Chapter 13
Continuing Education Choices for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder after Compulsory Education in China

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Abstract The Improving Plan for Special Education in Phase II (2017–2020) proposes to accelerate the development of special education at the non-compulsory education stage and strive to increase the opportunities for the disabled to receive non-compulsory education. After completing the 9-year compulsory education, children with special needs at regular schools can choose to continue to study at high schools or at secondary vocational education schools. More children with special needs choose vocational education instead of high school education as an extension of compulsory education. This chapter highlighted the continuing education situation for adolescents with ASD in China.

13.1 Continuing Education Choices for Adolescents with ASD in China

The Improving Plan for Special Education in Phase II (2017–2020) proposes to accelerate the development of special education at the non-compulsory education stage and strive to increase the opportunities for the disabled to receive non-compulsory education (Ministry of Education 2017). After completing the 9-year compulsory education, children with special needs at regular schools can choose to continue to study at high schools or at secondary vocational education schools. More children with special needs choose vocational education instead of high school education as an extension of compulsory education. Statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics show that, in 2014, the number of disabled students accepting secondary vocational education was 11,671, while the number of students accepting special education at normal high schools was only 7227. This figure rose...
to 10,059 in 2017 but still did not exceed the level of secondary vocational education in 2014. Among the student groups with special needs, the opportunities for students with intellectual disability to receive continuing education are still very inadequate. According to the data, in 2007, there were about 210,000 students with intellectual disability in the country, including 894 high school students; in 2017, there were nearly 280,000 students with intellectual disability in the country, including 3356 high school students. In terms of the promotion rate of junior high school students, in 2017, the promotion rate of students with intellectual disability was 9.2%, which was lower than that of students with audio disability (24.1%) and far lower than that of normal students at normal schools (94.9%) (Zhao 2017). In the face of the fact that the development of special education in the non-compulsory education stage is relatively lagging behind, the *Improving Plan for Special Education in Phase II (2017–2020)* jointly issued by the Ministry of Education and other six departments in 2017 proposes to “accelerate the development of vocational education-oriented high school education for the disabled.” It can be said that the promoting vocational high school education for students with intellectual disability is also one of the tasks of popularizing high school education.

### 13.1.1 Transition Services

Regardless of what continuing education choices children with special needs will make after completing the 9-year compulsory education, changes in the new environment and the pace of life will bring great pressure on their bodies and minds. Especially for children with intellectual disability and adolescents with ASD, dramatic environmental changes will seriously affect their academic/occupational performance, and the transition services can better help children with special needs complete the connection of various education development stages. At the same time, many students with ASD do not interact with people and have no idea of their future development (Zhou 2014). From this perspective, transition guidance for students with ASD is also very necessary.

### 13.1.2 Practice

After learning about the special children’s graduation intentions and service needs, the Shanghai Changning Special School develops and implements transition services for household, entry of a school of higher grade, and employment, to help special children go to school of higher grade and get employed (Zhou 2014). The Shanghai Changning Junior Vocational and Technical School, in conjunction with the China Disabled Persons’ Federation, the community, and the family, provides continuous transition support for the higher education for students with mildly intellectual disability through the extension of the functions of junior vocational schools
(Shen and Zhang 2014). After surveying 36 graduating students (aged 17–20, including 30 students with intellectual disability and 6 students with mild ASD) from three schools for the mentally handicapped in Dalian, Cui Mengmeng (2016) found that the life adaptability of graduating students with ASD in terms of home life, social skills, and self-direction was significantly lower than that of graduating students with intellectual disability, and there is no significant difference in their life adaptability in terms of health, safety, entertainment, and leisure, which indicated that parents, schools, and teachers should pay attention to the relevant differences and provide targeted design when implementing transition services for students with ASD.

13.2 Current Status of Regular High School Education for Adolescents with ASD in China

At present, it is not common for disabled adolescents to attend regular high schools in China. According to the data of the China Disabled Persons’ Federation, in 2017, there were 8466 special students (including 7010 deaf students and 1456 blind students) in 112 regular high school classes (ministries) for special education nationwide (according to the data of the National Bureau of Statistics, there were 10,059 students in normal high schools for special education). Compared with the development of high school education for deaf and blind students, the development of high school education for special children with intellectual disability in China is relatively backward. Most regions and schools offer special high schools or vocational high school classes with vocational education as the core (Yu 2009).

