

Instructional Improvement in Special Education Schools under the Background of Basic Education Teaching Reform—A Case Study of Chongqing Special Education Center

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Abstract. With the continuous development of basic education curriculum reform in contemporary China, and with the further implementation of the universal education system, China has continuously strengthened its attention and support to special education. From the perspective of core literacy in education development, this paper takes Chongqing Special Education Centre, a high-quality special education school, as a case study, and reviews the improvement of teaching and learning in special education schools in the context of basic education teaching reform. As the only school for the blind in Chongqing, Chongqing Special Education Centre adheres to the original intention of "education changes the life of children with disabilities", strives to build a high-quality special education school with national influence, and makes due contributions to the construction of a modern people's city at a high level, and is one of the most representative special education schools in China. It is one of the most representative special education schools in China.

1 Introduction

The profound transformation from "knowledge transfer" to "literacy" is driving the overall engine of basic education curriculum reform in contemporary China, and its beacon is core literacy. This fundamental shift is embodied in three key dimensions: the historical evolution and upgrading of the goals of China's compulsory education curriculum, how the various curricula can be deeply connected to the national core literacy system and carry unique nurturing functions, as well as the practical paths and challenges of the core literacy in teaching, evaluation and school ecology.

Special education is an important part of education, and the development of special education is an important measure to promote fairness in education and enhance the modernisation of education. At the National Education Conference held in September 2024, it was further stressed that to improve the level and quality of public services in education, and it must adhere to the people-centred approach, and constantly improve the universality,

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accessibility and convenience of public services in education, so that the fruits of education reform and development can benefit the entire population in a more extensive and fairer way. It is as crucial to strengthen the care and concern for the left-behind children and children with disabilities, and build a good special education school [1,2].

Formerly known as Chongqing School for the Blind, the Chongqing Special Education Centre was founded by the Civil Affairs Bureau of Chongqing Municipality in October 1960 at the Maguikou Children's Welfare Institution in Shapingba District, and was renamed Chongqing School for the Blind after several years of change, and is the only twelve-year system of education for the visually impaired in the city. The school adheres to the school motto of "walk forward with your chest up, look at the world with your heart as your eyes", insists on exploring potentials, compensating for deficiencies, cultivating a sound personality, forging a healthy body, and continues to push forward the "specialisation of compulsory education, the branding of high school education, the quality of vocational education", and is committed to empowering the visually impaired. "We are committed to empowering visually impaired students with comprehensive abilities and confidence to live independently, integrate into the society and realise their self-worth, so as to help them to become "people needed by the society [3]." The school is committed to exploring potentials, compensating for deficiencies, cultivating healthy characters and forging healthy bodies [3].

Therefore, this paper explores the improvement of teaching in special education schools in the context of basic education teaching reform by taking Chongqing Special Education Centre as an example from the perspective of educational development of core literacy.

2 Trend of curriculum reform in basic education

2.1 Trend of change in the objectives of compulsory education programme

The trend of change in the objectives of China's compulsory education programme has been a shift from the "double-basic" objectives, in which the acquisition of knowledge is the main goal, to the three-dimensional objectives, in which the emphasis is on the cultivation of students' creative and practical abilities. In the "double-basic" objectives, teachers focus on teaching, students focus on memorisation, and homework focuses on intensive training. In the three-dimensional goals of the early twenty-first century, the focus of educational reform is more on improving the comprehensive quality of students through curriculum reform.

Since the concept of core literacy was introduced in the education reform, China's education system has become more emphasised on learning to learn, live and innovate, and on stimulating personalised development through educational assessment. Under the goal-oriented approach of core literacy, acquiring knowledge is not the main goal. Especially at a time when learning is possible everywhere, it is more important to form abilities, character and values on the basis of knowledge, so the way of teaching and learning must be fundamentally changed, emphasising contextual, practical, task-based, autonomous and cooperative learning.

2.2 How to implement core literacy

The two main aspects of the implementation of core literacy are the adjustment of curriculum content and the cultivation of core literacy. The content of each subject will be transformed into structured, core and life-oriented knowledge; the practical and integrated learning of subjects will be promoted, and "interdisciplinary and thematic learning" will be added. With 10 per cent of the content of each subject, 90 per cent of the learning will be thematic.

