

# Dilemmas And Optimization Paths Of The Inclusive Education Support System For Children With Autism

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## **Abstract:**

*Inclusive education is the core path to safeguarding the educational rights and social integration of children with autism, and the improvement of its support system is directly related to educational equity and rehabilitation effectiveness. This study adopts a combination of policy text analysis and practical case study methods to systematically sort out the development context of inclusive education for children with autism in China from macro policy guidance to local diversified practices, focusing on analyzing the four core dilemmas faced by the current support system: insufficient institutional guarantees, unbalanced resource allocation, weak professional support, and lack of social and cultural inclusiveness. Based on the structural functionalist AGIL model, this paper deconstructs the causes of dilemmas from four functional dimensions: adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency maintenance. Furthermore, it proposes systematic optimization paths from three aspects: policy and institutional construction, practical professional empowerment, and cultural atmosphere cultivation. The research aims to promote the development of inclusive education for children with autism and provide theoretical reference and practical insights for improving the special education support system and promoting educational equity.*

**Keywords:** Children with autism; Inclusive education; Support system; Policy practice; Lifelong support; Optimization paths; Home-school-community collaboration; AGIL model

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## **I. Introduction**

### **Research Background**

China's inclusive education has entered a new strategic stage of comprehensive advancement. "China Education Modernization 2035"<sup>[1]</sup>, issued by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council in 2019, clearly lists "comprehensively promoting inclusive education and promoting the integration of medical and educational services" as a strategic task. The "14th Five-Year Plan for the Development and Improvement of Special Education"<sup>[2]</sup>, launched in 2022, is the first national policy to propose "actively exploring scientifically appropriate training methods for children with autism" and setting a goal of 97% enrollment rate of school-age children with disabilities in compulsory education by 2025. These policy arrangements highlight the important position of inclusive education for children with autism in the high-quality development of national education.

Professor HuiZhong He from Beijing Normal University points out that the particularities of children

with autism in social communication, emotional behavior and other aspects pose severe challenges to the teaching management of ordinary schools. In practice, some children with autism fall into the predicament of "being in class" rather than "attending class", and some schools even persuade students to withdraw due to insufficient teachers and management pressure. In China, a large number of people with disabilities live in rural areas, where inclusive education resources are scarce and support services are inadequate, further exacerbating the urban-rural resource imbalance. Issues such as educational placement, rehabilitation support and social acceptance of children with autism have not yet formed a systematic solution, so building a sound support system has become an urgent proposition of the times.

### **Research Purpose**

From the dual perspectives of policy text analysis and typical case study, this study systematically sorts out the national and local policy documents on inclusive education for children with autism, and evaluates their rationality and implementation effectiveness with the help of policy tool theory. On this basis, representative practical cases are selected to deeply analyze the operation mode and practical challenges of the support system in different regions and educational stages. Combining policy and practice dimensions, this study summarizes the core dilemmas and their underlying causes faced by the current support system, and explores the construction of optimization paths by drawing on advanced experience at home and abroad.

### **Research Significance**

This study has both theoretical significance and practical value. Through the dual analysis of policy and practice, it enriches the research dimensions of the inclusive education support system for children with autism and provides theoretical support for the implementation logic of special education policies and the direction of system optimization. At the same time, aiming at the practical dilemmas existing in the current support system, it provides guidance for families and society to participate in inclusive education, ultimately improving the quality of inclusive education and helping children with autism "share development achievements and have the opportunity to shine in life".

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Foreign Research Status**

Foreign countries have formed a relatively mature theoretical and operational system in the field of inclusive education. Developed countries represented by the United States and the United Kingdom have clearly guaranteed the educational rights of children with autism through legislation, generally adopting the support model of "resource classroom + itinerant teaching" and emphasizing the evidence-based foundation of educational intervention. For example, the classroom integration strategies proposed by Crosland and Dunlap <sup>[3]</sup>, and the research on the promotion of educational practices for autism by Hume <sup>[4]</sup>, all reflect a high degree of attention to scientific evidence. In addition, foreign studies also generally pay attention to common problems such as teacher attitudes, peer acceptance and cross-departmental collaboration, providing useful references for relevant practices in China.