At present, there is no relevant research on the current status of normal high school education for adolescents with intellectual disability and adolescents with ASD for the time being. Most of the bloggers who publish high school life of adolescents at the Elim Autism Forum are parents of children with high functions ASD. We may be able to infer from this that only adolescents with ASD and higher level of intellectual functions have the opportunity to enter normal high schools.

13.3 Current Status of Vocational Education for Adolescents with ASD in China

Since there is little research on vocational education for adolescents with ASD at present, based on the current status that children with ASD are included in the education system for children with intellectual disability, the development of vocational education for adolescents with intellectual disability will be introduced.

Vocational education is the education that enables students to acquire the vocational knowledge, skills, and professional ethics required for a certain occupation or...
production labor. The development of vocational education is of great significance to improving the quality of workers. The Regulations on the Education for the Disabled provide that in vocational education for the disabled, we shall vigorously develop secondary vocational education, accelerate the development of higher vocational education, actively carry out medium-term and short-term training based on practical technology, cultivate technical and skilled personnel mainly for the purpose of improving the employment ability, and strengthen the employment guidance for disabled students. The schools and training institutions that implement vocational education for the disabled shall reasonably arrange majors according to the needs of the society and the physical and mental characteristics of the disabled, cooperate with enterprises in setting up internship and training bases, or properly run internship bases according to the teaching needs and conditions (the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2017).

The vocational education supporting system for disabled students is a system consisting of five interrelated supporting subsystems: governments, schools, family, community, and enterprise (Zhao and Wang 2018). Specifically, government’s support includes four elements, namely, state-level vocational education policies and creation of education employment atmosphere, state-level scientific research and teacher training, state-level popularization of compulsory education and financial support, and advancement by local governments; schools’ support includes two elements, namely, school management and vocational education quality and school-running conditions; family’s support includes three elements, namely, home education counseling, family’s employment guidance and family-school cooperation, and application of family assistive technology; community’s support includes two elements, namely, community education and employment support and community atmosphere and application of assistive technology; enterprises’ support includes two elements, namely, enterprises’ interpersonal and employment support and school-enterprise cooperative teaching and practice. The system is a unified entirety with a certain structure and functions. Its core function is to provide support and services for students with intellectual disability to enable them to receive vocational high school education. The purpose is to enable all students with intellectual disability to receive high-quality vocational high school education equally, thereby enhancing their life quality.

13.3.1 Practice

The opportunities of students with intellectual disability for vocational high school education are gradually increasing. According to the Educational Statistics Yearbook of China, there were 2972 high school students with intellectual disability nationwide in 2016, representing a net increase of 2078 as compared with 2007. In terms of the proportion of high school students with intellectual disability in all students with intellectual disability, the proportion in 2016 was 1.14%, representing an increase of 0.71 percentage point from 2007 (Zhao 2017). According to the data
shown in the *Statistical Communique on the Development of the Disabled in China in 2017* [Can Lian Fa (2018) No.24], in 2017, there were 8466 special students (including 7010 deaf students and 1456 blind students) in 112 regular high school classes (ministries) for special education nationwide; there were no statistics on students with intellectual disability. There were 12,968 students and 3501 graduates, of which 1802 have obtained professional qualification certificates, in 132 secondary vocational schools (classes) for the disabled. A total of 10,818 disabled persons were admitted to ordinary colleges and universities, and 1845 disabled persons entered the special education institutes of higher educational institutions for study (China Disabled Persons’ Federation 2018).

