The Absence and Reconstruction of Primary School Moral Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education

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Abstract. As an important content of modern school education, moral education is related to the question of what kind of people the education cultivates, so it has always been the focus of school education work. With the development of inclusive education, special children enter general schools for study and life. Therefore, while general schools deal with universality and individuality, they should use moral education to beautify the behavior and mind of special children and improve their moral cultivation, so as to realize the integration of ordinary children and special children. However, the current construction of moral education in inclusive schools is in a state of absence. Thus, efforts should be made to build a complete inclusive school moral education curriculum system, continuously improve their own education level, cultivate the cohesion of the classes allowing learning in regular class, strengthen the construction of campus culture, and establish a strong sense of responsibility.

Keywords: Inclusive education · Moral education · Absence and reconstruction

1 Introduction

The report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China put forward that “It is necessary to implement the fundamental task of fostering character and civic virtue, develop quality education, promote education fairness, and cultivate socialist builders and successors with all-round ability in areas such as morals, intelligence, physical fitness, work and aesthetics.” In “China’s Education Modernization 2035” issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council in February 2019, it also made it clear that “more emphasis on morality first and more attention to all-round development” is one of the eight basic concepts for promoting education modernization, not only highlighting the importance of moral education, but also putting forward clear requirements for school moral education [1]. At the same time, with the development of special education in China, more and more special children enter ordinary primary schools for education. In China, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Education, the number of special children learning in regular class increased from 187,534 in 2013 to 390,525 in 2019, an increase of 108.24%. In
the past 6 years, the proportion of special students studying in ordinary schools has been around 50%, and learning in regular class has become the main form of inclusive education for special children in China [2]. In 2020, the Ministry of Education issued the “Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Work of Learning in Regular Class for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities During the Compulsory Education Period”, which is a leading document leading to the critical stage of inclusive education from learning in regular class, a summary and development of the experience of “zero reject” and “full coverage” of inclusive education in some areas of China, as well as an important guarantee for comprehensively improving the quality of special education. The promulgation of the “Guiding Opinions on Strengthening the Work of Learning in Regular Class for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities During the Compulsory Education Period” means that China’s inclusive education model has been formally formed [3].

With the continuous increase in the number of special children and the development of inclusive education, more and more special students are enrolled in ordinary schools and the education of special students in schools has also received widespread attention. Although placing special children in ordinary schools can improve the special children’s learning, social, life adaptation and other skills, the inclusive education of special children has brought great challenges to ordinary schools. Many school managers and teachers often ask these questions: Can special children receive education? What can be expected from educating special children? What kind of problems do ordinary children have when integrating with special children? What pre-service and in-service training do teachers need? Several studies have pointed out that the effect of inclusive education for special children in ordinary schools is not as good as expected [4, 5]. As a place for ordinary children and special children to learn and live together, inclusive schools should use moral education as a medium to integrate into an educational environment where the two types of children coexist while dealing with universality and individuality, guide students to correctly view the different beauty in the society and realize the comprehensive and harmonious development of body and mind. At the same time, parents of special children, teachers of ordinary classes, and inclusive schools all hope to find the most suitable assistance strategies to help special children improve their learning and life adaptation in school.

2 The Connotation and Importance of Moral Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education

In a broad sense, moral education generally refers to the activities of educators to influence the educatee in political, intellectual and moral aspects in a purposeful and systematic manner. Moral education in a narrow sense refers to school moral education, which is an educational activity that educators exert influence on the educatee in a purposeful, planned and systematic manner according to the requirements of a certain society or class, so as to make them form a certain education activity that serves a certain society and class through the active awareness, reflection and practice of the educate [6]. The definition of moral education in the “Great Dictionary of Education” is: “The education aiming at forming a certain ideological and moral character of the educatee. In socialistic China, it includes ideological education, political education and moral education. In the
West, it generally refers to ethics education and related value education” [7]. This is also in line with the main content of moral education in current Chinese school education [8]. The most prominent feature of modern moral education is that people are regarded as the foundation of moral education and it is closely integrated with modern society, walking out of the situation where school moral education being separated from production and life in ancient times, gradually returning to life. Paying attention to people’s development has become an important subject of modern moral education [6]. Among them, moral accomplishment is one of the most basic and important contents of primary school moral education. Moral accomplishment is not only reflected in the external civilized behaviors and habits, but also in the inner heart or personalities of a person. Suhomlinski said: “If the most important truth as moral accomplishment doesn’t become a habit in adolescent stage, the damage caused will never be repaired” [9]. The primary school period is an important period of rapid physical and psychological development and change of children and it is also the best period to enrich knowledge, accept good moral character and develop formative education of behavioral habits [10]. Therefore, in the primary school stage of basic education, moral education should focus on the formative education of behavioral habits, implement the formative education of behavioral habits of primary school students, and do a solid job in the formative education of primary school students.

