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## **WHICH IS MORE IMPORTANT, BEING ACTIVE OR BEING GOOD? COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOL AWARDS IN RUSSIAN AND CHINESE SCHOOLS**

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**Abstract.** A child's well-deserved recognition and praise are one of the oldest methods of providing feedback on whether a person is developing in the right direction. By examining the types of positive reinforcement and the differences in the way children are encouraged in different countries, teachers can better understand the characteristics of their potential international students and choose new methods to support Russian-speaking students from neighboring countries. The article aims to analyze the differences in the culture of discourse about school awards in Russian and Chinese schools. Research methods: comparative and descriptive approaches to text analysis and statistical analysis. School award texts received by schoolchildren and preschoolers from Russia (n = 51) and China (n = 50) were used for the study. As a result of the study, it was found that school awards in three formats are typical for Chinese educational institutions and seven for Russian ones. The systems of school awards in Russia and China have similarities and differences. Common to both practices is the promotion of good academic performance (achieving high rankings) and support for developing the child's talents in the arts or sports. Encouraging the student's personal qualities (love of work, conscientiousness, perseverance) can be said to be a characteristic found exclusively in Chinese schools. A peculiarity of the Russian school in this respect is the promotion of the student's work in some creative activity ("participation in an exhibition/festival") without mentioning the specific result of the child. Both Chinese and Russian award texts mention "achievements," but in the Chinese ones, teachers prefer phrases that include "hope for future success," while in the Russian school award texts, only the fact of the awarded child's participation in a particular event is mentioned. Moreover, the Russian award texts use virtually no artistic language devices, while the Chinese texts frequently use metaphors, epithets, and similes to reinforce the encouraging statement emotionally.

**Keywords:** school awards, recognition of educational achievements, positive motivation, teacher support, feedback, Russian school, Chinese school

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## Introduction

Recently, scientific and pedagogical discourse on the logic of positive education, school well-being, and feedback in pedagogical practice has developed in different countries [1]<sup>1</sup>. Tools for developing school well-being are associated with changes in the school environment as well as pedagogical practices that evoke feelings that support motivation to learn [20]<sup>2</sup>, work on self-development, and self-improvement [28]<sup>3</sup>. The well-deserved recognition and praise of the child is one of the traditional methods to provide feedback on whether the adolescent is building models of adaptation to the current challenges of the time and self-determination in the right direction [19]<sup>4</sup>. The recognition that the child receives can be viewed from the perspective of operant learning when reinforcement leads to repeated “correct” behavior [9]<sup>5</sup>. Another logic of psychological and pedagogical interpretation of the discourse on the recognition of child success is also possible [26]<sup>6</sup>. In his theory of social-cognitive learning, Alfred Bandura emphasizes the mutual influence of environment, behavior, and personal factors, giving a special place to the cognitive processes that provide mental self-control and self-efficacy of the

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<sup>1</sup> Azbel A.A., Ilyushin L.S., Kazakova E.I., Morozova P.A. The attitude of students and teachers to feedback: contradictions and development trends. *Education and science*. 2022;24(7):76-109. <https://doi.org/10.17853/1994-5639-2022-7-76-109>

<sup>2</sup> Skinner B.F. *Behavior of organisms* [per. s English Zuev A.B.]. Moscow: Operant, 2016. 363, [1] p.

<sup>3</sup> Yasvin V.A. Formation of the theory of the personality development environment in domestic pedagogical psychology. *Psychology. Journal of the Higher School of Economics*. 2020;17(2):295-314. DOI 10.17323/1813-8918-2020-2-295-314

<sup>4</sup> Panina E.A. Methods for the formation of positive patterns of behavior among adolescents in a conflict situation. *Psychology and psychotechnics*. 2014;(5):39-59. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=22286696>

<sup>5</sup> Zhidkova E.V., Ilinykh G.S. Encouragement and punishment of students in elementary school. *Materials of sectional meetings of the 58th student scientific and practical conference of PNU*. 2018:125-128. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=35262025>

<sup>6</sup> Chezhina Ya.V. Behavioral-humanistic method of education by praise (method of Alan Kazdin). *Integrative approach to human psychology and social interaction of people: vectors of development of modern psychological science*. 2017:237-242. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=29286083>

individual [13]<sup>1</sup>. In this sense, recognition, and encouragement can be considered as one of the factors of the mentioned self-efficacy already in early childhood. In practice, however, the educational problem is that many successful (usually financially well-off) parents do not allow their children to lose to other children [8]<sup>2</sup>. The lack of external encouragement and especially of school awards, is seen by them as a problem and violates the principles of operant learning [17]<sup>3</sup>. They teach their children to be diligent learners from an early age, enroll them in extracurricular activities, and want their children to spend all their time exclusively learning [11]<sup>4</sup>. The most important measure of their children's hard work and success is recognition in the form of official validation from outside sources. Of course, this is only one aspect of the problematic nature of the discourse on school awards, but the example given allows us to assess the general research potential of the topic mentioned in the article. When students achieve good grades in exams or competitions, the school gives awards to encourage them. At the same time, students may show the certificates to their parents for additional recognition. By examining positive reinforcement practices for academic behavior and understanding the differences in school awards across countries, educators working in multicultural settings can better understand the characteristics and aspirations of their international students. In this way, they can choose appropriate support methods and ways to provide positive feedback to their students and achieve better educational outcomes.