Various vocational education and training ministries were set up, and vocational high school education exploration practice was carried out for persons with intellectual disability all over the country, mainly in developed regions. Most vocational education training ministries (classes) were set up in schools for the mentally handicapped, and efforts were made to set up vocational high schools subsequently. For example, in September 1996, Hangzhou Yanglingzi School of Zhejiang, with the support of the district education bureau, the district China Disabled Persons’ Federation, the district labor bureau, and other departments, established a vocational training class for the production of pastry for the youth with intellectual disability (Hong and Chen 2004). In September 2000, with the approval of the Hangzhou Municipal Education Bureau, the school established a vocational high school ministry; carried out the pilot program for the vocational high school class for the youth with intellectual disability; set two 3-year majors, namely, pastry production and garden flowers; and comprehensively carried out practical research on the construction of the vocational high school curriculum system of the full-time school for the mentally handicapped. The Beijing Xuanwu Central Special School established a vocational training ministry in September 1996. At that time, the majors were mainly cooking, sewing, weaving, art designing, gold carpentry, and housekeeping (Zhao 2006). Beijing Chaoyang Anhua School established a vocational high school ministry in 2001. It successively set six majors, namely, Chinese cooking, computer application, hotel service and management, computer application, housekeeping service and management, and community public affairs management (“Enrollment Brochure of Vocational High School Education at Anhua School,” 2014). The education objects are junior high school graduates aged 16–18 with mildly intellectual disability, subject to the 3-year academic system. After 3 years of vocational education and professional training, those who have passed the test can obtain a vocational high school diploma issued by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission and be recommended to Marriott Hotel Group, Shangri-La Hotel Group, welfare enterprises under China Disabled Persons’ Federation, and other enterprises for internship and employment (Yang 2011). Since 1997, Shanghai has successively founded junior vocational and technical schools in six districts and counties such as Yangpu District, specifically enrolling children with mildly intellectual disability who have received 9-year compulsory education in regular schools or special education schools and some disabled children with moderately intellectual disability who are able to receive vocational and technical education, generally
subject to the 3-year academic system; in addition, vocational and technical training classes have been set up in special schools. For example, in the auxiliary schools of vocational and technical training, classes have been set up in special schools in some districts and counties of Shanghai, such as Luwan District and Hongkou District, to enroll some children with moderately-to-severely intellectual disability who have received 9-year compulsory education, generally subject to the 1- to 2-year academic system (Yu 2009). As a comprehensive special education school, Shenzhen Yuanping Special Education School founded a vocational high school ministry upon official approval by the Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau in 2002, to provide adolescents with visual, audio, and intellectual disabilities with moderate vocational and technical education whose main content is “double certificates” (high school diploma and skill level certificate), and established student off-campus internship and employment base agreements and post-internship, employment, and other channels, in conjunction with social resources such as large enterprises (“Introduction to the Vocational Education Ministry of Shenzhen Yuanping Special Education School,” 2016).

With the popularization of 9-year compulsory education for the disabled, special education schools around the country have actively developed vocational education classes and vocational high school ministries for persons with intellectual disability. Schools for the mentally handicapped in the western regions, such as Guilin, Guangxi, and Guiyang, Guizhou, begin to set up vocational high school classes for persons with intellectual disability. The original vocational high schools for persons with intellectual disability or the special education schools with vocational high school classes for persons with intellectual disability in the central and eastern regions strengthen action research and cooperation with relevant departments, start in-depth practice, and introduce systematic research results. For example, Shenzhen Yuanping Special Education School cooperates with the School of Education at Central China Normal University to systematically summarize the “overpass” vocational education model proposed by the school; sort out the concept, development goals, curriculum teaching, teachers, evaluation, and other contents of vocational education for students with intellectual disability; and edit the book *Models of Vocational Education for Students with Intellectual Disability* (Huang and Lei 2011). At the same time, the school continuously develops the school-run industry and formed the “pre-school and post-factory” school-running pattern and cooperates with a hotel and a pharmaceutical factory in Shenzhen to carry out school-enterprise cooperation and “order-based” cultivation and arrange students’ internship and employment. The scale of the vocational education ministry develops from a vocational education class (13 students) in 2003 to 7 vocational education classes (63 students) in 2011. For another example, Shanghai Changning Junior Vocational and Technical School (Shen 2013), in combination with practice, carries out the research on the preparation and implementation of the individualized career transition service plan for students with mildly intellectual disability. In the action research, the school has prepared the individualized vocational transition service plan for students with intellectual disability and operation manual and has summarized the methods and procedures for the preparation, implementation, and
evaluation of vocational transition service education courses and individualized vocational transition service plans in practice. For another example, based on practice, Beijing Chaoyang Anhua School has established a curriculum goal system covering independent living, community participation, and vocational education and developed the *Curriculum Standards for Vocational High School Education* and the *Manual of Assessment Standards for Vocational High School Education* for students with intellectual disability. In addition, special schools work with colleges and universities to strengthen action research. In 2015, the Institute of Special Education of Beijing Normal University, through the business matchmaking of the UNESCO Institute (Beijing) for Information Technologies in Education, established the “Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Training Experimental Base of the Institute of Special Education of Beijing Normal University” in Beijing Chaoyang Anhua School (“Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Training Experimental Base of the Institute of Special Education of Beijing Normal University Formally Established,” 2015), which was of great significance to promoting the education and training of the disabled in the region and improving the research level of regional special education.

