

Literature Review: Inclusive Education in Early Childhood

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Abstract: This literature review provides an overview of existing research and compares, and contrasts aims and definitions of Inclusive Education (IE) policies in China and Australia. It begins with the development of IE in each country; then it describes definition and concept of IE. The last section summarizes research in early childhood education in both countries.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Policy; Australia; China; Early childhood

Publication date: May, 2020

Publication online: 31 May, 2020

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1 The Development of Inclusive Education in Australia

IE policy history has changed significantly in the past twenty years. The World Declaration on Education for All (WCEA, 1990) and The Declaration of Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994) were developed respectively, and had a significant impact on the development of the theory and practice of IE (Zhicheng, 2001). The roots of IE can be traced back to civil rights in the middle of the 20th century in the west, which originated from the human's pursuit of freedom and equality, human rights (Shangqun & Zhengyun, 2005).

Inclusive Education has gone through three stages then has developed to today. The first phase is dominated by the medical model, focusing on diagnosis and treatment. The second stage is dominated by psychological models, focusing on testing and classification. These two models are the traditional model of special education, which is characterized by experts diagnosing and prescribing

disabilities, classifying students and finally enrolling in separate special education schools. With the rise and development of the concept of IE and social sciences, the third stage is dominated by the sociological model, advocating integration and emphasizing that every child has the equal right to education. Relevant policy studies in the west mainly embodied in "analyzing and summarizing relevant laws and policies of various countries" and "solving domestic policy decision-making problems by analyzing, comparing and referring to laws and policies of other countries" (Meng & Tingrui, 2016). It's easy to find that the content of IE policy has a close relationship with specialized education.

IE in Australia is based on the above historical development and considers its immigration and multicultural background.

Australian IE policy developed by The United States "Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Zettel & Ballard, 1975)" and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Forlin & Forlin, 1998). However, the situation varies from state to state and from region to region (Forlin, 2001). The Australian Federal Government has no specific legislative power for education policies. Forlin (2001) point that Each jurisdiction has its own education legislation and policies to provide students with special needs education with additional support, and to take care of the needs of the students. It is necessary to understand the specific provisions of relevant legal documents of each state if study the legal policies related to IE in Australia.

In terms of teaching implementation, Australia's support for students with special needs is based on the need for equitable educational opportunities so that all students can realize their potential (Forlin,

2001). In Australian schools usually divided into support for students with disabilities (knowledge, physics, ASD, vision, hearing or speech/language) and support for those with learning disabilities (Kemp, 2003). A common approach is to have trained staff to educate students in regular schools and to provide mobile professional staff to meet the different needs of students. In addition to that, specially trained teachers and assistants are employed to teach.

By the 1980s, most Australian teachers were familiar with the concept of inclusion, but in practice, usually children with mild disabilities were accepted into regular schools. In the 1990s, teachers began to have a deeper understanding of the concept of disability, but their acceptance declined significantly (Forlin, 2006). One reason was that there is no suitable teaching method, and the integration of children with special needs was seen to require specialist care. Since then, in Sydney, to push Start Education Program designed to support the children with special into inclusive kindergarten to accept education (Xijie, 2005). With this trend, the children with disabilities into mainstream class has gradually become a topic of concern, and faculty in the mainstream school recommended that (Kemp, 2003) lead teachers promote inclusive teaching practices and training. Fortunately, Australia has a series of supporting facilities and resources, it includes special schools, education support center segregation and usually autonomous units in the same campus, with mainstream schools and regular education in special education classes (Forlin, 2001). Due to these initiatives, more students with special needs care are able to access mainstream education and schools.

2 The Development of Inclusive Education in China

A significant problem for Australia was the lack of support staff and appropriate specialized facilities to assist all students in need of additional support, particularly in remote areas, because of the country vast in the territory. It is similar to the dilemma China needs to face but on a larger scale.

Yang Xijie (2005), an education Chinese academics, by analyzing the inclusive preschool education for children with disability and ordinary children's physical and mental health development, Inclusive preschool education funds and policy of the summary, concluded that inclusive preschool education is useful and worthy of promotion. At present, the preschool does

not fall into the category of compulsory education in China. The special children go to school together with ordinary children exists in many places. It means that the conditions of preschool and integrated teaching in China meet the needs of social development and conform to the trend of IE in the world. Experts predict that shortly, inclusive preschool education is bound to become the focus of public attention (Xijie, 2005). The development of inclusive preschool education is not only a realistic demand but also a general trend in China.

Learning in regular classroom (LRC), as a policy in China, means that inclusive schools cannot refuse admission of any children. Furthermore, the schools in China have jointly established a three-tier network of educational services in which special schools have become a resource center linked to programmers offered by regular schools, including special and integrated classes (Xiaohong, 2013). Through these ways, the IE system, including a variety of educational channels, has formed.

IE in China has required that all the children must be accountable in under same education structure, which will ensure that the inclusivity has been accounted in the educational sector of China.

3 Definition and Concept of Inclusive Education

Due to the different definitions of Inclusive Education, the idea of "inclusive" has been controversial in the international community, which can make scholars confused.

