

# ***Research on Equity Policies in Public Education for Learning Disabilities***

## ***—Taking China, America and Britain as Examples***

**Xinru Hou<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*School of Humanities, Chang'an University, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, 710018, China  
a. 2021903911@chd.edu.cn*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** With the recovery and development of the global economy, the quality of life worldwide continues to improve, and the demand for public infrastructure such as medical care and education services is becoming more and more vigorous. Medical development and progress have made studying the brain and neurological fields more thorough, and learning disabilities have gradually entered the public eyesight. As a special group, people with learning disabilities are not widely accepted and recognized in the scope of public education. Thus, education must support the development of this virtue cycle through educational fairness policies, as it is a public resource. Based on the existing education policies on learning disabilities in China, the United States, and the United Kingdom, this paper analyzes these policies and puts forward education policy suggestions from four aspects: the education policy formulation system, the education collaborative service system, the education accountability evaluation system, and the education funding service system. Among China, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the first two are based on the improvement of basic policies, focusing on the construction of education collaborative services and education accountability evaluation systems, respectively. The latter focuses on the improvement of education policy.

**Keywords:** Learning Disorders, Educational Equity, Public Policy, Learning Difficulties.

## **1. Introduction**

Current research on learning disabilities is divided into two main categories. The first category is neurology, the study of specific causes of medicine, and treatments. Current research on children with learning disabilities has gradually shifted from a neurological model to a psychological model over time [1]. The second category is related to pedagogy and sociology, which are mostly related to teachers' teaching methods. However, there is little attention paid to public policy, and the field of equity policy in education for learning disabilities is still immature. The theory of "learning disabilities" is reviewed from a national standpoint in this study, and research education policies for special groups with learning disabilities are refined. This paper dismantles the earlier restrictions that "learning disabilities" were restricted to specialized fields like neurology and education. Instead, it encourages cross-disciplinary research in fields like political science, management, and education as

well as cross-cultural research on special education policies. Furthermore, this paper makes pertinent policy proposals for educational fairness that support the advancement of learning impairments in the field of policy research.

## **2. Educational Equity Policy Practice for Learning Disabilities**

### **2.1. The definition of learning disability**

The concept of "learning disability" was first proposed by S. Kirk, an educational psychologist in the United States, in 1963. He believes that learning disabilities refer to developmental disabilities in children's language, speaking, reading and social communication skills, excluding visual and hearing impairments and intellectual disabilities. However, the definition of it varies from country to country, and different scopes of definitions will have a corresponding impact on national learning disability policies.

In terms of the definition of learning disabilities in various countries, "United States Public Law 94-142" has the greatest impact on the world, which defines "learning disabilities" as abnormalities in one or more basic mental processes related to the understanding and use of language, resulting in children showing insufficient ability in listening, speaking, reading, writing, thinking or mathematical operations. The United States National Federation of Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) defined learning disabilities in 1988 as defined by the United States Federal Education Agency and prior public law.

At present, there is no clear definition of learning disabilities in Chinese and United Kingdom academic circles." The original definition of China was proposed by Taiwan scholars in 1992, and it defined learning disabilities as significant difficulties in acquiring and using listening, speaking, reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. According to some Chinese scholars, learning disabilities refer to students with normal intelligence, but their learning effectiveness is low, and they do not meet the requirements of the national curriculum [2]. On May 4, 1989, the General Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China forwarded the notice of the former State Education Commission and other departments on "Several Opinions on the Development of Special Education", which used the concept of "learning disability", but did not explain the concept or define its scope. The term "learning difficulty" is mostly used in academic research and education in China.

### **2.2. The Learning Disabilities Education Equity Policy and Analysis in China, the United States and Britain**

#### **2.2.1. China**

"Several Opinions on the Development of Special Education", proposing learning disabilities and clarifying that learning disabilities are special education. Development Plan (2010-2020) is clearly stated "Take the required steps to prevent school-age children and adolescents from leaving school early because of issues with their families' finances, transportation, learning, or other issues." [3]. In 2011, the Ministry of Education's Proposal on Vigorously Promoting the Reform of the Teacher Education Curriculum proposed that kindergarten teachers should understand the knowledge of learning disabilities and how to deal with them, and include them in the kindergarten teacher education curriculum. In 2017, the Notice of the State Council on Printing and Distributing the 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Education put forward the establishment of a responsibility system for helping students with learning difficulties. It also raises the establishment of a counseling mechanism to encourage and help students with learning difficulties to build confidence. In 2024, the Notice of the General Office of the Ministry of Education on Recommending National Special Education Reform Experimental Zones proposes a series of policy measures, such

as expanding special education services, strengthening the quality construction of special education, and strengthening the digital construction of special education [4].

