

Research on Measures to Promote Social Security and Social Integration for Children with Disabilities

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Abstract

As a relatively disadvantaged group in society, enhancing the social security and social integration of children with disabilities plays a crucial role in promoting the spiritual civilization and economic development of society as a whole, while also tangibly improving their life skills and living standards. Through literature review and case studies, this paper analyzes current challenges faced by disabled children in China, such as heavy family burdens, uneven distribution of public welfare resources, and poor social integration. Based on these issues, it proposes a dual-pronged approach through social security and social integration to alleviate these difficulties. At the social security level, increased fiscal investment and optimized resource allocation are needed, alongside establishing cross-departmental collaborative management mechanisms. Regarding social integration, comprehensive efforts should advance high-quality inclusive education, build specialized rehabilitation support systems, foster an inclusive and supportive social and cultural environment, and empower families of children with disabilities. This research offers valuable insights for policy formulation and tangible improvements in the living conditions of children with disabilities.

Keywords

children with disabilities, social welfare protection, social integration, diverse development

1. Introduction

China has the world's largest population of persons with disabilities, which undoubtedly poses challenges for establishing and improving the social security system and framework for this group. However, with societal progress, China's disability social security has evolved from initial basic assistance to a modernized social security system and care service framework that is now largely aligned with contemporary standards (Chen & Mo, 2025). Within the “jellyfish-like” social structure, persons with disabilities constitute a permanently vulnerable group, while children with disabilities represent the youngest segment of this permanently vulnerable population. They generally possess lower average capabilities than the non-disabled population and are classified as dynamically vulnerable (Yan, 2024). Among persons with disabilities, children with disabilities represent the group with the greatest potential. The rehabilitation training, educational knowledge, skills training, and welfare resources they receive during childhood can significantly enhance their survival skills and life capabilities upon entering society. Currently, China has implemented multiple policies and measures to safeguard disabled children, achieving significant results. For instance, in rehabilitation assistance for disabled children, 499,000 children have received support, with both the level of assistance and the scope

of beneficiaries showing marked improvement and expansion (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2025). However, China's social security and social integration for children with disabilities still face numerous challenges. For instance, although special schools for persons with disabilities have been established and various preferential policies for enrolling children with disabilities have been implemented, it remains uncertain whether children with disabilities in different regions can equally access these benefits. Furthermore, while the basic right to education has been guaranteed, it is unclear whether the actual capabilities of children with disabilities have been significantly enhanced. Similar issues, such as regional disparities in resource allocation and suboptimal outcomes for children with disabilities, remain widespread. This paper will examine how to enhance social security and social integration for children with disabilities by analyzing case studies and proposing corresponding solutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Current Research Status Abroad

Compared to domestic research on social security and social integration for children with disabilities, foreign research started earlier, and the theories and methods in various aspects are relatively mature and advanced. Some studies even consider racial differences in healthcare and health outcomes among children with disabilities (Lindsay et al., 2024). However, overall, foreign scholars' research focuses more on policy and legal studies. For example, laws and regulations such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the United States and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SEND) in the United Kingdom provide full legal protection for children with disabilities. At the same time, there is also a large body of literature discussing the implementation models and support strategies of inclusive education (such as resource rooms and cooperative teaching), the impact on the development of children with and without disabilities, and the professional skills required for teachers in ordinary schools. In terms of rehabilitation training for children with disabilities, foreign scholars have fully explored community-based rehabilitation and support, studying how to utilize community resources to provide rehabilitation, education, livelihood, and social support for children with disabilities and their families, enabling them to integrate into society in familiar environments. Additionally, psychological education and support are also key focuses of foreign research.

2.2 Current Domestic Research Status

Domestic research primarily revolves around policies. However, in terms of research entities, China's welfare security research for disabled children has yet to establish a stable core research group, and research remains relatively scattered. Currently, the main research entities are universities and research institutes (Liu & Zhu, 2022). In terms of the main research content, most studies affirm the transformation of China's welfare system for disabled children from a “gap-filling” model to a “moderately inclusive” model, especially the establishment and promotion of the rehabilitation assistance system for disabled children. However, they also summarize the main existing issues, such as significant regional disparities, with notable differences in policies and resources between developed and less developed regions; overlapping functions among various government departments, resulting in fragmented policy implementation and decentralized management. Additionally, in terms of research on the social integration of disabled children, domestic researchers mainly focus on issues such as educational integration, the combination of “medical care, rehabilitation, and education,” and the existence of prejudice and discrimination from the public (including peers).

