

Special Education in Shanghai During the Republican Era: A Focus on the Qunxuehui

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Abstract: Special education is the result of human civilization and serves to compensate for congenital deficiencies through postnatal education. During the Republican Era, the field of special education in Shanghai underwent a significant transformation around 1920. Under the wave of “Regaining Educational Right Movement,” Western-dominated special education gradually shifted towards local influence. During this transitional period, the Qunxuehui, leveraging its accumulated experience in education and its high level of concern for the disabled, actively engaged in special education and became a powerful successor to local special education forces at that time. The successful establishment of schools for the deaf and mute, as well as schools for the blind, provided valuable local case studies for subsequent participants in special education. However, the challenges and deficiencies encountered in the process of establishing these schools also reflected numerous deep-rooted problems in Shanghai and even across the country.

Keywords: republican era, Shanghai, special education, Qunxuehui

1. Introduction

Throughout history, alongside the predominant “mainstream group,” there exists a significant population of “special groups” who are characterized by their large numbers, deep reflection of social realities, and active efforts to bring about societal change. Among these individuals, people with disabilities stand out prominently. Due to congenital or acquired impairments and limited personal abilities or low social acceptance, they often struggle to integrate into society and gradually drift away from the “mainstream group.” How to treat these individuals has become a crucial focal point for various schools of thought and social trends, as well as a major issue that cannot be overlooked in the pursuit of a fair and civilized society in modern times. Over time, disabled individuals, who had been “silent” in mainstream society, have emerged as a virtual group, capturing significant attention and becoming an exceptional “social focus” and “active group” in various contexts. Among numerous social practices targeting disabled individuals, special education undoubtedly plays a crucial role. It encompasses the education and care of disabled children on one hand and the employment assistance for disabled adults on the other, employing a school-based approach to impart necessary academic knowledge and livelihood skills to disabled individuals while providing a sheltered environment to help them navigate the “daring leap” from their families to society.

The origin of special education in China can be traced back to the late slave society, where there were specialized schools in the courts and government offices of the Zhou Dynasty to train musicians, with masters and assistants specifically responsible for teaching blind musicians [1]. However, overall, due to factors such as inadequate medical conditions and frequent wars, the number of disabled individuals remained high, and the underdeveloped level of productivity made education for disabled individuals at that time particularly “impractical.” During this stage, in order to maintain social stability, the government implemented various policies, and there was no shortage of benevolent individuals in society offering assistance. Since the late Qing Dynasty, the turbulent political situation created an unprecedentedly relaxed cultural environment, and the trend of “Western learning spreading to the East” intensified. Under the impact of new ideas and cultures, people began to deeply reflect on the existing educational system. As the government's ruling power weakened, the signing of unequal treaties opened the door for missionaries to enter China with ease. In addition to writing and disseminating ideas, they actively cooperated with Chinese people, establishing various charitable organizations, including special education schools. As special education schools continued to develop and calls for educational system reforms grew louder, Chinese people began to explore autonomous education initiatives. It was during this phase that the Qunxuehui demonstrated its capabilities, establishing affiliated schools for the deaf and mute as well as schools for blind children, garnering significant attention at the time.

Existing research has touched upon various aspects of special education in Shanghai during the Republican Era. Qu Tiejia and Liu Yingnan summarized the characteristics of special education implementation during that period and drew insights from the legal system, financial investment, curriculum development, and teacher training [2]. Lu Deyan analyzed the current situation and influences of disability-related work in Shanghai, starting from grassroots assistance, medicine, and education [3]. Examining specific practical aspects, Guo Weidong discussed the development and transformation of Christian special education initiatives within the context of the “Regaining Educational Right Movement.” [4]. However, none of these studies have placed a typical “Qunxuehui” within the context of the Chinese-Western transition at the center, nor have they adequately focused on the prerequisites and efforts involved in the transformation of special education in Shanghai during the Republican Era. This paper, focusing on Shanghai during the Republican Era and centering on the Qunxuehui, aims to shed light on the developmental status of the special education transition phase. By exploring the Qunxuehui’s arduous efforts and fruitful outcomes, it seeks to highlight its significant contributions to special education and analyze the broader landscape of Shanghai's special education initiatives.

2. Development of Special Education in Shanghai in Modern Times

In modern times, the Chinese nation faced extremely serious internal and external challenges, with political instability and economic decline. During the Republican Era, there was only a slight improvement in the overall situation. The development of special education in such an adverse environment was arduous. The achievements made during this period cannot be considered “remarkable,” but they were, after all, a rare advance since the “Seeing the world”. Upon analysis, at least three forces can be identified in their efforts and attempts.

