

Concerns towards mainstreaming education for students with disabilities in China

Yuxin Liu^{1,*}

¹Sendelta International Academy, Shenzhen, 518000, China

Abstract. Typically, children with unique educational challenges are separated into various learning contexts. Despite the fact that this education strategy has been established for a while, various researchers and analysts have questioned its effectiveness. Recently, inclusion has gained popularity as a universal educational issue. To be specific, according to the inclusive education model, disabled children should get an equitable education opportunity. Most academics agree that engaging kids with special education needs in mainstream classes can improve their learning opportunities. However, in order to successfully implement mainstreaming education in China, lots of challenges are needed to be overcome. In the essay, the following are some of the challenges to providing an inclusive education for students in China with special educational needs: the available technology is inaccessible, mainstream schools neglect their duty to educate students with impairments, and parents of such youngsters are not well equipped for online learning. Furthermore, this paper presents some suggestions to enhance the inclusive education for disabled individuals. Overall, the current inclusive educational pedagogy is the subject of discussion in relation to recent research perspectives on analyzing and overcoming it.

1 Introduction

For a long time, Chinese special education lags behind normal education, however, the system for the special education is revitalized from the government over the past few centuries. Learning In Regular Classrooms, was introduced by the government in the 1980s, but during the previous few decades, there has not been any particular legislation on special education [1]. The definition of inclusive education relates to the recognition of one's right to education, disabled children are entitled to education in standard schools. The number of disabled children attending schools has increased significantly during the past three years. Official data from the Department of Education indicates that 795000 pupils with special learning needs received lessons in 2019. Among them, 49% attended regular schools, 21.5% at home, 0.48% in a separate classroom in normal schools. [2].

The burden of educating disabled children falls on society [3]. For example, on January 5, In Shanghai, every school must form an inclusive education workshop, a framework for action for inclusive education development has been proposed by the Jing'an district government of Shanghai municipality, for instance, teachers can receive training to be more adaptable and

accommodating to pupils requiring special learning needs [2]. Moreover, Jiangsu encouraged the development of inclusion schools for special education children as well as constructed schools for children left behind. The enrolment of disabled children was 96% in June 2020 [4].

Nevertheless, although China adopts an inclusion education system for children with disabled and already did some practice, in 2017, a national survey revealed that only forty-five percent of children with disabilities of school age have access to education of inclusion, but 28% of them still reject the practice. In one way, the parents of children with autism hold a supportive view to express their willingness to include autistic children in their regular activities. In another way, some teachers complained that they had poor experiences when teaching all students. In fact, inclusive education in China offer more educational opportunities for disabled children, while simultaneously bringing to light a number of issues with the nation's educational system [5]. So, what kinds of challenges are schools and teachers facing under the current special educational model? Is this educational practice practically implemented in China?

* Corresponding author: Camilia.Yuxin.Liu@student.sendelta.com

2 Current Limitations of Inclusive Education in China

2.1. Traditional schools neglect responsibility for the education of handicapped pupils

Nowadays, the uniformity of a score has become the sole determinant of a student's value as a result of the intensifying worldwide competitiveness. In our society, good marks are used to determine who is deserving of participation. Therefore, since many children with special educational needs do not receive good learning environment, they are at disadvantage. As evidence to support the argument, as of August 2020, only less than 30% of disabled high school students in the four largest cities with a regular diploma of high school, according to the New York State Education Department [6]. Obviously, Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the inclusion of kids with learning difficulties in mainstreaming schools.

2.2 Inadequate technological support

Assistive technology is a key to the success of inclusion school. Without assistive technology, the conditions that allow children with disabilities to live their lives in which they can benefit from and exercise their equal educational rights in mainstreaming schools are still lacking. By definition, AT refers to "purpose-built or commonly accessible equipment, appliances, tools, or software" that has been shown to help people with disabilities function better [7]. In China, no more than ten percent of disabled children attend school, and it is estimated that one in ten children worldwide has a disability. One of the biggest obstacles preventing disabled children from participating in the society and accessing education is the lack of access to assistive technology.