2.3 Comprehensive Analysis and Research Deficiencies

Although research on social security and integration for disabled children has made some progress both domestically and internationally, there are still some shortcomings. Firstly, relevant research in China is mostly focused on policy-level discussions, with relatively lacking empirical research based on practice. The specific effects and impact mechanisms still require in-depth analysis. Although foreign research is relatively mature at the theoretical level, it often requires localization adjustments in terms of applicability and promotion effects under different cultural backgrounds, lacking a deep integration with China's national conditions. Therefore, future research should strengthen detailed analysis of the needs of disabled children in different regions and of different types, with the aim of providing more comprehensive and effective countermeasures for social security and integration of disabled children in China.

3. Case Study

This section, through two different cases, can reflect to a certain extent the basic situation of social security and social integration of disabled children in different regions of China, as well as the differences in policies and specific safeguards between different regions.

3.1 Case 1: “Sunshine Partner” Integrated Education Program in Haidian District, Beijing

3.1.1 Case Background

As a strong educational district, Haidian District in Beijing has long been facing the challenges of difficult school enrollment and integration for disabled children, especially those with autism and intellectual disabilities. The “Sunshine Partner” Integrated Education Program is a regional innovative practice launched by Haidian District to thoroughly implement the spirit of national documents such as the “Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities” and the “14th Five-Year Plan for the Development and Improvement of Special Education”. The Haidian District Education Commission took the lead in initiating this program in 2018, with the core goal of ensuring the equal right to education for disabled children and adolescents and improving the quality of regional integrated education.

3.1.2 Main Practices and Measures

The plan is led by the Haidian District Education Commission, in collaboration with the District Disabled Persons' Federation, Health and Family Planning Commission, Finance Bureau, and other departments, to establish a special working group to coordinate and address core issues such as enrollment, funding guarantee, staffing, and professional support. In terms of policy support, district-level supporting documents will be issued. In terms of funding guarantee, support will be provided for inclusive education, including per-student funding, special subsidies, and resources for classroom construction. Apart from basic mandatory support, the plan also establishes a professional support system. Through the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), an IEP team consisting of general school teachers, resource teachers, special education experts, parents, rehabilitation therapists, etc. will be established for each student learning in regular classes. Comprehensive assessments will be conducted to develop and implement individualized education plans, which will be regularly evaluated and adjusted. Additionally, high-standard resource classrooms will be built within regular schools to provide dedicated spaces for special students to undergo withdrawal-based remedial teaching, sensory regulation, and rehabilitation training. Resource teachers will also be responsible for assessment, training, consultation, and supervision. On the student side, the plan implements a peer support model. In classes, ordinary students with a sense of responsibility and caring hearts are selected as “Sunshine Partners” through voluntary registration and teacher guidance, forming pairs with students with special needs to provide natural support in daily learning and life.

3.1.3 Achievements and Challenges

As of 2023, the program has covered over 50 primary and secondary schools in Haidian District, benefiting more than 600 disabled children. Relevant research shows that disabled children participating in the program have significantly improved in social skills, language communication, and academic adaptability. At the same time, ordinary students' empathy and social responsibility have also been enhanced, creating a more inclusive campus culture.

However, the plan also faces some challenges. Firstly, this model is highly dependent on administrative power and financial investment, posing a test to its sustainability. Secondly, the professional knowledge training for teachers in ordinary schools is still inadequate, and they face significant work pressure. In terms of rehabilitation for disabled children, research generally suggests that the supply of rehabilitation services is insufficient and the quality varies greatly, with insufficient integration of “medical care, rehabilitation, and education”. Additionally, there is still a gap in vocational education and transition service support for some older disabled children (such as those after junior high school), making it difficult for them to integrate into society in the future.

3.2 Case 2: Dual-track Support Plan of “Door-to-Door Education” and “Resource Center” in Qin'an County, Tianshui City, Gansu Province

3.2.1 Case Background

Some regions in Gansu Province are inherently underdeveloped economically in China, and the social security and integration of disabled children in these areas are also highly representative. However, it is worth studying and exploring how such regions, with limited resources, can strive to safeguard the right to education of disabled children and enhance their educational level through mechanism innovation and precise policy implementation.

3.2.2 Main Practices and Measures

The plan aims to address the issue of “availability” of education for severely disabled children through “door-to-door teaching”, and enhance the “quality” of education for children learning in regular classes through a “resource center”. By implementing these two parallel tracks, it ensures that all school-age disabled children within the county can receive appropriate educational support. Firstly, Qin'an County has established a “Special Education Resource Center” under the County Education Bureau, which undertakes four core functions: management, guidance, training, and research. Initially, it conducts a thorough investigation of all disabled children in the county, both those with certificates and those without (but with obvious impairments), establishes a “one-person-one-case” database, and updates it dynamically. Additionally, it organizes an expert committee composed of personnel from education, healthcare, and the Disabled Persons' Federation to assess the educational abilities of each child and propose placement suggestions such as “learning in regular classes”, “learning in special education schools”, or “door-to-door teaching”.