### **Domestic Research Status**

Domestic related research mainly focuses on two directions: policy evolution and practical exploration. The major national social science fund project "Research on the Social Integration Path of Chinese-speaking Autistic Groups"<sup>[5]</sup> hosted by Professor Huizhong He systematically discusses the support strategies and teachers' professional development paths for children with autism. Shasha Meng's research reveals the problems

of insufficient teacher capacity and poor curriculum adaptability in preschool inclusive education, and proposes to build a support mechanism combining formal and informal support<sup>[6]</sup>. These achievements provide a solid theoretical foundation and empirical basis for this paper.

### **Research Gaps and Innovations**

Despite certain achievements in existing research, there are obvious deficiencies. On the one hand, current research on the inclusive education support system mostly stays on the surface of problems, lacking a systematic theoretical framework to reveal the interaction mechanism between various support elements. On the other hand, there is a lack of effective connection between policy text analysis and educational practice exploration. The intermediate transmission process of policy implementation, practical adaptation paths and their influencing factors have not been fully explained, leading to relatively weak research on the correlation between policy effectiveness and practical results.

In addition, research perspectives are mostly concentrated on the compulsory education stage, with insufficient attention to the inclusive support system in preschool and vocational education stages, making it difficult to respond to the practical needs of children with autism for lifelong development. More importantly, existing optimization suggestions mostly stay at the macro level, lacking specific implementation models with operability, adaptability and promotion, resulting in the difficulty of effectively transforming theoretical achievements into practical solutions.

This study achieves innovation in research perspective by constructing a dual analysis framework of "policy deconstruction-practice verification", filling the research gap between policy and practice. In terms of research content, it expands the research perspective to the lifelong education chain, incorporating preschool and vocational education stages into the research category of the inclusive education support system, and systematically discusses the support needs and adaptation models of different educational stages, making up for the phased limitations of existing research. In the aspect of countermeasure construction, based on the typical practical experience such as the "training-practice-feedback-improvement" closed-loop support mechanism in Shijingshan District of Beijing, combined with the concept of technology empowerment and cross-subject collaboration, it constructs a multi-level and collaborative concrete optimization path, forming a practical plan with operability, adaptability and promotion value.

### **III. Policy Analysis**

Current policies on inclusive education for children with autism in China are still mainly supported by authoritative tools, establishing the bottom line of educational equity through rigid clauses such as forcing ordinary schools to guarantee the enrollment rights of disabled students. However, the supply of incentive tools and capacity-building tools is relatively weak, and key links such as the stability of special fund guarantee mechanisms and the system of professional training systems need to be improved. From the perspective of policy content orientation, the core characteristics of "full coverage, strong guarantee and emphasis on collaboration" have been formed, but there is still room for optimization in the specialized and refined support for children with autism. For example, the exclusive curriculum standards and scientific evaluation system adapted to the cognitive development characteristics of children with autism have not yet been constructed, and the precise empowerment effect of policies has not been fully realized.

Insufficient supply of laws and regulations constitutes the primary obstacle to policy implementation. China has not issued special legislation on the education of children with autism. Existing provisions are scattered in various policy documents, with low legal rank, lack of implementation rules, and inadequate supporting accountability mechanisms. Parents lack clear legal basis in the process of safeguarding their rights,

so the rigid binding effect of policies is naturally difficult to give full play.

The shortage of resource allocation further restricts the effectiveness of policy implementation. Not only the total investment cannot meet the actual needs, but also there is a significant imbalance in distribution. The student-teacher ratio in special education classes of ordinary schools is generally unbalanced, making it difficult to implement personalized support. Early intervention resources in the preschool education stage and employment connection resources in the vocational education stage are particularly scarce, and the support needs of children with autism for lifelong development are difficult to be fully guaranteed.