To be specific, The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities assesses that approximately 1/3 of the 85 million disabled persons are in need of assistive technology services and products.. In 2022, almost 26 million disabled people have disabilities certificates, approximately 9 million requested assistive devices in China [7]. Additionally, the low level of living in Chinese households prevents families having children with disabilities from affording the expensive assistive technology necessary to help disabled children attend mainstreaming schools. Current studies show that disabled households need more income (on average 12 to 40 percent more, depending on the study and country) to achieve the same standard of living as similar households without disabled people. As a result,

families with disabled children or individuals with a substantial impairment earn much less money and cannot afford the high prices of assistive technology [8]. Overall, concerns about the expense of assistive technology is one of the biggest obstacles for the education of inclusion. To be honest, for a majority of students with disabilities, assistive technology definitely makes things easier, and makes inclusion education more practical.

2.3 Negative attitude of the educator

As part of the inclusion approach to the education of exceptional children, there is a need for a complete and systematic coordination of the educational services for children with disabilities. However, attitudes of teachers toward mainstreaming schools are not friendly enough. The results of current research indicates that not all teachers feel ready, and that negative perceptions of the practice lead to low self efficacy, which in turn leads to teacher stress when trying to satisfy the educational needs of disabled students in regular class [9]. For example, a study of 19 teachers of students with disabilities concluded that 17 of the teachers changed from initially positive to more negative reactions to the placement of the students [10]. In terms of the nature of educators' concerns, most teachers consistently and universally state that they have difficulties with classroom management and inclusion education reduces the quality of education [11] The range of concerns from educators is expanding over time; for example, some teachers continue to have worries about resources, money-related issues, staff members, infrastructure or educational materials. Overall, the negative attitudes of teachers towards education of inclusion became a hurdle to the full implementation of inclusive education

3 Case Description

According to the 2017 Ministry of Education communiqué, there are a total of 422,522 children with disabilities in compulsory education schools in China, and more than half of the children with disabilities are educated in mainstream schools [12]. In developed areas such as the southern China, like Shanghai and Guangzhou, the scale of integrated education for children with disabilities has been expanding, highlighting the growing importance that people attach to the education of children with disabilities in terms of conceptualization. In Shanghai, The process of applying for school registration with compulsory schooling is regulated (See Figure 1). For example, in Anhui Province, there are currently 21,801

children with disabilities between the ages of six and fourteen, and in Hefei City, there are 2,780 children with disabilities in school, with 159 visually impaired, 785 hearing impaired, intellectually impaired, and 1,836 others. There are 153 ordinary elementary school in the city, and there are 5 elementary school that enroll integrated education and sports students or open auxiliary classes, including Hongxing Road Primary School, Shilimiao Primary School, Taihu Road Primary School and Jindou Road Primary School, which account for 3.26% of the city's elementary school. H Primary School is located in Baohu District, which is at the forefront of the city's education, and the school practises a "zero-refusal" acceptance stance towards the disabled within its school district. H Primary School is a public school. In 2018, the enrollment totaled 1,128 students, and there are 58 teachers on campus, including 3 teachers of chartered special needs children. There is a counseling room and 3 special resource classrooms, including a personal training room, a sensory room, and a language training room. In terms of grade distribution, there are 14 classes in Primary School H, including 12 regular classes and 2 classes for children with disabilities, and Primary School H is committed to promoting interaction between children with disabilities and regular children, for example, the special education teacher of Primary School H in Hefei once said: "Although most of the disabilities are placed in the counseling class, we often create some integration opportunities, such as doing handicrafts, inviting special children to the classroom, etc.". opportunities, such as doing handicrafts and inviting ordinary class children to do it together, and I often organize trips to the cinema to watch movies, and the children in our tutorial class will invite many ordinary children to go, pair up one-on-one, and go to the movies together hand in hand. As the school only started to enroll children with disabilities in 2014, it is in the primary stage of special education, but as the number of children with disabilities enrolled in the school is on the rise each year, the number of special teachers is also increasing, and these hard and software create good conditions for the practice of integrated education.

Taking Shanghai as another example, the process of applying for and approving school registration for students with disabilities in compulsory education in Shanghai is based on the "Opinions of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission on Strengthening the Management of Work in Schools with Classes" and the "Notice on Doing a Good Job in Placing Special Students in So-and-So School Year" issued by the districts and counties in Shanghai every year. Disability identification medical institutions formulated by the