Firstly, foreign influences, represented by missionaries, played a role in promoting special education in China. On one hand, they introduced Western practices in special education across the country. For example, Reverend W. A. P. of the American Presbyterian Mission introduced Western special education methods in his book *Western Dynasties* and vigorously advocated for the importance of special education [5]. On the other hand, they took practical action by financing or personally establishing special education institutions. The Xu Jiahui Deaf and Mute School affiliated with the Catholic Church and the Shanghai School for Blind Children founded by American

missionary Join Fryer were representative examples of special education initiatives in Shanghai during this period. The efforts of Western influences brought the winds of “special education” to China, and the special education schools they established brought blessings to disabled students at the time and served as models for subsequent Chinese initiatives.

In addition, the ruling class also made beneficial attempts in the development of special education. The *New Section on Capital Management*, proposed during the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom period, advocated for the establishment of specialized institutions for people with physical disabilities such as the lame, blind, deaf, and mute, providing cultural and vocational education. The Qing government subsequently promulgated the *Charter for Mongolian Schools* and the *Charter for Elementary Schools*, both of which included specific provisions for special needs children who were deemed “unsuitable” for regular schools. In the Republican Era, the introduction of the *Elementary School Regulations* established legal provisions for the establishment of special schools [6]. From then on, special education was incorporated into the national education system in terms of societal perceptions. In 1927, the first public special school in modern China, the Municipal School for the Deaf and Mute, was established, and the development of special education entered a fast track.

Among various forces, social forces represented by intellectuals and local gentry were particularly prominent. They directly participated in the establishment of special education schools, such as the Qunxuehui’s affiliated school for the deaf and mute, as well as the China Association of the Deaf and Mute’s affiliated school founded by He Yulin, and the private Guangzhen School for the Deaf and Mute founded by Li Dingqing [3]. The active involvement of disabled individuals strengthened the influence of local forces. In addition to setting up educational institutions such as schools, some benevolent individuals implemented special education indirectly through charitable organizations. The Shanghai Disability Institute, initiated by Wang Yiting in collaboration with Chen Wenkui and Zhu Xiechen, provided basic education for young individuals, while adults learned simple work skills in specialized craft factories to promote self-reliance [7].

In summary, foreign influences introduced the modern concept of “special education” to China, and through charitable and educational institutions, they implemented and promoted it. Local forces, in the process of gradually strengthening their influence, took up the baton, initiating localized reforms and further development of existing special education practices. The ruling class-maintained attention to the special education cause throughout, and after undergoing a historic “change of command,” their focus on special education deepened. The development of special education silently recorded the achievements of Western learning moving East and the accomplishments of localization. At the critical juncture of the Chinese-Western transition, the Qunxuehui bravely forged ahead, establishing schools for the deaf and mute as well as schools for blind children in response to societal needs, leaving a significant mark in the history of special education.

3. The Qunxuehui During the Transitional Period

The Qunxuehui was a local philanthropic organization in Shanghai Nanshi. It was established in Yeshi Garden by ten individuals: Gao Yanyun, Hu Yifu, Yu Pingzhou, Wang Muji, Zhang Jundong, Luo Zhuping, Yang Pinyu, Zhou Zipin, Shen Gengyi, and Ding Zhongying in June 1904. Initially named the Group Transformation Book Society, it was later renamed the Qunxuehui in September of the same year to signify the evolution of a group. At its inception, the main activity of the Qunxuehui was the establishment of a “reading club,” providing members with access to borrowed books and opportunities for discussions. Later, a “research department” was established to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and ideas through general meetings and lectures [8]. However, the Qunxuehui, whose charter explicitly stated “studying in groups, expounding the truth,” could not limit itself to these activities. They aimed to enhance public knowledge, cultivate national foundations, and promote all endeavors beneficial to politics, industry, education, and societal progress [9].