An analysis of publications shows that very few studies have been published on the discourse of school awards at different levels of education in different cultures. In this context, we formulated some questions for conducting a comparative study. Why exactly do students in China and Russia receive awards? What constitutes the "pride" of students and their parents in the context of educational activities? Are there differences in the phrases and

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<sup>1</sup> Levin K., Bandura A. *Gestalt psychology and socio-cognitive theory of personality*. St. Petersburg: University Library. 2007. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=20090445>

<sup>2</sup> Dean Y. The influence of awards on the psychological state of students. *Space of education*. 2008; (13):80-82. (translated from Chinese by 丁宇 Impact of rewards on students' psychological state//教育电影- 2008. No. 13. P. 80–82).

<sup>3</sup> Menshikov A.N. Non-verbal behavior of a teacher as a factor in the development of a student's personality. *Pedagogy and psychology in the context of modern research on problems of personality development*. 2013:64-70. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=22769571>

<sup>4</sup> Klyachko T., Semionova E., and Tokareva G. "Success and failure of schoolchildren: parents' expectations, teachers' assessment". *Educational Studies – Educational Studies Moscow*. 2019;4 (December): 71-92. <https://doi.org/10.17323/1814-9545-2019-4-71-92>

words teachers in different countries use to recognize and encourage their students? China is a socialist country and differs from Russia in terms of the methods used to develop human capital and civil society. We will identify similarities and differences in pedagogical values and practices by analyzing the cultural and pedagogical differences between the formats and texts of school awards and incentives in the two countries.

### **Theoretical analysis**

Perhaps the first statements a person encounters when learning a foreign language are statements with gratitude and positive evaluation/praise [2]<sup>1</sup>, suggesting in particular that gratitude is one of the essential components of the human conceptual system [6]<sup>2</sup>. Patterns of interaction with the world are passed on in the educational process as educators, parents, and other important adults encourage or fail to encourage various behaviors in their children and students [3]<sup>3</sup>. Many authors have studied encouragement as an obvious form of expressing gratitude. It has been shown that encouragement is sometimes more helpful than criticism and can stimulate students to learn more [18]<sup>4</sup>. In daily school practice, it is a very common pedagogical tool for teachers to praise their students [10]<sup>5</sup>. Sometimes even the simple phrase “very good” can significantly support and motivate a student [24]<sup>6</sup>.

In contrast to the adherents of behavioral pedagogy, proponents of the humanistic approach consider the award as a stage of reflection and recognition of achievement that is part of the student’s pedagogical support system, especially when the student is focused on his or her

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<sup>1</sup> Aivazova V.V. Cognitive research of the frame-scenario “gratitude” in various types of English and German discourse. dis. cand. philologist. Sciences. 2011. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=19251333>

<sup>2</sup> Vorkachev S.G. Great word: linguo-conceptual analysis of gratitude in scientific discourse. *Actual problems of philology and pedagogical linguistics*. 2018;4(32). <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=36633779>

<sup>3</sup> Alexandrovskaya V. N. “Ideal image” and “Formation of personality” as a polyfunctional synthesis. *Bulletin of the Samara State University*. 2014; 1(112): 198-206. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=21344599>

<sup>4</sup> Ouyang Ze. Nurturing Reward: An Analysis of an Educational Survey on the “Map of Dignity”. *Journal of Educational Reform*. 2004;(11):72-74. (translated from Chinese).

<sup>5</sup> Kislitsa G.K. A study of the phenomenology of the experience of gratitude. *Bulletin of St. Petersburg State University*. 2016;15(3). <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=27252587>

<sup>6</sup> Ji Zhenhui. On the role of praise in learning. *Educational and Pedagogical Forum*. 2013:59-61. (translated from Chinese).

development [12]<sup>1</sup>. If we disregard the practice of awards as a behavioral approach to children's education, it becomes possible to focus the research on the problem of perception of the ideal image of a person (a child) in a particular society [15]<sup>2</sup>. Solving the problem of forming an "ideal personality" of a student as a future "ideal adult" has been one of the leading areas of theoretical and applied interdisciplinary research for many centuries [3]<sup>3</sup>.

The idea of an ideal person exists in both the culture of the "East" and the culture of the "West" [25]<sup>4</sup>. In particular, in Chinese culture, the idea of an ideal person is based on the ideas of Confucianism, and in the Chinese language, there is even a separate word for such a person – "Junzi." The term frequently appears in classical Confucian texts and usually has two meanings. Before the Zhou Dynasty (1045 BC to 221 BC), it was a collective term for aristocrats [27]<sup>5</sup>. Afterward, it extended its meaning to high moral standards and became one of the most important terms in Confucianism, denoting the ideal person [14]<sup>6</sup>. According to Confucian ideas, such a person is endowed with benevolence, justice, and morality as the most important worldview and humility, trust, and righteousness standards of behavior [23]<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Kulikova L.N. Personal self-development of the student and teacher – the basis of humanistic pedagogy [Text]. *Pedagogy of development*. 2001:3-10.

