searching for Bobby Fischer (USA, 1998)	10,3	5,9
The Jester (Russia, 1988)	7,7	5,9
Gifted (USA, 2017)	7,7	7,7
Little Stars on Earth (India, 2007)	7,7	7,7
The Young and Prodigious T.S. Spivet (France and Canada, 2013)	7,7	7,7
Billy Elliot (UK, 2000)	5,1	0
Little Man Tate (USA, 1991)	5,1	2,9
The Act (USA, 2019)	2,6	0

The significance of differences was assessed using the statistical method "one proportion Z-test". In most cases, the differences are insignificant. Significant differences were found in three films: "Scarecrow" (Russia, 1983), "The Little Prince" (France, 2015), "When I Become a Giant" (Russia, 1978). Probably, in these films it is more difficult for teachers to find meanings, images, information that are useful in working with gifted children and resolving problems that arise.

Additionally, as films that can help in resolving difficulties in working with gifted children, teachers named "Ballad of a Soldier", "Hot Snow", "Son of the Regiment" (2,9% each). 2,9% of respondents indicated that not films, but fiction books can help in solving problems in working with gifted children.

The tasks of working with gifted children, in the solution of which, in the opinion of teachers, pedagogical comprehension of feature films can help, were distributed as follows (table 4).

Table 4. Tasks of working with gifted children, the achievement of which can help the pedagogical interpretation of feature films, in the opinion of teachers

Tasks of working with gifted children	Percentage of teachers, %
Understanding the individual characteristics and special educational needs of gifted children	61,5
Predicting the behavior of gifted children	33,3
Determining the value and foundation of pedagogical work with a gifted child	30,8
Search for new ways of pedagogical influence and interaction with a gifted child, not described in pedagogical science	30,8
Design and implementation of pedagogical interaction with a gifted child	25,6

Designing and organizing group interaction of a gifted child with peers	23,1
Design and implementation of interaction with the parents of a gifted child	23,1
Adaptation of teaching methods and methods, educational content, standards to the special educational needs of a gifted child	17,9
Selection of educational content interesting for gifted children	15,4
Resolution of conflicts with a gifted child or his parents	15,4

Discussion

Feature films about the school have significant potential in resolving the problems and difficulties that teachers face in working with gifted children, which lies in the ability to perform the following functions:

adaptation: the adaptation of scientific and theoretical knowledge to specific conditions and situations of pedagogical activity – the films show specific situations of application of such knowledge, with which the teacher can relate his experience;

therapeutic: overcoming negative psychological states associated with emerging difficulties (the teacher sees that the heroes of the films have the same difficulties and problems as he does, and they successfully solve them);

value-semantic: the comprehension of scientific and theoretical knowledge from the standpoint of moral norms and values, the extraction of personal meanings;

innovative: the presentation of new methods of pedagogical actions, new pedagogical experience;

dialectical: problematizes of pedagogical reality, presentation of alternative pedagogical ideas and concepts.

The information contained in the films has characteristics that are relevant for overcoming difficulties that scientific knowledge does not possess: imagery, expressiveness, emotionality, sensuality, semantic capacity (polysemy), problematizes of pedagogical reality. Watching films involves teachers in a dialogue with their creators, problematizes the understanding of pedagogical reality, provides its figurative, emotional perception.

The authors of feature films address the problems of the modern school and the school of the past and "offer not only new facts, situations and images, but also a typology of pedagogical phenomena reflecting this or that fragment of pedagogical reality in its variability, dialectics, and conflicts" (Ovchenkova, 2006).

However, the appeal of teachers to feature films in resolving problems that they have in their work with gifted children also has the risks of a destructive influence, reducing the effectiveness of such work. Risks are associated with such characteristics of pedagogical information presented in films as convention, subjectivity of the reflection of pedagogical reality, fiction in its depiction, and idealization. It should also be noted the tendency of the commercialization of the film industry characteristic of recent years, the propaganda in some films of destructive images of the teacher (the "Fizruk" TV series) and students (the "School" of Gai-Germanicus TV series). This indicates the need for scientific understanding and selection of films about school by the teacher for their use in work with gifted children.

It is advisable to select films according to the following criteria:

high cultural level (director's work, musical arrangement, video sequence, etc.);

positive content (achievement by the heroes of the film of significant results in teaching and upbringing of a gifted child, asserting faith in the possibility of positive results in working with gifted children, in "the initial goodness of such children" (Serikov, 2018);

correspondence of the content of the film to the teacher's difficulties, the pedagogical and psychological content of his work with gifted children;

availability of an up-to-date pedagogical idea;

problematic (the film should contain a problematic question; for example, "what is more correct for a teacher in working with a gifted child: listen to your heart or keep your reputation?");

humanistic orientation, propaganda of spiritual and moral values, compliance with the principles of humanistic pedagogy and psychology.