Just two years after its establishment, the Qunxuehui embarked on a significant endeavor that would have a profound impact on future generations—the establishment of the “Qunxuehui Affiliated Primary School” in 1905. The school faced great challenges in its early days, with members providing temporary premises until social fundraising efforts allowed for the official opening of the school in the former Bailiangcang near Xiaonanmen. The school did not charge tuition fees, and teaching tasks were undertaken by the members themselves. Despite generous support from local merchants and philanthropists in Shanghai, the school still faced numerous difficulties in its operations. In such challenging circumstances, the school relied on loans, organized theatrical performances to raise funds, and held sporting events and family gatherings multiple times to provide the best possible learning environment for students. The dedication of the members was evident in their tireless efforts. In a despotic political system, the establishment of a compulsory primary school was a commendable act of “seizing the opportunity.” This action created a ripple effect in Shanghai, where compulsory education was not well developed, and soon attracted the attention of intellectuals [10].

Due to limited available information, it is difficult to assess the precise impact of this school. However, the fact that the Qunxuehui’s affiliated primary school has managed to survive to this day, “isolated under a despotic political system,” suggests that it was not an ordinary institution [11]. Recognizing the school’s positive outcomes, the Qunxuehui established an alumni association to provide a platform for members and graduates to maintain contact and engage in scholarly research [12]. This indirectly reflects the considerable achievements of the primary school. After the success of the compulsory primary school, the Qunxuehui did not cease its exploration of the field of education but shifted its focus to correspondence schools. On July 18, 1914, the Qunxuehui held an interim review meeting and decided to establish the Qunxuehui Correspondence School, approving the school’s charter. The school aimed to popularize various specialized sciences and ensure that individuals from all walks of life made productive use of their time. Due to the distinctive nature of the school’s educational philosophy, students only needed to complete one year of coursework, with some capable individuals even graduating in just six months [13].

During the period before and after the May Fourth Movement, mainstream thought gradually shifted from “worshipping the West” to “non-Western” ideas. The intellectual upheaval inevitably spread to the field of education, where the declaration of national independence firmly tied individual education to national rejuvenation. In order to strive for national interests, the development of education gradually became an important tool for the country to seek self-defense and assert its voice. As movements like the “Regaining Educational Right Movement” unfolded, the existing educational landscape faced significant challenges. The government issued several regulations restricting the establishment of church schools, which directly impacted foreign missionary efforts to establish educational institutions [14]. Moreover, modern special education was relatively nascent, and its previous welfare and relief nature posed great challenges during this process of transition between Chinese and Western influences. Many aspects of existing special education institutions were constrained, and there were temporarily no local forces capable of taking up the task. The withdrawal of foreign influences provided a broader soil for independent Chinese initiatives, while also presenting a more severe test for local educators.

In Shanghai, the earliest response to this challenge was the “Hangzhou School for Mute Children.” However, as this school was relocated from another city, the first locally established institution was the “Qunxuehui Affiliated School for the Deaf and Mute.” During a period of difficulties in the transition of special education, the Qunxuehui was by no means among those with “excess capacity,” as the burden of the compulsory primary school and correspondence school was already overwhelming. However, out of a sense of national sentiment and a recognition that Shanghai lacked Chinese-owned special education institutions, the Qunxuehui chose to enter the field of special education. At the time, “there were only a few pioneering efforts among Chinese individuals.” [15].

From then on, Shanghai's special education had Chinese forces taking up the mantle, and subsequently, self-established special education schools sprouted like bamboo shoots after rain.

4. The Qunxuehui and Its Affiliated School for the Deaf and Mute

The Affiliated School for the Deaf of the Qunxuehui, formerly known as the Affiliated School for the Blind and Deaf of the Qunxuehui, was founded in April 1920. Wang Yiting and Lu Songhou served as directors, while Huang Renzhi, Jia Jiying, and Fu Bulan served as advisors. Gao Yanyun was elected as the principal by the board of directors, and Yao Bohong served as the accounting director [16]. The school was located within the premises of the Qunxuehui, specifically at 493 Zhonghua Road. It occupied three buildings, with the middle one consisting of two floors, serving as classrooms and staff dormitories for the affiliated school [7]. The purpose of the school was to educate deaf and mute children, enabling them to receive general education and vocational training, thus preventing them from becoming permanently disabled. The establishment of the school received significant support from various sectors of society, being hailed as the “Gospel for the Deaf.” [17]. After the fall of Shanghai to the Japanese during the occupation, the school ceased operations and relocated to the Shanghai Cloth Exchange in the International Settlement. After resuming classes for one year, the school began expanding its classrooms and enrollment [18].