At present, there are also some explorations of vocational skill training for persons with ASD. For example, in the face of the lack of policies and professional institutions and schools’ refusal to enroll persons with ASD, Beijing Kangnazhou Rain Man Bakery, through professional training, individualized production operations, market-oriented publicity, and sales and other means, has initially explored the “teaching-production-sales” model, which provides a paradigm for the government to promote vocational skill training and related policies for older persons with ASD (aged 22–32) (Deng et al. 2015).

13.3.2 Policies

In 2007, the “17th CPC National Congress” proposed to “concern about special education”; in 2012, the “18th CPC National Congress” proposed to “support special education”; and in 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee proposed to “advance the reform and development of special education.” The Party and the government have stepped up their efforts to promote special education. Policies during this period, from the height of promoting education equality, propose to accelerate the development of vocational high school education for the disabled, vigorously promote vocational education for the disabled, and actively promote free education for disabled students in high schools. This period initiated the gradual inclusion of vocational high school education for the disabled in the basic education public services. For example, the *Outline of National Medium- and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010–2020)* proposes to “accelerate the development of high school education for the disabled and vigorously promote vocational education for the disabled” (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China 2010). In 2011, the *Implementing Proposals of the*
“12th Five-Year Plan” on Education for the Disabled, the supporting implementing proposals of the 12th Five-Year Development Outline for the Cause of the Disabled in China, point out that “it is required to accelerate the development of high school education and higher education mainly based on vocational education” (State Council Work Committee for Persons with Disabilities 2011). In 2012, the “12th Five-Year Plan” for National Basic Public Service System issued by the State Council proposes to “improve the funding policy for disabled students, ensure that disabled students and children of the disabled can receive compulsory education free of charge, and offer free education for high school students with disabilities during the ‘12th five-year plan’ period” (the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2012). In 2016, the “13th Five-Year Plan” for Accelerating the Well-off Process for the Disabled issued by the State Council points out that during the “13th Five-Year Plan” period, “it is required to accelerate the development of vocational education-led high school education for the disabled” and “provide disabled children and adolescents whose families have financial difficulty with 12-year free education including compulsory education and high school education” (the State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2016). These policies have provided new opportunities for the development of vocational high school education for persons with intellectual disability during this period and the “13th Five-Year Plan” period.

13.3.3 Outlook

Since the reform and opening up, especially since the “17th CPC National Congress” proposed to “concern about special education” in 2007, the development of vocational high school education for persons with intellectual disability has entered the track of rapid development but is still a short slab in the vocational education system and the vocational education system for the disabled. Judging from the educational opportunities of students with intellectual disability, due to the scarcity of vocational high schools (classes) for persons with intellectual disability, persons with intellectual disability have many difficulties in entering regular vocational high school education institutions. In 2016, the number of students in high schools for persons with intellectual disability was less than 3000. From the perspective of education legislation, although a system of educational laws and regulations with Chinese characteristics, which is led by 8 educational laws and consists of 16 educational administrative regulations and 80 educational departmental rules, as well as a large number of local educational laws, regulations, and rules, has been basically formed (Sun and Zhai 2017), the Special Education Law has not yet been included in the agenda of the State on education legislation, which has constrained the development of the cause of special education, including the cause of vocational high school education for persons with intellectual disability. Judging from the practice of vocational high school education for persons with intellectual disability, under the demonstration and guidance of developed eastern regions, special education schools in all regions have actively developed vocational education classes and
vocational high schools for persons with intellectual disability, and schools for the mentally handicapped in the central and western regions have also begun to found vocational high school classes for persons with intellectual disability, but the hardware and software of vocational high schools for students with intellectual disability, such as funds, courses, and teachers, still face difficulties.

Vigorously developing and popularizing vocational high school education for students with intellectual disability is a major measure to consolidate the achievements of the popularization of compulsory education, improve the vocational education system for the disabled, facilitate the employment of persons with intellectual disability, and improve the life quality of persons with intellectual disability. Some researchers believe that incomplete laws and regulations on education for the disabled and inadequate law enforcement are important factors that result in the inadequate protection of the right to education of disabled children (Meng et al. 2007). The important way for developed countries and regions to guarantee the right to education of the disabled and promote education equality is to introduce and improve laws and regulations on education for the disabled. At present and in the upcoming period, efforts should be made to strengthen special education legislation and legalize the important achievements of the reform and practice of special education, including vocational high school education for the disabled, so that vocational high school education for persons with intellectual disability can better and faster play the leadership, standardization, promotion, and guarantee roles.

References


