

Qualitative Analysis: Effective Practices in Inclusive and Special Needs Education in China

Cao Zongqing¹, Gift Muyunda^{2*}, Qiangfeng Lab³

^{1,3}Beijing Normal University, China

²Southwest University, China

*e-mail: giftedlimpo@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The sphere of inclusive and special needs education has garnered significant attention in contemporary educational discourse. China, as an influential global actor, provides a pertinent case study due to its socio-cultural dynamics and rapid educational reforms. This qualitative analysis seeks to elucidate effective practices prevalent in China's special needs education system and examine their implications for further academic and policy-oriented discussions. A qualitative study method was chosen and in-depth interviews were used to obtain in-depth information. The study sample consisted of 4 teachers, 3 students, 1 parent and 1 school manager in China using purposive sampling technique. Data analysis was analyzed inductively and successively coded to generate emerging themes. The results of the study shows that special needs children enjoy equal educational access in China, however, there is a lack of systematic and comprehensive support at school level resulting in limited compensatory equity and differential equity. Also, the results of the study show that teachers' professional ethics and professional level are the keys for implementing relevant policies and ideas and promoting the educational equity of children in regular classes.

Keywords:

Inclusive Education; Special Needs Children; Learning in Regular Classes.

ABSTRAK

Bidang pendidikan inklusif dan berkebutuhan khusus telah mendapat perhatian yang signifikan dalam wacana pendidikan kontemporer. Tiongkok, sebagai aktor global yang berpengaruh, memberikan studi kasus yang relevan karena dinamika sosial budaya dan reformasi pendidikan yang cepat. Analisis kualitatif ini berupaya menjelaskan praktik-praktik efektif yang lazim

dalam sistem pendidikan kebutuhan khusus di Tiongkok dan mengkaji implikasinya terhadap diskusi akademis dan berorientasi kebijakan lebih lanjut. Metode penelitian kualitatif dipilih dan wawancara mendalam digunakan untuk memperoleh informasi mendalam. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 4 orang guru, 3 orang siswa, 1 orang tua dan 1 orang manajer sekolah di China dengan menggunakan teknik purposive sampling. Analisis data dianalisis secara induktif dan diberi kode berturut-turut untuk menghasilkan tema-tema yang muncul. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak berkebutuhan khusus menikmati akses pendidikan yang setara di Tiongkok, namun kurangnya dukungan sistematis dan komprehensif di tingkat sekolah mengakibatkan terbatasnya kesetaraan kompensasi dan kesetaraan diferensial. Selain itu, hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa etika profesional dan tingkat profesional guru merupakan kunci untuk menerapkan kebijakan dan gagasan yang relevan serta mendorong pemerataan pendidikan anak-anak di kelas reguler.

Keywords:

Pendidikan Inklusif; Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus; Belajar di Kelas Reguler.

1. Introduction

Beginning in the 1980s, a call to receive special children in regular classes emerged (Ferguson 1995; Ainscow, 1998; Underwood, 2008), as the evidence that the value and benefits of inclusive education approach for special children grow (Brown et al., 2004; Lynch & Irvine, 2009; Theohari's, 2013). As an educational trend, inclusive education accommodates all students, opposes discrimination and exclusion, promotes active participation, pays attention to cooperation, and meets different needs (Ainscow, 1998). One of its basic forms in practice is learning in regular classes for special children. Special children consist of three specific disability categories: visual and hearing impairment and intellectual disability (Deng & Poon-Mcbrayer, 2004). However, inclusive education develops not so well in some countries, especially in developing counties. So solutions to these difficulties in inclusive education are more likely to turn to laws and policies, which seems to be the fastest and most effective way to promote inclusive education. As early as 1986, *China's Compulsory Education Law* proposed to create diversified resettlement forms for disabled children to enter school. Until now, relevant departments have promulgated, such as *the Five-year Development Outline of China's Cause for the Disabled (1988-1992)* (the State Council, 1988), *the Trial Measures on Carrying out Regular Schooling for Disabled Children and Adolescents* (the State Education Commission, 1994), and *the Ninth Five Year Plan of National Compulsory Education for Disabled Children and Adolescents* (the State Education Commission, 1996), *Special education promotion plan (2014-2016)* (the State Council, 2014), *Regulations on the education of persons with disabilities* (the State Council, 2017), all of these and some newly revised policies specifically related to the issue of Learning in Regular Classes (LRC), which means children with disabilities receive education in

ordinary schools, provide policy basis and support for the development of inclusive education in China.