To make a mark on uncharted territory, a great deal of effort was required. A year before the establishment of the school, the Qunxuehui raised a special fund of two thousand taels to ensure the timely opening of the school. However, just as the funding issue was alleviated, the problem of staffing became urgent. The Qunxuehui decided to hire external teaching staff, and Hu Zongxi, a communication officer, introduced Hong Maochun, a graduate of the Deaf and Mute Department at Nantong Normal School, to serve as the school's principal [19]. With this matter resolved, the school's annual expenses remained around 3,800 yuan. The Shanghai Education Bureau provided a subsidy of 1,400 yuan, and the remaining deficit had to be filled through donations, aside from tuition fees and rental income from the Qunxuehui [20]. In 1920 alone, the Qunxuehui sought financial assistance twice in newspapers, highlighting the school's dire financial situation [21].

After the school opened, thanks to its role in filling the educational gap for Chinese nationals and effective publicity efforts, the number of students surged to over 20 in the first year. Apart from local deaf and mute students, students from other places such as Gaoyang and Zhangzhou also enrolled [22]. Until 1933, with a few exceptions, the number of students at the school continued to rise, reaching a peak of 89 students. In 1934, after former teachers Shi Dianqing and Shen Runyi resigned to establish their own school, the Shanghai School for the Deaf and Mute, most of the students transferred to that school, causing the number of students at the Qunxuehui's school to plummet to 26 [23]. However, it gradually began to rise again [10]. In the nationwide statistics, the total number of deaf and mute students enrolled in schools was 346, with the Qunxuehui accounting for 75 of them, making a notable contribution [24].

The school's admission age range was initially set at 10-15 years old (later expanded to 7-14 years old [25]), and if a student exceeded the age of 15, they needed to undergo a trial semester before a final decision on admission. The school did not have strict age limits for enrollment, possibly due to limitations in its educational conditions, intentionally narrowing the age range to reduce the number of students and teaching difficulties. Both male and female students were accepted, but boarding was only provided for male students, with an annual boarding fee of 48 yuan. However, throughout different periods, the number of male students far exceeded that of female students.

The school offered a general curriculum and a vocational curriculum. The general curriculum included moral education, Mandarin, Chinese literature, phonetics, arithmetic, physical exercises, and manual work, with a duration of four years. After completing the general curriculum, students could advance to the vocational curriculum. The vocational curriculum included subjects such as books,

woodworking, and tailoring, with a duration of three years. Overall, the curriculum was reasonably designed, starting with basic communication skills, followed by fundamental subjects such as language and mathematics, complemented by music to enhance cultural enrichment and physical education to improve physical fitness. After completing the general curriculum, students could further their studies in various technical fields, acquiring practical skills for their livelihoods. The school operated on a two-semester system, with the first semester starting on September 1. Initially, the annual tuition fee was 12 yuan, but it was subsequently adjusted multiple times, eventually being divided into four categories: preparatory and junior, intermediate, advanced, and vocational, each with a tuition fee of 8, 10, 12, and 18 yuan, respectively. There was also a registration fee of 2 yuan (inclusive) [26]. Poor and orphaned students could be granted subsidies or exempted from tuition fees through the deliberation of the school's directors [27]. This tiered pricing structure significantly optimized the tuition fee structure, and the lower starting price and even “tuition exemption” effectively reduced the barriers to enrollment.

Since its establishment, the Qunxuehui made continuous efforts to improve the school's teaching quality and better educate its students, attracting more deaf and mute children to receive an education. According to statistics, there were approximately 370,000 deaf and mute individuals nationwide, but less than 400 had the opportunity to attend schools for the deaf and mute. The disparity was striking, highlighting the arduous task of special education. In response, the Qunxuehui established the Deaf Education Research Association, which held meetings twice a week to study teaching pronunciation, material application, and teaching methods for deaf education [10]. In the autumn of 1928, teacher Shi Dianqing went to study at the Carter School for the Deaf in Yantai, and after graduation, he published the book *My View of Deaf Education*, which provided a brief overview of the history of deaf education, teaching methods, and management principles [28]. The school also edited and improved textbooks, using a comparison of the Bailey and Zhuyin phonetic alphabets to enhance teaching quality [29].

The education of deaf and mute students posed numerous challenges. On one hand, there was a language barrier, and sometimes the teachers themselves were not deaf or mute, making it difficult to understand the students' inner worlds and establish effective communication. Communication difficulties could lead to frustration and emotional repression, resulting in either self-destructive behavior or resorting to violence. When deaf and mute students first entered the school, they were unable to speak and could only produce sounds like “ah.” The school adopted the American Sign Language method, which proved remarkably effective. “About three-quarters of the students achieved excellent academic performance, correct pronunciation, and skilled sign language” [30]. Higher-level students could even speak short phrases and use general Mandarin textbooks. To outsiders, deaf and mute teachers “could hardly be recognized as deaf and mute individuals,” and deaf and mute students were often not perceived as such. This achievement was extraordinarily challenging [31].