Insufficient professionalism in teacher training exacerbates the practical resistance to policy implementation. The proportion of special education courses in normal majors is relatively low, and the post-service training of ordinary teachers lacks pertinence. Most teachers have not mastered evidence-based practice methods such as Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) and Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH). Relevant reports show that even in first-tier cities like Guangzhou, although the proportion of "double-qualified teachers" has reached 70.60%, there is still a gap in professional teachers with special capabilities in autism education. Faced with the special behaviors and learning needs of children with autism, teachers are often overwhelmed.

The lack of cross-departmental collaboration mechanism has led to fragmented policy implementation. Relevant departments such as education, health, civil affairs and disabled persons' federations lack regular communication, collaboration and information sharing, and the phenomenon of acting independently is prominent. The diagnostic evaluation results and rehabilitation guidance suggestions from medical departments are difficult to be effectively transmitted to schools, so educational intervention lacks scientific basis. The rescue resources of civil affairs departments and the service forces of communities have not been fully integrated into the educational support system. The goals of "integration of medical and educational services" and "home-school-community collaboration" mostly stay at the formal level, and it is difficult to form a policy synergy.

#### **IV. Practical Analysis**

##### **Shijingshan District, Beijing: A Case of High-quality Development of Preschool Inclusive Education**

Under the guidance of Professor Huizhong He's team, Shijingshan District has constructed a "training-practice-feedback-improvement" closed-loop support mechanism. In the 2024-2025 academic year, 32 schools in the district introduced artificial intelligence teaching tools and built AI-assisted learning classrooms to improve the precision of inclusive education through technology empowerment<sup>[7]</sup>. At the same time, it held forums on the construction of teaching alliances and resource empowerment to promote regional resource sharing. Its successful experience lies in the organic combination of expert guidance, teacher training, technology application and home-school collaboration, forming a replicable pre-school inclusive education model.

##### **Guangzhou City: A Case of Regional Collaborative Support System**

Guangzhou has built a "one core and four wings" service system, adding 79,200 public compulsory education degrees in 2024, and issuing the "Three-Year Action Plan for Improving the Home-School-Community Collaborative Education Mechanism (2024-2026)"<sup>[8]</sup> to strengthen family education guidance through the "Yangeheng Parents' School". The city's practices in teacher training, curriculum reform and cross-departmental collaboration provide valuable experience for promoting inclusive education at the regional level, but there is still a need to strengthen the sinking of resources in rural areas.

### **Rural Areas in Central and Western China: A Case of Resource Scarcity**

Inclusive education in rural areas of central and western China faces multiple dilemmas. There is a lack of professional special education teachers, the construction of resource classrooms is lagging behind, and basic rehabilitation auxiliary equipment is insufficient; parents have insufficient understanding of inclusive education, and home-school cooperation is loose. This case reveals the problem of support system fragmentation caused by unbalanced resource allocation, providing empirical basis for the pertinence of optimization paths.

### **Summary of Practical Dilemmas**

Insufficient professional capacity of teachers constitutes the core bottleneck in promoting inclusive education. Ordinary teachers generally lack professional knowledge and skills in the education of children with autism, and often fail to provide effective guidance and support due to improper handling of children's stereotyped behaviors and emotional outbursts. Special education teachers face the dual pressures of large quantity gaps and heavy workloads. Their limited energy makes it difficult to meet the needs of individualized teaching for each child with autism, and the effect of personalized intervention is greatly reduced. Existing teacher training lacks continuity and pertinence, and the curriculum setting is disconnected from the needs of front-line practice, leading to slow improvement of teachers' professional capacity, which is difficult to adapt to the complex scenarios of inclusive education.

The lack of adaptability of curriculum and teaching further increases the difficulty of improving educational quality. The curriculum content of ordinary schools is relatively abstract, and the teaching methods are relatively single and rigid, failing to fully consider the sensory sensitivity characteristics and cognitive processing styles of children with autism, resulting in low classroom participation and difficulty in understanding for children. The development of adaptive courses lacks professional theoretical guidance and practical experience support, mostly staying at the level of simple adjustment of ordinary courses, and failing to form a systematic and scientific exclusive curriculum system. The supporting evaluation system also fails to reflect the developmental particularities of children with autism, still using traditional evaluation standards and methods, which is difficult to comprehensively and objectively reflect their progress in core areas such as social skills and life skills as well as intervention effects.

