

A Study on Strategies to Improve Elementary School Teachers' Professionalism in the Context of Integrated Education

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Abstract: *Integrated education is an educational concept of special education, which refers to the provision of equal quality education and related services for all children, including those with special educational needs, in regular classes in regular schools in the community, based on the belief of meeting the diverse learning needs of all children. In recent years, the elementary school level has become the main basis for the development of integrated education, and the number of children with special needs attending classes has gradually increased, placing higher demands on the professionalism of elementary school teachers. This study aims to improve the professionalism of elementary school teachers in the context of integrated education at three levels: educational administration, schools and teachers, which will not only inject new energy into the development of elementary school teachers' professionalism, but also better promote the development of "class attendance" in China.*

Keywords: *inclusive education; elementary school teachers; professionalism*

1. Introduction

With the increase in the popularity and level of education in China, integrated education has become a major form of education in China, which refers to the provision of equal and quality education and related services for all children, including those with special education needs, in ordinary classes in ordinary schools in the community based on the belief of meeting the diverse learning needs of all children. [1]In 2022, the "14th Five-Year Plan of Action for the Development and Enhancement of Special Education" explicitly calls for "promoting further and deeper integration of general education and special education, and promoting high-quality development of the integration of general and special education". [2]The quality of the implementation of integrated education depends on the professionalism of elementary school teachers, who should have professional philosophy and ethics, professional knowledge and professional competence. In the context of integrated education, the integrated education literacy of elementary school teachers is part of the professional literacy structure of future teachers and is a necessary professional literacy for a good elementary school teacher. This study analyzes three aspects of elementary school teachers' professional literacy in the context of integrated education: its connotation, components and enhancement strategies, to further promote the comprehensive development of elementary school teachers' professional literacy.

2. The connotation of professionalism of elementary school teachers in the context of integrated education

In the context of integrated education, elementary school teachers educate not only ordinary children, but also children with special needs who are enrolled in the classroom. The elementary school teacher, as the main implementer of integrated education, is the decisive factor in whether children with special needs can receive appropriate education in the regular classroom. Studies have found that teacher professionalism has a more significant impact on student achievement in terms of class size, structure, environment, and children's background. [3]In addition, the acquisition of relevant professional skills by elementary school teachers is a significant predictor of successful practice of inclusive education. [4]It is evident that elementary school teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and children with special needs are closely related to their mastery of special education teaching skills.

In the context of integrated education, the professional development of elementary school teachers

is inseparable from the professional development of elementary school teachers. With the rapid development of integrated education and the increasing number of children with special needs in the classroom, the teaching system of elementary school education, the teaching methods of elementary school teachers and the learning paths of elementary school teachers are changing. As the main practitioners of integrated education, primary school teachers need to re-examine their own values, concepts and forms, discard old values and build new values. In terms of ideology, they should integrate the concept of integrated education and form the diversified educational values of equality, respect, acceptance and tolerance; in terms of curriculum content, they should integrate the advantages of various types of curriculum to meet the learning needs of special and ordinary children; in terms of teaching methods, they should combine modern electronic technology and adopt diversified teaching methods to comprehensively promote the overall physical and mental development of special and ordinary children.

In the context of integrated education, the connotation of elementary school teachers' professionalism reflects both the basic content of elementary school teachers' profession and the contemporary characteristics of elementary school teachers, and is in line with their professional development.

3. Structural elements of elementary school teachers' professionalism in the context of integrated education

Integrated education advocates the acceptance of children with disabilities with special needs education in ordinary schools and promotes the educational concepts of integration, inclusion, equality, and democracy. This paper further explores the professionalism of elementary school teachers based on the three major aspects of professional philosophy and teacher ethics, professional knowledge, and professional competence proposed in the Professional Standards for Elementary School Teachers (for Trial Implementation), incorporating the concept of inclusive education.