The highlight of this plan lies in the innovative “1+X” door-to-door teaching model. Door-to-door teaching serves as an important supplementary form of educational placement for children with disabilities, referring to the teaching method of providing on-site education for students with severe or multiple disabilities (who are mostly unable to take care of themselves and have extremely low cognitive function) (Lahaije et al., 2023). However, the actual effect is generally mediocre, with many regional “door-to-door” programs becoming mere formalities and lacking quality, making it difficult to exert practical effectiveness and truly benefit children with disabilities. Nevertheless, the “1+X” door-to-door teaching model, through a primary responsible teacher plus a diversely supportive team, has enhanced the practical effectiveness of this model to a certain extent. This model completes basic cultural knowledge teaching through the primary responsible teacher, and safeguards the rights and interests of children with disabilities from various aspects, including rehabilitation instructors, college student volunteers, community volunteers, and online experts.

3.2.3 Achievements and Challenges

Through the dual support of “door-to-door education” and “resource center”, the enrollment rate in this region has significantly increased: the compulsory education enrollment rate for disabled children in the entire county has risen from around 90% in the past and stabilized at over 98%. The educational process has also become more standardized, and the quality of education has improved.

However, the plan still faces numerous challenges. Firstly, there is a significant shortage of professional talents, whether it be full-time staff in resource centers, lead teachers, volunteers, or online experts, all of whom are facing the practical issues of insufficient numbers and the need to enhance their professional abilities. Additionally, some work remains at the stage of “having”, and the challenge lies in transitioning from “having” to “excellence” and achieving high-quality integration. Meanwhile, home-school cooperation needs to be further deepened. Many families of children with disabilities are impoverished and have outdated beliefs. The challenge lies in effectively empowering these families and forming a synergistic force in education.

3.3 Case Summary

Through two cases from different regions, it can be observed that China's social security and social integration policies for disabled children are gradually evolving from being popular and general to being specific and professional. The relevant departments responsible for social security for disabled children are also becoming more specific and professional. Previously, disabled children were often neglected by society, but more and more policies and local plans have brought the issues of disabled children to the attention of the

wider public, and discrimination against them has been relatively reduced. Furthermore, there has been significant progress in the integration of “medical care, rehabilitation, and education” compared to the past.

However, cases from different regions also reveal issues of commonalities and specificities:

3.3.1 The Implementation of Social Security and Integration Policies for Disabled Children is Not in Place

China has initially established a policy framework covering various aspects of disabled children's lives, rehabilitation, and education. However, many well-intended policies aimed at safeguarding their rights and promoting their integration have shown a disconnect between “high-level design” and “low-level implementation” in practice. The reason lies in the fact that, on the one hand, the work related to the protection of disabled children involves multiple departments such as the Disabled Persons' Federation, education, civil affairs, health and wellness, and human resources and social security. However, in actual operation, the problem of “policies coming from multiple sources and multiple management” is prominent. There is a lack of efficient and unified coordination mechanisms and information sharing platforms among various departments, often leading to independent operations, resulting in scattered service resources and poor policy cohesion. On the other hand, the final implementation of policies relies on governments and institutions at the county and township levels. However, many grassroots units generally face triple constraints of financial resources, manpower, and professional capabilities, seriously affecting the effectiveness of policy implementation.

3.3.2 Lack of Professionals and Specialized Institutions for Social Security and Integration of Children with Disabilities

Currently, China has a basic awareness and preliminary framework for the cultivation of talents and institutions in this field. However, the scale of the professional training system is limited, and the number of talents trained is difficult to meet actual needs. Research shows that the vast majority of parents of children with disabilities require family-centered services provided by nursing professionals(Xiang et al., 2021). Additionally, even if talent institutions cultivate high-quality talents, the relatively low salary and limited career development prospects make it difficult to attract and retain excellent talents. Furthermore, although the number of rehabilitation centers, special education schools, and resource classrooms has increased in recent years, they are still scarce resources compared to the large demand group, especially comprehensive institutions that can provide high-quality integrated services of “medical care, rehabilitation, and education”. At the same time, there have been many private institutions in society, but the industry access threshold, quality assessment standards, and regulatory system are not perfect, resulting in uneven levels among private institutions. This, in turn, further harms the rights and interests of children with disabilities and their families, and may even undermine the confidence of children and their families.