<sup>2</sup> Managarov R.V. Encouragement as a means of pedagogical influence on the achievement of a positive learning outcome at school. *Social, humanitarian and economic sciences: actual problems*. 2018: 206-208. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=36324841>

<sup>3</sup> Alexandrovskaya V.N. "Ideal image" and "Formation of personality" as a polyfunctional synthesis. *Bulletin of the Samara State University*. 2014;1(112): 198-206. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=21344599>

<sup>4</sup> Jin Li. *Cultural foundations of learning East and West*. 2nd ed. ed. Moscow: Publishing House of the Higher School of Economics, 2017. Print. Library of the journal "Questions of Education".

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Jining. Comparison of Chinese and Western ideal personality and remodeling of ideal personality. *Vestnik Komsomolskoi school of Shandong province: studies of teenagers*. 1997;(3):4-7. (translated from Chinese by 张种宁. 中西方电影电影电影的人格可电影的人格重塑的发动电影 // Shandong 省共青团学报: 研究小少年 1997. #3. P. 4-7.)

<sup>6</sup> Liu Xiaodan. Comparison of the Western ideal personality and the ideal personality of Confucius. *Chinese electric power education*. 2011;(188):137-138. (translated from Chinese by 刘晓丹. Comparison of Western ideal person and 学子 ideal person//中国电影教育 2011. #188. P. 137–138.)

<sup>7</sup> Juan Kaigo. Dictionary of one hundred schools of masters. Chengdu. ed. "Sichuan People's Publishing House", 1999. (translated from Chinese).

In Russian educational practice, the concept of the *ideal person* is traditionally based on coexisting and sometimes contradictory ideas of Western European and Orthodox cultures [22]<sup>1</sup>. The ideal person in this cultural and philosophical context is, on the one hand, an active, energetic, strong-willed person who overcomes adversity, but at the same time should be characterized by contemplativeness and the ability to accept reality as it is, without trying to change anything in it, but only striving to survive the difficulties that constantly arise [7]<sup>2</sup>. The combination of these differently oriented vectors characterizes the understanding of the personal ideal in different social groups [16]<sup>3</sup>.

In the cultural traditions of education in the East and West, teachers and parents encourage students on different occasions and in different ways. In Eastern culture, students should display the following five virtues in the learning process: seriousness, diligence, care, perseverance, and concentration [5]<sup>4</sup>. In the Western culture, parents and teachers mainly emphasize the desire for inquisitive behavior and curiosity, the expression of critical thinking, and the desire for self-expression, activity, and discussion in the learning process [4]<sup>5</sup>.

### **Research methods and methodology**

We hypothesized that there are cultural and pedagogical differences in the texts of award ceremonies in Russian and Chinese schools designed to promote children's achievement. To test this hypothesis, we compared the texts of certificates given to students in Russian and Chinese schools (Fig. 1, Table 1). This work used not only a comparative but also a descriptive approach, which included a content analysis of the award texts. The subject of the analysis was the following aspects presented in the texts: The reason for the award, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ushinsky A.D. *Modern ideas and Orthodoxy*. St. Petersburg: type. Yu. Shtaufa, 1857:20 p.

<sup>2</sup> Goncharov V.V., Poyarkov S.Yu. Human rights and freedoms as an ideal value of the modern state. *Philosophy and Culture*. 2017;(1):47-50. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=28423227>

<sup>3</sup> Mareeva E.V., Mareev S. N. The problem of thinking: a contemplative and activity approach. Moscow: Academic Project, 2013:281 p. URL: <https://elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=22323073>

<sup>4</sup> Bien Nguyen. Change of the ideal personality in ancient and western history. *Foreign philosophy and philosophy history*. 1995;(4):14-16. (translation from Chinese 卞谷寅 夏保西方游戏的剧情主要讲述的人格的这些//外国品学与品学史 1995. № 4. P. 14–16.)

<sup>5</sup> Arutyunyan Yu.I. An average person – a typical person – an ideal person: historians of the Russian abroad about the Western Middle Ages. *Proceedings of the St. Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts*. 2008;178:8-14. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=32577496>

form of educational support, and the language of the award and encouragement. As a result of the analysis, it was determined what content the teachers (school administrators) write in the award document, why the encouragement is given, and how the award texts are designed in terms of linguistic means.

Text: “Commendation Certificate for Wang Yu. You are very intellectual, enjoy reading, and have excellent grades in school.

You have been classified as “Excellent Little Reader – Wolf King Dream\*.” Congratulations! I hope you will continue to be diligent and read the best books. This letter is to encourage you to keep going!