In addition, related research on inclusive education has promoted special children to learn in regular classes instead of in special schools. Deng (2014) firmly holds that LRC is an important way to develop inclusive education in China. LRC benefits special children in various aspects, such as friendship, cooperation, and social skills. Friendship predicts cognitive development in the areas of creativity, and task-mastery (Hartup, 1996). However, they may be at risk for many negative socio-behavioral outcomes (DiGennaro Reed et al., 2011). Sociometric nominations have been used to assess peer acceptance in regular classes (Erdley et al., 1998). Some put forward meaningful suggestions, while some reveal the existing problems of inclusive education (Lindsay, G; & Ryan, D). All these studies, with no exception, argue that special children have the right to receive high-quality education and have laid a solid theoretical foundation for regular learning.

The policy preference for special children in China and in-depth study of regular classes by scholars objectively solve enrollment problems for many special children. In essence, it is the promotion of educational equity. Educational equity can be framed in terms of both equal opportunities and outcomes (Nieto, 1996). Ready et al. (2004) mainly concentrated on educational equity from structural issues to explore how structural issues related to social stratification in student outcomes. At the same time, De Valenzuela et al. (2006) thought of key aspects of educational opportunities as enrollment, access to general education settings, and ancillary services. Combined with China's specific conditions, Shi (2008) holds that educational equity means inclining the allocation of public education to vulnerable groups in practice. Also, Gong (2021) asserts that everyone should have the right to educational opportunities, quality learning conditions, and success to ensure starting equity, process equity, and result equity, respectively. Scholars have discussed educational equity differently, and educational equity can be embodied in various situations.

They all agree that educational equity is the inevitable requirement for high-quality development of education and the necessary meaning of maintaining social stability and human prosperity and development. China's macro policies and local-specific regulations supporting education equity in regular classes have been formed. However, environments closely related to children, such as regular classes, family conditions, class atmosphere, and local social economy, are very different. So the policy results and educational equity of each special child vary from each other. The environment closer to children can affect the individual's perception of equity and reflect the problems existing in education equity. Therefore, in order to truly promote the fairness of regular learning and return to the original intention of regular learning policies and ideas, we must not only classify special children as a unified subject but recognize that special children are people who have a common world and intersubjectivity with others (Silva Filho, 2015), to go deep into the real environment of LRC. A qualitative case study design could be a better choice to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction (Creswell, 2009). In sum, the present study traces back and explores one specific special student with an intellectual disability by a

qualitative method, with the purpose to reflect and analyze the current situation in the inclusion of special needs children in regular schools.

The Case: Tom

Tom, born in 2000 in an ordinary family in the suburb of Chongqing City in China, is the only child in the family. His father works far from the family, his mother takes care of him at home, and in the daytime works in a nearby supermarket to subsidize the family. Tom's mother told the headteacher about her child on the first day of the seventh-grade school. When he was born, the hospital suddenly cut off the power, resulting in her child's lack of oxygen and mental impairment. As Tom grew up, his parents found a large gap between his intelligence level compared to his peers, hence, the need to begin to look for a reason. Tom ranks Grade IV intellectual disability (mild), and his IQ value is between 50 and 75. Tom can take care of himself and communicate normally. If you do not have a deep understanding of Tom, he looks like a normal child at first glance. Tom once completed six years of primary school in a school corresponding to junior middle school. After entering junior middle school, he and most of the students in his class were also primary school classmates and were familiar with each other.