The lack of home-school-community collaboration mechanism makes it difficult for the support system to form a synergy. There is a lack of regular and efficient communication channels between schools and parents. Parents have insufficient understanding of the policy requirements and scientific methods of inclusive education, and cannot effectively cooperate with schools to carry out educational intervention. The community support network is not yet sound, with a lack of professional rehabilitation training institutions and safe and inclusive social integration spaces, making it difficult to undertake the extended needs of school education. Enterprises and social organizations have a low degree of participation, and their resource advantages and professional expertise have not been fully exerted. The support system is still dominated by the government and schools, and a diversified and all-round collaborative support pattern is far from being formed.

Cognitive biases and insufficient acceptance at the social level constitute the deep-seated obstacles to the development of inclusive education. The public has a serious lack of scientific understanding of autism, and there are widespread misunderstandings and stigmatization phenomena. Some parents of ordinary children are resistant to children with autism entering ordinary schools for fear of affecting their own children's study and life. Peer acceptance within the campus is also insufficient. Children with autism are often isolated due to behavioral differences, which easily leads to loneliness and a sense of exclusion, which is not conducive to the development of their social skills and psychological adaptation. The social popularization of science lacks continuity, failing to effectively reverse cognitive biases. A social and cultural atmosphere of inclusion,

acceptance, equality and respect has not yet been formed, bringing invisible resistance to the promotion of inclusive education.

## **V. Summary Of Dilemmas And Optimization Paths**

### **Summary and Cause Analysis of Dilemmas**

The core dilemmas faced by the current inclusive education support system for children with autism can be summarized into four categories.

Institutional dilemmas are prominently manifested in the lack of special legislation, poor connection of policy clauses, and inadequate supporting accountability mechanisms, leading to the lack of a solid institutional foundation and rigid constraints for the support system.

Resource dilemmas are concentrated in insufficient total financial investment, unbalanced urban-rural and regional resource allocation, and scarce supply of professional talents, forming structural shortcomings in support capacity.

Professional dilemmas are mainly manifested in insufficient professional capacity of teachers, low adaptability of curriculum and teaching, and imperfect evaluation systems, which directly restrict the improvement of inclusive education quality.

Cultural dilemmas are manifested in social cognitive biases, low public acceptance, and serious stigmatization, which constitute deep-seated social obstacles to the sustainable development of inclusive education.

Referring to the research of Yang Wang and Shuo Bai, from the perspective of the structural functionalist AGIL model, the above dilemmas of the support system are essentially significant obstacles in four functional dimensions [9].

Insufficient adaptation (A) function means that the existing resource investment scale, allocation structure and supply method cannot accurately match the diverse and lifelong development needs of children with autism.

Insufficient goal attainment (G) function means that there is an obvious gap between the goals set by policies and practice, and the intermediate transmission and implementation efficiency of policy implementation is relatively low.

Insufficient integration (I) function means that there is a lack of effective collaborative linkage mechanisms between multiple subjects such as government departments, schools, families and social institutions, with prominent problems of information barriers and scattered resources, making it difficult to form a support synergy.

Insufficient latency maintenance (L) function means that a social culture of inclusion, acceptance, equality and respect has not yet been formed, and the value recognition and public opinion support for inclusive education are not sufficient, making it difficult to support the long-term stable development of the support system.

