

Research Progress on Social Inclusion of Disabled People in China

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Abstract. Social inclusion of the disabled is one of the most important signs of social civilization. Firstly, this paper discussed and defined the connotation of the social inclusion of the disabled, and briefly combed the current research situation of the social inclusion of the disabled in China. Secondly, this article pointed out the main obstacles faced by the social inclusion of the disabled in China and summed up the research from four paths: education, employment, rehabilitation and culture. Thirdly, the research on the social inclusion of the three typical groups among the disabled was supplemented. Finally, on this basis, summarized the characteristics of the research on the social inclusion of the disabled in China and prospected the future research.

Keywords: social inclusion, the disabled, inclusive education, inclusive employment.

1. Introduction

President Xi Jinping once pointed out: “In 2020, a well-off society will be built in an all-round way, and there will be no shortage of disabled people.” With the 21th century officially entering the second decade, the goal of building a well-off society in an all-round way in China is about to be realized. Whether the disabled can reach the standard of “well-off” is a topic worth exploring and pondering. For the disabled, “well-off” needs to be improved not only in terms of economic income, Engel’s coefficient, electrification level, housing conditions, marriage and other living conditions, but also in terms of rehabilitation, education, employment, social security, informatization level, social participation and other development conditions(Chen, Lv, & Chen, 2014). Most importantly, “well-off” means removing the institutional obstacles and conceptual barriers faced by the disabled and changing the status of exclusion and reducing the difficulty of inclusion. As the largest minority group in society, disabled people’s social inclusion issue has long been an important research topic.

2. Connotation and research status of social inclusion of the disabled

2.1. Connotation of social inclusion of the disabled

Social inclusion, also known as social integration, is a concept relative to social exclusion. There is no exact academic definition of the concept of social inclusion.

Xu, L. (2014) divided the conceptual research on social inclusion by foreign scholars into three paths: one is that social inclusion is an important variable used to explain the social system and social

stability process, and the representative figure in this aspect is Durkheim (2005). The second path is to take social inclusion as the content of immigration research and to discuss the inclusion process and situation of immigrants in immigration countries. The third path is to regard social inclusion as a companion to social exclusion.

The EU defined social inclusion at the Copenhagen Conference in 2004 as “the process of ensuring that vulnerable groups in society can obtain opportunities and resources to promote development, enable them to fully participate in economic, cultural and social life and obtain social welfare, and ensure that vulnerable groups participate in life and have the opportunity to make decisions on basic rights and enjoy the same life as ordinary people”. The core of social inclusion research is to explore how to let the alienated and isolated people participate in and integrate into the mainstream society to obtain their due opportunities and benefits. Giddens (2000) believed that “inclusion” means citizenship, rights and obligations and public space participation it brings. Collins (2003) stressed that social inclusion is a stable social order, with the result that individuals are equal. Parsons (1999) pointed that inclusion is to ensure that the institutional arrangements can meet the legitimate participation needs of all people and their wish to benefit from the arrangements.

From a sociological perspective, Chen, C. et al. (2012) believed that social inclusion is “a process of social behavior in which subjects in a weak position actively reflect and continuously interact with individuals and groups in a specific community”. Luo, X. (2014) defined social inclusion as a dynamic process in which social groups participate in social activities through all-round participation with equal opportunities.

It is not difficult to find that the core of social inclusion lies in: (1) social inclusion is the goal of social development, and is an indispensable link in the construction of the Community of Shared Future for Mankind; (2) the basic value of social inclusion is to follow equality, emphasizing the equal social participation of all social citizens, aiming at improving the welfare of all social members, making them all could enjoy equal rights and undertake corresponding obligations; (3) social inclusion is a comprehensive concept, involving political, institutional, economic, cultural, social and psychological aspects; (4) social inclusion requires not only the subjective initiative of vulnerable groups, but also the acceptance of mainstream groups and the joint efforts of the whole society. It is a dynamic process of multiple participation.

2.2. Research status of social inclusion of the disable

In the China Academic Journal Network Publishing Database, 1,390 Chinese documents were found using the retrieval formula title= (“social inclusion” or “social integration”). The keyword co-occurrence network of the documents was drawn using VOSviewer software (refer with Fig. 1).