Group 4, Grade 6, Primary School

20.09.2021”

(12 years old, China)



Text: “Diploma / awarded to/ Alesya A. / winner (first place) of the scientific-practical conference on research and design work of schoolchildren “KRONA Junior”: strategy of discoveries and transformations/signatures of the organizing committee / St. Petersburg” (14 years old, Russia)



**Fig. 1.** Examples of a commendation certificate for a student of a Chinese school and a diploma for a student of a Russian school

Table 1

Reasons for awards in **Chinese** and **Russian** schools, including award texts

Reason	Russian award texts	Chinese award texts
Good academic performance and rankings	<p><b>Diploma.</b> First place winner in the age group up to 6 years in the nomination “Fine arts: painting.” Mushnikov M.</p> <p><b>Honorary diploma</b> The student of group 3B Naumov K. is awarded for good academic performance</p>	<p><b>Commendation certificate</b> Wang Sh. (9 years old). Won first place in the Chinese competition “Welcome to the New Year.” Huai Ren Huajie Elementary School</p>
Personal talents	<p><b>Commendation certificate</b> Lisov S. is awarded “an expressive recitation of a poem by A.S. Pushkin”</p>	<p><b>Commendation certificate.</b> Bai Yu (4 years old): For outstanding performance in the second semester of the 2016–2017 school year and was named a “lucky lark” (sings very well). This certificate is meant as encouragement!</p> <p><b>Honorary Diploma.</b> Qin Yi (8 years old): In the first semester of 2021–2022, he did well and received the title “Little Poet.” I hope you will continue working hard and become your best version!</p>
Personal qualities	no data	<p><b>Commendation certificate.</b> Bai Yu (5 years): Recognized as an “excellent worker” for outstanding performance in the second semester of the 2017–2018 academic year. This letter is issued for encouragement. June 1, 2018.</p> <p><b>Honorary Diploma.</b> Student (10 years old): Congratulations on your activity, and conscientiousness, in learning English. You are recognized as a “Star in English Learning” This letter is issued to encourage you!</p>
Participation in activities	<p><b>Diploma.</b> Lisov S. and Lisov A. are recognized for participating in the kindergarten creative exhibition “Dad can do it.”</p> <p><b>People’s Choice Award.</b> The student of the 1st grade, P. Starkova, is awarded in the drawing contest on the theme: “The Universe of the Cell” (based on the exhibition about cells)</p>	no data

\*Note: In Chinese culture, there is a positive image of the wolf, which combines courage, activity, mindfulness, and diligence. Therefore, the phrase



“Wolf King Dream” fits well with the discourse about awarding a child who is an active reader.

### **Databases for the analysis of school awards**

By school awards, we mean documents issued to a student to express recognition and praise for personal achievement and indicate the importance of that achievement. The award text also indicates which moral qualities and behaviors most deserve public attention and praise in different cultures.

The educational process for students in both countries is generally divided into preschool, elementary, and high school. In this study, we analyzed the school award texts received by students aged 4–14 in Chinese and Russian schools. The sample did not include recognition texts for children under the age of 4, as they do not yet have pedagogical independence. Furthermore, the age limit of 14 years was set to more accurately “synchronize” the sample, given the significant organizational differences between schools in China and Russia (e.g., the start of specialized schooling).

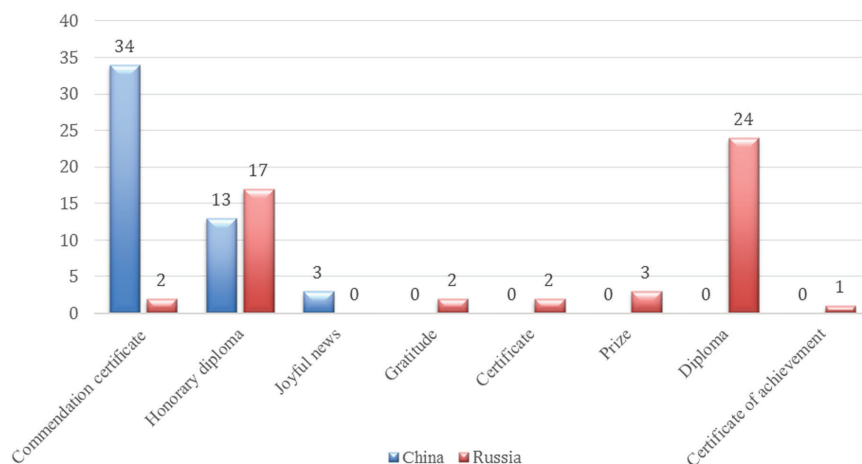
Thus, the texts of 50 Chinese and 51 Russian school awards sent to us by parents for analysis became the basis of the study. The study was conducted with the parent’s consent, who accepted our research principles and objectives and sent us copies of their children’s acknowledgments to analyze for scientific purposes. The corpus of analyzed texts included: diplomas, recognitions, commendation certificates, and certificates issued to school children in Russia and China between 2015 and 2020.