Disabled Persons' Federation strictly refer to the Second National Sample Survey of Persons with Disabilities "Disability Standards" to identify the students. After the students have obtained the "Certificate of Disability", if they belong to the category of deafness, low vision, physical disability, etc. where there is an obvious obstacle, they can apply for enrollment with the class directly from their parents to the school before the first grade. After the students have completed the initial screening process, the results of the screening will be reported to the relevant district and county education administration departments by the specified deadline, and the district and county education administration departments will organize experts to convene a meeting of the District Committee on the Identification of Children with Disabilities for School Admission to review and evaluate the results of the review and evaluation opinions back to the school, which will then provide feedback to the parents, and to do a good job of placing the students. Every two years, district and county education administrative departments are required to organize experts to retest students with disabilities who are studying with their classes, and to decide whether to retain or revoke the school registration for students with disabilities based on their rehabilitation, and to provide feedback to the schools. In terms of the number of children with disabilities enrolled in classes in ordinary schools, there are currently no clear and uniform regulations at the Shanghai level, but the Ministry of Education has stipulated that no more than three students are allowed to be enrolled in each class.

At the same time in Shanghai, the resource classroom and full-time teachers and other supporting support has also made the relevant provisions: where the total number of students in the unified ordinary school with more than 10 students, should be set up in a special resource classroom, and at the same time must be assigned to a full-time resource teacher; where the district and county areas, there are more than 30 schools with more than students, need to be in the district special education and rehabilitation guidance center to set up a full-time three itinerant instructors. Specialized resource classrooms and full-time itinerant instructors shall be provided with staffing solutions by the education administration of each district. The itinerant instructors provide guidance and services to the regular classroom teachers, and the two work together, writing and participating in the development of teaching programs for the students, and providing guidance to parents on family education. Finally, through the joint participation of multiple organizations in Shanghai in the placement of students with disabilities, the right of students with disabilities to

receive a fair education is continually being strongly safeguarded.

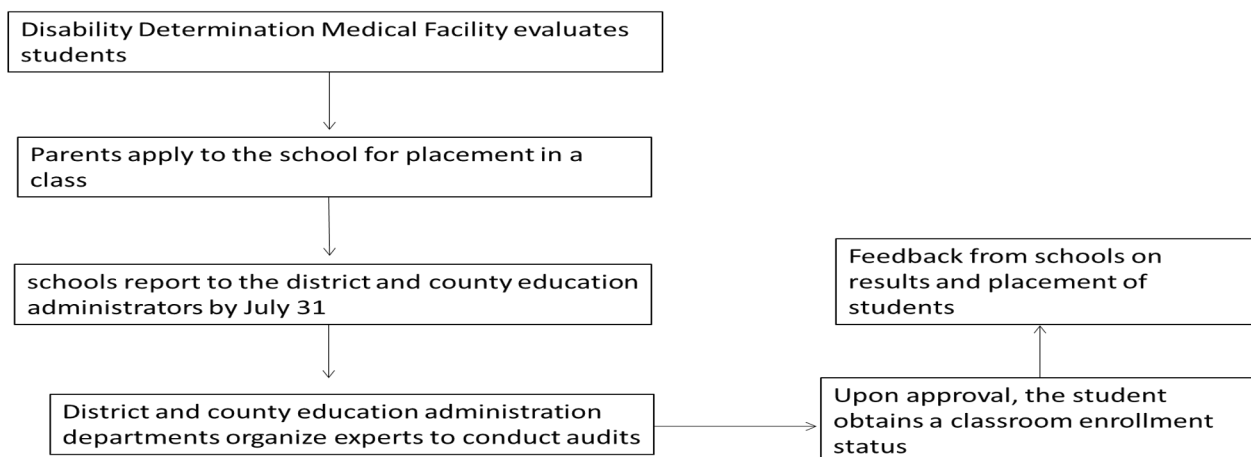


Figure 1. Application Process for Shanghai Compulsory Education School Registration with Regular Classes [12]

However, in the process of rising, due to the lack of social resources and insufficient socio-economic development and other problems, China's education system still needs to make further improvements.

4 Suggestions

Firstly, regarding the incapability of teacher to offer teaching in inclusive classrooms, special education center and normal education should have mutual respect in inclusion schools. Hiring two teachers in the mainstreaming school, especially two of them should involve one teacher from regular class, another teacher from special education center, is the way to the success. To be specific, to make sure that disabled students' requirement are satisfied, teachers for special education should help design lessons for inclusive classrooms, as well as provide learning material [13].