In the co-occurrence network, “social inclusion” and “social integration”, as subject concepts, are at the core of the network, and the network presents certain clustering division. The main clusters can be roughly divided into: research on migrant workers and their children, research on urban migrants or floating population, community or rural grassroots governance, ethnic inclusion research, etc. The only words directly related to the disabled in the network are: “disabled children”, “deaf college students” and “mentally retarded people”. After constructing the retrieval formula title= (“social inclusion” or “social integration”) and keywords = (“disab*”), there is no corresponding Chinese literature. From this, we can basically draw a conclusion: the social inclusion researches in China often focus on cities and communities, and the research objects focus on vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, floating population, etc., while the social inclusion problem of the disabled has not received enough attention from domestic academic circles.

main force of literature in this field. It can be seen that China's current research on social inclusion of the disabled focuses more on the research on educational inclusion.

3. Obstacles to social inclusion of the disabled in China

Social inclusion is the only way for the disabled to realize equal rights and share development. The concept of social inclusion “provides a new perspective for understanding the disabled and their problems” (Wu & Li, 2012), and the degree of social inclusion of the disabled is one of the most important signs of the disabled people's cause development and the progress of social civilization.

However, at present, there are institutional and non-institutional barriers to the social inclusion of the disabled in China, such as physical environment, psychological barriers of the disabled, social environment, etc. Zhang, R. (2018) based on the reality survey in Qingbaijiang district, Chengdu, found that the disabled showed the characteristics of “semi-inclusion” and low degree of psychological integration. Zhou, L. (2017), taking the disabled in Guangdong Province as a sample, pointed out that their level of social inclusion in the four aspects of economy, rehabilitation-service, social participation and rights and interests was not ideal. The difficult and slow process of social inclusion will be the norm for the disabled in China at present and in the future.

Among the non-institutional barriers, concept exclusion is the most important factor affecting the social inclusion of the disabled. Wu & Li (2012) believed that the view of the disabled refers to people's basic attitudes and opinions on the phenomenon of disability. Li & Xu (2010) put more emphasis on the understanding and attitude of “social mainstream consciousness”. The former divided the view of the disabled into medical mode and social mode, and held that the idea of the disabled in social mode is based on the view of inclusion, while the latter added the “right mode” on the basis of the former, emphasizing the rights subject identity of the disabled. Long, J. (2019) pointed out that there has been no fundamental change in China's current mainstream view of the disabled. Although the social model begins to consider the needs of the disabled, the disabled are still in the embarrassing position of “second-class citizens” in mainstream cognition.

There are also “disability stigma”, namely social degrading and insulting labels for the disabled, which is an unhealthy view of the disabled. Non-institutional exclusion represented by disability stigma is one of the obstacles for the disabled to realize social inclusion (Guan, 2015) and its elimination and change need a long-term and gradual process. Stereotypes, group emotions and social distance together constitute the social exclusion model of disability stigma (Qin, 2017).

It is precisely because social inclusion of the disabled is currently facing many obstacles that the necessity and practical significance of its research are particularly urgent. At present, the exploration of social inclusion path for the disabled in China can be roughly divided into four paths: education, employment, rehabilitation, and culture. Scholars have put forward their own thoughts and countermeasures from the above different angles.

4. Obstacles to social inclusion of the disabled in China

4.1. Education inclusion

The earliest use of the concept of “social inclusion” in the study of the disabled in China began with the Canadian scholar Lily Dyson's article, Social integration of children with disabilities in elementary schools: teacher's expectation and evaluation of critical components, translated and proofread by Zhang, N. (1997). The article clearly pointed out that “social inclusion” is a “highly valued social and educational concept and practice”. In 2002, Zhang, N. applied the concept of inclusive education to the domestic environment and investigated teachers' attitudes and opinions on the most common way of inclusive education in China, namely “learning in regular schools”. Many scholars in China hold a critical attitude towards learning in regular schools. They believed that the pattern is the result of the combination of China's local educational practice and the trend of inclusive education. Students studying in regular classes are vulnerable to exclusion and neglect and the teaching methods have obvious hierarchical order. Inclusive education is not exactly the same as the “learning in regular

schools” of the compulsory education strategy for disabled children and adolescents implemented for a long time in our country (Jing, S., 2013; Li, C., 2013)

Special education has attracted the attention of domestic scholars. Luo & Liu (2013) pointed out that most of China's special education is to “isolate” students who need special education, which runs counter to the goal of social inclusion. Some scholars have held the view that adult education and higher education can effectively break through the bottleneck of social inclusion for the disabled and helping the disabled’s inclusion is also the responsibility of them (Guo & Dong, 2019). In addition, some scholars have tried to introduce core socialist values, personality education, social support theory and social work methods into the field of inclusive education for the disabled.

