

Research Review of Teacher Education for the Children with Special Needs in PRC

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Abstract

At present, the CSN education is being paid close attention to in PRC. About “teacher education for the children with special needs (CSN)”, the researchers mainly analyze some things including “teacher for CSN”, “pre-service training of the teacher for CSN”, “in-service training the teacher for CSN” and “the managing system and strategies of teacher education for CSN”. It is considered that the studies will be strengthened about the managing systems, objective, curricula, methods and modes of teacher education for CSN in the future.

Keywords: Teacher, teacher education, the children with special needs (CSN), PRC

At present, the CSN education is being paid close attention to in Chinese Mainland. About “teacher education for CSN”, CNKI and CDDDBFT* in PRC tell us that the researchers mainly analyze some things including “teacher for CSN”, “pre-service training of the teachers for CSN”, “in-service training of the teachers for CSN” and “the managing system and strategies of teacher education for CSN”. The author will introduce them as follows.

Teacher for the children with special needs (CSN)

Modern educational approach is mainly framed in to the key concept, which is inclusive education. Such approach must be linked to teacher training concepts. Any type of teacher training is based on practical part - students practice. Since authors believe that students, who are becoming teachers in many countries, should get appropriate education - practice experience included, as a sample of thinking or rethinking is brought this study. The teacher is the key of the CSN education. The researchers mainly analyze its definition, traits, qualities, status quo, strategies, etc.

About the definition and traits

What is the teacher for CSN? The teacher for CSN is the professional person engaged in special education and performing the educational responsibilities for CSN. Viz, the vocational attribute is to transmit the knowledge of human being and educate CSN; and the professional person is the attribute of identity, which means the teacher must have educational background, knowledge, skills, abilities in special education and good health in accordance with vocational criteria (Zhang, 2005).

In addition, from the right and responsibility of the teachers for CSN, they have two identities, of which, one is the average citizen and another be the professional person. Their rights and responsibilities are based on the vocational attributes. That is, their behaviors are determined and restricted by the lawful norms and criteria, closely connected with the duties of the special education teachers, and supported by the material conditions of social life again Zhang (2005).

* The CNKI and CDDDBFT are two data bases containing papers of journals and degree thesis in PRC.

Professional qualities of teachers as an issue

How many professional qualities must the teacher for CSN have? They will have the loftily vocational ideal and good moral qualities; good personality and psychological qualities; individual charm; compound professional knowledge; adeptly professional skills and abilities including dealing with increasing number of the educated and the change of teaching means and various reform measures, the consciousness and abilities of initiatively paying attention to the newest academic achievement and carrying out cooperative research about the practical problems of special education, and continuously promoting individual and group professionalization (Ding, 2006; Tan, 2006; Zhang, 2005; Zhao, 2007).

The status survey

At present, some investigations tell us that the number of the teachers is seriously scarce and the quality is very unsatisfactory for CSN and special education. On the one hand, there are few teachers for CSN, who usually are aged, irrational distribution and easily dropout because of low income and the severe living condition such as high work stress and mental health problems; on the other hand, they have not high qualities with low diplomas and degrees, and no or little professional training (Chen, 2008, 2010; Ding, 2006; Liu, 2010; Yang, 2009; Zhang, 2005).

In the meantime, there is great gap between PRC and some developed countries on the comparative view. It is true that the ratio of teacher-student[†] and professional training in Chinese special school is much lower than that in Japan, Britain, America, Russia, Korea, Singapore, etc. and we can learn the good experiences from these developed countries. Moreover, there is the teacher shortage and great mobility, no balance in the special education teacher's supply and demand in USA (Yang, 2009; Zan, 2008; Zhang, 2005).

The influencing factors

There are a lot of reasons of the disadvantages of the teachers for CSN. In PRC, they are mainly because of low social status, low income, bad living condition, and low teaching efficacy; great work stress; few candidates willing to choose the major special education; the imperfect managing policies and systems for the teachers and schools for CSN; etc. In addition, they are mainly due to the increasing number of CSN; there are few students for

[†] The ratio of teacher-student is 1:5.8 in PRC but 1:1.7 in Japan.

special education in higher schools, and great dropout of the teachers in America. (Zan, 2008; Fu, Hou, Liu & Zhang, 2012)

The strategies

Due to the teacher's shortage and low quality, the social support systems will have to be set up including social identity, teaching resources, etc.; the teacher education system for CSN will be improved to make them have more and better chance of professional development; and improve the work and living condition to lessen their stress and safeguard their physical and psychological health in PRC (Zhang, 2005)

Pre-service training of the teachers for CSN

In these studies, the researchers have mainly talked over the developmental history, training objectives, curricular system, modes, practical problems and strategies of pre-service training of the teacher for CSN.

