

Analysis on the Feasibility of Integrated Education for Autistic Children in China

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Abstract: Autism is a psychological disorder caused by the deviation from the nerve tissue development in the human body, and patients with this disorder can be easily recognized in the crowd, mainly due to their social impairment and abnormal and strange behaviors. This paper first introduces the relevant definitions of autism and integrated education. Then, it draws out that autistic children are characterized by communication difficulties, social impairment, narrow interests, stereotyped behaviors, a delayed speech system, a lack of imitation ability, etc. Lastly, based on the current education situation in China, this paper points out that, at present, teachers' professionalism lags behind the requirements of integrated education, curriculum resources cannot meet the needs of autistic children's education, and current learning styles are not suitable for autistic children. In addition, the construction of classroom culture fails to reach the degree of mutual integration, the teaching and learning pattern in Chinese autistic classrooms is not scientific enough, and the number of related studies is small. Based on the above problems, corresponding solutions are proposed, including the allocation optimization of curriculum resources, rational formulation of learning styles and teaching strategies, and the enhancement of the linkage between home and school.

Keywords: integrated education, autistic children, Autism, ordinary school

1. Introduction

Autism is a mental developmental disorder originating from infancy and early childhood, which is mainly manifested by patients' lack of social communication ability and inability to empathize with others. The word "autism" does not represent a well-defined disorder, but rather a complex "spectrum disorder" that affects individuals throughout their lives [1]. Specifically, there are five distinctive characteristics of children with autism. First, speech is delayed. Most children speak and use a limited vocabulary. Some can speak, but only in small, low voices or by repeating monotonous words to themselves. Second, there is a lack of imitation ability. Imitation is the most important tool for children to learn, but children with autism generally do not know how to imitate others; they are usually immersed in their own world. Third, they have difficulty in socializing. Due to the limitation of their language ability, children with autism often use strange sounds or sentences to imply anxiety. Fourth, they suffer from social dysfunction. Children with autism are indifferent to the things around them, and they have difficulty experiencing other people's emotions and feelings, as well as expressing their emotions and feelings correctly. Fifth, they have only a few

interests. Children with autism often focus on one or several games or activities for a long time. They have difficulty adapting to new environments, often repeat fixed and stereotyped actions, and even have self-injurious behaviors.

The concept of integrated education was first introduced in the Salamanca Declaration in 1994. This concept advocates for special children to be enrolled in regular classes, and it emphasizes the importance of allowing children with special needs to learn and live in a normalized educational environment [2]. Inclusive education is the process of placing special and regular children in the same classroom, combining special education with general education rather than educating them in isolation. The philosophy of integrated education is that all school-age children, including those with disabilities, have the right to public education. In other words, special children should be allowed to study in general ordinary schools; classes that can provide integrated education should be set up or schools should be required to make sure that special children are provided with adequate and appropriate assistance; individualized teaching programs need to be designed for special students; as a result, both general and special students are supposed to be enabled to grow together.

One of the core problems of autistic children is social interaction, and many people believe that autistic children should be enrolled in special schools. This is because there are children like them there, and specialized teachers in the schools can provide them with specialized education and care suited to their needs. But in fact, the relative isolation of special schools is not conducive to the improvement and rehabilitation of autistic children's social interaction. Therefore, autistic children need to enter a real, normal living environment, study and live with ordinary students, and gradually improve their social interaction problems through learning and practicing methods such as following instructions to imitate.

The Report on the Development Status of Autistic Children in China points out that studying with regular classes is the most direct and effective way for autistic children to overcome the obstacles of social interaction and integrate into society. This also reflects the urgent need of autistic children for an education model of integrated education. This paper discusses the difficulties faced in the implementation of integrated education for autistic children at this stage in China, and some solutions are proposed to address these problems, so as to enhance the implementation of integrated education for Chinese autistic children.

2. Current Problems in the Education of Autistic Children in China

First, the professionalism of teachers lags behind the requirements of integrated education. Due to the lack of specialized teacher resources, ordinary teachers are relatively deficient in their educational concepts, knowledge, and abilities in dealing with autistic children in class. According to the survey, 70% of the teachers lacked professional knowledge in the education of autistic children and the ability to communicate with autistic children.

Secondly, curriculum resources cannot meet the needs of autistic children's education. Generally speaking, there is no big problem in the allocation of hardware resources in schools, but the software resources cannot meet the requirements of children with autism studying in classes. For example, the curriculum learning resources are poor, and schools have not formed a personalized curriculum that meets the physical and mental characteristics of autistic children [3].

Third, the curriculum learning method is not suitable for the characteristics of autistic children. Because autistic children generally have stereotypical behaviors, social disorders, abnormal emotions, and sensory disorders, and they are easily distracted [4], not all the content of the curriculum is suitable for their learning and they can not fully meet the learning standards of ordinary students [5]. If the previous learning style is required for all students, autistic children "studying with the class" will inevitably be changed into autistic children "sitting with the class".

Finally, the classroom culture does not reach the level of mutual integration. It is not easy to make ordinary students fully accept autistic children from the inside, and teachers are still not clear about the implementation of integrated education, so it is difficult to guide the formation of a good classroom atmosphere, and the rejection of both autistic children and ordinary students will affect the effect of education.

3. Optimization Strategies for the Education of Autistic Children in China

3.1. Optimizing the Allocation of Curriculum Resources

First, it is important to enhance the quality of teacher resources through introduction and further training. It is obviously impractical for every teacher to have relevant knowledge, so special education professional teachers can be established in ordinary schools to carry out classroom education for autistic children. Professional teachers for special school education can form a school research team for children with autism, or schools can form an educational development community to maximize resource-sharing and continuously improve the quality of teacher resources.