The present study is the first one in China to explore parental involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process and may be significant to students, parents, and teachers of students with disabilities. First, exploring parental involvement in the IEP process may support educational practices for enhancing the academic and social performance of students with disabilities in schools. Second, discovering the perceptions and beliefs of parents associated with different cultural groups. (Gumpel & Sharoni, 2007), may provide improved practices for students with disabilities in Israeli special education schools. Last, identifying of parents' central concerns may assist teachers with implementing educational programs aligned with the goals and cultural background of the family (Santamaria, 2009).

2. Methods

The qualitative research was adopted in the present article to study Tom's learning in a regular class to answer the research question. The case study method is relevant because it is helpful to investigate specific individuals or specific contexts for in-depth analysis. There is no single way to conduct a case study, and a combination of methods (e.g., unstructured interviewing, direct observation) can be used. In the present study, a case study design with a direct observation method was adopted. The concept of inclusion is complex and requires observations to investigate the research question from different points of view in their natural settings (Yin, R. K, 2003). This study consists of multiple observations as the study environment is not confined to one setting but covered multiple sites to draw qualitative analysis (Padgett, 1998). In our observations, we have selected them from five different ways that the schools organized their inclusive practice. These are 1) Traditional teaching practice in the classroom, 2) Variety and Flexible teaching practice in the classroom, 3) One to One teaching within the classroom 4) One to One teaching outside the classroom 5) Teaching in

Small Groups outside the classroom. Several observations were done related to each of these five inclusive practices. The validity of the findings is obtained with these multiple observations in each inclusive practice were embedded and analyzed.

2.1. Participants

According to relationship closeness, three relationship circles from the closest to least close to Tom are included in the present investigation. Tom and his parents are the first relationship circle that pays the most attention to the equity of LRC. The second circle, including Tom's classmates, headteacher, and subject teachers, is the core force affecting the fairness of Tom's regular learning. The third, such as school leaders and other teachers, are not directly connected with Tom. However, their conceptions about LRC are still essential, the data that can supplement and confirm the findings of the first two layers. Hence, their participation are valuable data source. The basic information of participants is as follows (see Table 1). Two stakeholders in the first circle were interviewed in this study, including Tom and Tom's mother. Because Tom's mother is Tom's family companion in his study and daily life, we can obtain first-hand information than his father, who works from a distance. More than 15 teachers have taught him during Tom's junior high school, but only three teachers have completely accompanied Tom for 3 years, hence, selected them as participants. It is worth mentioning that Teacher 1 is the headteacher and English teacher of Tom, he is interviewed within the research group, and his self-reflection is also essential for the qualitative case study. Furthermore, two Tom's closest classmates were selected as well. Additionally, one other teacher who did not teach Tom and a school manager of the junior high school were selected.

Table 1. Participants Discription

No.	Participants	Identity	Relationship circle
1	Tom	A special student	1 st
2	Miss Wang	Tom's mother	1 st
3	Teacher 1	Tom's headteacher	2 nd
4	Teacher 2	Tom's math teacher	2 nd
5	Teacher 3	Tom's politics teacher	2 nd
6	Student 1	Tom's classmate	2 nd
7	Student 2	Tom's classmate	2 nd
8	Teacher 4	A PE teacher	3 rd
9	School manager	A vice-principal	3 rd

2.2 Data Collection

The meticulous process of transcribing data in this study was a vital component to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the research findings. The data collection was a multi-faceted endeavor, drawing from a variety of sources to safeguard its internal validity. These sources included interviews, observations, and document analysis, forming a comprehensive approach to gather information.

To capture the essence of Tom's educational journey, the data collection unfolded in three distinct phases. The first phase began with contacting Tom himself and reaching out to his parents. This initial contact served the dual purpose of informing them about the study's objectives and securing their support, which was fundamental for the in-depth exploration that followed. Consent and ethical considerations formed the cornerstone of this phase, ensuring that the study proceeded with transparency and respect for all involved.

