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**AN EXPLORATION ON THE ATTITUDES OF CHINESE MAINSTREAM
SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION IN CHINA AND THE PROFESSIONAL TEACHER
TRAINING REQUIRED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF DISABLED STUDENTS.**

[MSc]

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SUMMARY:

This dissertation focuses on the exploration of teachers' attitudes toward the practice of inclusive education in mainstream schools' classrooms in China. As a long-standing concept, inclusive education has been paid much attention by scholars. However, since it is at the core of education, teachers' attitudes and practices determine the learning experience of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools. The context of this dissertation is set in the Chinese education system, and the integration of pre-existing research results will be reviewed for further analysis. In addition, an extended literature review is used to explore the nature and historical development of inclusive education in China, so as to give potential readers a more comprehensive understanding of the field. For a long time, there has been a lack of study on the implementation of inclusive education from the perspective of teachers, a blind spot which has also hindered the promotion of inclusiveness in China. Besides, the dissertation analyzes the views of teachers and identifies the problems in implementing inclusive education in the regular classroom. Only by recognizing the obstacles can we figure out how to overcome them. The dissertation will draw a conclusion on how to enhance the training of professional abilities and integrate the answers to all the research questions, hoping that the research results can provide supports to the development of inclusive education in China and the work of in-service for teachers.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE:

As a starting point, this chapter mainly serves as an introduction to the background and context of the research project. To ensure the smooth progress of the later analysis, some related concepts and theories will be explained preliminarily. In the process of introduction, the value of carrying out the study will be well demonstrated, as well as clarifying the purposes of doing an in-depth exploration of the research topic and questions.

‘An “inclusive” education system can only be created if ordinary schools become more inclusive - in other words, if they become better at educating all children in their communities’ (UNESCO, 2009: 8). As pointed out in the Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO, 2009), inclusive education is a process of transforming schools and education systems to cater for the requirements of all children. Over the past few decades, the term “inclusion” has gained increasing attention by scholars and policymakers, making it one of the most powerful forces that drive the changing of global education policies and practices (Yan and Deng, 2018). After realizing that inclusive education is the key for achieving education for all, the United Nations has been calling on countries around the world to enact legislation or policies that explicitly require inclusion in education reform (Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). Inclusive education requires schools to be more accessible and responsible for students with special educational needs to ensure their entitlements to education (Deng and Poon-McBrayer 2012). In today’s context, “inclusion” is not just the physical presence of students in the classroom, it places more emphasis on the major structural reform of the school management system and requires that the teaching methods and contents be more suitable for all students’ needs (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010). Therefore, the concept of inclusion cannot be fully interpreted in a few words. It is complex and has influenced educators’

pedagogic strategy, curriculum setting, policy-making and even the reform of the whole education system behind it.

As a developing and powerful country, China shares the same commitment of realizing inclusion, being aware that education is the decisive factor for the nation's prosperity. Given the differences in policies on inclusive education around the world, we should understand and explore the implementation and interpretation of inclusive education in China under its unique cultural and political context (Yan and Deng, 2018). Starting in the 1980s, China began to implement inclusive education domestically in response to global trends and national educational demands. In 1982, the newly revised constitution stated that "the state has to provide disabled citizens with the entitlement to work, live and receive education" (The National People's Congress, 1982: Article 45). Since then, the theory of inclusive education has been formally incorporated into the national education agenda. Simultaneously, a policy called "Learning in Regular Classroom" (hereafter referred to as LRC) supported this aim. China initiated LRC for solving the problem of enrollment for children with special educational needs in mainstream schools (Fei, 2007). Decades passed, the LRC program still serves the biggest proportion of students with disabilities in China. It is the crucial strategy to perform inclusive education in the current education system (Deng and Poon-McBrayer 2012).

China's adoption of inclusive education and its long-standing efforts have been recognized, the world has witnessed the rapid progress it made to increase the enrollment rate of disabled students into regular schools (Deng and Zhu, 2016). However, under China's unique context, quite a lot scholars question the quality of education that students with disabilities receive in mainstream schools. Many challenges and obstacles are waiting to be tackled, which slows down the pace of developing inclusive education in China. This is

the value of conducting the research on inclusive education for the dissertation. At a time when education has become the key to promote the development of individuals and even the nation, this field has begun to attract the attention of researchers. Among all the factors that hinder the move towards inclusion, teachers' attitudes play a significant role. Previous studies have shown that educators' perspectives and beliefs are among the most influential variables in determining the success of practicing inclusive education (e.g. Yan and Deng, 2018). Apart from other factors, teachers have the most direct contact with students. Their willingness and abilities to respond to students' particular needs influence the learning experience in the regular classroom (Mu et al., 2015). Although many peer-reviewed journals have analyzed the attitudes of in-service teachers toward classroom diversity and special needs education, those studies are not clear about the concerns of teachers over inclusive education which are rarely investigated and require further research.