3.1. Professional philosophy and teacher ethics of elementary school teachers

Professional philosophy and teacher ethics are the implicit characteristics of elementary school teachers' professionalism, which can have a subtle influence on children with special needs and ordinary children in their educational and teaching activities. This is because the purpose of elementary school teachers' education and teaching is not only to enable children with special needs and ordinary children to gain increased knowledge and experience and to improve their learning and practical skills, but also, and more importantly, to promote their positive development in terms of their ideology and way of thinking. These aspects of development are closely linked to the professional emotional engagement and teaching quality infection of elementary school teachers. The professional philosophy and teacher ethics of elementary school teachers have a crucial impact on the development of children with special needs and children in general, and are important structural elements in the development of their professionalism. The professional philosophy of the elementary school teacher is the professional ideal that he or she possesses as an elementary school teacher. The professional philosophy of primary school teachers is their unique understanding of teaching content, teaching objects, and teaching environment in the process of learning and teaching practice, the basic concepts and basic attitudes they hold in education and teaching, and the basic basis for their implementation of teaching behaviors and practices. However, studies have shown that most front-line elementary school teachers have contradictory cognitive performance about integrated education, understand what integrated education is, but have low acceptance of integrated education or attending classes for children with special needs, have negative attitudes toward integrated education, and lack confidence in implementing integrated education.[5]In addition, the teacher ethics of elementary school teachers is also the core content of their professionalism. It is the code of conduct and the moral quality that elementary school teachers should follow at all times when they are engaged in education and teaching activities. It defines the attitude of elementary school teachers in dealing with the education targets, the educational methods in dealing with the problems, and the way of working with students. In the context of integrated education, the special nature of the educational objects faced by elementary school teachers has placed higher demands on their moral qualities. Elementary school teachers should not only love elementary school education, adhere to their own educational sentiments, and care for their educational targets, but also set a good example for their students, teach them by example, and infect both special and ordinary children with their own learning style to help them develop fully physically and psychologically.

3.2. Expertise of elementary school teachers

Professional knowledge is the basis for elementary school teachers' educational and teaching activities, and it plays a crucial role in their professional development. The professional knowledge that elementary school teachers possess directly affects their teaching behaviors and the presentation of curriculum design, and is an important sign of their professionalism. Some studies have shown that teachers' professional knowledge can be divided into three parts: subject knowledge, educational knowledge, and general knowledge. [6]As far as elementary school teachers are concerned, subject knowledge refers to the basic knowledge of the subject that elementary school teachers teach, and the degree of mastery of such knowledge determines their understanding of "what to teach" and is a prerequisite for whether elementary school teachers are competent in education and teaching. It mainly affects whether elementary school teachers can carry out appropriate and effective teaching activities and is the knowledge of "how to teach"; general knowledge mainly refers to the knowledge of astronomy and geography, humanities and history, philosophy and politics that elementary school teachers master in addition to the above types of knowledge, which is essential for enriching the content of elementary school curriculum and adding interest to the curriculum. It is an essential part of knowledge that enriches the content and increases the interest of the primary school curriculum. In the context of inclusive education, a broad knowledge of elementary school teachers is a prerequisite for being a teacher. However, current research on elementary school teachers' knowledge related to integrated education shows that primary and secondary school teachers in accompanying classes only have expertise in general education and teaching and lack expertise in special education curriculum and teaching, and due to the heterogeneity of teaching objects, teaching in elementary school has a higher degree of distress perception in both curriculum design and teaching strategies, making it difficult to carry out teaching activities, and elementary school teachers are also less likely to receive The training and learning of special education related knowledge and theories.[7] In the context of integrated education, elementary school teachers should not only master general education and teaching theories, but also master special education theories and related subject knowledge, seriously integrate the two in classroom management, curriculum design, teaching strategies and teacher-student cooperation, deeply grasp the laws and characteristics of education and teaching of the two, continuously reflect and improve their own education and teaching abilities, and further promote the implementation of integrated education in elementary school. The students will continue to reflect on and improve their teaching skills to further promote the implementation of integrated education in primary schools.

3.3. Professional competence of elementary school teachers

Professional competence is generated and developed by elementary school teachers through their acceptance and participation in teacher education, their engagement in education and teaching, and their involvement in teaching and research activities, and it is the element of competence that enables elementary school teachers to adapt to social and professional development requirements and promote their own professional development. The professional competence of elementary school teachers is mainly reflected in the various teaching behaviors implemented by elementary school teachers, which are closely related to children's learning and development, and are the external expression of the level of professionalism of elementary school teachers and an important measure of professionalism. Some studies show that teachers' professional competence can be divided into four parts: classroom teaching competence, communication and cooperation competence, teaching reflection competence and educational research competence.[8]In the context of integrated education, classroom teaching ability is the most important part of elementary school teachers' professional competence, which includes teaching behavior ability, teaching design ability and teaching organization ability. Specifically, elementary school teachers should have strong oral expression ability, classroom management ability, written expression ability, and multimedia courseware production ability in teaching behavior ability. In terms of communication ability, besides having the ability to communicate with school colleagues, ordinary children and parents, elementary school teachers must be aware of the necessity of communication and cooperation with special children and pay attention to the psychological health of special children due to the special nature of the teaching objects; in terms of teaching reflection ability, elementary school teachers should consciously carry out reflection before, during and after teaching, and promote their own professional development through teaching reflection, in addition, the Through teaching reflection, elementary school teachers can deeply explore the learning needs of special and ordinary children and adopt appropriate methods to promote their physical development; in terms of educational research ability, elementary school teachers should strengthen their analysis and exploration of teaching theories of general and special education so as to deepen their understanding of

education and teaching. In the context of integrated education, elementary school teachers have higher requirements for their professional competence. The professional competence of elementary school teachers is a composite and multidimensional development, and their professional competence is an important sign of their competence in education and teaching.