The history of the pre-service training

In PRC, there are four stages for the pre-service training of the teachers for CSN, which includes the bud early stage (before 1949), the adjustment and creative stages (from 1949 to 1976), the all-around development stage (from 1976 to 1998), and the deepened reform stage (from 1998 to now) . In the first stage, there are two modes of training such as “master worker with the apprentice” and “normal class”. The pre-service training is anarchical, unplanned and unsystematic. In the second stage, the mainly method is still the centralized and decentralized short-term training with “master worker with the apprentice”. In the third stage, there is a whole system of pre-service training of the teacher for CSN including three levels of secondary normal school, normal college and higher normal university. In the fourth stage, the teachers for CSN are mainly trained in higher schools where the college students will have to get a job including the junior, undergraduate and graduate ones. (Liu, 2010)

In addition, the history of the USA's was introduced in some papers. Especially, “Education for all handicapped children act” (EAHCA) was enacted in 1975, and among 1970-80s there were many majors of special education such as blind, deaf, mental retardation, speed disorder, etc. At present, there is a whole pre-service cultivating system from bachelor, to master, to doctor, to post master (Liu, 2010).

The objective of pre-service training

From the objective of pre-service training and the major of special education, the pre-service training is the concentrated and long-term training for the students to get the teacher qualification for special education; and the major of special education is one of which fosters professional persons for special schools, who will engaged in practice, theoretical research and management of special education (Shen & Zhang, 2011 Zhao, 2007).

Furthermore, there are the differences, advantages and disadvantages of the pre-service training system between PRC and USA. On the one hand, the former is mainly carried out in higher normal schools including 5-year or 3-year junior schools, and 4-year colleges and universities, the former pays attention to the applied abilities, and the latter do the integration knowledge with skills and abilities, “normal education” with “special education”. On the other hand, the latter makes much of “CSN-based” and pays more attention to the educated adapting to special education (Liu, 2010).

The curricular system of the pre-service training

The curricula of pre-service training in PRC are divided into two dimensionalities, one of which is general curriculum, educational curriculum and professional curriculum, and another is required and elective curriculum. However, although there are some differences in curricular types and structure in different normal colleges and universities, the high ratio of general curricula, centered on pedagogy and psychology, and discipline knowledge-based are the outstanding and main features of the pre-service training system in PRC (Liu, 2010). In addition, some researcher thinks that the language therapists have to learn “child psychology”, “child linguistics”, “anthroponomy”, “diagnosis and treatment methods of logopathy”, etc. (Zhao, 2011).

In USA, there are still mainly three types including general curriculum, professional curriculum and educational professional curriculum, but they lay more stress on teaching skills and abilities, multi-culture how to influence on education, personalities of CSN and cooperation between the different departments (Liu, 2010).

The modes of the pre-service training

On the one hand, there are three types of the pre-service training including directional training mode, non-directional training mode and mixed training mode.‡ Directional training mode is popular in PRC; On the contrary, mixed training mode is made much of in America, Japan and Australia (Chen, 2008; Ding & Chen, 2005; Liu, 2010).

On the other hand, some researchers compare the straits of PRC with USA. In USA, the college students of special education have the stably professional ideas, high qualities in humanities and science, and can quickly adapt to the job of special education in the future (Liu, 2010).

The status survey and problems of the pre-service training

There are the successful experiences and practical difficulties in Chinese pre-service training of the teacher for CSN. By the investigation, there is very few in the number of the major in special education; the educated have low professional identity, stability and self-efficacy, weak professional skills and abilities; the curricula are purposeless, theoretical and far from practice, general curriculum is not made much of; the time and chance are too short in practice; the training mode is single (Liu, 2010; Shen & Zhang, 2011; Tang, 2009; Zhang, 2005, 2008)

The strategies of the pre-service training

With the above problems, the Chinese pre-service training will be improved including the scale of college students, the training objective, curricular system, educational practice, and training modes, and learning some experience from the developed foreign countries. For example, the number of the students and the major ought to be increased; the training objective will be diversified, united normal education with special education, knowledge and abilities with attitude and feeling, especially professional identity; the curriculum ought to be diverse, involved in natural science, humanistic science and social science, professional and common required course, connected theory with practice; the educational practice ought to be long-term and ceaseless with more time and chance in special schools; the training modes will

‡ The directional training means the aim of pre-service training is to provide the teachers for special schools in some place; but the non-directional training is not to provide the teachers for some special school; and mixed training is mixed by the directional and non-directional training.

be varied, and united directional mode with non-directional modes, including “2+2”, “4+1”, “4+2” and “4+3” modes. § (Deng, 2002; Ding, 2005; Shen & Zhang, 2011; Tang, 2009; Zhang, 2008; Liu, 2010)

In-service Training of the Teachers for CSN

In these studies, the researchers have mainly discussed the definition, objective, modes, problems and strategies of in-service training of the teachers for CSN.

The definition and objective of the in-service training

The in-service training for the special education teachers is the process of professional development, of which the in-service teachers are trained systematically and purposefully in training institutions (Li & Shen, 2009). In addition, it is very important of the in-service teacher for inclusive education (Chen, 2010).