When aiming at changing the status quo of Chinese inclusive education, we must start from the source. It is necessary to analyze teachers' perspectives and the obstacles they encounter in implementing inclusive education to develop practical solutions. This is also a gap in this research field, for instance, researchers should explore more on how to help teachers identify students with special educational needs, establish a correct attitude and do not label them randomly, pay more attention to disabled students' psychological counseling and care, simultaneously, modify the pedagogic methods to meet their needs. These are the aspect the researcher hopes to fill in through the dissertation. On the whole, inclusive education is a broad and meaningful topic to study. It is of great value to explore the attitudes and views of teachers in the context of the implementation of inclusive education in China.

As a researcher, I used to work as a mainstream school English teacher in

Beijing and had experience in dealing with students with defects. These students often need special attention and care. Some of them found it hard to concentrate, absorb knowledge or interact with peers. If the teacher lacks relevant experience, he will mistakenly label the students as “naughty”, “dull” or “stupid”. Little do they know that these practices are very harmful to the mental health of students with special educational needs. As a young teacher, the only thing I could do was to give them more attention and help after I identified their differences. Besides, schools rarely provided training on how to deal with disabled students. If teachers can establish the right attitudes towards disabled students and have professional teaching skills to assist, inclusive education will be further developed to a higher level. As a teacher and a researcher, I want to gain insight into this issue from the study, which will also help my future professional development.

The objective of the research is to find out in-service teachers' views on the implementation of inclusive education in China and the career training that can provide them with the professional skills to respond to the diverse needs of students. In particular, through the study of inclusive education, this paper will focus on addressing the following questions:

1. How has inclusive education developed in the Chinese educational context and what hinders the implementation of inclusion in China?

Sub questions:

- 1.1 What is inclusive education?

- 1.2 What is the “Chinese educational context”?

2. What are teachers' attitudes toward the practice of inclusive education in

mainstream schools and what obstacles do they face?

3. What professional training can be given to help them cope with students with special needs?

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, it is hard to carry out direct investigation, question, and discuss the significant issues with in-service teachers. In the following chapters, the researcher will choose the most appropriate research method and introduce the methodology in detail, reviewing the literature extensively to make up for this deficit and extract valuable information. The researcher will then discuss the key issues, make some recommendations for future practice, policy and research then end with conclusions.

2. METHODOLOGY:

In the previous introduction section, the research direction, objectives and questions have been outlined (see page 9). The background and context of the research problems were initially introduced by combining the nature of inclusive education with its development in China. Given the importance and influence of inclusive education worldwide, it is of great value to conduct further research on inclusive education concerning China's education system. To find answers to the research questions, having a detailed and rigorous research design is an important step in the early stages of the research process to ensure that the research project produces tangible results (Cohen, 2018). The purpose of the research informed the methodology which, consequently, determines how the issues were to be explored, what research methods used, the justification for adopting these and the various detailed steps relating to how the research is undertaken (Cohen, 2018). In this research methodology chapter, the above contents will be elaborated at length to clarify the

approach adopted.

In the early stages of planning the research program, the idea was to conduct a primary study for data collection and analysis. The researcher had made a feasible plan and intended to use individual face-to-face interviews to obtain valuable and abundant information from the samples. Primary research is applicable to produce new knowledge compared to secondary research where the researcher makes a summary, review, or synthesis of data that has already been collected by someone else (Smith, 2011). However, due to the current global pandemic of COVID-19, no human subject research was allowed to be undertaken according to the University policy. In any case, schools' closures hindered many aspects of primary data collection. It was made compulsory that all dissertations should focus primarily on literature reviews and secondary data, albeit that this was not necessarily the best approach for the research topic and questions. Notwithstanding, a literature review can be used to show what we know and don't know about an issue, or to show what new research is needed to solve unanswered questions (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). In the current situation, a literature review is more suitable for the study of inclusive education in China.