China's education policy on learning disabilities embodies the distinctive characteristics of national education for all and compulsory education, actively protects the right to education of all citizens during the years of education and attaches full importance to human rights and mental health. On the other hand, the policy itself classified learning disabilities as special education at the initial stage of formulation, but did not clearly define the learning disability group, and the scope of the policy service population was ambiguous. China's education policy on learning disabilities started late and developed slowly, and in the process of supplementing and improving the follow-up policies, the policy focused on educational institutions and the government's capital investment did not involve relevant supporting policies.

### 2.2.2. The United States

The Decree on the Education of Children with Learning Disabilities, as one of the main decrees in Public Law No. 91-230 of 196 United States 9 on the Amendment to the Law on Primary and Secondary Education for Persons with Disabilities, was promulgated in 1969, which formally incorporated the concept of "learning disabilities" into national laws and regulations. The 1975 Act on the Education of All Disabled Children stipulates that "to the greatest extent possible, students with disabilities aged 3~21 will be placed in a "least restricted" educational environment, so that they can receive free and appropriate public education" [5]. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 stipulates that the special education curriculum should be set according to the state unified curriculum standards, and at the end of the semester, special needs students and ordinary students are organized to participate in a unified test to assess the quality of teaching. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 provides that the United States Office of Special Education Programs plans to allocate state funding each year to ensure that the age of learning disabilities is expanded from 3-21 to 0-21. The Every Student Succeeds Act, enacted in 2015, proposes to further optimize the structure of government funding, increase funding for vulnerable groups such as those with learning disabilities, set up resource classrooms, and carry out small-class training.

The United States learning disabilities education equity policy reflects the outstanding federal, decentralization of the national characteristics. Educational institutions in the United States are made up of federal, state, and local government educational institutions. The three are responsible for the basic education service functions of guidance, jurisdiction, and operation [6]. In addition, the United States learning disability education policy also includes many supporting measures to assist in supporting the implementation of the policy, which confirms the degree of government investment and the support of policies in economic, political and other related fields. On the other hand, the biggest problem with United States education equity policy on learning disabilities is the contradiction between compulsory education laws or related policies in integrated education and legal rulings on students with disabilities [7]. It is impossible to examine the teaching level and effect of the special education model, and there is a lack of clear measurement standards to identify whether the educational achievements of the learning disability group are qualified and whether the right to education is effectively protected. The 1954 Brown v Board of Education of Topeka decision made it clear that the principle of "segregation and equality" was inherently unequal in the field of public education [8].

### 2.2.3. Britain

The National Education Act in 1996 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Implementation Regulations: 0-25 years old in 2014 were issued in the United Kingdom as model

laws on learning disabilities and special education, which stipulate that relevant public education services are provided by the government, schools and relevant institutions: local governments, without policy-making powers, are responsible for providing overall coordination arrangements for learning disabilities service groups; Schools at all levels are under the responsibility of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) to provide additional learning support to groups with learning disabilities and provide related services when necessary; Agencies, such as the United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS), are responsible for providing education, health and care programs for people with learning disabilities [9]. The equitable education policy for individuals with learning disabilities in the UK addresses a wide range of topics. In terms of financing, for instance, the government establishes a "learning skills training program" and offers extra financial assistance to those with learning problems. For students with learning challenges, public schools are mandated to provide composite professional teachers as part of their instructional resources. In addition, the Department of Education provides multidisciplinary professional assessment services and provides private schools and small class education for students with learning disabilities.

The United Kingdom's "Home of Home Rule" is fully demonstrated in the education policy formulation system, and the funds and related educational resources provided by the education equity policy for learning disabilities are sufficient and professional. However, the education policy itself has similar problems in China, with a late start in development, a poorly defined concept of "learning disability", and a low degree of follow-up policy perfection. In addition, the implementation of education policy in United Kingdom involves many institutions, and there are many influencing factors of policy assessment and accountability, and it is difficult to implement policy responsibility assessment.

### **3. Policy Recommendations on Equity in Education for Learning Disabilities**

#### **3.1. Formulate a characteristic and systematic education policy-making system**

The education equity policy formulation system for learning disabilities should be based on the basic and legal definition of "learning disabilities", based on the current situation of education for people with basic learning disabilities in the country, fully consider national conditions and unique educational service needs, formulate characteristic education policies, supplemented by supporting political, economic, and health policies, and fully consider the differentiated treatment of regional education policies due to regional differences.

In the United States, the definition of relevant learning disabilities is more complete, and China and the UK should first make the term "learning disability" clear and standardized in the policy field. In addition, the formulation of education policies for learning disabilities in China, the United States and the United Kingdom has the common characteristics of macro and holistic policies. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the existing education policy, further refine and characterize the policy content, and delegate the power to formulate special education policies to local governments to form a characteristic education service system that conforms to different political and cultural backgrounds.