On the one hand, for special children, receiving the required targeted moral education in primary school can improve their social communication skills and moral cognition ability to a certain extent, so that they can obtain the same opportunities for all-round development in the school-age stage as ordinary children. At the same time, meeting the special education needs of special children will help them integrate into ordinary classes. The educational ideas of different educational systems will also have different effects on the personality development of special children. Special education schools often adopt the educational idea of bottom-line education, take too many protective measures and have lower expectations for students, which will adversely affect the integrity of students’ personality, while the concept of inclusive education believes that every student has the potential to develop and every student can be successful, so it will be conducive to the development of students’ potentials. On the other hand, for ordinary students, infiltrating moral education in the teaching process and focusing on cultivating students’ morality and virtue can cultivate students’ correct learning attitudes and correct moral ideas. Therefore, for the class as a whole, the necessary moral education enables special children to better integrate into the class, and at the same time, it can improve the acceptance and care of ordinary children to special classmates, avoid bad behaviors such as bullying and marginalization of special students by ordinary students to a certain extent, form a good class atmosphere and enhance class cohesion, so that all children can learn and grow together in such a class. Therefore, compared with ordinary classes, the moral education in classes allowing learning in regular class is more essential. In addition, receiving moral education is also conducive to the formation of caring qualities under the educational care of special children. Through moral education, ordinary children can regard special children as children with “a little difference but no hierarchy”, be able to communicate with them normally without prejudice, indifference and compassion, and convey tolerance and fraternity in the process of caring for special children. After perceiving this kind of kindness, special children can establish a caring relationship with
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3 The Current Situation and Problems of School Moral Education from the Perspective of Inclusive Education

Moral education is the soul of school education, which plays an irreplaceable guiding role in the formation of people’s ideological and character and the cultivation of personality. In schools’ education work, schools should increase their attention to students’ ideological education. As a critical period for the formation of students’ moral ideas, teachers in primary schools need to do a good job in moral education to help students establish correct moral ideas. At the same time, the “Regulations on Education for Individuals with Disabilities” revised in 2017 confirmed the concept and principles of inclusive education for the first time at the regulatory level, highlighting the important role of ordinary schools in inclusive education in terms of concept and system [12]. However, there are still some deficiencies in the current school moral education in terms of educational equity, humanistic care and value construction in inclusive education, which affect the development of students.

First, the concept of defect makes special children become outsiders of moral education [13]. For a long time, China has adopted a problem-based education model in the inclusive education of special children. Learning in regular class is a form of placement in China’s implementation of inclusive education for special children, but at present, although ordinary schools accept special children, their real educational status is only “sitting in regular class”, and special children are outsiders in the education and teaching activities of schools and classes [14]. In the aspect of moral education, there is a lack of adjustment of moral education courses specifically for special children. Although after years of practical development, foreign developed countries have produced a certain amount of basic research on the curriculum and teaching adjustment of inclusive education, and they are also very concerned about the academic participation performance of special students after teaching adjustment and take it as one of the important factors to measure the effectiveness of the adjustment, there is very little research in this area in China. At present, the main research directions in China are still at the theoretical level. Although some individual attempts have been made at the practical level, there is still no systematic operating system and no universal experience to follow [15]. In addition, moral education is not optional education. In most cases, inclusive schools only regard moral education as a “minor-subject” course and such courses are not within the scope of examination-oriented requirements, which is the reason why schools arbitrarily ignore and compress them. This kind of thinking set that bundles the true meaning of moral
education with after-school consolation, carefree mood, and leisure and entertainment is too extreme. In fact, moral education is the most urgently needed course in current inclusive schools and it reflects the “hidden” culture of a school. This is also irreplaceable by other educational content.