The main research object of this paper is to find out teachers' perspectives on the practice of inclusive education in the regular classroom and the difficulties they encountered in the context of implementing inclusive education in China. This is a big topic that has been studied by many scholars before (e.g. Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). Given the difficulty of obtaining primary data due to previously stated factors, rigorous exploration of secondary data in the form of an extended literature review to obtain the answers to research questions provides more space for the breadth and diversity of data. An extended literature review involves stretching out the

review in length and direction (Pardey, 2006). The researcher can search relevant literature specifically according to the research objectives, ensuring the width of data from the richness of the qualified literature, critically evaluating and extracting the data useful to the research. According to Boland et al. (2012), there are several advantages for carrying out an extended literature review for the dissertation. For instance, it allows the researcher to show his knowledge in a particular area, including definitions, history, concepts and theories of the field of study. Once obtaining a certain amount of literature related to the topic, an extended literature review was also be used as a research method to analyze and evaluate the issue critically, then to answer the research questions in a more comprehensive and generalized way (Broderick, 2020). Similar to a systematic review, both methods help researchers critically review and synthesize previous studies, identify the deficiencies in the literature to provide a valuable theoretical basis for the research questions (Smith, 2011). However, considering the time scale of the dissertation, an extended literature review is relatively more appropriate.

2.1 The process of searching for literature:

A literature review is a big project which requires a lot of reading and the synthesis of sources. Considering the diversity of research questions that need to be covered (please refer to the Introduction chapter), it is essential to be specific when searching the literature. It is advisable to make use of a series of research questions to guide the focus and emphasize their importance at this phase of the literature review (Kaminstein, 2016). This can be achieved by classifying each research question into a theme and searching for relevant literature separately according to the theme. Through the planning of the research project, the preliminary themes included the background and current situation of inclusive education; the attitudes and views of teachers in

mainstream schools in China towards inclusive education and disabled students. Sub-themes would be derived according to the theme in a more detailed way, so as to facilitate literature search (see table 1 in the appendix). The search direction of the literature was utterly based on the research question as a reference. Therefore, in the process of literature generation, it is important to match the research question and theme with the literature focus and extract valuable information to answer the questions. To be more specific, in association with the definition, background and development process of inclusive education in China, theoretical studies that contained the contents would be searched then recorded carefully on an electronic platform for future data analysis. The research focused on teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in mainstream schools' classrooms and the obstacles they were confronted with upon practicing this policy, so the exploration of these issues will be supported by sufficient evidence from empirical studies. The same process will be conducted to find information on teacher training for inclusive education. Such targeted literature searching will make the research process more rigorous. Extensive literature citations and analyses also lead to deeper and more critical insights into the research issue, integrate what others have done and said and build bridges between related research areas (Cooper, 1998).

After identifying all the alternative literature, the next step was to do a lot of reading and sort out the useful ones, in doing so, referring to coding in qualitative data analysis to classify and organize the literature into themes as in the next section. This was completed by making a data extraction template (see table 1 in the appendix for details) and indicating the information of the studies that can address the themes of the research questions to facilitate later data analysis (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020).

2.2 Keywords identified in the research:

The literature collection process of this study mainly relies on searching web pages and databases with keywords and phrases related to the themes below. At the beginning of the search, several combinations of keywords were identified from the research topic “Exploration on the attitudes of Chinese mainstream school teachers toward the implementation of inclusive education in China and professional teacher training required to meet the needs of disabled students” and questions. The researcher listed the following terms for literature retrieval: “inclusion”, “inclusive education”, “learning in regular classrooms”, “LRC”, “mainstream schools”, “special schools”, “disabled students”, “special educational needs”, “classroom diversity”, “teachers’ attitudes”, “teacher training for inclusion”, “China”. Furthermore, additional keywords were considered in search of sources to expand the scope. For example, “teachers’ attitudes” can be replaced by “teachers’ perspectives” or “teachers’ opinions”. These additional keywords and terms could be utilized interchangeably. Academic articles’ titles with these terms were initially selected and categorized according to research questions for further investigation and appraisal. It should be mentioned that in the process of searching literature, keywords needed to be integrated most of the time. Since the focus of the research locates on the attitude of teachers toward inclusive education in China, the terms “teachers’ attitudes” and “China” were often linked with others. For instance, typing in “teachers’ attitudes” and “inclusive education” and “China” in the search box, some literature would appear that might be suitable to find information. The purpose of this step was to expand the databases and facilitate the extraction of abundant information and knowledge from the potential literature. The extended literature review aims at conducting in-depth and critical analysis (Boland et al., 2012). If the

literature quantity is insufficient, the extracted data will not be convincing and universal.