On this basis, the implementation of core literacy is also facilitated by changes in teaching methods, and the following changes are proposed. Adhere to the literacy orientation, and cultivate and implement the core literacy in the whole teaching process. Strengthen the practice of the subject: learning by doing, learning by using. Allow students to experience the whole process of discovering problems, solving problems, constructing knowledge and applying knowledge. Promote integrated learning, explore large-unit teaching, and actively carry out comprehensive teaching activities such as theme-based and project-based learning. We will implement differentiated teaching and strengthen individualised guidance to meet the diverse learning needs of students. The academic quality standards portray the core qualities of students, based on the core content and backbone knowledge of the curriculum, and the overall portrayal of the typical performance and behavioural characteristics of students in applying subject knowledge, concepts and methods to analyse and solve problems in real-life situations. The comprehensive performance of students' academic achievement after completing the study of a certain discipline reflects the degree of achievement of the curriculum objectives and the development of core literacy. It helps teachers to accurately grasp the depth and breadth of teaching, makes the examination and evaluation more accurately reflect the requirements of talent cultivation, and makes the curriculum standards more instructive and operable.

3 Improvement of teaching and learning in special education schools

In the context of the trend of education reform centred on core qualities, special education for students with physical and mental disabilities is also facing active challenges. Admittedly, with reference to international cases, the promotion of integrated education and inclusive education is also a development direction, and a series of reform measures around the country, special schools for students with special needs also highlight the corresponding core literacy requirements [4,5].

From a variety of perspectives, the special education assessment guidelines set out the core qualities expected of students with special needs.

In terms of ideological and moral qualities, they are oriented from social participation to responsibility, love the Party, love the country and love the people, and have good moral qualities. In terms of being sensible, law-abiding and honest, they are orientated from independent development to healthy living, and have positive psychological qualities and optimistic attitudes towards life.

In the field of hard work and dedication, it is oriented from social participation to responsibility, with a sense of social responsibility and the initiative to serve others.

With regard to the level of knowledge and skills, oriented from independent development to learning to learn, actively participating in classroom learning activities, understanding effective learning methods, developing good learning habits, mastering the basic knowledge of academic subjects and basic life and vocational skills needed to adapt to future life and development, actively participating in physical activities and forming good exercise habits; oriented from independent development to a healthy life, and orientated to the development of a healthy life.

They have a healthy aesthetic interest, master appropriate leisure and recreation methods, are orientated towards social participation and practical innovation, have an awareness of the use of information, and are able to use assistive technologies effectively in their studies and live. [6].

In terms of social adaptability, with the orientation of independent development to healthy living, they have the basic ability to live independently and manage themselves; they actively participate in household and classroom work and acquire certain labour skills; they have an

awareness of safety and self-protection; they are able to reasonably express their needs in the light of their own situation, adopt appropriate methods of social interaction, manage their emotions and behaviour, and basically adapt to family life, school and community life [7].

4 Case study: Chongqing Special Education Centre

In Chongqing Special Education Centre, a world-renowned school for the blind, the Yangfan Wind Orchestra, established in 2011, has developed into the world's largest wind orchestra for the blind, and has successively entered the Shanghai Spring International Wind Music Festival and the National Centre for the Performing Arts, performed with top orchestras such as the National Symphony Orchestra of China and the People's Liberation Army Military Orchestra, and played the concert song at the Opening Ceremony of the 2022 Winter Paralympics in Beijing. The choir won the first prize twice in national competitions, the cheerleading team won the second place in the 2019 World Cheerleading Championships, and the rope skipping team won seven gold medals in the National Disabled Persons' Games. In total, more than 400 outstanding students have been admitted to colleges and universities, and more than 700 people have achieved self-reliance with solid skills [8].

Education is a project that pays attention to the growth of life, which makes the imperfect life tend to be perfect and casts the mediocre life to be brilliant. Attention to life is the starting point and ultimate goal of education. For special education, life means more important and unique implication. How to let every disabled life through school education to get better growth, get a dignified life, is not only the sacred mission of each special education school, but also the inner soul of running a school. Chongqing Special Education Centre takes "respect for life" as the core, and lays the foundation for every child's happy life with a hot teaching culture [9].