For deaf and mute students, besides acquiring general knowledge and specific skills, integration into society was of paramount importance. Long-term social isolation resulting from their disabilities, coupled with the discrimination and marginalization they faced from “normal” individuals, made it exceedingly difficult for deaf and mute students to lead a “normal life.” The school held numerous family gatherings to establish connections with the students' families and promote special education through these events. The process typically involved exhibiting students' academic achievements and various statistical reports on deaf education in the morning, followed by student performances showcasing their artistic talents in the afternoon [32]. In addition to these activities, the school organized student participation in city-wide joint sports events, primarily in gymnastics, allowing deaf and mute children to gradually integrate into the lives of their peers through playfulness [33]. In 1940, the school, along with other deaf and mute schools in Shanghai, participated in the Deaf and Mute Art Exhibition initiated by the Chinese Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Deaf and

mute children created astonishing works of art and also served as hosts and monitors at the event, enthusiastically answering visitors' questions. It was remarked that among this unfortunate group, there were many individuals with artistic talents [34]. This attempt at "socialization" had remarkable results but also led to some unexpected problems. Some deaf and mute individuals falsely claimed to be "raising funds" and used the name of the Qunxuehui's School for the Deaf to sell products. As a result, the school had to publish articles to clarify the situation [35].

"The best product of a school is its students." The dedicated efforts of the Qunxuehui eventually bore fruit. After graduating from the school, many deaf and mute students either entered vocational schools or found employment through the school's recommendations, working as Chinese typists, watch repairers, and other professions, becoming self-sufficient [36]. Among the graduates were several outstanding individuals. Dong Jinhong, from Cixi, Zhejiang, furthered his studies in landscape painting at the Changming Art Vocational School after graduation. He was employed by the Shanghai Textile Printing and Dyeing Company, primarily engaged in fabric pattern design, and was well-received in domestic and international markets. Jiang Chengji, from Wuxian County, Jiangsu, studied painting under several renowned teachers after graduation and became a teacher at the Shanghai Light and Shock School for the Deaf, benefiting others with the same condition and cultivating a group of deaf individuals engaged in artistic work. Wu Mo, from Yinxian County, Zhejiang, excelled in calligraphy and painting after graduation, and his talents were highly sought after by employers. He went on to work at the Ningbo-Shaoxing Paper Distribution Office [37]. Fu Gaoqing, from Jiaxing, Zhejiang, worked for the Chinese Cotton Corporation as a Chinese typist. He was skilled in repairing electrical appliances, automobiles, and other machinery and parts. Later, he resigned to establish his own factory but was unable to achieve his aspirations due to changes in the political situation and insufficient funds [38]. Among them, the most outstanding was He Yulin from Zhenhai, Zhejiang. After graduation, he worked in an advertising company and a printing and dyeing factory. In June 1937, he initiated the establishment of the Chinese Deaf and Mute Association, the first nationwide organization for deaf individuals in modern China, and was elected as its chairman [37]. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance, He Yulin utilized this platform to establish the Chinese Deaf and Mute School and the first deaf magazine in Chinese history, *Yanduo*. He also organized a national deaf and mute art exhibition and provided employment opportunities for deaf and mute individuals through the art society to alleviate the impact of the war on their employment [3].

In addition to the School for the Deaf, the Qunxuehui also established a school for blind children. In September 1930, a board of directors consisting of Wang Yiting, Di Junwu, Wu Kaixian, Wu Bokuang, Gao Yanyun, Gao Shoutian, Zhu Xiechen, Zhuang De, Yang Jiachun, and others was formed, with Lu Zude serving as the director [39]. With approval from the Shanghai Education Bureau, the Affiliated School for Blind Children of the Qunxuehui was established. The school offered general and vocational curricula, including subjects such as Mandarin, arithmetic, general knowledge, manual work, physical exercises, music, and English. It had an enrollment capacity of 20 students, accepting both male and female students [40]. The tuition fee per semester per student was 10 yuan, with an additional 5 yuan for books, 3 yuan for miscellaneous fees, and 40 yuan for meals. Compared to the School for the Deaf, the Qunxuehui's School for Blind Children had a smaller scale, with fewer than 10 students throughout its existence. The school aimed to provide "adequate education and vocational development for blind children," but unfortunately, this vision did not persist for long. The school operated for less than two years and closed after the January 28 Incident due to low enrollment numbers [10].