3.4. Strategies for improving elementary school teachers' professionalism in the context of integrated education

With the promotion of the concept of integrated education and the implementation of the policy of attending classes, elementary school teachers are given more demands as the implementers of integrated education. In the long run, the professionalism of elementary school teachers not only affects the learning of basic knowledge of ordinary children and children with special needs, but also has an impact on their first experience with social environment and even on their ability to integrate into social life on their own initiative. For this reason, it is necessary to promote the professionalism of elementary school teachers in the context of integrated education, starting from the educational administration, schools and teachers.

4. Educational administrative authority level

4.1. Enriching the content of professional standards for elementary school teachers

The Professional Standards for Primary School Teachers (for Trial Implementation) promulgated in 2012 proposed that elementary school teachers should possess professionalism in three aspects: professional philosophy and teacher ethics, professional knowledge and professional competence. With the gradual popularization of integrated education, elementary school has become the main base for the development of integrated education, and the number of children with special needs attending classes has gradually increased, which has raised higher requirements for the professionalism of elementary school teachers. This has placed higher demands on the professionalism of primary school teachers. Therefore, the content of the professional standards for elementary school teachers should be further enriched and used as the main basis for pre-service training and post-service training for elementary school teachers.

In terms of professional philosophy and teacher ethics, elementary school teachers should be helped to understand the concept of integrated education and strengthen professional ethics education; in terms of professional knowledge, the pre-service elementary school professional curriculum should incorporate special education-related courses, reform traditional education teaching methods, and acquire teaching design skills for integrated education; post-service training on special education-related topics should be conducted and cooperation with special education institutions and resource centers should be actively launched; in terms of professional competence In terms of professional competence, the pre-service and post-service teachers should pay attention to the learning of practical experience in integrated education, so as to truly improve the professionalism of elementary school teachers in the context of integrated education.

4.2. Adjusting the curriculum and teaching of integrated education in elementary school

In the context of integrated education, elementary school teachers have many teaching problems, the most significant of which are in curriculum design and teaching methods. Specifically, there are difficulties in the integration of curriculum content, teaching methods and evaluation between general education and special education, and these problems exist because elementary school teachers lack theoretical knowledge and practical guidance about special education. Therefore, the education authorities should incorporate the curriculum and teaching content adjustment of special education into the policies related to primary education, and at the same time, make it a special content for specific operation and implementation rules and regulations, so as to guide the educational practice of elementary school teachers in the context of integrated education. In addition, in response to the teaching problems encountered by teachers in elementary and secondary schools with accompanying classes, regional special education resource centers should play their supporting role to strengthen on-site training and professional guidance for elementary school teachers with accompanying classes, so as to alleviate the teaching troubles faced by elementary school teachers.

5. School Level

5.1. Strong support for teacher integration education efforts

Schools should support the development of inclusive education and actively create a positive climate for inclusive education. Research has confirmed that school leaders who focus on or care about the development of inclusive education are conducive to creating an excellent atmosphere and increasing teachers' enthusiasm for teaching. [9]A quality inclusive education environment in schools requires not only the involvement of elementary school teachers, but also school-level support. Schools can actively work on integrated education from three aspects: principal's support, practical activities and management system. The first is to increase the support of the principal, who should enrich the knowledge of integrated education and update the concept of integrated education, and also communicate it clearly and explicitly to every teacher working in the school, and to strongly advocate the active cooperation between the accompanying teachers and the resource teachers to jointly achieve the educational and teaching goals, and to guarantee the full participation of children with special needs and ordinary children in the classroom activities, and to receive high-quality educational activities together. In addition, we should promote the active cooperation between teachers and resource teachers to achieve the educational and teaching goals together, and ensure that children with special needs and ordinary children participate in classroom activities and receive high-quality educational and teaching activities together. Secondly, practice activities should be enriched. The purpose of practical activities is to better serve children with special needs and help them adapt to school life, as well as to provide a platform for elementary school teachers to implement integrated education in depth. Schools can organize training activities, school-based research activities and observation activities for elementary school teachers on integrated education. Finally, a sound management system is needed. Schools should improve the management system related to integrated education, form an organized institutional culture, and clearly define the school's future development plan for integrated education, the incentive mechanism for teachers to implement integrated education, the construction and use of resource classrooms, and other management and operation systems, in order to promote the improvement of teachers' integrated education literacy and build an autonomous and supportive school ecosystem.

