

Analysis of the Development Trend of International Special Education

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Abstract: The problem of special education is one of the key research issues in the education work of various countries. Special education in different stages shows different characteristics. All countries have legislated special education as a protective public affairs and basic rights and paid attention to it. Studying the development trend of international special education has important reference significance for promoting the development of special education cause. This paper analyzes the development trend of international special education and discusses the characteristics of special education in several different periods.

Keywords: International development; Special education; Development trend

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1. Introduction

Special education is a kind of improved educational guidance for children with special needs. The education targets include children with special needs due to physical development defects, mental health problems, learning disabilities and special talents, etc. The problems they show mainly include learning disabilities (mental retardation), emotional control disorders, behavioral disorders, mental retardation, autism, physical disabilities, speech impairments, hearing impairments, visual impairments and craniocerebral trauma.

2. Special education guided by physiological orientation

Special education develops continuously under the influence of physiology, psychology and other theories, and has been more deeply influenced by sociology. It can be said that special education is closely related to social economy, politics and culture, and it develops continuously with the development of society, reflecting people's understanding of the "normal population" and "special population" in society at that time.

Since the Renaissance, special education first under the influence and guidance of physiology development, this stage of special education mainly from the perspective of physical rehabilitation of special education, deaf, dumb, blind and mentally retarded people from the pathological and physiological

perspectives to discuss educational countermeasures, aimed at improving and treating the physical function of the disabled to achieve educational effects. This stage of special education can be called “physiologically oriented special education.” As special education at this stage mainly focuses on medical intervention, the subject of education implementation is the doctor. At the same time, special education also began to be combined with social welfare groups, such as nursing institutions, children’s hospices, welfare institutions and so on.

Nowadays, attention is no longer paid to the lives of special groups, but also to mental health, such as social difficulties, learning difficulties, emotional problems and so on. At this time, psychological theory has played a prominent role in special education, psychoanalysis, cognitive development theory, and psychometric tools began to be applied to the identification and evaluation of the spirit and emotion of the special population, and will carry out pathological research on the special population through psychological experiment data, on this basis, put forward the corresponding education and improvement measures.

As a whole, special education led by physiology and psychology theory is centered on the individual, starting from the individual’s physiological or psychological “defects,” through objective assessment means (such as an intelligence scale, hearing test, etc.) to analyze and evaluate the individual’s special degree and take the results as an important reference for medical intervention and education. Therefore, special education under these two orientations is also called the “medical paradigm.” In order to ensure that special groups are not marginalized by society, people put forward the concept of “integrated education,” which holds that special education objects should not be treated as “patients”, but as “ordinary people”^[1]. It can be said that sociologically-oriented special education is in essence a social change and an important attempt to promote the equal participation of special groups in society^[2].

3. Special education in the guidance stage of sociology is an inclusive and integrated education

Different countries in the world carry out different special child care work in different periods, there are special education places, such as schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and the mute, nursing schools, etc. There is also some comprehensive special education, such as conducting special education in ordinary primary and middle schools, enrolling special students and implementing classes. The different treatment of special education students is not only affected by the development level of special education theory but also by the whole social trend of thought. Fundamentally speaking, promoting the integration of special education is a fundamental requirement for ensuring the fairness of society. Under the guidance of sociological theory, special groups participate in learning and life with an equal attitude. From the perspective of “equal participation,” although inclusive education does not allow special children to participate in learning and life equally, it gives them equal rights to education to some extent, reflecting the principle of personalized education and helping every child to achieve success^[3].

In terms of equal rights and interests protection for special groups, in 1993, UNESCO promulgated the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. This regulation laid the foundation for the subsequent protection of the equal rights and interests of children with special needs and for the development of integrated education. In 1994, UNESCO adopted “The Salamanca Declaration at the Conference on Special Education,” which explicitly advocated inclusive education. In 2005, to provide clear guidance on Inclusive Education, UNESCO issued the “Inclusive Education Guidelines: A Pathway to Ensuring Education for All,” which sets out in detail how inclusive

education should be implemented. Subsequently, UNESCO has discussed the development of inclusive education in many international conferences on education. A series of documents and conferences issued by the United Nations called on the international education system to recognize the significance of inclusive education, commit itself to eliminating various forms of exclusion between special and normal groups, and build an inclusive society ^[4]. In 2015, Australia promulgated the “Education Standards for Persons with Disabilities,” which clarified the rights of children with special needs to receive education and training, and proposed that all students should be treated equally and be able to learn in a supportive environment is the embodiment of inclusive education ^[5].

4. The goal of inclusive education is to promote the development of every student

Only by effectively judging the educational needs of special children can schools provide effective education and promote the development of special students. More countries set out to build a service support system for special educational needs. Specifically, the contents of the special educational needs service support system include: (1) assessing students and identifying students with special educational needs; (2) assessing the level of special educational needs; (3) developing an individualized special education plan (IEP) based on SEN’s evaluation; and (4) seeking support from professional bodies and professionals outside the school for failure to achieve educational goals.

In the construction of the special educational needs service support system, the British Ministry of Education has standardized the identification and assessment procedures and criteria of special educational needs through documents. “The Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs,” formulated in 1994, is a detailed regulation of this. Later, the “SEN Code of Practice” and “Support and Aspiration: Consultation Proposals for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities” were introduced.