4.2. Employment inclusion

Ensuring the employment of the disabled is the prerequisite for guaranteeing the disabled’s right to subsistence. Luo, X. (2014) believed that employment was an important watershed for the disabled to move from social exclusion to social inclusion. Similarly, Xu, Q. (2012) regarded the employment of the disabled as an important symbol for the disabled to move towards and participate in society. Inclusive employment refers to disabled people engaging in competitive jobs in the open labor market and getting wages at or above the labor market level or the lowest social work level, including prohibition of discrimination, support of the employment environment, acceptance and adaptation. Inclusive employment is the general trend, and further improving the inclusion policy is the focus of the employment policy for the disabled (Dai, M., 2014).

At present, China's system and policy design on employment of the disabled are still not perfect, guarantee for employment of the disabled are still lacking, and employment policies related to the disabled remain at the employment rate stage, and inclusive employment has not been included in the policy objectives and agenda (Liao & Yue, 2015), and the employment policies for the disabled still have the problem of lack of effectiveness. At the same time, the disabled are currently facing a severe employment situation, especially in a market economy environment, where there are a large number of problems such as low employment rate, low level of employment, unstable employment, etc.

Some scholars pointed out that the law should fully protect the equal employment rights of the disabled, and the promotion of social inclusion is the real value foundation to support the legal system prohibiting occupational discrimination (Li, C., 2015), while the supportive employment policy is an important way to protect the employment rights of the disabled and the development strategy of inclusive employment. In addition, people’s concept and the role of non-government organizations directly affect the employment level of the disabled.

4.3. Accurate rehabilitation

Accurate rehabilitation of the disabled is an important prerequisite for achieving the goal of social participation and social inclusion of the disabled. Comprehensive rehabilitation should focus on medical rehabilitation and give consideration to education, occupation and social rehabilitation. Community rehabilitation is a strategic plan to achieve the goals of rehabilitation of the disabled and social inclusion (Zhang, J., 2014). It can be seen that rehabilitation and social inclusion of the disabled are the relationship between premise and result, task and goal.

Community-based rehabilitation (CBR) was proposed by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund in the 1978 Almaty Declaration. The Joint Submission on Community Rehabilitation issued by the World Health Organization and the UNESCO in 2004 defined community rehabilitation as a strategy for community development for rehabilitation of the disabled, equalization of opportunities, reduction of poverty and increase of inclusive development.

Pan, L. (2009) pointed out in his research that CBR in our country is still in the initial stage and be CBR should realize the social inclusion through the support for their life, education and employment based on the social support network. Fu, Q. (2013) believed that CBR does not attach importance to the goal of social inclusion, and there are still many problems in organization and management.

In addition to CBR, social organizations in China have also carried out various forms of rehabilitation activities for the disabled. For example, the rehabilitation bus service carried out by Guangzhou Puai Social Work Service provides travel, sightseeing and social services for the disabled in Guangzhou urban area, and provides a powerful platform for communication, interaction and inclusion between the disabled and society (Liu, Y., 2017).

4.4. Culture inclusion

The inclusion culture has laid a value foundation for the social inclusion of the disabled. Inclusion culture refers to the new cultural forms and spiritual products formed by the disabled via “participating in social and cultural activities, enjoying public cultural services and creating culture on the basis of equality” (Wu & Li, 2012), including literature and art, leisure and entertainment, sports and other fields. Public cultural services help enrich the spiritual and cultural life of the disabled and promote their equal participation and sharing of social and cultural life. For the disabled, especially the youth with disabilities, enriching their leisure and recreational activities and sports activities will help to strive for equal opportunities for them, encourage the disabled to participate more in society, and have positive significance for eliminating discrimination and promoting social inclusion of the disabled (Tang, H., 2015; Li, A., Li, X., & Qiu, Z., et.al., 2018).

5. Exploration on social inclusion path of three typical disabled groups

In addition to the above-mentioned four paths, a large number of scholars have conducted in-depth research on specific groups, among which the mentally handicapped, children/adolescents with disabilities, and college students with disabilities are the three most concentrated groups.