Additionally, teachers in regular classrooms also need much training for children with special educational needs. Recent data has shown that 95.8% of the teachers were able to identify children in the inclusive classrooms with special educational needs. In 2021, a qualitative approach was utilized through focus group discussions to get an in-depth understanding about the teachers' awareness of learners of special educational needs in inclusive settings which includes 24 participants. The result has illustrated that majority of primary teachers or 44.11% of the sample had a satisfactory level of knowledge of special education. 42.17% had an average satisfactory level, while 4.9% had very good knowledge [13]. But a few teachers had a low awareness of special needs. Furthermore, in terms of the competitiveness of Chinese traditional examination gaokao, some provincial governments, like Hunan,

Liaoning and Hainan provide exclusive testing rooms and longer testing times, 1.3 times longer than non-disabled test takers. The number of disabled college graduates in China is estimated to have reached 2523 last year [14]. Overall, teachers in inclusion schools already had some trust in their ability to take care for children with disabilities in conventional large classrooms, as evidenced by the fact that students with special educational needs will encounter less competition.

Finally, regarding the negative attitude of the educator toward inclusion education, school leaders should seek to train teachers in special education and to provide support services to students with special learning needs in regular classrooms [10]. Initially, teachers stated that they did not know the teaching strategies to manage the inclusive environment, so they have a negative attitude toward inclusion education. However, in recent years, Sun investigated preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Shanghai. Surprisingly, whilst forty-nine percent teachers reveal a proactive attitude, while 51% showed neutral attitudes [15]. Additionally, SMEC is working on the development of special education pathways as well as the formulation of formal certificates for training of special education teachers [16]. Educators endeavored to meet the needs of SEN students as fully as possible by comforting, rewarding, paying more attention, using time out and ignoring minor misbehavior. To help students with SEN learn and interact socially, teachers also arranged for other students to be desk mates. To change negative attitudes, teachers must also work with parents. In detail, educators tried inviting parents to accompany their children as tutors in class.. As a result, parent involvement and specific special training for teachers can change teachers' attitudes from negative to positive.

5 Conclusion

Generally, in this paper, lack of teaching knowledge of inclusive education, lack of attention to students with special educational needs resulting from large classroom setting, and inadequate assistive technology for children with disabilities are main barriers to the implementation of inclusion education. Regarding these challenges, in China, government should accelerate the construction of assistive technology, and establish educational support for teachers in inclusion schools. Under the professional support and guidance mode of teachers, the situation of mainstreaming schools in China will definitely be improved. In the future, it is quite expected to see increasingly amount of children with disabilities enter the mainstream school.

References

1. M, Wang. and Y, Feng. Special Education Today in China Special Education International Perspectives: Practices Across the Globe (Advances in Special Education), Bingley : Emerald Group Publishing Limited
2. M, Q Xu, China's special education needs to catch up with growth of general education, 2021. Available online at: <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2021-01-26/China-s-special-education-needs-to-catch-up-with-general-education-XmXEvcQlos/index.html>
3. A. Ahmed, D. Meng. J Res Spec Educ Need, 352-367 (2022)
4. OECD. Education In China, A Snapshot. 2016. Available online at :<https://www.oecd.org/education/Education-in-China-a-snapshot.pdf>
5. Y. Feng, J. Johnson. Int J Sch Disaff. (2020)
6. L.B. Maria, M.L. Susan, Glo Edu Rev 1, 32-43(2022)
7. B. He, R. Halvorsen. EUHRIP, (2020)
8. J. Borg, W. Zhang, M.S. Smith, C. Holloway. Assert Tech 33 1-2 (2021)
9. O.M. Al-Hassan, M. M. Al-Hassan, H. Almakani, A Al-Rousan, A.A Al-Barakat. Int Edu Stud 3-13 2022.
10. L.W. Huei, N. Hua, Int Edu Stud, 2, No.4 (2022)
11. U. Sharma and S. Vlcek, Global trends in the funding of inclusive education: a narrative review in Resourcing inclusive education. United Kingdom: Emerald Publishing Limited.
12. L Lu. Research on integrated education for children with disabilities in urban elementary schools Master's thesis, Anhui University, Hefei, (2019).
13. American Universtiy. School of Education Online Programs. The Role of Special Education Teachers In Promoting An Inclusive Classroom. 2020. Available online at: <https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/promoting-an-inclusive-special-education-classroom/>
14. China.org. Special Arrangement Benefits Gaokao Takers With Disabilities. 2022. Available online at: http://www.china.org.cn/china/2022-07/21/content_78334856.htm
15. R.Tan, M. Lichtblau, C. Wehmeier & R. Werning Eur J Spec Needs, **37**(6), (2022).
16. NCEE, Top-performing countries. 2023. Available online at: <https://ncee.org/country/shanghai-china/>