2.3 Search sources and parameters set for searching:

The main search engine of literature would be the bibliographic database of The University of Glasgow Library, which also provided multiple sources simultaneously. A bibliographic database is suitable for indexing records by subject using "keywords" or "controlled terms" (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). Manually input the keywords, the electronic system can intelligently screen the relevant references. One thing the researcher appreciated the University of Glasgow's library was that it conveniently provided free access to the data. Besides, given the essence of the research topic, the data must be updated. The selected studies were all from peer-reviewed journals and academic books published in the past fifteen years, to avoid ambiguity among the literature caused by the early research period. However, for some fundamental questions, such as the definition and history of inclusive education, the parameters of the literature were not strictly limited. Above all else, all studies must rigorously meet the selection criteria described below in the process of initial retrieval.

2.4 Study selection strategy and inclusion criteria:

Reviewers should decide which studies to be included in the extended literature review. They often need to set selection criteria systematically and transparently to determine which studies are eligible for review (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). This step was to ensure the quality of the literature in the initial selection process. The selection and inclusion criteria were shaped by the review questions and research direction.

Several criteria would be applied to the search process. The primary selection criteria were to identify specific peer-reviewed articles on the implementation and development of inclusive education in China and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. The reason for relying on peer-reviewed journals is that articles are reviewed by knowledgeable peers and experts in the field, which indicates that the research results have been recognized and instructive (Kaminstein, 2016). Besides, important references are generally included in peer-reviewed articles which can aid the research program of the dissertation. In addition, potential academic books are helpful in gaining insight into the area of study. All of the identified articles or chapters in books would be published in English which provided useful information on inclusive education-related. Furthermore, the parameters of the literature have been mentioned previously. Only academic research within the past fifteen years could be selected to obtain up-to-date information, except for the fundamental issues.

The researcher also applied some exclusion criteria, filtering out publications from the Grey Literature, the Website (e.g. Wikipedia), Newspaper Articles, PhD or Master's dissertations. Since the literature from these sources may not be academic or professional enough to be taken reference to in the dissertation, thus the accuracy and reference value of the information for the research content could not be guaranteed.

2.5 Judgments on the quality of the literature:

Assessing the quality of the literature aims to find out whether the study is adequate to answer the research questions (Petticrew and Roberts, 2012). According to Gough (2007), there are mainly three aspects that are included in the quality appraisal: the appropriateness of the study design, the quality of

the execution of the study methods and the study's relevance to the research questions. To make the acquired data more valuable for analysis and make sure the literature is free from the methodology biases, it is extremely important to carry out the quality assessment after collecting the literature. The evidence from the poor quality studies is usually weak, which inevitably impacts the reliability of the results and therefore the conclusions drawn (O'Brien and McGuckin, 2016). When there is a large amount of literature at hand, it is necessary to filter and select: critically evaluate whether the information provided by several authors was of sufficient reference value for a research area and whether they could answer the research questions or provide an advisable idea. Besides, in the process of screening the literature, each was examined in detail according to the authors, countries, research methods and findings. Before starting the extended literature review section, one should critically assess the extracted valuable data that were described, synthesized and analyzed for each research question.

2.6 Ethical considerations:

Ethics concerns what a researcher should or should not do in the study process (Cohen, 2018). For primary research that collects personal data directly from the participants, ethical considerations need to be stressed explicitly in the research paper. However, carrying out secondary research makes use of pre-existing literature and does not require individual ethical approval from the committee before the review or rather a "blanket approval" was issued (e.g. for all members on the course). In the researcher's view, the ethics guidelines for conducting extended literature reviews were not well explained, but raising awareness of certain ethical considerations is still necessary for improving the ethical and methodological quality of the research (Vergnes et al., 2010). First of all, the research process should maximize

benefits and minimize the harm of all concerned stakeholders. Also, justice, honesty and responsibility need to be maintained. Finally, ethics is also concerned with being a moral person, especially in relation to various stakeholders in the research process. The researcher considered these ethical issues before the research began and ensured that they were well addressed throughout the research process.

The methodology chapter explored the research methods of carrying out an extended literature review for the research project. This also included providing an outline for the process of searching literature, the classification of documents and the synthesis of data. What follows is the core section of the paper - the literature review.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW:

3.1 Introduction

As mentioned previously, the purpose of the paper was to explore and make an in-depth analysis of inclusive education in China as well as teachers' attitudes towards inclusion in mainstream schools' classrooms and the professional training on offer. The introduction section, as the starting point, briefly described some relevant knowledge of inclusive education and the important role of teachers in determining the quality of education available to students with special educational needs in regular schools, thus emphasizing the significance of the research project. Subsequently, the methodology section elaborated on the steps and process of selecting valuable literature for the research objectives and questions. The following part will be the focus of the research paper--the literature review.