5.1. The mentally handicapped

People with intellectual disabilities are vulnerable groups that need special attention and help. Scholars have tried to solve the problem that mentally retarded people are difficult to integrate into society from three aspects: policy, concept and practice. In terms of policies, Liu, C (2006) systematically introduced the relevant laws and policies on the inclusion and resettlement of the mentally handicapped in the United States, restored the process from isolation to inclusion, and believed that supportive employment was an important part of them. In terms of concepts, the concept of disability is changing from a medical model to a social model. Under this model, the understanding of the mentally disabled tends to be objective and positive, which helps eliminate isolation and exclusion. In practice, the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities includes interpersonal relationships, employment status, personal capabilities, etc. Pan, L. (2009) proposed empowerment measures from both individual and social levels through case analysis, in order to improve the living ability and social inclusion level of people with intellectual disabilities.

5.2. Children/adolescents with disabilities

At present, the social inclusion of disabled children/adolescents in our country faces many obstacles, which are composed of three factors from family, community and society, while Zhang & Xiong (2012), based on the survey of disabled children in rural areas, pointed out that the main obstacles to their social inclusion are lack of assistance funds, backward concept of family-supported care, psychological trauma of disabled children and other factors. The effective way to break down the barriers is to use the intervention mode of social work, to improve discrimination against disabled children, to create a social atmosphere of equal acceptance, and to build a social approach based on rights, paying attention to potential and eliminating barriers.

5.3. College students with disabilities

College students with disabilities are an important force to promote the change of social outlook on the disabled and reflect the value of the disabled. However, China has a short history of developing higher education and higher vocational education for the disabled, and the developing mechanism is still

insufficient, which is not fully compatible with the inclusive education idea advocated internationally. Under this background, it is of great significance to construct the higher education and higher vocational education model of “inclusion of the disabled and the healthy, common development, limited isolation and infinite inclusion” (Wang, D., 2011).

Accompanying the imperfect educational mechanism are the psychological barriers and social dilemmas faced by disabled college students. The social adaptation of disabled college students is characterized by difficulties in learning, narrow interpersonal circle, etc. These students are not fully integrated into the mainstream society psychologically. The medical mode of social cognition, self-identity of disabled college students and the self-psychological defense mechanism jointly cause their embarrassing situation in the process of social inclusion (Zhao, Wang & Deng, 2018).

In addition, scholars have also extensively learned from international experience and used the experience of developed countries in promoting the social inclusion of the disabled to find effective solutions to many problems in education, employment, rehabilitation, culture and other aspects of the social inclusion of the disabled in China.

6. Conclusion

The social inclusion of the disabled is an important event related to the healthy development of the cause of the disabled, social fairness and justice, and the overall construction of a well-off society. At present, the research on the social inclusion of the disabled in China is still in its initial stage, and there is still much room for improvement in the overall research level, research width and depth. Specifically, there are three problems:

First, the research on the social inclusion of the disabled is in an embarrassing situation of “double deficiency” in the research on the disabled and the research on the social inclusion. On the one hand, research on the disabled pays more attention to specific issues, such as education and employment. Relatively few articles directly use the concept of “social inclusion”. On the other hand, the disabled are marginalized in the research of social inclusion.

Second, the theoretical system for the study of social inclusion of the disabled has not yet formed. Few scholars have explained the complete framework and process of the research on the social inclusion of the disabled from the macro perspective of theoretical construction. The content, theoretical basis and methods of the study on social inclusion of the disabled are still unresolved issues. At the same time, the academic discourse system of social inclusion research for the disabled is still immature and lacks a unified standard.

Third, the overall level of research on social inclusion of the disabled is not high. The research on the social inclusion of the disabled has the obvious feature of periodical papers and degree theses coexist. Among the documents found, 88 are Chinese journal papers and 67 are degree theses. The number of journal papers and degree theses is almost the same every year. The scale of research is still quite limited, and the maturity of research results still needs to be studied.

With the continuous development of China's economy and society, scholars, government and the whole society will surely develop their understanding of social inclusion of the disabled in a systematic, localized and scientific way. In this process of development, the inclusion of education and employment of the disabled will become the focus and priority of the research, and will be widely used in the research of the cause of the disabled with relatively independent concepts of inclusive education and inclusive employment, while the research of rehabilitation and cultural inclusion of the disabled is relatively marginal. However, in the background of the current research on grass-roots community governance, public service and public culture in China, this part of the research is likely to become the intersection of interdisciplinary research. In addition, the mechanism of social concept and social security system on the social inclusion of the disabled still needs to be further clarified.

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