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EDITORIAL ARTICLE

Educational Therapy in China

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Zhang and Miao's 2022 research delves into special education governance, inclusive education (incorporating learning in regular classrooms), teacher dynamics, curriculum adjustments, the conventional 'three basic disability types', and the emergent category of Special Education Needs (SEN) in China. Their recent study broadens the focus from specific disability types to a broader spectrum of SEN, expedites policy formulation for China's special education (especially, the inclusive education) advancement, and identifies curriculum reform as pivotal in bridging general and special education systems. However, there is no mention of educational therapy in the Chinese literature on SEN, but much has been already written and published on rehabilitation therapy (e.g., Fisher & Shang, 2013; Li, 2015) in treating individuals with special needs or disabilities.

Officially, China does not have educational therapists for students with special needs, though it does have rehabilitation therapists to serve the rehabilitation needs of patients with chronic diseases and disabilities, postoperative dysfunction, and cognitive impairment (Sun et al., 2022), and these mainly senior or aging patients (Guo et al., 2022). Both educational therapy and rehabilitation therapy are two different professional domains of treatment. Educational therapy focuses on addressing academic challenges such as learning disabilities or attention deficits. It involves tailored strategies to enhance learning skills and academic performance. Rehabilitation therapy, on the other hand, aims to improve functional abilities, such as motor skills or speech, for individuals with physical or developmental disabilities. While both therapies aim to support individuals with special needs, they differ in their focus and methods of intervention.

Even if there is such a service as educational therapy available in China, it is most likely unregulated and invalidated. The quality of these educational therapy services in China can vary significantly depending on the region (town/city, district, county, province) and resources.

Why China needs a pool of qualified educational therapists to treat individuals with special needs is fivefold, as explained below:

1. Increasing Awareness: There is a growing recognition in China about the importance of addressing the educational and developmental needs of students with special needs (Zhang & Miao, 2022). This awareness highlights the need for and should lead to the establishment of educational therapy programs and services.

2. Rising Number of Students with Special Needs: With an increasing number of students being diagnosed with various learning disabilities, developmental disorders, and other special needs (Cheng, Miao, & Zhou, 2021), there is a greater demand for specialized support services, including educational therapy.

3. Inclusive Education Policies: China has been promoting inclusive education policies aimed at integrating students with special needs into mainstream schools (Zhang & Miao, 2022). Educational therapists can play a crucial role in providing tailored support to help these students succeed academically and socially.

4. Parental Advocacy: Parents of children with special needs in China have been advocating for better support and services (Fengming, 2016). Their efforts can also contribute to the development of educational therapy programs and the recognition of the importance of addressing the diverse needs of students.

5. Professional Development: There has been a focus on professional development and training for educators and therapists in China to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to support students with special needs effectively (Wang & Feng, 2014).

Overall, having a pool of qualified educational therapists in China reflects a growing understanding of the importance of addressing the unique needs of students with special needs and a commitment to providing them with the support they require to reach their full potential.

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