5. Conclusions

Special education provides education to individuals with disabilities who were previously considered "useless," allowing them to acquire essential knowledge and develop skills. It is a great endeavor that

compensates for their inherent limitations with social care and support. Throughout this process, individuals with disabilities gradually integrate into society, use their talents to earn a living, experience the vibrant and colorful world that was previously inaccessible to them, and express their inner feelings in their unique ways of communication. In this sense, special education has made significant contributions, empowering individuals with disabilities to lead meaningful lives and preventing them from becoming “waste.” Simultaneously, it relieves the burden on family members who tirelessly cared for disabled children, making individuals with disabilities and their families more active and stable members of society. However, due to various factors, the development of special education in China has been slow and only took shape through the collision of Chinese and Western cultures in modern times. The Western model of special education faced challenges and did not readily adapt to the Chinese context, while a significant number of disabled individuals were still not receiving education. Therefore, it was imperative to carry out localized reforms in special education, and the Qunxuehui responded to this call effectively. The influx of Western knowledge provided a template for the rise of special education in China, while local forces injected new vitality into its development, with the Qunxuehui representing Shanghai as a shining example. This marked a new phase in the development of special education in China [41].

In Shanghai, where there was a lack of grassroots special education forces, the Qunxuehui took the lead in shouldering the responsibility of localizing and transforming special education through its Affiliated School for the Deaf and School for Blind Children. They provided deaf and mute children with basic language and communication training, solid general education, and training in practical skills. Through integration and interaction with the “normal society,” they enabled disabled children to become independent individuals capable of surviving in society. The Qunxuehui’s efforts in special education were undoubtedly a great success. In a newspaper submission in 1935, the Qunxuehui’s School for the Deaf was prominently mentioned among the recommended educational institutions for the deaf and mute in Shanghai [42]. The initial struggles and subsequent adjustments and optimizations in the operation of the school provided invaluable local cases for the prosperity of grassroots special education forces that followed.

However, the process of running the schools also exposed several problems faced by the Qunxuehui. Firstly, there was an extreme shortage of funds, and the government's support was severely insufficient. This was attributed not only to the inadequate societal attention towards special education but also to the turbulent political situation, where special education did not seem as necessary as “building a strong nation.” Secondly, there was an extreme shortage of qualified teachers. For a long time, the Qunxuehui’s School for the Deaf had only four teachers, two of whom were part-time. On one hand, the scarcity of special education teachers was addressed by providing short-term training through special education schools [43]. On the other hand, the poor treatment and lack of job satisfaction for special education teachers made it challenging to attract and retain qualified professionals [44]. Ultimately, the unstable political situation prevented the rulers from allocating resources to support vulnerable social groups, and the overall backwardness of cultural and educational development further obscured societal attitudes, leading to the exclusion of special individuals and a lack of care for their needs. These were structural problems that the Qunxuehui alone could not overcome.

By addressing the issues of insufficient funding and shortage of qualified teachers, we can gain insight into the numerous problems in special education in Shanghai and even across the country during the Republican era. Firstly, any form of support for special education requires a primary prerequisite of “policy support.” However, at that time, the policy framework was still incomplete, with specific provisions mostly confined to legal aspects, lacking comprehensive coverage and practical implementation. Secondly, due to a lack of understanding of “special education” and the limited involvement of forces dedicated to special education, the existing focus was primarily on the

blind and deaf, neglecting physical disabilities such as lameness and paralysis, intellectual disabilities such as idiocy and mental retardation, and mental disabilities such as epilepsy and insanity. Thirdly, the institutions involved in special education were mostly orphanages, relief centers, and schools, with a significant absence of specialized medical institutions. The involvement of more diverse special education institutions can bring about a wider range of educational practices and enable disabled individuals to live more like “normal people.” Fourthly, societal attitudes still largely embraced the notion of “disability is useless,” which not only reduced the willingness of families with disabled children to send them for education but also made it more challenging for students to integrate into society after graduation. Lastly, the existing special education institutions primarily exist in the form of “welfare organizations,” and there is an urgent need to transition from social education to school-based education. While specific policies, admission categories, and special education institutions can be gradually improved over time, the overall societal attitudes and educational structures require the birth of a new government to bring about significant changes.

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