In 2014 and 2018, China issued the “First Special Education Improvement Plan (2014–2016) and the second Special Education Improvement Plan (2018–2020),” which set the goal of “making every disabled child have access to appropriate education” ^[6]. As for the special educational needs support system, the UK has set up three levels of special education service system, the School Action Plan (SA), the School Action Enhancement Plan (SA+) and the Special Educational Needs Declaration. Students who are found to have learning disabilities or understanding problems in ordinary schools will start the School Action Plan with the consent of their parents. If the first level of the school action plan is not working, the school can apply to start the SA+ scheme, which extends the recourse from the school to health and social services agencies. If the SA and SA+ are not working, the local education department will assess the student’s situation and notify the parents. After the two parties have reached an agreement, the special educational needs will be declared.

In Finland, similar to the United Kingdom, after the completion of compulsory education, for students with severe learning disabilities, the school provides three different levels of additional education according to the degree of learning difficulties of the student: corrective tutoring, half-time special education and full-time special education. Corrective tutoring refers to short-term supplementary learning support for students who have fallen behind temporarily. If corrective counseling is not effective, the student may be judged to have special educational needs ^[7]. Both half-time and full-time education models are available for students with special needs. The goal of full-time special education is to help children who have more severe learning difficulties, for example, groups with disabilities, slow development, emotional disorders, etc. For students

with higher degrees of disability, ordinary schools cannot provide adequate support, and Finland has set up some special schools to accept these students.^[8]

5. Government support for international special education

5.1. National legislation on special education

Special education is a public welfare undertaking, and relevant regulations and policies will directly affect its development level. All countries have paid great attention to special education, and regard it as a public welfare undertaking and an important work concerning the basic human rights of special people.

The United States passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975, which played an important role in the development of special education in the United States. The Act has undergone several adjustments in response to social development and changes in special education needs. The first amendment to the Act in 1986 added free education for children with special needs, and the second amendment in 1990 further highlighted the idea of being “disability-centered” and renamed the Act into the Persons with Disabilities Education Act. It also reflected the society’s concept of education for children with special needs at that time. In 1997, the Act was revised for the third time, which further improved the protection of education rights of special children^[9]. In 2004, the fourth amendment improved the allocation of funds for special education and renamed the Act into the “Promotion of Education for Persons with Disabilities Law of 2004.” The continuous improvement of the Special Education Law in the United States reflects people’s attention to special education and also provides legal protection for the development of special education.

The legal system of special education in South Korea is also showing a trend of gradual improvement. In 1977, Korea passed the Special Education Promotion Law (특수교육진흥법), which put special education under the administration of the state and provided a guarantee for the standardized development of special education. The Law on the Promotion of Special Education regulates the identification and placement of special children and effectively promotes the development of special education through the combination of the legal system and the Five-Year Development Plan for Special Education. With the deepening understanding of special education in Korea^[10], the Special Education Law (특수교육법) was passed in 2007. The law is the representative law of the reform of special education in Korea and embodies the ideas of “integrated education,” “professional care” and “emphasis on support,” marking a new stage of special education in Korea^[11].

The Warnock Report published by the United Kingdom in 1978 paid attention to the important impact of special education on social development^[12] and put forward the goal of “helping disabled children to reintegrate into society”^[13]. In 1981, the UK introduced the Education Act 1981, which clarified the responsibilities of education departments, parents and schools in the assessment and education of special children from the legal level. The Green Paper on Special Education in 1997 put forward the path of special education in detail and discussed the path of improvement of special education through eight themes such as family and school joint efforts and improvement policies. In 2001, the Special Education Needs and Disability Act further protected the equal rights and interests of special children and ordinary children at the legal level, and the amendment law pointed out that if disabled children did not receive the same care as healthy children. The custodian may be criminally liable and the Education For Persons with Special Education Needs Act of 2004, mandated the creation of a national Council for Special Education. In 1995, the New Zealand government established the National Special Education Advisory Council and promulgated the “Special Education Policy Guide”, which pointed out that the state should strengthen the financial support for

students with special needs, including providing them with special teaching facilities and teaching materials, so that they can better adapt to the teaching content of schools ^[14]. In 2003, New Zealand revised the Special Education Policy Guide, emphasizing that New Zealand should create an inclusive education system, provide equitable educational resources for all students, and ensure that all students can participate in the smooth ^[15].

5.2. State financial allocation

At present, the financial security system of special education in various countries is becoming more perfect, among which, financial allocation is the main, financial allocation and special allocation is the main. Take Japan as an example, the current funding for special education in Japan is 50% funded by the state and 50/50 funded by counties, cities, and villages ^[16,17]. In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was enacted in 2004, which provides that children with disabilities can receive free and appropriate public education in public schools. Accordingly, the United States has clearly defined the investment and use of special education funds, which mainly come from the federal government, and a large part comes from the state and local.

Throughout the world, although the total funding for special education is increasing year by year, there is still a problem with single funding. In the United States, federal funding for special education in 2013 increased by 5.57% compared to 2008 ^[18]. In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides that the federal government bears the costs of special education required by the states. The federal government will use the money for the specified purpose when the state government has reached an agreement on the implementation of the Education for Children and Youth with Disabilities Act to provide special education and related services to the local government and cannot cross-use with state education funds. This special education funding mode with state finance as the main body and federal financial subsidies as the supplement has received good results in actual application ^[19]. The sources of special education funds in the United States have also been experienced from the initial subsidies for special education schools and special education institutions to the subsidies for disabled children and adolescents.

6. Conclusion

The development of special education is related to the development of special groups in society and is of great significance to the fair and stable development of the whole society. With the development of civilization, international special education continues to develop, from the stage of physiological orientation to the stage of sociological guidance, and then to the direction of focusing on personalized education, promoting special groups to participate in education in an equal and freeway, it can be seen that the development of integrated education and paying attention to the individual needs of special groups are the main trend of special education at present. International special education is developing in the direction of fairness and justice.

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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