A literature review is a research method used to understand large bodies of

information and is a means of contributing an answer to the research questions (Petticrew and Roberts, 2012). According to Carnwell and Daly's (2001) guidance on the construction of a literature review, the content of this chapter will include the following: the examination of the selected literature and studies will be presented first, followed by making critical analysis based on the identified research questions and the corresponding literature to acquire valuable answers. Finally, summarising the review into a broad conclusion (Carnwell and Daly, 2001).

At the first search, after applying the inclusion/exclusion criteria, thirty-eight papers were identified for further filtering. Subsequently, the selection of the key literature was mainly based on the reading of the abstract, the structure of the article, the research methods and results. Relevant literature was carefully screened, then eleven were abandoned for the studies were not of the great reference value, i.e., the participants of these studies include both mainstream schools and special schools, so the research was not targeted enough. Thus, twenty-seven references were selected for conducting the extended literature review. Of the twenty-seven papers reviewed, nine were conducting surveys that involved a certain number of participants (mostly regular school teachers), and four took the form of qualitative research methods (including focus group, individual interviews and case study). The remaining part consisted of thirteen reviews of previous literature and two policy books, which mainly focused on theories and policies of inclusive education and provided abundant resources for understanding the nature of inclusion. Different research methods adopted in the selected literature corresponded to different research themes. For this research topic, evidence from theoretical journals was suitable for analyzing definitions and historical processes of inclusive education, while the data from empirical studies were applicable for analyzing the attitudes of teachers on the implementation of

inclusive education.

As the research topic was under the Chinese context, among the twenty-seven selected studies, seventeen were based in China. Since the research purpose was to explore the attitudes of teachers in Chinese mainstream schools towards inclusive classes and disabled students, the research objects of the selected studies must be Chinese teachers. For themes that were not limited by the context, there was no need to refer to countries in the selection of literature, for instance, the definition of inclusive education should be international, not national. The reason was that countries around the world truly integrated inclusive education into their legislation and policies in response to the United Nations' call for universal access to inclusive education. Therefore, the international definition of inclusive education should be the most complete and effective model.

Once the available studies had been identified, the next step was to organize them into different themes. Combing the research questions (see page 9) mentioned previously, the themes to be covered in the literature review were:

1. The definition of inclusive education
2. The development of inclusive education in the Chinese context
 - 2.1 The history of Chinese inclusive education
 - 2.2 The current situation and problems of inclusive education
3. Teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream school

4. Potential challenges teachers are facing

5. The professional training for mainstream school teachers to cope with inclusive education.

Table 1 (see the appendix) provided an overview of the valuable information about the relative themes mentioned in the papers. In terms of the evidence covered in the selected literature, eight of the twenty-seven gave a comprehensive and detailed explanation of the definition of inclusive education and relevant international policies. Various international theoretical frameworks and models concerning inclusive education were presented in this part by going through the papers. As for the history of inclusive education in the Chinese context, there were eleven literature sources of great reference value which were all peer-reviewed journals of Chinese scholars. What these papers had in common was the mentioning of “special schools”, “Reform and opening up” and the “Learning in regular classroom” policy (e.g. Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2012, Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). All these were important inflection points in the history of inclusive education in China. Nine papers focused on the status quo of inclusive education in China, and the existing problems that hindered the move of inclusiveness in regular classrooms. In addition, eight and four empirical studies respectively analyzed the attitudes of Chinese in-service teachers towards inclusive education and children with disabilities, as well as the challenges they faced in inclusive classes. Attitudes were roughly divided into: positive, neutral and negative (e.g. Mu et al., 2015, Yan and Deng, 2018). Finally, seven articles referred to some valuable suggestions and information for professional teacher education to cope with special educational needs and classroom diversity. As illustrated above, several themes emerged from the reading of the literature. Next came the main part of the literature review, where these themes were further discussed in detail

around Chinese inclusive education. At the final stage, the discussions of different research themes would be summarized into a conclusion.