### **Research results and conclusions**

The types of school awards in Russian and Chinese school practice have a number of similarities and differences. This diversity is reflected, in particular, in their names, which we found in the presented corpus of texts (Fig. 2).

Modern China is characterized by school awards in three main forms: a *commendation certificate* (68%), less frequently an *honorary diploma* (26%), and very rarely *Joyful news* (6%). The definition from the explanatory dictionary of the Chinese language makes it clear what students are encouraged to do by the various text forms. The *Commendation certificate* is an award that expresses a student’s recognition and praise for high achievement. The *honorary diploma* is a document that highlights the

winner's achievement. Finally, the *joyful news* refers to an informative document with emotional undertones, meaning that this *news* (fact, event in which the recipient is involved) makes a person, a group, a country, or even the whole world happy. Usually, this format is used in informal and playful situations [21]<sup>1</sup>.

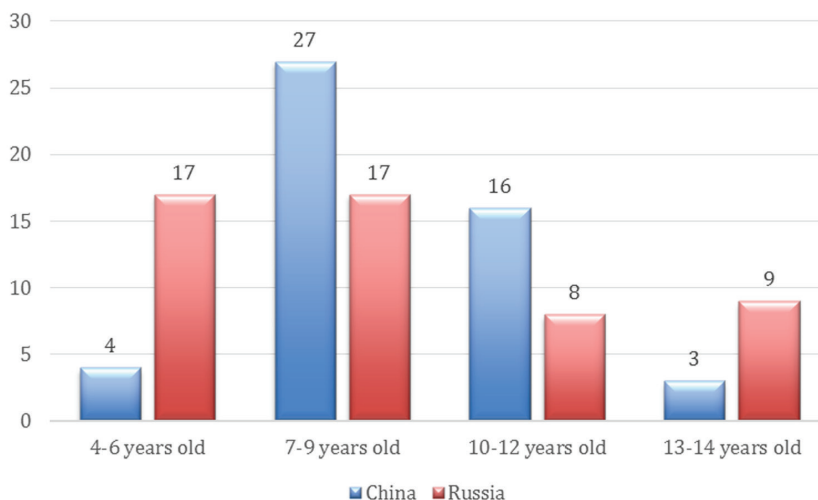


**Fig. 2.** Frequency of occurrence of different types of awards in Chinese educational practice (n = 50) and Russian educational practice (n = 51)

In Russian school practice, we identified seven types of award texts: *Diploma* (47%), *Honorary Diploma* (33%), the remaining 20% seem to be distributed among *commendation certificate*, *gratitude letters*, *certificates*, *prizes*, and *certificates of achievement*. The *honorary diploma* is considered the most official document, representing an award in itself. The *gratitude letter* is an official recognition of a particular social or educational behavior of a student at a particular time at a particular event. A *certificate* officially certifies (confirms) the fact that the student has mastered course participation in a particular event or case. A *prize* (usually with an explanatory text) is awarded to the competition winner. A *Diploma* as an award document certifies the successful completion of a particular educational or creative pathway and usually refers to competitions, Olympiads, and festivals. And the *certificate of achievement* is an official document that certifies a specific educational achievement or an event in a student's life.

<sup>1</sup> Chinese Dictionary // URL:<http://xh.5156edu.com/>

An analysis of the age dynamics of school awards shows that it is quite comparable in both countries, although each country has its own characteristics. We divided school awards into four groups: Preschoolers (4–6 years old), Elementary School students (7–9 years old), Middle School students (10–12 years old), and High School students (13–14 years old). This classification by age corresponds to the schooling levels in Russia and China. Figure 3 shows the quantitative distribution of school awards by age.

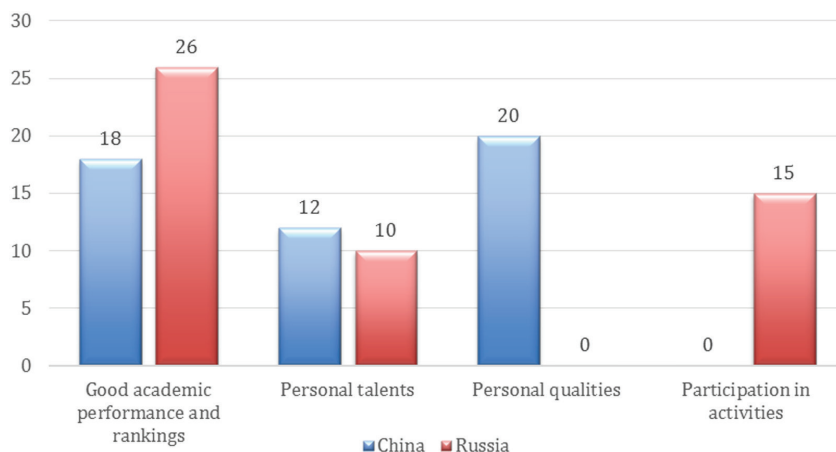


**Fig. 3.** age of Chinese students ( $n = 50$ ) and Russian students ( $n = 51$ ) at the time of an award

The figure shows that in Chinese schools, the largest proportion of awards falls on the age of 7–9 years, namely 54%; the smallest proportion falls on the age of 13–14 years, namely 6%. The share falling on the age of 4–6 years is also very small – less than 10%.