What’s more, the acceptance attitude of ordinary students to special students lacks correct guidance and moral education is superficial. Against the background of inclusive education, more children with mild and moderate special needs enter ordinary schools to learn in regular class. Whether these special children who are “alienated” by people can smoothly enter the school and be accepted is not something that can be solved by the scientific knowledge they have learned in the classroom. Therefore, the value of moral education at this moment becomes extremely important. The value of moral education in inclusive schools is to give every student an equal opportunity to experience love and respect. All kinds of special children can also expel the shadows of their souls in an inclusive environment, overcome the limitations of their own obstacles, improve their social cognition and adaptability, and achieve the most sincere life experience. The interaction between peers is one of the key factors in evaluating whether inclusive education is truly realized. Peers’ support for special children is beneficial to both, which not only promotes the interaction between classmates, but also helps to create a good atmosphere in the class [16]. However, the current reality is that students in ordinary classes know very little about special children and even label them discriminatory, resulting in special children’s low acceptance by their peers. And the most basic content in the moral education curriculum — “caring for and helping others” can’t be implemented. Studies have shown that it is very common for urban disabled children to be discriminated against in the process of learning in regular class. Discrimination is manifested at macro, meso and micro levels, many of which are difficult to detect, but will seriously affect the physical and mental development of children with disabilities [17]. At the same time, there is another reality, that is, the school has carried out a lot of moral education for special children and its related content, but has not screened the content, resulting in mixed educational content, which has become a means for ordinary students to attack and ridicule special children. From this point of view, the moral education of ordinary students is also the top priority.

Moreover, for teachers, on the one hand, most of the current teacher education in China lacks the training of educational knowledge and skills for all kinds of workers who are about to enter the front-line general education industry, and although it covers all aspects of general education, it lacks the teaching of relevant knowledge of special education [18]. Therefore, most teachers in ordinary schools lack the ability to guide special students when they carry out moral education in classes allowing learning in regular class due to lack of understanding of special education in front-line education practice. As a result, the moral education for special students is incapable of starting and eventually some teachers may directly ignore the targeted education for special students [19]. In such an educational environment, special students can’t be properly guided, so they may be harmed again. On the other hand, for the current situation of moral education in China, because the primary responsibility of teachers is to impart knowledge, in addition to this, more energy and time need to be invested in moral education. The traditional education model for a long time has focused on imparting
knowledge, with little or no necessary moral education interspersed in it. Although with the continuous advancement of the new curriculum reform, the proportion of moral education is gradually increasing, it is still difficult to change such an education model all at once. More importantly, although most schools have begun to gradually instill the concept of combining intellectual and moral education, the popularization of moral education in China is still in the exploratory stage after all. Some teachers lack awareness or consciousness of moral education and can’t guide students well. They may only instill some more abstract concepts and repeat what the book says, failing to achieve the purpose of moral education [20, 21]. Moral education in ordinary classes has already been difficult. Moral education is more necessary and more challenging for classes allowing learning in regular class. The challenges of moral education for classes allowing learning in regular class lie in, firstly, the special education method involving special students, and secondly, the cultivation of the learning atmosphere of the class. This requires that the class teacher of the classes allowing learning in regular class must first have certain moral education skills and abilities, and secondly, he or she must have a certain cognition and understanding of special education, as well as the integration of general education and special education, and have the corresponding implementation ability.

In addition, teachers from the classes allowing learning in regular class may face difficulties in their daily education and teaching work, such as heavy teaching tasks, relatively unmatched educational resources, and too many students. However, most schools don’t have the relevant resources and measures to assist teachers from the classes allowing learning in regular class. In this case, it is also challenging for the class teacher to carry out the moral education work properly and effectively for the class.