3.3.3 Significant Disparities Exist in Social Security and integration Policies, as Well as Resources, for Disabled Children Across Different Regions

There are significant disparities in the socio-economic development levels among different regions. This disparity is evident in various aspects related to the social security and integration of children with disabilities, including policy concepts and design, financial investment levels, professional talent teams, and social support environments. Developed regions have advanced concepts that emphasize social integration, mental health, and career development. Their policies are more refined and cover a wider range. In contrast, less developed regions often remain at the level of “ensuring basic needs and meeting minimum standards,” with relatively narrow policy coverage. Additionally, developed regions have stronger financial support, with higher subsidy and funding standards, and more diversified channels for economic support. Less developed regions, on the other hand, rely heavily on central and provincial fiscal transfer payments, with limited economic support sources and lower subsidy standards. In terms of professional talent, economically developed regions have a wealth of talents in various industries, a well-established training system, and a high talent retention rate. However, due to objective reasons, less developed regions are not attractive to professional talents and struggle to achieve professionalization in their training systems. In terms of social support environments, economically developed regions have high public awareness, active social organizations, a mature volunteer culture, and a strong sense of corporate social responsibility. Less developed regions, however, are deeply influenced by

traditional concepts, where social discrimination and prejudice are still prevalent. Social organizations are few in number and weak in capability, and community support networks are sparse.

4. Discussion on Countermeasures to Promote Social Security and Social Integration for Disabled Children

4.1 Strengthen Overall Coordination and Establish an Integrated Service System

To address the issues of policy fragmentation and poor inter-departmental coordination, we can strengthen top-level design and mechanism innovation at the national level. A cross-departmental national coordination agency can be established, responsible for coordinating the formulation of national strategies, coordinating policy resources, breaking down departmental barriers, and achieving a transition from “multiple management” to “collaborative governance”. On this basis, a unified supervision and feedback mechanism can be established to ensure that various policies can form a closed loop of supervision and improvement after implementation. At the same time, national basic public service standards can be formulated to clearly define the minimum service standards that the government should provide to children with disabilities in areas such as rehabilitation, education, and care (such as per capita funding, teacher-student ratio, professional staffing, etc.), and a central fiscal transfer payment mechanism linked to these standards can be established to set a baseline for service provision nationwide and gradually narrow regional disparities.

4.2 Strengthen the Construction of Talent Team and Consolidate the Foundation of Professional Development

Addressing the core pain point of a shortage of professional talents, on the one hand, we need to expand the scale of talent cultivation and optimize the training structure. Specifically, we can support more universities and vocational colleges to offer majors related to special education, rehabilitation therapy, applied behavior analysis, etc., and expand enrollment. The curriculum should emphasize the practical orientation of “combining medical education with educational practice” and “integrating rehabilitation education with education,” cultivating composite talents. Additionally, we can improve the in-service training and career development system, incorporating all teachers from ordinary schools and technical personnel from rehabilitation institutions into the free training system. More importantly, to attract and retain talents, it is recommended to establish a tiered salary system and professional title promotion channels based on professional ability and years of experience, significantly increasing special education allowances and benefits for frontline workers to enhance the attractiveness of the profession. At the same time, to address the issue of uneven talent distribution among regions, national, provincial, and municipal expert databases can be established to provide technical guidance and itinerant services to grassroots units. Emphasis should be placed on strengthening the professional staffing of county-level special education resource centers, making them regional hubs for training grassroots teachers, guiding parents, and managing services.

4.3 Innovate Resource Allocation and Supply Methods to Bridge Regional and Development Disparities

In response to the issues of uneven regional development and insufficient total resources, it is necessary to innovate the way resources are allocated and stimulate market and social vitality.

On the one hand, the central and provincial governments can further increase special transfer payments to underdeveloped areas, with a focus on rural and remote areas, and allocate more high-quality resources to these areas. Additionally, they can vigorously support and regulate the participation of social forces, encourage and guide social capital to establish non-profit service institutions for disabled children, and establish strict industry access, quality assessment, blacklist and whitelist, and exit mechanisms. Strengthen in-process and post-process supervision, promote the standardized and professional development of private institutions, and form an effective supplement to the public system. At the same time, in the context of modernization, we need to embrace digital technology and develop “Internet plus rehabilitation education”: relying on the national smart education platform, develop and gather high-quality special education and rehabilitation course resources. Leverage technologies such as 5G and artificial intelligence to conduct remote assessments, online training,

and video guidance, providing high-quality professional support to families and grassroots teachers in remote areas, breaking the resource barriers brought by geographical isolation.

5. Conclusion

This article, from the dual perspectives of social security and social integration for disabled children, reveals the existing issues in this field in China through specific cases from two different regions. Generally speaking, although various policies and frameworks have been basically established, the specific implementation effects cannot be guaranteed. To achieve improvement from “having” to “excellence” in all aspects, this article proposes specific countermeasures such as strengthening top-level design and mechanism innovation at the national level, building a stable team of high-quality talents, and innovating resource allocation and supply methods. However, in the specific practical process, there may still be resistance from various aspects, including the urgent need to pay attention to and optimize the social security and integration of disabled children after they become adults. Therefore, future research can combine China's national conditions and actual situation, integrate relevant experiences from other countries, and transform them into a path suitable for China's social security and integration of disabled children.

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