

Chapter 43

Creating Inclusive Classroom: Innovative Practices by Chinese Banzhurens

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ABSTRACT

From the 1980s, there are three steps to understand and adopt the inclusive education belief and theory in China. In today's Chinese schools, the typical inclusive education is implemented at the classroom level, but with unique context and content compared with the practices in the Western world. Banzhuren, a very special role in Chinese school, has witnessed the development of each child and plays a very important role in student development. Banzhuren creates the inclusive atmosphere for all students, engages every student in the classroom-based activities, and works with other teachers and parents to develop the classroom community. Authors surveyed students in two classes on their experience, values, understanding and expectation on inclusive education in the classroom. Based on the data, the authors found that the banzhurens involved have fulfilled their potentials to achieve the inclusive classroom by multiple ways. The authors discussed the practical application, the limitations of the research, and future research directions about the inclusive classroom in China as well.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is an international focus in education reform and social development (Booth & Ainscow, 1998; UNESCO, 1994). With the largest amount of population, Chinese educators' practice and understanding can be an important part in the international society. From PISA 2009 and 2012, Chinese educational reform aroused more attention in the world (OECD, 2010; Tan, 2012; Tucker, 2011). As innovative practice and perspectives about inclusive education, the experience from China can be valuable to the international community. Especially with the development of urbanization in China, the disadvantaged children's education is getting more attention from policy-makers, researchers and other relevant stakeholders. This phenomenon is also the embodiment of inclusive education.

In Chinese education context, inclusive applies to the special education as well as regular schooling or general education. At the compulsory education level, almost all classrooms are divers in terms of gender, ethnicity, SES, and potentials. This chapter will focus on the inclusive classroom in regular schools to illustrate the innovative practice of Chinese teachers.

Inclusive education is adopted by Chinese government for enrolling children with disabilities. After years of efforts, the policy has implemented and developed, and China can now provide good services to children with disabilities in regular classroom settings (Xiao, 2005). However, new problems arise in China in the constructure of the supporting and security system for disabled children's learning in regular classes (Yu & Zhu, 2012). Besides, challenges facing the in-depth development of China's inclusive education arise from the conceptual backwardness in China's special education laws and regulations, including the imperfect mechanism of inclusive education, the imperfect system of special education fund allocation, the poor mechanism of teacher cultivation and training, and the excessively large regular classes (Peng, 2011). Comparing to Western schools, there are always more students in a regular classroom in Chinese schools. In 2013, the average class size at elementary level is 37 students per classroom, 49 students at junior high school level, 55 students at senior high school level, and 13.3% of the elementary schools have over 56 students per class (MOE, 2015a).

Diverse students with different SES, personalities and interests, values and habits, and expectations on education stay together from morning till afternoon in regular Chinese classrooms. A group of teachers teaching the same group of students in the same classroom through the grades in elementary schools, as well as in junior or senior high schools. Among the teachers, there is one teacher who plays the role as the team leader, with key responsibility in student management, collaboration among teachers, and communication with parents (Gu, Chen & Li, 2015). This is Chinese *banzhuren* (Li, 2014; Li & Ni, 2015), literally, the director of a class. Readers can imagine that the Chinese school principal would work with all students, teachers, and parents, as well as the *banzhuren* at the classroom level. It is related to the Chinese culture, school organization, instructional leadership, teacher professional development, school-family partnership, and the living mode of students in school. Unfortunately, Western researchers can hardly find this role in the West, though *banzhuren*'s responsibility is very similar to the homeroom teacher, school counselor, administrative assistant, and classroom teacher in USA (Morgan, 2016).

Banzhuren plays a very important role in Chinese education system, and there are lots of creative moments in children's classroom life created by *banzhuren* along with students. Besides the instruction, this new kind of education is referred to as *classrooming* and mainly conducted by *banzhuren* (Li & Chen, 2013). The *classrooming* consists of the classroom ceremonies, peer relationships, class meetings, student organizations in the class, and so on. At the classroom level, difference and the intersection of race, gender, ability, social and economic status are taken care of not only in the instruction time

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