5.2. Investing in reducing pressure on teachers

In the context of integrated education, the increasing prevalence of accompanying classes poses serious challenges to the professionalism of elementary school teachers. Currently, elementary school teachers face increasing workload pressure, social and school evaluation pressure, professional development pressure, educational pressure for children with special needs, and academic pressure for regular children. In classroom management, elementary school teachers have to manage both regular children and children with special needs. This requires elementary school teachers to be responsive to the needs of children with special needs in the classroom, and when developing lesson plans, elementary school teachers need to devote more time and energy to incorporating special education-related curriculum content or making appropriate curriculum adjustments due to the inclusion of children with special needs, which in effect increases their teaching pressure. Therefore, efforts should be made to reduce the non-essential workload of elementary education teachers and effectively cope with the work pressure. Schools can help elementary teachers to manage their emotions and cope with the difficulties and challenges that may arise in their future work by conducting various forms of thematic activities to relieve their stress or teach positive coping strategies for stress. In addition, schools should also provide primary teachers with

In addition, schools should also provide primary school teachers with opportunities to study with resource teachers or special education teachers, so as to really help elementary school teachers solve the problems they face in the process of integrated education practice and get out of the teaching dilemma completely.

6. Teacher's Level

6.1. Deepening understanding the meaning of inclusive education

Numerous studies have shown that the successful implementation of integrated education depends on teachers' attitudes toward children with special educational needs, and teachers' attitudes are one of the key factors affecting the success of integrated education. At present, elementary school teachers

have a superficial understanding of the concept of integrated education and realize that children with special needs should receive education on an equal footing with ordinary children, but they are still confused about the practice of integrated education and lack in-depth understanding, which affects their attitude toward teaching children with special needs in the development of the classroom. Therefore, it is necessary to deepen primary school teachers' understanding of integration. Therefore, it is necessary to deepen elementary school teachers' understanding of integrated education, clarify that the concept of integrated education emphasizes "promoting education for all" and promoting educational equity, so as to enhance elementary school teachers' sense of teaching efficacy and help them establish firm beliefs in integrated education, such as equity and excellence, acceptance and inclusion, diversity and a sense of belonging, in order to give more help to children with special needs and to improve the quality of education. This will lay the foundation for giving special children more help and better integrated education.

6.2. Strengthen the professional knowledge of special education

Currently, studies have shown that elementary school teachers' professional knowledge about special education is relatively lacking, and most of them are unclear and ambiguous about how to develop individualized teaching programs for children with special needs and how to evaluate them. Therefore, in the context of integrated education, elementary school teachers should fully explore their potential, continuously strengthen their knowledge about special education, actively broaden their knowledge level, explore diversified teaching methods in practice, and improve the level of curriculum and teaching adjustment. In addition, elementary school teachers should actively participate in professional seminars and training related to integrated education, so that they can meet the different needs of different children and work with ease. Elementary school teachers should also enhance their awareness of self-reflection and actively engage in "self- guidance- self- motivation- self- monitoring- self-evaluation-self-reflection", thus helping them to continuously improve their professional knowledge and skills. In this way, they can improve their own professional knowledge and gradually find a suitable path to carry out integrated education, and finally grow in their own professional quality.

In conclusion, the study on the improvement of elementary school teachers' professionalism in the context of integrated education requires not only the policy system as a guide, but also the help of schools as a guarantee, and the continuous self-improvement of elementary school teachers in learning and practice. Only by organically combining these three paths and promoting each other can the professionalism of elementary school teachers be more effectively improved.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study on the improvement of elementary school teachers' professionalism in the context of integrated education requires both a policy system as a guide, school assistance as a guarantee, and the establishment of professional development awareness among elementary school teachers. Only by integrating integrated education into elementary school teachers' professional standards, adjusting elementary school integrated curriculum and teaching, supporting elementary school teachers' integrated education work, reducing elementary school teachers' work pressure, and focusing on elementary school teachers' own professional growth, can elementary school teachers' professionalism be more effectively improved.

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