3.2 The definition of inclusive education and policies

What is meant by “inclusion” and why? What does an inclusive education system look like? Who is considered the object of inclusive education? These questions were often contained in the literature surrounding inclusive education research. Of the eight selected articles and policy documents (see academic and policy references below) on the definition of inclusive education, each referred to the international policies on education issued by UNESCO in the last century. Referring to ‘Open file on inclusive education’ (UNESCO, 2001), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declared education as a basic human right. As well as the Universal Declaration of Education for All (1990) which set out a comprehensive vision: promoting equity by providing universal access to education for all children, youth and adults. Since then, numerous scholars have been studying and discussing the term “inclusion” combined with the questions concerning its definition, objectives and legislation (e.g. Grima-Farrell, Bain and McDonagh, 2011, Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). From the declarations, education was a human right and every social member should be entitled to regular attendance at school, thus maintaining a just society. Simultaneously, the idea of inclusion was the key strategy to achieve education for all (Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017).

It was necessary to have a thorough understanding of the theoretical model before exploring specifically how a nation's education system can successfully implement inclusion. The word “inclusion” has various historical roots. Different countries often have slightly different aspirations and understandings towards this concept, i.e., in some countries, inclusive education was

considered as a way of serving children with disabilities in a general educational setting (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010). However, in an international sense, UNESCO (2001) explained inclusion as creating schools that welcome all learners, regardless of their characteristics, weaknesses or difficulties. This concept was later supported by de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) that, instead of excluding, regular schools should embrace individual differences and ensure that each person has the right to attend. In other words, students with disabilities could enjoy classroom learning with students without disabilities and schools were responsible for providing them with corresponding services and supports. In a similar way of thinking, Rafferty, Boettcher and Griffin (2001) described the term 'inclusion' as the process of embracing disabled students into regular classrooms of the schools that they should be entitled to access if they did not have disabilities. Therefore, Ainscow and Sandill (2010) highlighted that the purpose of inclusive education was to eliminate social exclusion, not only individual differences but also attitudes and responses to the diversity in race, social class, gender, etc. but also to nurture a society of acceptance and belonging. Thus, it could be seen that these researchers were consistent with international policies in their understanding of inclusive education.

Advocated by the United Nations, countries have been adjusting legislation and policies to authorize inclusive education explicitly. From the study of inclusive education by Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017), educational reforms worldwide have encouraged the rebuilding of school systems to provide appropriate assistance to students with diverse needs in regular schools. Importantly, this contrasts with past policies. It was pointed out by Richardson (2012) that, in the past, students who were considered as different from "normal" students as they incorporated particular demands for education were usually classified as "impairment" in Europe, North America and Australia.

Such disabled students were considered to be the targets of inclusive education, as they required additional supports and care and ordinary teaching methods did not apply to them. However, “impairment” alone was not the whole story. If the focus of inclusive education was defined solely by impairment, many students might miss the opportunities to enjoy the right to regular school education.

According to ‘Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education’ (UNESCO, 2009), at the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education, it was stressed that the way of promoting inclusion was to enable schools to embrace all children, particularly those with special educational needs. Lübke, Piquart and Schwinger (2018) claimed that ‘special educational needs’ should encompass four areas: physical, academic, behavioral, and social. Therefore, the movement of displacing “impairment/disabled” by special educational needs (hereafter refers to as SEN) played an important role in expanding the range of children to be involved in the inclusive education system and alleviating the crisis of social marginalization caused by exclusion (Richardson, 2012). In a broader sense, Lübke, Piquart and Schwinger (2018) explained inclusive education as emphasizing not only the admission of students with SEN into mainstream schools but also required teachers and normal students to accept these “special” students and help them fully integrate into classroom learning. The scholars mentioned above had interpreted the definition and connotation of inclusive education in an international context. According to the document issued by UNESCO (2001), despite differences in the notions of inclusion between countries, the purpose of implementing inclusive education from a nationwide perspective was to eliminate all barriers for students with SEN and renovate schools and education systems to truly cater for the diverse characteristics and needs of students. Next, the review will move on to policy reforms related to inclusive education.

When policies and administration were in the early stages of development, practicing inclusive education in ordinary schools might have focused only on putting students with SEN in the classrooms but without fully attending to their different learning needs. The study of Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017) reported that policymakers and legislation had been consciously transferring physical presence to, importantly, changes in curriculum, teaching methods and the entire educational programs. This was conducive to the realization of an inclusive society with equity. With the proposition that education as a basic human right and the guarantee that education was for all, ordinary schools globally were called to make major reforms to offer better education to accommodate students with diverse needs (UNESCO, 2009). In response to the UN's call, policymakers worldwide have made political changes to address inclusive education.