### **Suggestions on Optimization Paths**

The optimization at the policy level should focus on the construction of an institutional guarantee system to lay a solid foundation for the development of inclusive education. On the one hand, it is necessary to improve laws and regulations, clarify the educational placement standards, resource guarantee bottom lines, and the rights and responsibilities of various subjects for children with autism, establish a scientific and standardized rigid accountability mechanism, and ensure the effective implementation of policies. On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen policy coordination, establish a regular joint meeting system involving education, health,

civil affairs, disabled persons' federations and other departments, build a cross-departmental information sharing platform and resource coordination mechanism, and break down departmental barriers. At the same time, it is necessary to increase financial investment, set up a special fund for inclusive education of children with autism, focusing on supporting the standardized construction of resource classrooms, the allocation of professional auxiliary equipment, the special training of teachers and the sinking of resources in rural and underdeveloped areas. Through incentive policies such as government procurement of services and tax preferences, it guides social forces to participate in the construction of the support system and broadens the channels of resource supply.

The improvement at the practical level should focus on the optimization of the professional support system to improve the implementation efficiency of inclusive education. In terms of teacher team construction, special education courses should be designated as compulsory courses for normal majors, and evidence-based practice methods such as Pivotal Response Treatment (PRT) and Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) should be promoted. In terms of curriculum and teaching optimization, it is necessary to rely on special education experts and front-line teachers to jointly develop adaptive courses suitable for children with autism, highlighting the cultivation of life skills, social skills and emotional management abilities. Drawing on the practical experience of Shijingshan District in Beijing, it is necessary to promote the deep integration of artificial intelligence and inclusive education, build AI-assisted learning classrooms and personalized learning platforms, and realize the precision and personalization of the teaching process. At the home-school-community collaboration level, building regular communication mechanisms and online platforms is the basic work, and systematic parent training is also indispensable. We can learn from the successful model of Guangzhou's "Yangcheng Parents' School" to build a professional and regular family education guidance system. In terms of community resource integration, it is necessary to establish a comprehensive service platform integrating rehabilitation training, social integration and psychological support, and guide enterprises and social organizations to deeply participate in inclusive education public welfare projects, ultimately weaving a support network with multi-subject collaboration.

At the cultural cultivation level, creating an inclusive and accepting social atmosphere can inject deep motivation into inclusive education. Popular science publicity needs to strengthen systematicness and effectiveness, popularize scientific cognition, developmental characteristics and support needs of autism through multiple channels such as television, the Internet and community activities, and gradually eliminate misunderstandings and prejudices. Schools should strive to cultivate an inclusive culture to promote understanding, respect and acceptance between ordinary students and children with autism, helping the latter establish stable peer relationships and enhance their sense of belonging. At the same time, we should give full play to the demonstration effect of typical cases, widely publicize the successful experience of inclusive education, the deeds of excellent teachers and the public welfare behaviors of enterprises, arouse the attention and support of all sectors of society through positive incentives, and ultimately form a social and cultural ecology of "equality, inclusion, mutual assistance and common progress", laying a solid foundation for the social integration and lifelong development of children with autism.

## **VI. Conclusion And Outlook**

### **Research Summary**

The dual paths of policy text analysis and case study show that although the inclusive education support system for children with autism in China has a certain policy foundation and practical experience, it is still restricted by four major dilemmas: institutional obstacles, resource shortages, insufficient professionalism and cultural prejudices. The essence of these dilemmas lies in the structural imbalance and functional disorder

of the support system, which urgently requires the construction of systematic solutions from the three dimensions of policy, practice and culture. The lifelong support system optimization path proposed in this study emphasizes the organic unity of institutional guarantee, professional support and cultural cultivation, providing practical guidance for promoting the high-quality development of inclusive education.

### **Research Limitations and Future Outlook**

This study has two main limitations: the coverage of cases is limited, and the empirical data in rural areas and vocational education stages is relatively weak; the research method focuses on qualitative analysis, lacking the support of large-scale quantitative data.

Future research can be expanded in three directions: first, carry out cross-regional large-sample empirical research to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the support system; second, focus on the employment connection and social integration problems of children with autism in the vocational education stage; third, explore the innovative application scenarios of new technologies such as artificial intelligence and big data in inclusive education, and build an intelligent support system. Through continuous in-depth research, we can create a more inclusive, high-quality and sustainable inclusive education ecology for children with autism.

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