4.1 Development of life-adapted curricula

It is well known that children with disabilities vary greatly in terms of intelligence, life skills, self-reliance, physical fitness and so on, which determines that special education cannot follow a rigid, step-by-step and completely "faithful curriculum", but needs to be creatively developed and adapted in accordance with the children's objective differences.

Firstly, the school develops special school-based curricula according to the developmental characteristics of the students. According to the characteristics and degree of disability of each handicapped child, the school searches for suitable contents for curriculum development and carries out in-depth research on "Improving the Community Adaptation Ability of Visually Handicapped Students", "Experimental Research on School Education for Blind Children Aged 3-6", "Education for the Blind with Multiple Disabilities", "Research on the Means and Methods of Visual Function Rehabilitation Training for Students with Low Vision", "Research on the Construction and Practice of School-Based Music and Physical Education Programmes for Students with Visual Impairment", and so on. On the basis of these researches, a number of school-based programmes have been developed, such as "Art and Crafts for Blind Schools", "Music for Blind Schools", "Physical Education for Blind Schools", "Information Technology for Blind Schools", etc., which have established a curriculum system that is in line with the reality of the school and the actual situation of the students, so as to better develop the potentials, compensate for the deficiencies, promote the harmonious development of the students' body and mind and lay the foundation for the students to stand on their own feet in the society.

Secondly, the school has reconstructed the art activity curriculum according to the developmental characteristics of students. Aiming at the fact that visually impaired students generally have a sensitive sense of hearing and love music, the school takes instrumental

music education as a breakthrough, adopts the way of teaching in different classes, drives the overall development of vocal music, dance, art and other art education programmes, and guides the students to learn to communicate and co-operate with other people through the development of colorful art activities, and strives to cultivate the sunshine mentality of the students which is lively and cheerful, and positive and optimistic. Teamwork, co-operation and tolerance are further developed, and students become more sunny. In the cultivation of art, the students' volition can be refined.

Once again, physical activity programmes are being strengthened in accordance with the developmental characteristics of students. A strong body is an important prerequisite for disabled persons to become useful talents. The school attaches great importance to the development of sports, and on the basis of good training in traditional sports programmes, the school widely carries out mass sunshine sports. According to the relatively weak competitive ability of the students, while strengthening the special sports for the blind, the school has enriched and expanded the interest-centred sub-sports teaching, "blind goalball, blind football, track and field, rope skipping teaching into the classroom", and creatively set up the pattern rope skipping, cheerleading, and other sports that are in line with the physical and mental characteristics of the blind students, so that they can sharpen their wills and improve their physical and mental abilities. In sports, blind students can sharpen their will, explore their potential, effectively overcome physical and psychological barriers, go to the playground, walk into nature, walk into the sunshine, actively participate in sports, overcome the blindness caused by physical disabilities, master the correct exercise methods, develop the habit of exercising, enhance their physical fitness, strengthen their physique, set up a lifelong awareness of sports, and lay the foundation for self-reliance and self-improvement [10].

4.2 Practising pro-life classroom teaching and learning

The classroom is the main channel of education and teaching in special education schools, a process of teacher-student interaction and spiritual dialogue, a process in which teachers and students work together to create a miracle and awaken their dormant potentials, a process in which lives are moistened by each other, and the main position for the happy growth of each special life. The school will "lay the foundation for every child's happy life" is the core concept implemented into the classroom teaching activities of each subject, in the subject curriculum penetration of the outlook on life, the world view, values and behavioural development, moral character and cultural cultivation education, for the happy growth of life to strengthen the foundation.

Firstly, the implementation of the student's main position. Students are the masters of the classroom, special education classrooms serve children with special needs, and children with special needs should be the masters of the classroom. Teachers should start from the needs of children with special needs, choose appropriate teaching methods according to their characteristics, design appropriate teaching process according to their actual receptive ability, and adjust their teaching strategies in teaching, so that the classroom becomes the main battlefield for children with special needs to develop their potential, personality and character.