If we analyze the age dynamics of rewarding and encouraging Russian students, we find that the largest share falls on the age groups 4–6 and 7–9 years, where they account for 33.33% each. On the other hand, the smallest share is accounted for by 10–12-year old students and represents 15% of the total number of school awards. Furthermore, we found that in both national school systems, the number of school awards decreases as the age of the students increases. Perhaps this is because schools begin to set higher expectations for students, so the number of awards students receive generally decreases.

To analyze the reasons for awards in Russia and China, we examined the texts of award documents and divided them into four types, shown in Table 1 and Figure 4.



**Fig. 4.** Frequency of reasons for awards in Chinese (n = 50) and Russian (n = 51) schools

As a result of the analysis, we found that when promoting student performance in Chinese schools, the reasons related to personal qualities account for the largest proportion. These reasons account for 40%. This is followed by reasons related to academic performance – they account for 36%. The smallest share is accounted for by reasons related to specific personal qualities – their number is 24%. At the same time, personal qualities are promoted in both preschool and elementary school. Recognition for good academic performance in general or for achieving a specific high academic result is statistically the most common reason for school awards for Chinese children over the age of 10.

Having done the same analysis with respect to Russian schools, we found that in Russian schools, the largest proportion is awarded for winning I<sup>st</sup>, II<sup>nd</sup>, or III<sup>d</sup> places in competitions that have nothing to do with academic achievement. The share of these reasons for the award is 51%. The share of awards for participation in certain activities is 29%, and the share of rewards for “personal talents” (usually creative or sports) is 17%. At the same time, there is a correlation between the age group a Russian child belongs to and the reason for an award. Preschool children are more often awarded for active participation in an activity, elementary school students for good academic performance, and older children over ten mainly for personal talents.

We view the practice of school awards examined in this study as a range of educational support necessary to address different developmental stages of a particular skill and achieve new outcomes. Therefore, we divided the forms of pedagogical support in the texts of Chinese and Russian awards into the following categories:

1) Expression of hope. The words used are associated with the hope that students will continue to work hard and achieve better results.

For example:

“You did well in the reading activity “Melon in the First Grade” and were named a reading star. I hope you will read more good books and become a happy reader!” (7 years old, China).

“This week in Chinese class, you listened well and were active and were graded as “Little Star in Chinese Class.” I hope you will continue to work hard and learn the best version of yourself! With love. Master Zhou” (12 years old, China)

2) Expression of gratitude.

For example:

“Diploma for participating in the creation of the children’s short film “Where Bears Dream”... Thank you for your joint work aimed at teaching humanistic values to the young generation” (14 years old, Russia).

3) A specific demonstrated ability or educational outcome is noted.

For example:

*“A diploma for a wonderful clay model work” (5 years old, Russia).*

*“Commendation certificate for outstanding achievement during the 2019–2020 school year, you will be awarded the title of Outstanding Alumnus. This letter is an encouragement for you!” (11 years old, China)*

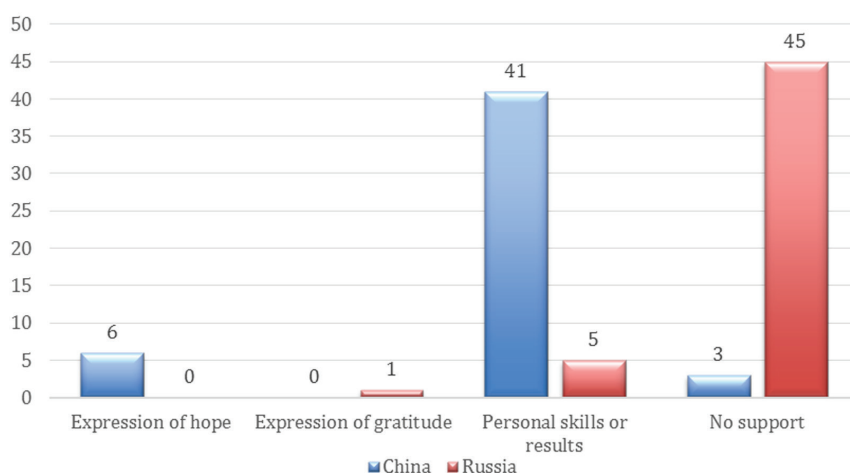
4) Formal Award. In the text of such an award, there is little or no encouragement for education. Example:

*“The diploma of the winner of the X-City children’s literature contest “Southern Storyteller” is awarded to Bykova V.” (14 years old, Russia)*

*“You have been recognized as an outstanding pioneer in the second semester of the 2020–2021 school year. This certificate is awarded to you as an encouragement!” (9 years old, China)*

Figure 5 shows a comparative analysis of the texts of the award certificates, which reflect one or the other type of educational support.