From a Western perspective, there are three main viewpoints of IE. (1) Bailey (JianWei, 2003), from the perspective of social integration, emphasizes the mainstream acceptance and pay attention to the needs of people with disabilities, the children with special needs are placed in the same educational environment as ordinary students, make them feel no difference with the other children (JianWei, 2003). However, the view is impractical in reality did not change the existing education system structure, children can only acquire in behavior, but the emotion and cognition neglected, the current educational structure of ordinary schools fails to consider the factors related to disabled children, which makes disabled children feel less accepted (Jin & Wan, 2008). Therefore, inclusive teachers preservice training emphasis that let children to feel belonging and enhance their engagement in the classroom. (2) Tony

Booth (Shangqun & Zhengyun, 2005), who is a famous British scholar on IE, proposed from the perspective of sociology that "Inclusive Education is a process to strengthen the engagement of children." As an avid supporter of IE, he advocates for "full inclusion." He believed that no students should study in separate special schools. Booth's research on IE not only focuses on integration or isolation but explores the issues of inclusion and exclusion. His perspective transcends the category of special education puts forward the request to the diversity of educational objects in general education (Jin & Wan, 2008). Chinese scholars generally acknowledge the opinion of Tony Booth. (3) Tomlinson, another British scholar, believes that the complete acceptance of the education system and the equal treatment of all children in the same environment require the society to provide an education system with adequate resources. It requires a relative number of teachers and experts and adequate technical support and resources. Whereas, Tomlinson's understanding of IE considers the specific situation of resources provided by the state from the perspective of social reality and considers how to ensure children's fair access to education in a resource-limited environment. However, there are also logical difficulties in the definition, which are not clearly explained (Jian Wei, 2003). The research by Signal, Engelbrecht, Forlin, and Kugelmass explores systemic issues related to the development of specific countries. The research of Farrell, Messiou, Humphrey and Ainscow, Cesar and Santos, and Deppeler are closer to the subject of practice and practitioners (Hestenes, Cassidy, Shim & Hegde, 2008). Some scholars, who are in favors of IE, point out that isolation and to label people only encourages separation (Forlin,2006).

From an Eastern perspective, (in China), there is one primary definition of IE. Huang Zhicheng (2003) proposed a preliminary definition of IE in China based on the western views explained above. He says: "Inclusive Education is a new educational concept and process that embraces all students, opposes discrimination and exclusion, promotes active participation, focuses on cooperation and meets different needs". Whereas, Taiwanese people have different translations of "Inclusive Education." Their use of the terms translates to integrated education. This appellation highlights the mutual acceptance and tolerance of people in terms of culture and spirit. However, the concept of integration also leads to the misunderstanding of educational homogenization

(Shangqun & Zhengyun, 2005). This concept can help people to better understand the interdependent relationship between popularization, democratization, equality and quality, diversity and personalization in IE, without giving people the illusion that the former is emphasized while the latter is relatively ignored.

To summary, teaching concept of IE is to provide children with disabilities the equal access to adequate education and to eliminate exclusion. The purpose is to educate children to integrate and be included into society and make them ready for their future life.

4 Research into Inclusive Education - Worldwide

Research on Inclusive Education has changed over the years and it now focuses on how we define IE and how to improve teaching practice.

Hestenes, Cassidy, Shim & Hegde (2008) research states that the classroom atmosphere in which inclusive classroom teachers interact with all children is suitable for all children, including children with disability. Portuguese researchers (Coelho, Cadima & Pinto, 2019) pointed out in the latest paper that they hope to influence the participation of disabled children in class through teachers' actions.

A Turkish study (Fenech & Skattebol, 2019) compared the closeness between students and teachers with or without special needs and found that teacher closeness was related to social skills, conflicted teacher-student relationships were related to problem behavior, and dependent teacher-student relationships were related to teaching experience and class size. It is acknowledged that children with special needs are more likely to have tensions with teachers and have lower intimacy with teachers than their peers, but it can be improved by improving teachers' skills (Demirkaya & Bakkaloglu, 2015). The latest comparative study of Slavkovic and Memisevic (2019) shows that the math performance of children with mentally disabled receiving special education preschool education is significantly better than that of children developmentally disabled receiving inclusive preschool education. Therefore, it is necessary to improve preschool teachers' teaching of children with developmentally disabled, employ special teachers to support teaching, conduct training for teachers and enroll special children in school in advance.

Teaching in inclusive classrooms is an important topic. There is more emphasis placed instead of

focusing on the integration of exceptional children into mainstream classrooms. However, the studies are not one-sided to emphasize the advantages of IE. In some specific cases, integrated education is not entirely suitable for students' development. Most of the research conclusions are enlightening to the specific practice of teachers. Inclusive teaching has advantages and disadvantages, but fortunately, it can be solved by specific methods such as teacher training or changing the environment.

5 Summary

To sum up, the results of various studies are some differences parts. The overall trend is to promote IE, and most literature and studies have shown that IE pays more attention to human rights, promotes education reform and promotes democracy and social progress.

Under the guidance of the trend of IE, there are still many unexplored research areas on this topic in different national conditions and educational

backgrounds, more powerful evidence should emerge to guide front-line teachers, parents and relevant personnel on how to carry out inclusive teaching.

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