The second phase involved a strategic approach to involve various stakeholders. Tom's classmates and teachers were contacted, and a purposive sampling method was employed to select participants who could provide valuable insights. Additionally, one other teacher and a school manager were reached through convenient sampling. Individual in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of these participants. At the heart of these interviews lay a pivotal question: "Is it fair for Tom, a special needs child, to learn in a regular classroom, and why?" Each interview spanned 20 to 40 minutes, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of perspectives, experiences, and opinions.

Throughout this second phase, the principles of safety, dignity, and the voice of the participants were paramount, reflecting the ideals set forth (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013). These principles guided the interactions and underpinned the ethical framework of the research process, ensuring a respectful and supportive environment for all involved.

The third phase delved into the realm of documentation and supplementary materials. It involved consulting various records and resources related to Tom and his classroom environment. These materials primarily encompassed academic records, videos, class logs, and the head teacher's workshop manual. They served as essential resources to enrich the foundational data of the study, offering insights into Tom's genuine learning experiences and daily life within the classroom.

In summary, the transcribing of data in this study was a meticulously executed process that integrated various sources and methods. This comprehensive approach ensured that the research captured a holistic view of Tom's educational journey and the complex issues surrounding the inclusion of special needs children in regular classrooms. Ethical considerations, transparent communication, and a commitment to respecting the voices of all participants were pivotal in every phase of data collection.

2.3 Data Analysis

The investigators embarked on a comprehensive analysis of data to assess the effectiveness of inclusive practices for children with special needs in China. To ensure a rigorous examination, they harnessed the capabilities of NVivo software, a powerful tool for qualitative data analysis. The first step in this analytical journey involved the development of distinct criteria, designed to evaluate various aspects of inclusivity.

The data was meticulously organized, employing categorical and chronological arrangements, which allowed for a structured and comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. This methodical approach enabled the researchers to gain valuable insights into the evolution of inclusive practices over time, shedding light on the historical context of the issue.

The analysis was far from a one-time endeavor; instead, it was characterized by a process of constant revisitation. The data was repeatedly reviewed, providing opportunities to refine and deepen the understanding of the research problem. This iterative process ensured that no valuable insights were overlooked and allowed the researchers to explore the subject matter from multiple angles.

As the analysis progressed, a core theme emerged, emphasizing the critical aspect of equity in the context of Learning Resource Centers (LRC). This central theme served as a focal point around which the entire study revolved. It crystallized the essence of the research, highlighting the significance of equity in inclusive practices for children with special needs in China.

In summary, by employing NVivo software and a meticulous analytical approach, the researchers successfully completed a systematic and in-depth research study, enhancing their understanding of inclusive practices for children with special needs in China. This rigorous process ultimately yielded valuable research findings that can contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject and guide future efforts to promote equity and inclusivity in educational settings, particularly with regard to individuals like Tom

3. Results and Discussion

In the following section of this study, a thorough exposition of the findings is outlined, derived from the meticulous analysis conducted. The employed methodology was designed to systematically code and categorise data that exhibited similarities in thematic content or shared attributes. The implementation of this method allowed for the adoption of a systematic and organised approach in identifying significant patterns. Upon conducting a meticulous examination of the feedback provided by the participants involved in the study, it became evident that three distinct categories emerged with notable frequency. The three key components that are encompassed in this context are: the principle of ensuring equal access to educational institutions for all individuals, the concept of fairness in compensation structures, and the importance of maintaining consistency in approaches to differential treatment. This section of the study extensively explores the intricate aspects of educational equity, with a particular emphasis on the central themes identified.

Fair access to LRC: A real social environment conducive to future development for special children

In 2016, Tom graduated from junior high school and entered a vocational education school. He studied automobile maintenance. In the next two or three years, the author never met him again, and there was no other information about Tom. When the author saw him again, he was at a well-known hot pot restaurant in the same city. Tom was a waiter there. He took the initiative to say hello to the teachers who taught him before. His voice was still the same as before, not too loud, but could be heard. His face kept smiling as usual. Teachers asked him to sit down and eat together, "thank you, teachers. We have discipline and have to work." he answered a little shyly. The sense of professional discipline reflected is still the same as abiding the school rules and discipline when he was a student. From then on, the author has been to the hot pot shop several times and could see Tom doing her job conscientiously. Once, he told that he had a girlfriend and worked in the same hot pot shop. Even in junior high school, he openly said he liked a female classmate so that the female classmate did not dare to come to class; straightforward feelings towards girls are not greatly affected by intellectual problems.