Richardson (2012) cited the example of the UK that inclusion had been at the core of British educational reform since 1997. Additionally, it was concluded by the UNESCO's Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009) that, the elimination of exclusion and implementation of inclusion within education and the society should include three levels. First, in terms of education, regular schools that implemented inclusion must develop teaching methods that adapt to individual differences so that all children could benefit. Second, in terms of society, ordinary schools could change people's attitudes to diversity by admitting all children and lay the foundations for a just and non-discriminatory society. Last but not least, in terms of economy, it was much cheaper to build and maintain schools that educated all children than to establish one that was open only to students with SEN. However, scholars who studied inclusive education and social equality argued that it was straightforward to make inclusive education a key policy but far more challenging to implement (e.g. Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou, 2011,

Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). Much work remains to be done on the road to an inclusive society, but believing that countries worldwide share the joint commitment and practice of inclusive education will lead to better functioning of social justice.

In conclusion, these articles presented an apparent vision and time-line of inclusive education in the international context. Inclusive education was well adopted by scholars in this field as a prerequisite for realizing education for all and social equity. Awareness of who should attend inclusive schools and be provided with extra support has also shifted from 'the disabled' to a broader range of special educational needs to avoid social exclusion and marginalization. Reviewing the literature, policies and educational institutions need to be further reformed to assist countries on promoting inclusive education and guaranteeing the equal opportunity for all children to integrate into regular classroom inclusive education, there was a tiny deviation in researchers' interpretation of the theoretical model, so it was easier to quote and review.

3.3 The development of inclusive education in China

After a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education in a broad sense, various countries may make targeted adjustments according to the different political and economic circumstances to better adapt to their national conditions. As one of the developing countries, China has long complied with the UN's calls and its own domestic needs to strengthen inclusive education. To explore the attitude of Chinese educators towards inclusive education, one must study the historical process, development trend and current situation of inclusive education under its unique historical and cultural background.

3.3.1 The history of Chinese inclusive education

Among the eight academic papers selected, scholars described the development of inclusive education in China with unique perspectives, but the time nodes were much the same. After sorting out the papers, the origin and reform of inclusive education in the particular Chinese context could be displayed.

The studies carried out by Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004, 2012) provided an explicit and complete time-line for the reform of inclusive education. They reviewed the historical and political factors that have had a significant impact on the development of Chinese inclusive education. Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) claimed that we must acknowledge the unique influence of Confucianism in ancient China on people with special educational needs. Confucius advocated a 'harmony society' with strict class consciousness, a society that must care for and educate people with disabilities (Yu, Su and Liu, 2011). However, the disabled were placed at the bottom of the hierarchical pyramid. Despite Confucius' suggestion that "education without distinction", disabled people were educated out of social sympathy rather than as a fundamental human right. Although Confucius's view of disability was solely motivated by compassion and goodwill rather than society's responses to individual's SEN, it laid a philosophical foundation for educational equity in China (Yu, Su and Liu, 2011). In their study a few years later, Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) argued that it was not until the 19th century, when the Americans and Europeans set up special institutions for handicapped people in a few cities in China, that the disabled began to receive the formal education. Until then, however, no sign of inclusion had been seen. But the emergence of special schools since then undoubtedly provided opportunities for people with SEN. In a study of special schools and mainstream schools, Deng and Zhu (2016)

compared the role of special schools to a kind of exclusion instead of inclusion, because before the full implementation of inclusive education in China, ordinary schools tended to send students with SEN to special schools rather than modify the system to better serve the learners. Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) said there were 42 special schools all over the nation to accommodate students with disabilities when the Peoples' Republic of China was founded in 1949. Fei (2007) introduced the idea of 'normalization', which was pioneered in western countries after Second World War by reforming the isolated operation of institutions that offered specific care and allowed people with special needs to fully participate in a normal and equal society. However, as pointed out by Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004), this view did not shake the perception of the Chinese rulers. Special institutions were the only option for deaf or blind people and, sadly, the number of new special schools barely increased during the Cultural Revolution in the 1970s. One thing to add, several researchers (e.g. Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2012, Deng and Zhu, 2016) claimed that there was no precedent for China to include students with special educational needs in regular schools before Reform and opening up. During Chairman Mao's reign, there was strong political oppression over culture, people with special educational needs were even less valued. Nevertheless, Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017) drew evidence from multiple research reviews that, as early as the 1950s, there were stories of a few regular schools which accommodated disabled students in the classroom, although minority spontaneous action was unlikely to bring political changes.