The scientific understanding of the film is that the teacher:

differentiates the understanding of the situation by the heroes of the film and their own understanding;

compares himself\herself to the hero: in what ways is the hero similar to him\her as a teacher, and in what way they differ;

evaluates the actions of the hero from the standpoint of scientific theories;

carries out a pedagogical reflection of events taking place on the screen;

pre-configured to detect in the film certain problems, situations, meanings associated with working with gifted children, overcoming difficulties that arise.

Teachers' scientific interpretation of films about school in order to overcome difficulties in their work with gifted children is based on the following logic: (1) creation of a film library on the school website (filing files for solving specific problems and difficulties with links to a resource where they can be viewed); (2) independent viewing and analysis of films by teachers; (3) organization of group discussions of the films watched in the form of film training; (4) application of the information extracted from the analysis of films in work with gifted children.

An example of a film library is shown in table 5.

Table 5. Film library for scientific interpretation and application while working with gifted children

Problems and difficulties	Films for scientific interpretation
Misunderstanding the characteristics of a gifted child by teacher	"Schedule for the day after tomorrow" (Russia, 1978, director Igor Dobrolyubov) "Certificate of Maturity" (Russia, 1954, director Tatiana Lukashevich) "Jester" (Russia, 1988, director Andrei Eshpai) "When I Become a Giant" (Russia, 1978, director Inna Tumanyan) Little Tate (USA, 1991, directed by Jodie Foster) Mr. Spivet's Incredible Journey (France, Australia, Canada, 2013, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet) "Indigo" (Russia, 2008, director Roman Prygunov)
Diagnostics and development of special types of giftedness (moral, emotional, etc.)	"Forest Gump" (USA, 1994, directed by R. Zemeckis) "Correction class" (Russia, 2014, director I. Tverdovsky) – the character of Lena Chekhova "Gifted" (USA, 2017, director Mark Webb)
Inadequate understanding of the values and goals of working with gifted children	"Certificate of Maturity" (Russia, 1954, director Tatiana Lukashevich) "Jester" (Russia, 1988, director Andrei Eshpai)
Manipulating a gifted child, imagining him only as a carrier of enhanced abilities	"Vitus" (Switzerland, 2006, directed by Fredy M. Muhrer) "In Search of Bobby Fischer" (USA, 1993, directed by Steven Zaillian) Little Tate (USA, 1991, directed by Jodie Foster) The Little Prince (France, 2015, directed by Marc Osborne)
Lack of understanding of the problems of gifted children	"When I Become a Giant" (Russia, 1978, director Inna Tumanyan) "Gifted" (USA, 2017, director Mark Webb) "Mr. Spivet's Incredible Journey" (France, Australia, Canada, 2013,

	directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet)
	"All Stars on Earth" (India, 2007, directed by Aamir Khan)
	"Correction class" (Russia, 2014, director I. Tverdovsky)
	"Pawn Sacrifice" (USA, 2014, directed by Edward Zwick)
	"Queen's Move" (UK, 2020, directed by Scott Frank)
	"Scarecrow" (Russia, 1983, director Rolan Bykov)
	"Correction class" (Russia, 2014, director I. Tverdovsky)
The well-known methods of work do not work	"All Stars on Earth" (India, 2007, directed by Aamir Khan)
	"Night School" (Malcolm D. Lee, 2018)
	"Triumph: The Story of Ron Clarke" (USA, 2006, directed by Randa Haynes)
The lack of empathy	"Billy Elliott" (UK, France, 2000, directed by Stephen Daldry)
Lack of positive thinking, pedagogical optimism in working with gifted children	"Billy Elliott" (UK, France, 2000, directed by Stephen Daldry)
	"All Stars on Earth" (India, 2007, directed by Aamir Khan)
	"Before the Class" (UK, 2008, directed by Peter Werner)
	"Triumph: The Story of Ron Clarke" (USA, 2006, directed by Randa Haynes)
	"Republic SHKID" (Russia, 1966, director Gennady Poloka)
The teacher lacks certain competencies, qualities for productive work with gifted children	"Schedule for the day after tomorrow" (Russia, 1978, director Igor Dobrolyubov)
	"Jester" (Russia, 1988, director Andrei Eshpai)

Group discussion of the films can be organized around the following topics: What was this film about for you? What pedagogical idea did you find most significant in the film? From the standpoint of your chosen idea, make a short announcement of the film (What was the movie about?). If you were a director, what would you change in the presentation of the main idea of the film? If you were a screenwriter, what continuation of the script could you think of? (Bystritsky, 2007).

Conclusion

The results of the survey of teachers showed that the significant potential of feature films in overcoming difficulties that arise while working with gifted children is recognized by teachers, but is not used sufficiently. This suggests the necessity to identify the pedagogical conditions for the scientific interpretation of films about school by teachers. Such conditions are: selection of films according to the criteria of high cultural level; positive content; relevance of the content to the current difficulties; the presence of an actual pedagogical idea; problem statement; humanistic orientation; mastering the methods of scientific and pedagogical comprehension of films in the form of film training; exchange of experience with colleagues; creation of a film library on the school website.

Acknowledgements

The research was carried out with the financial support of the Kuban science Foundation in the framework of the scientific project № «MFI–20.1/112».

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