4 The Reconstruction of Moral Education in Inclusive Schools

First of all, it is necessary to build a complete inclusive school moral education curriculum system. As a quality course for cultivating students’ awareness of social responsibility, shaping a healthy personality, and promoting students’ personality formation and all-round development, there is a big conflict between the actual development of the moral education curriculum and the original intention of the theoretical framework of “educating people with morality” and the concepts of equality, respect and tolerance advocated by inclusive schools. Therefore, inclusive schools need to speed up the construction of a moral education curriculum system to provide a basic path for the healthy and positive development of inclusive school moral education. To construct a moral education curriculum system is a broad road to realize curriculum teaching, curriculum evaluation and curriculum reflection. And to make this road wide and far, inclusive schools must be based on three principles: First, they must follow the laws of physical and mental development and learning of ordinary children and special children, insist on paying equal attention to teaching and development, respect differences, understand differences, and achieve teaching in accordance with aptitude; second, they must grasp the exception and unity of ordinary and special education, pay attention to the integration and practice of moral education, promote the fair and quality development of moral education, and truly realize the integration of ordinary children and special children; third, they need to be based on localized culture, inherit the excellent spiritual quality of China, and
guide the healthy growth of each student’s personality. Meanwhile, the construction of the curriculum system also needs to think about how to stimulate students’ sense of responsibility and morality; think about how to improve human nature and cultivate the ability of independent thinking and creation; think about how to discover and identify beauty in life and judge false, ugly, evil and true, good, and beautiful. Based on this, the content structure of the moral education curriculum system in inclusive schools is organized around ideological and moral courses, school-based moral education courses, and comprehensive activity courses.

Secondly, teachers should continuously improve their professional development level. Due to the particularity of the classes allowing learning in regular class, first of all, teachers need to continuously improve their knowledge and skills of moral education; secondly, teachers also need to understand the psychological characteristics of special children and the relevant skills of learning special education, so as to carry out moral education for the classes allowing learning in regular class in a targeted manner. In terms of moral education skills, teachers should improve their moral literacy level, teach by words and deeds, consciously infiltrate moral education in the classroom, and take the lead in infecting students. Class teachers can take advantage of their own advantages to actively carry out class meetings and use class meetings to impart relevant knowledge of moral education. Moral education-related teaching activities can be appropriately held according to the interests of students, so that ordinary students and special students can naturally cultivate good ideological and moral qualities in practice. In the study of special education, the class teacher needs to fully understand the characteristics of special children, be good at changing the way of classroom teaching, give appropriate attention to special children, teach in accordance with aptitude, discover the shining points of special children, and use appropriate moral education teaching methods according to the characteristics of special children.

Thirdly, teachers should pay attention to cultivating the cohesion of the classes allowing learning in regular class. Class cohesion plays a pivotal role in the classes allowing learning in regular class. The improvement of class cohesion is conducive to the integration of special students into the learning environment and their ability to integrate into society in the future and to form a united and friendly learning atmosphere, so that special students and ordinary students can learn and grow together. To begin with, the comprehensive ability of special children can be improved by appropriate means, so that the communication between them and ordinary students can be promoted. At the same time, it is necessary to properly cultivate their awareness and ability to protect themselves. Next, teachers can properly popularize special education and related knowledge to ordinary students and parents, improve their understanding and acceptance of special children, and gradually correct their wrong views on special children. In fact, ordinary children just lack communication and understanding of special children and a bridge of communication between them can be built in an appropriate way. For example, in the role-reversal activities, setting a scene allows ordinary children to experience the feeling of being unable to communicate with the outside world and accepting the observation and discussion of outsiders. Through such activities, ordinary children can improve their understanding of the psychological environment of special children and be encouraged to think in a different position. This type of activity should give consideration to special
children and properly set the plot so that all students can participate. At the same time, simple teamwork games can be designed to consciously let special children experience the joy of interacting and cooperating with other students and exercise their language and social skills. In teaching, teachers should educate students’ sense of unity, do a good job in the construction of the class style of the classes allowing learning in regular class, so that all students can develop comprehensively in a united class.