After analyzing the form of pedagogical support in the award texts, we conclude that in the Chinese award texts, the largest proportion is devoted to highlighting and supporting specific student achievements: it amounts to 82%; no words of support are used in 6% of the cases, and expressions of hope are recorded in 12% of the cases. Furthermore, the expression of gratitude is not used at all in the texts of Chinese awards. Instead, Chinese teachers describe students' achievements in detail to make students (and their parents) aware of their strengths while inspiring them to work hard in their further education to build on them. This kind of award is also used in Chinese schools to allow some students to show themselves as role models for others.



**Fig. 5.** Frequency of manifestation of pedagogical support in the texts of Chinese and Russian awards (n = 101)

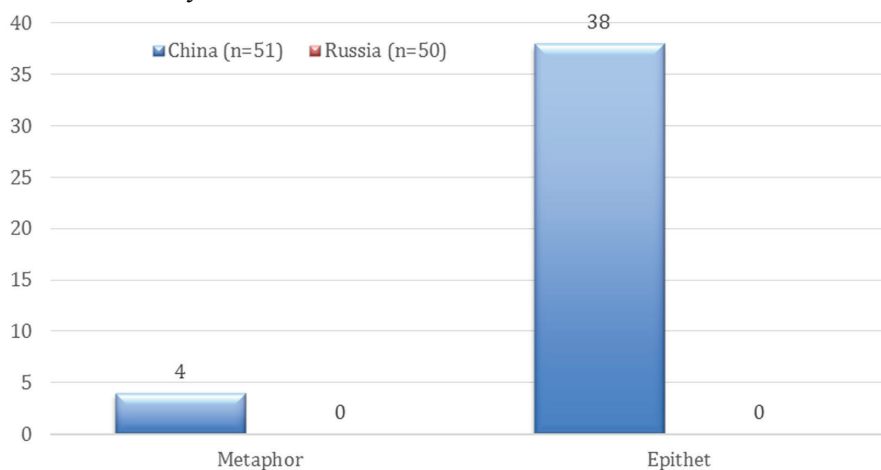
In contrast to the situation in China, the largest proportion of award texts in Russian schools falls into the “no support” category – about 88%; award texts mentioning a specific achievement result account for about 10%, and texts expressing gratitude only about 2%.

Analyzing reward practices as a form of pedagogical support, we found that Chinese reward texts more often mention specific student achievements. At the same time, Russian award texts mention achievements and students' active participation in one or another school-approved activity. Our results show that “expression of hope” is used more frequently in Chinese awards, while the category “expression of gratitude” occurs only once and only in Russian award texts. Texts addressed to Chinese students actively support the

student's "personal abilities or results," while Russian award texts record the fact of the student's participation in a school-approved activity or (as in Chinese texts) the fact of achievement. At the same time, the position of pedagogical support is almost always absent from these texts.

Analyzing the texts of school awards in general, we find that while the pedagogical practices of school awards and encouragement in Russian and Chinese schools have many similarities, they also differ significantly. The "ideal" Chinese student displays diligence and care and performs well. On the other hand, the "ideal" Russian student is primarily characterized as an active student who participates in events inside and outside school.

In analyzing the texts, we learned of significant linguistic differences in the award texts of the two national school systems. The Chinese awards are characterized by an artistic style dominated by metaphors (8%) and epithets (76%). The texts of Russian school awards are mostly written in an official style. Figure 6 illustrates the differences in language style between the two national school systems.



**Fig. 6.** frequency of use of epithets and metaphors in the texts of Chinese and Russian awards

The traditional Chinese award text very often contains metaphors and analogies and uses impressions and artistic images to illustrate the judgments and facts stated in the text. The texts written by the Chinese teachers themselves usually contain specific, simple, and at the same time, beautiful images, which, on the one hand, are intended to help the awarded/encouraged

student understand the essence and reason for the encouragement and, on the other hand, to leave a deep impression on them and encourage them to achieve even greater success in the future.

We have also found that most of the epithets used in Chinese school award texts contain the word “*little*” to emphasize the youth of the recipient, e.g., “*little calligrapher*” or “*little example of a hard worker*.” In a Chinese school, it is common to give such an honorary title to express the adults’ hope for a great and successful future for the child. This approach is in line with the Plan for the Moral Education of Children in Chinese Society, officially adopted at the state level as the “Outline for the Implementation ... Strengthening civic morality construction” of the Party Central Committee. In general, the practice of awarding and encouraging, which is common in modern Chinese schools, aims to help Chinese school children strengthen their moral education and raise their self-esteem.

### **Conclusions and discussion**

As a result of the study, we found that the culture of school awards in both countries begins at about the same age – 4–5 years. Until the age of 4, children do not understand the meaning of awards, so the encouragement is more directed to the child’s family. In both countries, there is a correlation – the younger the child, the more awards and encouragement he or she should receive, but the older the child gets, the less often teachers issue commendation certificates and diplomas. We have several hypotheses about the reasons for this relationship. First, teachers in preschool specifically shape useful learning habits and skills. Second, students move from “playing” to systematic “learning” with a fixed outcome of knowledge and skills in the higher grades. Third, schools in both countries place higher demands on students with each grade level, making it more difficult to earn honors and decreasing their numbers accordingly.