The modes of in-service training

At present, from the historical view, there are mainly two modes such as “master worker with the apprentice” and “normal class” in PRC; (Liu, 2010); Moreover, the other modes include “School-based training” in America, “Cooperative training between special school and university” in Britain, “Network training” in German, and “Correspondent training” in PRC from professional development of the teacher for CSN (Chen, 2008).

The problems and influencing factors of in-service training

Having summed up the successful experience of in-service training of the teachers for CSN, the practical problems include that there are not definite supervision systems; the training resources are not enough and imbalance in distribution; there are less training in discipline knowledge and professional feature of general curricula; the trainers are not enough; the methods and modes are too simple; etc. Thus, the in-service training is short of speciality, continuity, pertinence and applicability in PRC (Chen, 2008; Liu, 2010; Tang, 2012).

§ “2+2”, or “4+1”, or “4+2” or “4+3” mean that the school years are divided into two stages. In the first stage, the students have to learn two years, or four years; however, they do two years, or one year, or two years, or three years.

At the meantime, there are a lot of factors hindering the in-service training of the teachers for CSN. They are shortage of institutional supports and normal systems; insufficient communication in profession, academics and information; low social identity and income; heavy work stress and worse living condition; worse consciousness of professional learning and development; etc. (Chen, 2010; Wang, 2009).

The strategies of in-service training

In order to increase the quality of in-service training of the teachers for CSN, the types of in-service training have to be expanded such as the disciplinary teachers, the special project, the teachers for the CSN “learning in regular class”, the consultants, etc.; improve the conditions of in-service training including the trainers, training content, training methods and modes, and set up the system of resource sharing through the modern educational technology internet; take full advantage of the guiding role of research in special education; carry out the evaluation with various forms and subjects; and increase the enthusiasm and abilities of the teacher’s professional development (Chen, 2010; Liu, 2010; Li & Shen, 2009; Tang, 2012; Zhao, 2007).

Managing System of the Teacher Education for CSN

About the managing system of the teacher education for CSN, the researchers mainly discuss the practical problems and strategies.

The status quo and problems of managing system

At present, the managing systems of teacher education for CSN become more and more perfect and scientific, such as “the Chinese with Disabilities Act” (1990), “the Chinese Compulsory Education Law” (1986, 2006), etc. which are the lawful basis and systematic security of special education for CSN. Especially, there are some systems for the teachers for CSN including “Qualification Access” in America, “Qualification Access with Rank” in Japan, Korea and Chinese Taiwan, and “Refining” in Austria (Chen, 2008)

However, the systems of the teacher’s qualification identification, pre-service and in-service training, educational management, and social support are imperfect, there is no professional criteria for the teachers for the CSN (Chen, 2008; Tan, 2006).

The strategies of managing system

In order to solve the above mentioned problems, the scientific interior and exterior managing systems will have to be set up in PRC. On the one hand, the exterior systems will have to be improved and the good social support system will be set up, which involves in the professional criteria, the rights and responsibilities (such as income, pre-service and in-service training) for the special education teachers, educational hardware, etc. On the other hand, we ought to improve the interior managing systems, which include resource distribution and utilization, incentive mechanism and evaluation system, etc. (Bao, 2011; Chen, 2008, 2010; Gu, 2005; Li & Shen, 2009; Yang, 2009; Zan & Jiang, 2008; Zhao, 2007; Wang, 2009).

Reflection and Conclusion on “Research of Teacher Education for CSN”

From the above ideas, “teacher education for CSN” has been paid more and more attention to. Especially, some of the ideas have given us much enlightenment and good experiences.

In fact, some rethink the studies on “Qualification Criterion”, “Pre-service Training” and “In-service Training” of the teachers for CSN again. On the one hand, the research on “qualification criterion of the teachers for special children” ought to cope with some relationships between compulsory and non-compulsory education, special education and common education, professional teachers and common teachers, etc. (Gu, 2005) On the other hand, the research focus on “pre-service and in-service training of the teachers for CSN” has changed from macroscopic to microcosmic view, general to personal character, and become more and more deepened and specific; however, the research focus is too narrow and not systematic, pays little attention to the other higher schools beside some of the Normal Universities, is usually short of systematicness when introducing or comparing with the foreign research achievement (Liu, 2010; Shen & Zhang, 2011).

In conclusion, these studies and ideas are very abundant and maybe rational and reasonable in a way, but, the studies will have to be strengthened about the managing systems, objective, curricula, methods and modes of teacher education for CSN in Chinese Mainland in the future. To get tips and arguments for improvement the whole strategy of teacher training focused on inclusive education which as the open space for comparative studies offers deeper research a comparison. It could be done in other countries e.g. Finland, Sweden, Czech

Republic and others. Fast progress in knowledge on the area of inclusive education needs to be reflected in teacher training programs.

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