Second, the practice of individualised teaching. The differences between children with special needs are greater and more specific than those of ordinary children, which inevitably puts higher demands on the implementation of classroom teaching. Therefore, the school requires every teacher to pay attention to the individual differences of children with special needs, so that each child can get the appropriate education. On the one hand, teachers are encouraged to pay attention to the differences of students, promote individuality in teaching, so that each student can make progress; on the other hand, pay attention to the different levels of development of students, the content and methods of teaching vary according to the

individual, make up for the shortcomings of the students to get the overall coordinated development of the students, so that the classroom teaching has become a part of the happiness of the student's life.

Thirdly, the establishment of harmonious and equal teacher-student relationships. Due to their physiological defects, children with special needs are subjected to much more pressure from family, society and interpersonal communication than ordinary people in their study and life, and they are often denied and criticised. Too many failures and blows make them form a negative self-consciousness such as low self-esteem, withdrawal and lack of motivation. They need encouragement, understanding and respect. In the classroom, teachers should be good at discovering their flashpoints, treating every student with an appreciative eye and an equal attitude, and leading by example, acting as a role model, with sincere love, happy emotions, clever methods, noble behaviour to infect students, influence students, let them feel the joy and value of life.

Chongqing Special Education Centre has a teaching culture with the heat of life, giving the teaching behaviour the meaning of life, letting the teaching touch the hearts of children with special needs, realising the release of life, and letting every life be full of power because of love.

5 Conclusion

The core of the improvement of teaching and learning in special education schools lies in the shift from the traditional model of knowledge transfer and compensation for deficiencies to a support system that is fundamentally aimed at the holistic development and quality of life of students. This transformation is profoundly reflected in the systematic innovation of the three key aspects of curriculum, teaching and adjustment.

First of all, strengthening the nurturing nature of the curriculum is the fundamental orientation. The special education curriculum must break through the limitations of skills training and build a comprehensive blueprint for educating people with "building morality and nurturing people" at its core. This means that the objectives of the curriculum should deeply integrate socialist core values, life education and career planning, and focus on cultivating students' self-esteem, self-confidence, social adaptability and positive attitudes towards life. The content of the curriculum should be closely linked to the students' real life and future possibilities, and establish an organic link between cultural knowledge learning, rehabilitation training, vocational skills and artistic cultivation, which ultimately serves to shape the students' sound personality and ability to live independently, laying a solid foundation for their lifelong development.

Second, the implementation of differentiated instruction is the core approach. There are huge differences in the types and degrees of disabilities, learning styles and developmental potentials of special education students, so a uniform teaching model is bound to be ineffective. Therefore, teaching must be based on accurate assessment and be truly "one life, one case". This requires teachers to flexibly use a variety of teaching strategies, assistive technologies, communication methods and learning materials, and to design personalised teaching objectives and learning ladders. Differences are reflected not only in the difficulty and pace of teaching, but also in the ways to achieve the goals and the intensity of support, to ensure that each student can have a successful experience and effective development in the "zone of nearest development".

Finally, the adjustment of optimal curriculum teaching is a practical guarantee. Adjustment is a dynamic and continuous professional process that connects the ideal of curriculum with individual reality. It covers the systematic adjustment of curriculum standards, teaching content, teaching methods, learning environment and assessment methods. For example, simplifying the complexity of knowledge presentation, extending

learning time, providing physical or communication aids, creating accessible environments, and adopting multiple and dynamic assessment methods. Effective adaptation requires close collaboration among the teacher team and ongoing communication with families to make evidence-based decisions and to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently aligned with the real-time needs and changing capacities of students.

To sum up, the improvement of teaching and learning in special education is a three-in-one project with nurturing as its soul, differentiation as its path and adjustment as its tool. It requires educators to change from being the "teacher" to being the "supporter" and "designer", and through a more inclusive, individualised and flexible educational ecology, to truly empower each and every student with special needs, to explore their unique potentials and to help them achieve the maximum extent of their potential. Through a more inclusive, individualised and flexible education ecosystem, each student with special needs is truly empowered, his/her unique potential is tapped, and he/she is helped to achieve maximum personal growth and social integration.

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