

Acceleration Strategy in Gifted and Talented Education

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Abstract: The training of Gifted and talented children starts with the accelerated strategy, and the development of Gifted and talented education has now had several relatively mature forms, including early enrollment, grade skipping, curriculum compression, early placement and so on. Strengthening the research on various forms of acceleration and the appropriate use of this strategy in practice is the key to the successful operation of excellent education.

Keywords: Excellent education; Elite education; Acceleration

Gifted and talented children usually show faster levels of development than their peers, and regular education fails to meet their development speed. "Accelerate" strategy for students who are not limited by ordinary courses and teaching schedule, with faster speed or younger age to complete the general course, meeting the special development needs of Gifted and talented children. Since development, it has been applied to Gifted and talented education practice, is the longest and most widely used in Gifted and talented education, has long been proved to be very effective for Gifted and talented children as an intervention strategy.

1. Accelerated object

The acceleration strategy is specifically aimed at Gifted and talented children, which matches the characteristics of strong acceptance ability and fast learning speed.

1.1 Definition of Gifted and talented children

Gifted and talented children is also known as "gifted", "talented", "prodigy", "exceptional children", "intellectual precocity", "able learners", or "gifted and talented behaviors" etc. Although the name is different, but the meaning is not very different, all refers to the children with special talent or development potential. But the key is not which name to use, but how to develop the education of such children. According to the most recognized Marland Report, "Gifted and talented children are those who are identified and proven superior ability to achieve high achievement, personal satisfaction and contribution to society through special educational programs and services provided."^[1] Can see from this definition that whether born or acquired, it is a trait that some people have and others do not have, and their excellent ability or potential needs to be valued and stimulated. In addition, Gifted and talented children should be differentiated and need special differentiated education programs.

1.2 The character of Gifted and talented children

Generations of scholars have experienced a lot of research on the characteristics of Gifted and talented children. Terman in the 1820s tracked 1500 high IQ children, contemporary Hollingworth studied the way of thinking, emotion, education needs and growth, in the 80s Walberg studied 200 outstanding men in the field of art, science, politics, and 771 high school students in the science, art competition. These studies prove that Gifted and talented children are different from ordinary children in many ways. Later, Clark, Davis and Rimm described the characteristics of previous research, summarizing some common features such as: above-medium intelligence level; language and thinking ability developed beyond physical age; fast and logical thinking process; advanced reading and understanding; excellent memory; excellent motivation and persistence; and willingness to study independently.

2. For and against the acceleration of the view

2.1 Support the view of acceleration

Support acceleration believe that acceleration is the most effective classroom intervention for gifted and talented children and is a low-cost intervention strategy. According to the views collected in the Templeton National Acceleration Report, Gifted and talented

students have special intellectual and emotional needs, and if Gifted and talented children learn at the pace of their peers, may be bored, frustrated, lose interest in learning, and lead to lifelong poor grades. Acceleration strategies can allow Gifted and talented children to work at their own fast pace, providing a better mature match with the individual, with long-term beneficial effects on both the academic and social affection development of smart students. If students are diagnosed with a high level of development in one or more areas of the classroom, then accelerated learning strategies based on individual willingness, motivation, and potential to learn should be the primary consideration^[2].

2.2 Opposition to acceleration

While there are many scholars and studies that support the need for accelerated learning for Gifted and talented children, there are also many educators who are largely negative about accelerated practices. One reason for opposition is that acceleration may face some cognitive and adaptive problems. For example, accelerated children can not get along with older children, cause social and interpersonal discomfort, may also lose some childhood experience, less opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, and excessive academic requirements cause pressure to them, produce weariness, rebellious mood. Another argument of opposition is that acceleration may lead to the omission of certain important intellectual content and learning skills..

3. The main form of the acceleration strategy

Over the long term, acceleration strategies take on a variety of forms, with common ones including early enrollment, skipping, compression courses, and early placement.

3.1 Early enrollment

Early enrollment refers to the early start of formal study to meet the high enthusiasm, curiosity, imagination and intellectual needs of Gifted and talented children. Well-prepared early school children usually get along smoothly with older students, and their academic achievement is not only equivalent to older students, but even better than older students, and this advantage continues into high school. They will attend more extracurricular activities, receive significantly more graduation awards, and are more likely to be admitted to college. Moreover, in the administrative system, it is a less damaging option, avoiding the discontinuity of the curriculum^[3].

3.2 Skipping level

Skipping means allowing students to “skip” their age and enter any learning stage that suits their abilities. It can be divided into grade skipping and subject skipping two kinds. Grade skipping enables students to finish school faster than their peers; subject skipping allows students to learn advanced content earlier in certain subjects.

3.2.1 Grade skipping

Grade jump is also known as full skipping, this skipping generally occurs in lower grades, which may be by the parents first realize that their children are precocious than other children in the class, and may also be through careful observation by the teacher or evaluated by psychological counselors. When arrange a grade skipping at the convergence point of all stages of education, such as advance to middle school, high school or college, its the perfect time. By grades skipping, some children can shorten their school education for several years and enter college at the age of 15 or 16, which means they can have more time and flexibility to plan their future life. But this acceleration is not very popular and could lead to two main problems. The first problem is that skipping may miss some key knowledge and skills in the discipline system, creating academic gaps. This can be avoided by performing a series of tests on the grade to skip, identifying missing knowledge and skills, and then taking remedial measures. The second problem is that staying with older children after skipping may cause discomfort with peers. But this may be based on misconceptions.

3.2.2 Subject skipping

Subject jump, also known as partial skipping or single subject acceleration, is more flexible and does not need students to be talented in all areas in order to be accelerated in a single aspect. This kind of skip is an ideal way for talented and Gifted and talented students in a certain field. One kind of subject skip allows Gifted and talented students to take classes with senior students in superior subjects, or to use higher levels of courses and materials, which is particularly suitable for reading, mathematics, language and other subjects, and can continue from primary school to high school. Other types of subject skipping can be achieved by enrolling students in complementary, accelerated off-school courses, such as participating in summer programs, after-school and Saturday programs, or receiving mentor mentoring or expert guidance. This type of acceleration requires assurance that students are awarded credit and no repetition of these content outside the formal school.

3.3 Course compression

Compression means shortening or deleting some learning content and speeding up the learning process. When students show a

content advantage, they can cancel or streamline the regular courses from 50% to 75% to spare time to learn other content. The compressed parts, which are often replaced by more attractive challenges, are used to avoid repeating previous jobs, while participating in enrichment activities, or in exchange for the opportunity to graduate early. Before streamlining or reducing the course, teachers should firstly fully understand the course content and determine the scope and degree of streamlining; secondly, pretest the students to master their existing experienced knowledge and level.

3.4 Advance in courses or obtain credit in advance

For students who want to take college-level courses in high school, early extra courses or credits is the best option. These include participation in the Advanced Placement(AP)program,the International Baccalaureate(IB) programs, and the dual enrollment(DE) program. Students can also get credit or qualification exemption through exams, such as the College Level Examination Program(C-LEP), which can also be implemented with distance education, additional tutoring, and summer programs.These early degree options reflect the cooperation between high schools and universities or colleges. In addition to encouraging high school students to take on college-level courses and life, they can also plan their career direction early. If limited by geography or other factors, it can also be enriched or supplemented by online learning or online courses, receiving tutors with a common interest, or conducting independent research. It is important that the credits earned by these programs are credited into the high school graduation requirements so that students are not double burdened.

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