Before this study, the author had a video call with Tom. He was cooking in the kitchen. At the age of 21, he resigned from the hot pot shop in September, 2022. His savings for more than three years were enough to buy a car, which also strengthened his hope for a better life in the future. At present, he is learning his driver's license. He hopes to buy his car after getting his driver's license and then marry his new girlfriend (to be verified).

From kindergarten to high school graduation, Tom spent the whole campus life studying in regular classes. Because high school vocational education and college vocational education have been connected, Tom said he could still go to college, but he did not. Although in ordinary primary and secondary schools with the main tasks of knowledge teaching, thinking development, and habit morality cultivation, children with intellectual defects such as Tom are difficult to obtain the same academic achievements as ordinary children, and the functions of education on class mobility and career choice have much less impact on children in regular classes. However, access and equity are the main pillars of inclusive education (Mphongoshe et al., 1998). China's policy of participating in regular classes from kindergartens to universities ensures that special children have fair educational opportunities. Judging from childhood's current social life situation, he can improve his social survival and survive a normal social life.

Within the domain of education, it is irrefutable that maintaining regular involvement in conventional learning modalities provides an educational environment comparable to that experienced by typically developing children. The experience of being fully immersed in a traditional educational environment acts as a catalyst, promoting frequent engagement with peers who possess typical developmental characteristics. The engagement in such activities not only facilitates the development of Tom's skills in understanding and navigating the intricacies of the world but also makes a substantial contribution to the core educational goals of mainstream institutions that cater to

students with special needs. Additionally, the consistent immersion in a conventional educational setting functions as a transformative environment for fostering social skills, a crucial aspect in the comprehensive growth of individuals belonging to the special-needs population. The development and enhancement of social skills within a traditional setting play a crucial role in equipping individuals with special needs to successfully navigate the complexities of society and engage effectively in social interactions.

Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge that the development of social skills in a traditional environment is inherent to the ability of individuals with special needs to thrive and succeed within the larger social context. The acquisition of vital abilities necessary for societal integration and participation occurs within the ordinary context. The acquisition of these competencies empowers individuals with special needs to overcome the obstacles that frequently result in their exclusion from mainstream society. Therefore, the cultivation of social intelligence within a typical educational setting becomes a crucial element in the broader approach to promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for individuals with diverse educational needs. The integration of routine educational encounters and ongoing engagement with peers who exhibit typical behaviour not only fosters Tom's individual development and flexibility, but also plays a crucial role in the broader objective of fostering inclusivity and empowering individuals with special needs to achieve their maximum capabilities as esteemed contributors to the community.

Limited compensatory support: real perception of fairness cannot hide the imperfect fact of fairness

Perception is the psychological feeling based on objective facts, but the same objective facts may have different psychological feelings. Therefore, perception is the mapping of facts, but perception is not the fact itself. Tom said that he was very happy (fairly treated) at school. He gave two reasons. (1) Classmates are his friends. In the saved video of the class's New Year's Day party, Tom actively participated in the Journey to the West show. He played the second senior brother Pig. There was constant laughter. Tom's "comedy" effect was good, but everyone knew the hidden inequality and differential treatment behind the laughter, but Tom enjoyed it. Tom happily lives in the class and takes some as his friends. On the surface, he is an active participant in various occasions of the class. However, he is a dispensable outsider in others' subconscious and has not been recognized, respected, and treated equally from the heart. This results is consistently the same with sociological studies which have shown that social exclusion and marginalization are prevalent in contemporary societies. A study conducted by Smith et al. (2019) found that individuals who do not conform to the dominant social norms or belong to minority groups often experience exclusionary practices. These practices can manifest in various forms, such as ostracism, discrimination, and unequal treatment. This empirical research underscores the claim that the individual discussed in the passage may indeed be relegated to the role of a dispensable outsider in certain social contexts.