Efforts should be made to strengthen the construction of campus culture and create a moral education atmosphere. Campus culture is a potential educational force, which plays a subtle role in the formation of students’ morality and plays an important role in the formation of students’ moral cognition and moral behavior, as well as the construction of values. Dewey believes: “The school itself must be a social life, with all the meanings of social life. Social perception and social interest can only develop in a real environment. In this social environment, everyone lives equally with each other and builds a common experience… Our school is no longer a place away from life or a place for learning lessons, but a rudimentary social group” [22]. Special schools should transmit this materialized campus spirit to students through a certain way of presentation, give full play to the incentive function of campus culture, guide students to establish the spiritual quality of being broken in body but firm in spirit, and hardworking, and shape students’ values, psychological activities and volitional quality through sculptures, publicity windows, newspapers, posters, attractions, facilities, class culture construction, etc. In the meantime, campus culture has a positive effect on the development of special children’s personality. The spirit of “self-care, self-reliance, and self-improvement” manifested in campus culture plays a role in guiding and supervising students to form a sound and independent personality, cultivate self-care ability, and develop good behavioral habits. At the same time, the richness and openness of campus culture and the development of various activities are conducive to the free development of students’ personality and the cultivation of creativity and social skills. Therefore, special schools must start from various channels, highlight the “soul of the campus”, strengthen the construction of campus culture, and create a good atmosphere for moral education work. In the construction of hardware facilities of the inclusive school campus, the actual needs of each special child should be fully considered, such as setting up special channels for the disabled, providing reasonable convenience for academic examinations, and establishing resource classrooms. Furthermore, it is necessary to fully consider the concepts of “respect”, “equality” and “acceptance” conveyed by the campus cultural wall, cultural slogans, convenience signs, etc., to lay the foundation for the acceptance and integration between disabled students and ordinary children [23]. Meanwhile, to create a beautiful campus cultural environment, it is indispensable to hold various cultural activities to narrow the gap between students, such as the organization of specialty club activities, regular speech activities on “Understanding Different Beauty”, weekly theme class activities of “Spiritual Exchange”, etc. to promote the contact and communication between disabled students and ordinary students. As a result, moral education can be integrated into all aspects of campus culture construction. Whether it is the humanization of campus environmental facilities or the output of the concept of ideological equality, they will provide strong support for the development of “inclusive” education.
Finally, the school administration needs to establish a strong sense of responsibility and should play an exemplary and leading role. The school administration shouldn’t passively wait or be content with the status quo. Instead, it needs to give the greatest support to school moral education on resources and platforms. In response to the lack of inclusive education training in schools, school administrative leaders should take the initiative to apply for special funds from higher-level departments, actively contact the district special education resource center, hire special education experts, and regularly organize teacher training. When it comes to the difficulties and problems raised by inclusive teachers, schools should take the initiative to understand the situation and seek solutions. In the final performance evaluation, the inclusive teachers should be given appropriate credits and corresponding material and spiritual support. For the construction of the resource classroom, the school needs to cooperate with the special education resource center to formulate a practical plan so that the resource classroom can be put into use as soon as possible. At the same time, schools can also hire professional resource teachers. Whether the resource teacher is professional or not determines whether the resource classroom can play its best role. Meanwhile, the resource teacher is also an important part of building an inclusive education support system. Professional resource teachers can not only provide professional and targeted guidance for special children, but also make the school’s inclusive education work more smoothly.

5 Conclusion

Moral education in primary schools is an important part of the all-round development of education and an important aspect of China’s realization of the fundamental educational task of fostering character and civic virtue. The primary education stage is a period when children grow up and acquire knowledge, and they have great plasticity during this stage, which determines that they are easy to accept correct guidance and are also susceptible to bad influences. Therefore, during this period, it is necessary to make full use of the age and psychological characteristics of children and do a good job in the education of ideological and moral values such as world outlook, outlook on life, and values. The implementation of moral education in line with the concept of inclusive education will play a vital role in the development of children throughout their lives. In view of the current situation in the moral education of primary schools that the integration of special children is difficult, the acceptance attitude of ordinary children lacks correct guidance, and the teachers of ordinary schools don’t pay enough attention, inclusive schools must firstly build a complete inclusive school moral education curriculum system; secondly, teachers must continuously improve their professional development level; thirdly, it is necessary to focus on cultivating the cohesion of the classes allowing learning in regular class, while strengthening the construction of campus culture and creating a moral education atmosphere; finally, inclusive schools need to establish a strong sense of responsibility, and play an exemplary role, so as to provide maximum support for the development of school moral education.

Authors’ Contributions. This paper is independently completed by Qiqing Tang.
References


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