Second, it is essential to keep a reasonable teacher allocation and curriculum selection at the time of enrollment. Based on the special characteristics of autistic children's behavioral performance, teachers with a strong sense of responsibility and full of love should be allocated to the classrooms where autistic children are located, so as to minimize the number of problems that occur in the process of integrating autistic children with other students. At the same time, psychologists are supposed to be cooperated with to carry out psychological assessments of students with autism, and the results should be fed back to parents and teachers in time, so as to make all kinds of initial preparations for the study in class [6]. According to the assessment, the school professional team should formulate and select the most suitable key learning courses for autistic children and provide them with professional guidance.

Third, there is a need to build and fully utilize relevant hardware resources. In addition to actively constructing a support and guarantee system for curriculum construction and research consisting of a decision-making and management organization, it is also necessary to make good use of the resource classroom for children with autism, so as to make it a nurturing place integrating the functions of consulting and guiding, monitoring and coordinating, education and training, and teaching and researching. Parents and teachers should work together to carry out a series of personality training and behavioral performance research for children with autism, communicate and record the student's performance and problems, obtain first-hand research data and information, and adjust the content and mode of the curriculum implementation in a timely manner, so as to optimize the effect of the implementation of the curriculum.

3.2. Optimizing the Selection Strategy of the Course Learning Mode

First, compulsory and elective classes should be set for the basic curriculum content. In order to enable autistic children to adapt to their future learning life, necessary cultural basic knowledge is indispensable. The content of the curriculum should be consistent with that of the general class and then adjusted to the individual needs of autistic children. In terms of the content of the curriculum, the basic knowledge should be taken as compulsory, and the content of the enhancement part of the curriculum can be taken as elective according to the situation [7]. In the elective stage, autistic children can adopt the form of taking classes to learn the courses they are interested in.

Second, individualized learning can be improved through supplementary courses. Tailor-made supplementary courses can be designed for each student, and they can take advantage of their spare time to go to resource classrooms or teacher's offices, adopting the form of "personalized" tutoring for "one-to-one" learning.

3.3. Optimizing the Integration of Course Teaching Methods

First, there is a need to implement mutual-support teaching strategies. Utilizing peers to support autistic children is not only an effective intervention method but also allows peers and autistic children to learn and progress together. Therefore, in addition to parents accompanying the students and the implementation of “dual-teacher” tutoring (teachers for special education follow the students into the class for tutoring), caring students can also be arranged as mutual help partners to assist autistic children in learning [8], leading them to participate in classroom activities with an approach of group cooperation and demonstration. On the playground, there can be students who help autistic children complete the required movements or competitions.

Second, there is a need to implement motivational evaluation strategies. Teachers in the classroom should focus on autistic children’s understanding and mastery of basic knowledge. Besides, teachers can ask appropriate questions to autistic students and timely encourage them with affirmation. At the awarding ceremony at the end of the term, time is set aside for autistic children to express their gratitude to each other in various ways, creating a classroom atmosphere of unity, love, and mutual support.

3.4. Optimizing Home-School Linkage Strategies

First, it is critical to enhance the awareness of all parents. Experts can be hired to give lectures to parents and strengthen the construction of school culture with the theme of respect and tolerance as well as mutual help and love so that the educational concept of children with autism can be understood and recognized by parents, the social recognition of the school’s characteristic development can be constantly improved, and an atmosphere of love and tolerance can be gradually formed.

Second, it is necessary to promote the implementation of home-school linkage strategies. In the initial stage, parents accompany their children. Professionals are here to help when autistic children have emotional fluctuations, so as to improve autistic children’s emotional conditions through an effective intervention of special education teachers. At the same time, schools should develop activity courses for parents to participate in and establish a growth file for each autistic child in order to teach parents the secrets of cooperation at home with real-life cases. Moreover, seminars can be conducted to answer questions and confusions arising from parental accompaniment and cooperation, so as to promote the improvement of the co-education program and actions.

Third, the curriculum learning needs to be extended outside schools. Autistic children need to be encouraged to spend more time and energy at home on learning the curriculum they are interested in so that they can maintain a constant interest in learning. Parents should cooperate with schools to make the practical life curriculum continue outside schools, thus improving the children’s self-care ability and social adaptability. To sum up, through the research chain of planning-action-reflection, an effective method can be found for the mutual integration and growth of ordinary students and autistic students. The goal of “making the education process fair for children with autism” can be translated into positive actions.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the current integrated education for autistic children in China still needs to be improved, including teachers’ professionalism, curriculum resources, current learning patterns and styles, and the construction of classroom culture. In addition, there is a small amount of literature researching classroom teaching of children with autism in classrooms. Current literature is mainly studied at the elementary school level and the authors are mostly front-line workers. There is little research published in core journals or being conducted by university researchers. To make further

progress, the allocation of curriculum resources needs to be optimized, rational learning styles and teaching strategies need to be formulated, and the linkage between home and school needs to be enhanced.

Specifically, ordinary schools should increase their support for children with autism in class. They should also promote the understanding and acceptance of autistic children among ordinary children and their parents, so as to provide convenient and integrated school environments for autistic children to study with their classmates [9]; teachers should enhance their teaching skills for children with autism. They should fully understand the characteristics of autistic children, adopt various teaching methods to promote the participation and integration of autistic children into the classroom, and make adjustments to teaching contents according to actual conditions; the research on classroom teaching of children with autism should cover different school periods and be strengthened, especially the research on the secondary school stage. In terms of research methodology, a variety of research methods need to be carried out in order to enrich the related research on the classroom teaching of children with autism in the classroom.

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