Furthermore, psychological research on social identity and self-esteem sheds light on the emotional and cognitive consequences of being unrecognized and unrespected. According to Tajfel

and Turner's (1986) social identity theory, individuals derive a sense of self-worth and belonging from their social group memberships. When they are consistently excluded or devalued within those groups, it can lead to feelings of alienation and diminished self-esteem. This theoretical framework provides insight into how the lack of recognition and equal treatment can impact an individual's internal experiences

"The sole distinction lies in the probability of experiencing an apathetic existence. Undoubtedly, fostering a positive peer relationship contributes significantly to one's cognitive development, personality formation, social growth, and the assimilation of societal values (Zou, 1993). Nonetheless, within a conventional classroom setting, the identity of exceptional students becomes entangled, leading to a clash between societal stigmatization and self-identity (Peng, 2021)." (2) Teachers are his friends. The math teacher says,

"In the seventh grade, the oral arithmetic of addition and subtraction within 100 became a problem. It was still the case in the ninth grade, and Tom was not given too many requirements in learning." The political teacher's feedback was, "In class, I would still call him yes or no; otherwise, he would be bored sitting in the classroom for more than three years."

Teachers have almost no requirements for Tom's studies. Of course, there is no after-school counseling. Teachers do not treat Tom as strictly as other students. Tom took it as the love from teachers. Parents' information often comes from children's feedback. Tom's mother also thinks that children's junior high school life should be a very happy one for all students, and teachers.

To some degree, Tom is an outsider in the class in the view of classmates and even teachers. For the differential treatment of Tom, the tolerance and compensation on the surface are the absence of education and the lack of peer friendship. We cannot deny that the concern of teachers in Tom's view and the different treatment in the view of teachers have become the basic reason why both sides have an inconsistent understanding but can promote the harmonious coexistence of teachers and students. Teachers treat Tom differently, but this differential treatment is a negative behavior and no compensatory support. From the relationship between him, his loved ones, classmates, and teachers, we know his emotional perception is not normal, and we cannot judge the relationship correctly. Different types of special children have different degrees of psychological perception and perception tendency toward the outside world. Some special children can face themselves and receive objective information from the outside world rationally. Some are very sensitive and tend to distort the objective facts of the outside world, causing psychological harm. Others shield the unfair objective facts of the outside world and tend to be optimistic about the world, and Tom belongs to this category. That is partially why no extra love is compensated for him.

Compensatory equity refers to compensating students with disadvantaged socioeconomic status and giving them more educational resources (Chu, 2020). Compensatory equity, as elucidated by Chu, pertains to the practice of allocating additional educational resources to students hailing from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This allocation may appear unequal on the surface;

however, the underlying rationale is to address disparities stemming from individual or societal factors, ultimately striving to bridge the pronounced educational gap.

To delve deeper into this notion, it is crucial to underscore that the unequal distribution of resources, particularly in the context of children in regular educational settings, is not intended as a perpetuation of inequality. Instead, it serves as a strategic intervention aimed at rectifying the educational disparities that stem from various sources, whether they be individual challenges or broader societal inequities.

Chu's conceptualization of compensatory equity underscores the importance of recognizing that not all students have equal access to educational opportunities due to various socioeconomic factors. By acknowledging this reality and directing additional resources towards those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, the educational system seeks to level the playing field and promote educational equity.

In conclusion, the concept of compensatory equity, as expounded by Chu, entails a nuanced approach to addressing educational inequalities. It acknowledges that, in the pursuit of genuine educational equality, temporary unequal resource allocation may be necessary to rectify deeply entrenched disparities. Therefore, the utilization of compensatory equity serves as a vital step towards narrowing the educational gap and fostering a more equitable educational environment for all students.

The interviewed teachers said that even if the teachers put more energy into Tom's education, it is difficult to compensate him in ordinary schools, such as academic compensation. One teacher said.