#### **3.2. Form a diversified and advanced education collaborative service system**

Service providers in the education collaborative service system should change in the direction of diversification, marketization and internationalization, and introduce diverse institutions and organizations. Taking the publication of books with learning disabilities as an example, experts with learning disabilities must research the development and research of relevant books, the pricing and allocation of public books, and the teaching work of professional teachers. Besides, it should actively promote the professionalization of education service providers to promote the optimization of the education collaborative service system. In 201 United States 7, there were only 480 American

Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA)-certified Speech-Language Pathologists per 1 million inhabitants [10].

According to the complexity of the construction of the education collaborative service system, China is the most complex, and it has not yet formed a mature education collaborative service system, and the research data in 2017 shows that there are only 10,200 rehabilitation personnel in language rehabilitation institutions and enterprises among the approximately 1.4 billion people in Chinese mainland[10].China needs to learn from the experience of other countries and further build a diversified, market-oriented, and characteristic education collaborative service system, while focusing on improving the shortage of professionals through policy guidance, financial assistance, and discipline construction. The United Kingdom and the United States need to focus on the cultivation of special professionals such as learning disabilities, and form professional, modern, and supply-demand balanced collaborative service resources.

### **3.3. Formulate a scientific and standardized education accountability evaluation system**

Since the fact that the policy involves many subjects and the implementation of the education equity policy involves government agencies at all levels and educational institutions, there is a possibility of passing the responsibility for the implementation of the education equity policy. It is recommended to clarify the evaluation standards for education fairness in learning disabilities, formulate clear and standardized policies and regulations to regulate the public service behavior of service subjects, formulate a clear responsibility allocation system and accountability appraisal system, and formulate and adjust them in a timely manner according to the actual situation of the national education policy.

High-tech assessment tools have high reference significance for the establishment of an education accountability evaluation system. The United States Office of Special Education Programs revised its accountability system and developed a results-driven accountability model. In Texas, United States, the results-driven accountability system serves as a technical resource as part of the annual Texas school district or school performance evaluation and program effectiveness evaluation [11]. Each year, the regional review and support department coordinates with the support department within the Department of Education to adjust the development and implementation of the results-driven accountability system for the year in a timely manner [12]. For the United States, the combination of strict accountability and results-driven accountability in integrated education, as well as the conflict between strict accountability in integrated education and the guarantee of the right to educational equity for special groups with learning disabilities, will be one of the important elements of its policy improvement. China and the UK can introduce and learn from their educational accountability technology and learn from their experience in improving the accountability system, so as to build a distinctive and innovative education accountability system.

### **3.4. Guarantee a rational and comprehensive education fund service system**

The government's investment in education funds covers multiple education providers, to ensure the comprehensiveness and rationalization of government fund allocation, which will effectively avoid social dissatisfaction and adverse development caused by the self-sufficiency supply of education service providers. As far as the main body of fund allocation is concerned, the rational market pricing model of public education resources produced by educational resource service providers in different fields should be carried out to prevent the waste and unevenness of education funds. In terms of local distribution of funds, in the United States, for example, states with a large proportion of non-white and black children receive less federal funding per capita in terms of average education spending [13]. Therefore, the investment in education should combine the characteristics of the pilot, the co-



implementation of policies and the characteristics of each region, so as to improve the accuracy and rationalization of the capital investment.

Based on increasing investment in special education, China should focus on the rational allocation of funds by all parties and the integration of scientific and market-oriented education pricing into the policy-making system. The United Kingdom and the United States mainly need to further improve the central government and local government fund allocation model, and adjust the proportion of education investment according to local particularities under the standardized fund supervision system.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the rationality and shortcomings of education equity policies in various countries, clarifies the focus of policy improvement, and gives different policy suggestions for education equity for learning disabilities. The degree of policy perfection in China and the UK is relatively low, and first of all, it needs to be based on the standardization of the "learning disability" policy. However, in the follow-up policy improvement, China should focus on building a sound education coordination system; In the United Kingdom, the main focus needs to be on the establishment of an accountability assessment system for education. Relatively speaking, the United States, which has a relatively well-developed education policy, needs to further improve the relevant policy system, mainly including: the handling of internal contradictions in the education accountability system, the cultivation of professional and collaborative talents, and the rationalization and accurate allocation of local funds. However, because of their differing political backgrounds, the United States, the United Kingdom, and the United States each have unique policy peculiarities; it is still unknown how comprehensive these policies are. It is expected that future study can conduct a thorough and scientific investigation into educational equity policies for learning disabilities by enhancing the universality of policy recommendations through cross-cultural policy research and scientifically measuring policy tools in a qualitative and quantitative manner.

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