We found a statistically significant relationship between the age of students at the time of the award and the reasons for the award in all national school systems. Russian and Chinese pedagogical practices have in common the promotion of good performance by children in elementary school and the achievement of high rankings in competitions (I<sup>st</sup>, II<sup>nd</sup>, III<sup>d</sup>). In other words, in both systems, the manifestation of a certain ability or talent in a certain activity is encouraged.



A peculiarity of the Chinese school is that as children grow older, the proportion of awards associated with personal qualities and talents decreases, and the promotion of academic achievements increases. In Chinese middle schools, educators place more emphasis on academic achievement and less on personal (additional) talents not directly related to learning. For Chinese parents, however, a source of pride is not only an award for placing well in competitions but also awards for their child showing positive personal qualities in the life of the school and the class.

In Russian educational practice, active participation in competitions is most often encouraged in preschool age, for good academic performance – in elementary school, and only in adolescence students are awarded for the manifestation of personal talents. This situation is explained by the fact that specialization in a particular subject in Russian schools begins at twelve. Personal awards not only recognize a child's achievement but also give him or her feedback about their performance in a certain area, which may be related to their future learning specialization. The fact that a teenager receives a school award for manifesting certain skills and talents qualifies him or her for selection for special programs to support gifted children, funded by the state and business.

Compared to Russian practice, the emphasis in Chinese schools is clearly on the value of academic achievement. However, this often results in the school not creating conditions and opportunities for children to participate in certain activities where they could show their talent. This is also reflected in the content of school award texts, where there is no category encouraging participation in additional (extracurricular) activities, as this is not considered a meaningful activity for students. Thus, in the Chinese school award system, specific educational progress and academic achievement are encouraged in most cases.

In the comparative study, we also found a lack of educational support in the texts of Russian awards. In most Chinese school award texts, hope and belief in the student's "great successful future" are emotionally expressed with the help of metaphors and epithets. Russian school award texts are predominantly devoid of such artistry and emotionality, as well as lines associated with hopes for a successful future. Despite this difference, it is important to recognize the value of both approaches. While Chinese award texts may be more emotionally expressive and evoke a sense of hope and inspiration, Russian award texts may be more straightforward and focus on the student's academic achievements. Ultimately, school awards aim to

acknowledge and reward students' hard work and achievements, and both Chinese and Russian award texts serve this purpose in their own way. By recognizing and appreciating the cultural differences in how educational support is expressed, we can gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the unique educational experiences of students in different parts of the world.

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## **ЧТО ВАЖНЕЕ БЫТЬ АКТИВНЫМ ИЛИ БЫТЬ ХОРОШИМ? СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ НАГРАД РОССИЙСКИХ И КИТАЙСКИХ ШКОЛЬНИКОВ**

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**Аннотация.** Заслуженная награда и похвала ребёнка, является одним из древних способов обратной связи о том, в нужном ли направлении развивается человек. Изучая способы позитивного подкрепления и различий в способах поощрения детей в разных странах, учителя могут лучше понять особенности своих возможных иностранных учеников, а также выбрать новые методы для поддержки учеников-соотечественников. Цель статьи – проанализировать различия в культуре наградного дискурса школьных достижений в российских и китайских школах. Методы исследования: сочетание сравнительного и описательного подхода к анализу текстов, статистический анализ. В исследовании использовались наградные тексты школьников и дошкольников из России (n = 51) и Китая (n = 50). В результате исследования было установлено, что для китайских образовательных учреждений характерны награды трёх форматов, а для российских – семи. Системы поощрений в России и Китае имеют схожесть и различия. Общим для обеих практик является поощрение хорошей успеваемости (достижение высокого рейтинга) и поддержка развития личных талантов ребенка в области искусств или в спорте. Свойственным исключительно китайской школе можно назвать поощрение личностных качеств ученика (любовь к труду, добросовестность, настойчивость и т.д.). Уникальной особенностью российской школы в этом контексте является поощрение активности

школьника в какой-либо творческой деятельности («участие в выставке/фестивале») без указания конкретного результата ребенка. В текстах и китайских и российских наградных документов отмечаются «достижения», но в китайских наградах педагоги отдают предпочтение формулировкам, содержащим «надежду на будущие успехи», а в российских фиксируется только факт участия награждаемого ребенка в том или ином событии. Кроме того, в текстах российских наградных документов практически не используются художественные средства языка, в то время как в текстах китайских широко используются метафоры, эпитеты и сравнения для эмоционального усиления «поощрительного высказывания».

**Ключевые слова:** *школьные награды, позитивная мотивация, педагогическая поддержка, обратная связь, поощрение, российская школа, китайская школа*

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