"Tom's scores in various disciplines in Grade 7 and completion in Grade 9 are very stable and get some lucky scores by relying on multiple-choice questions. It is difficult for teachers to correct the problems caused by natural intellectual defects through counseling."

Another is the compensation of love.

"Tom is happy. It does not seem particularly necessary for teachers to pour too much attention at ordinary times. Some compensation not needed by children in regular classes may also lead to compensation overflow or compensation waste. Just keep an ordinary mind."

That one does not need it does not mean it is unnecessary to give it. Fairness is the inevitable requirement of respecting human modernity. The necessity of its existence cannot be ascertained by individual perceptions alone; rather, it stands as an inexorable facet of civilized society's evolution. While maintaining due regard for Tom is imperative, it should not infringe upon Tom's own sense of self-worth. Irrespective of variances in individual sentiments, it is incumbent upon all educators to uniformly approach their students with an impartial perspective, thereby redressing any inherent disparities within the student body to attain a state of educational equity that is equally accessible to all.

However, students with disabilities may be at risk for several negative socio-behavioral outcomes, which suggests the need for social skills and academic-related interventions (DiGennaro Reed, et al., 2011).

Ordinary schools are difficult to provide differentiated educational services for special children.

Differential equity in education requires differentiated education based on students' innate endowment or defects, ability differences, etc. (Chu, 2020).

"We don't discriminate against Tom. The educational environment and educational support provided by ordinary schools are mainly aimed at ordinary students. It is unfair for special children to study and live in an environment that does not belong to them. I think it is better to go to special schools. I do not know the methods of this kind of special education. There is no professional support, especially the lack of professional support and lack of knowledge and skills in mental health education for special children. "

A teacher who has never taught Tom but is now a headteacher said.

"There is a similar case like that one of Tom in my class, and he will not have any impact on other students in the class. During the exams is always the last one, and the teachers tolerate him. The government has given him fairness in learning anywhere, but in terms of learning, it is unfair. He cannot even finish his homework. It is the same for him in other classes. Is that fair? Everyone regards him as a joke . Children who experience disability have been educated in regular education settings, are often separated from their peers."

The teacher's description is consistent with Tom's. He cannot write his full name until he graduates from junior high school, but he cannot guarantee to write it correctly every time.

A school manager told us.

"At present, there are many children in regular classes, especially in our schools (non-key middle schools). As long as they meet the policy requirements, we will certainly accept them. Education is an important means to maintain equity, and paying attention to special children is key to maintaining personal equity. If we fully respect and focus on inclusive education, we may also cultivate excellent people like Helen Keller, but what we can do now is to let them live in a normal environment. There is no specific training program that is being implemented under our current conditions. But if we go to a special school, they may have better development."

In their opinions, differential equity requires different education for ordinary students and students with disabilities, but different education is used under the same education system. There are various practical difficulties. In most teachers interviewed, the best differential equity for special children is to send special children to special schools for education. The core problem is that it is difficult for special children to obtain suitable education in ordinary schools.

(i) Previous studies have found that teachers' personal quality plays a more important role in students' growth than other factors such as class size, class structure, the physical environment, and

students' background (Savolainen, 2009). However, teachers in ordinary schools were not trained to teach learners with disabilities, lacking professional special education concepts and skills. The special care for special children depends only on personal teacher ethics. Consequently, the education process becomes random, and ensuring the educational effect becomes challenging.

(ii) The core idea of inclusive education is to require teachers to treat every student equally, affirming that special children have the same right to education as ordinary children (UNESCO, 2003). The notion that what to teach and learn should vary from person to person is central to this concept. Nevertheless, in ordinary schools, the educational objectives and standards for special children remain vague. Furthermore, there are no targeted teaching materials and curriculum, creating a situation where graduating safely and smoothly appears to be the primary focus.

(iii) In the school culture and class culture primarily constructed by ordinary students, it is inevitable for special children to become outsiders. The generation of culture is a process that naturally evolves within a specific cultural background. Culture results from the conscious or unconscious accumulation or condensation of human activities and their historical achievements (Deng, 2012). Historically, disability has been a phenomenon associated with stigmatization, discrimination, and negative stereotyping (the United Kingdom Disabled Peoples' Council (UKDPC) 2011, cited in Tugli et al. 2013). While special education has had a relatively short development in China, the culture of discrimination against vulnerable groups has a long history that is challenging to change quickly.

In a class lacking cultural inclusiveness and diversity, special children find it difficult to establish a sense of cultural belonging. These factors collectively hinder the achievement of differential fairness within regular classes. However, it's worth noting that according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011), teachers who suggest sending special children to special schools may overlook the fact that special schools often fail to meet the diverse demands and needs of learners with various forms of disabilities. Consequently, neither regular schools nor special schools can provide fully differentiated educational services

4. Conclusion

We can draw the following main conclusions on the fairness of special children learning in regular classes through the above analysis.

(i) The policy framework in China unequivocally advocates for the integration of special children into regular classes, a stance that reaffirms the nation's commitment to inclusive education. This commitment ensures that special needs students are afforded unrestricted access to mainstream educational environments.

(ii) However, it is imperative to acknowledge the existence of a discernible deficiency in the provision of systematic and comprehensive support mechanisms at both the classroom and institutional levels. This deficiency, in turn, results in a constricted capacity to offer compensatory

and differentially equitable opportunities to special children, thereby posing a notable challenge to the attainment of true educational equity.

(iii) The pivotal role played by teachers in this context cannot be overstated. Their ethical comportment and professional acumen serve as linchpins for the effective implementation of relevant policies and ideals aimed at advancing educational equity for special children within regular classrooms. It is incumbent upon educators to champion the cause of inclusive education, thereby fostering an environment conducive to the realization of educational equity for all.

In summation, the analysis presented in this study underscores the multifaceted nature of the issue at hand, elucidating the nuances and challenges inherent in ensuring the fair and equitable education of special children within mainstream classroom settings. It is within this intricate web of policy, support, and educator commitment that the foundation for equitable educational outcomes for all children is to be laid

Recommendations

This study recommends the following to address these existing inequities for special students learning in regular classes. (i) Government should actively explore the complementary joint training model of ordinary schools and special schools, deepen and innovate the exchanges and cooperation between the two types of schools, and provide a comprehensive and high-quality education system for special children. (ii) Ordinary schools should take the initiative to optimize the school training system of regular learning, refine the supporting support of regular learning, form a special training mechanism of "one education set for each student", and pay attention to the maintenance of compensatory equity and differential equity; Strengthen the construction of teachers' moral cultivation, improve the special education skills of teachers, especially class teachers, and promote the fairness of results. (iii) Teachers should be deeply aware of the importance of learning in regular classes for the future development of special children, pay attention to process fairness, pay more attention to compensatory attention and positive differential education for special children in practice, create a harmonious class culture of love and mutual assistance, and establish a diversified and inclusive class growth community.

Another interesting finding is that even though Tom did not get full compensatory support and was treated scientifically based on his special needs (differentiated educational services), he can still earn his life normally in society. It shows that apart from educational equity, complicated factors function in the development of special children. Hence, educational equity is a prerequisite for the growth of special children, but educational equity and the future development of special children do not constitute a complete one-to-one causal relationship. To ensure the development of vulnerable groups such as the disabled, we should pay attention to the different kinds of educational equity in one's student age and attach great importance to the development of the economic and political civilization of the whole society.

Limitation

Though the findings have common with other research using different methods (Mphongoshe, et al., 1998; Carrington, & Duke, 2014; Carrington, et al., 2017; Xie, et al., 2021; Jozef Miškolci et al., 2021), for the self-limit of chosen qualitative case research approach, the research results may lack generalizability, As the authors have been rooted into the case, it seems a "backyard research", which often leads to compromise in the researcher's ability to disclose information and raises difficult power issues. When realizing the potential research risks, we keep in mind to avoid the detrimental effect of personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to test the proposed propositions further.

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