In the 1980s came the most important historical inflection point for the emergence of inclusive education in China. The reform and opening up were then mentioned in all the articles concerning inclusion under Chinese political and educational context. Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017) introduced the modification of two crucial pieces of legislation--the Constitution was revised

in 1982 for the provision of educational and social support to citizens with disabilities. This was followed by the enactment of the Compulsory Education law, emphasizing that children (included those with disabilities) over the age of six must be enrolled in schools and enjoy nine years of compulsory education. The enactment of these two laws not only protected the equal educational rights of children with SEN but also paved the way for the formal implementation of inclusive education. Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) analyzed that the reform and opening up initiatives made policymakers realize that education was the catalyst for China's prosperity. Since then, inclusive education with Chinese special characteristics had gradually emerged. China began to embrace children with SEN into mainstream schools in the late 1980s. In response to this great movement was the famous 'Learning in regular classroom' model (hereafter refers to as LRC) introduced by Yan, Deng and Ma (2019) in their study. LRC was defined by Mu et al. (2015) as the government-funded schooling for children with SEN into mainstream schools that traditionally served non-disabled students. LRC was initiated by China in response to international educational trends and domestic needs (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2012). Deng and Zhu (2007) acknowledged that LRC was the chosen strategy for special education offered to students with SEN under the influence of western inclusive schooling and based on China's special circumstances to enable mainstream schools to meet diverse needs and provide better education for these students, thus enhancing inclusion. LRC had undoubtedly promoted inclusion in the Chinese education system, while researchers declared that it was not entirely consistent with inclusive education in the western concept, since the LRC model gave more consideration to the Chinese social and cultural environment (Yan, Deng and Ma, 2019). According to Yu, Su and Liu (2011), the significance of LRC was not limited to helping those who were denied an education because of their

disabilities, more importantly, it mitigated the challenges in China's education system, such as the low enrollment rate of children with SEN and the lack of educational resources.

In conclusion, due to the special historical and political factors in China, the rise of inclusive education was not overnight. From the idea of Confucius' hierarchical system to the gradual influence of western countries' inclusive concept, and to the formation of an inclusive education system which was suitable for the domestic environment, China has been exploring for thousands of years in achieving educational equality. After having a comprehensive understanding of the development history of inclusive education in China, it is time to discuss the practice of LRC. What are the successes, challenges and areas that need more attention?

3.3.2 The current situation and problems of inclusive education under Chinese educational context

According to the historical review, China has initiated inclusive education program since the 1980s and has been committed to ensuring that disabled children (who had been excluded for any reason) enjoy equal access to compulsory education (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). After three decades, it is time to look at what progress has been made and reflect on what problems still exist to push forward inclusion in China. The nine selected studies used data and evidence to explicitly record how China's inclusive education and LRC policy have come to today, the current challenges are also summarized.

It was explained in Xu, Cooper and Sin's (2017) study of LRC that, as an inclusive education model with unique Chinese characteristics, LRC was initially proposed as an experiment. It was not widely known about or formally recognized by laws. Besides, Yu, Su and Liu (2011) concluded LRC as an

innovative form of inclusion based on the western inclusive education concepts and practice but rooted in special education in China (more on this will be discussed later). Therefore, up to now, China's LRC model was still different from inclusion in western countries. Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) referred to the revisions of two important laws in 1982 and 1986 respectively, which marked the official appearance of inclusive education and also embodied China's determination to make education compulsory for all citizens and realize an inclusive future. However, according to the law at that time, only visual impairment, hearing impairment and intellectual disability were included as special educational needs. The reasons were explained in the research by Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017): first, these three types of disabilities accounted for the majority part of the disabled population; second, the Chinese economy at that time was way too poor to support a great proportion of students with SEN. This has changed and the world has witnessed the rapid development of China's economy. Today, Su, Guo and Wang (2018) added that the LRC policy's definition of SEN had been expanded to seven types of disabilities, including physical, speech and language disabilities, mental disorders and multiple disabilities. This was a great step forward and mainstream schools were able to embrace more students with disabilities.

Since the two legislative reforms in the 1980s laid a solid foundation for inclusive education in China, the increasing amount of policy-making and the enactments of legislation associated with it has never stopped. Zhou and Yang (2016) compiled a table in their study that clearly showed major legislation and policy reforms regarding Chinese inclusive education and LRC in chronological order. As the researchers summarized, China has been committed to improving the enrollment rate of disabled students in compulsory education through legislation since 1987. Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017) mentioned the great moment when LRC was finally written into

the Chinese law system in the revised Compulsory Education Act in 2006. What's more, Yu, Su and Liu (2011) wrote about the latest revision of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Disabled emphasized in Article 25 that children with SEN should have the right to general education from preschool to high school, and schools must provide convenience (adaptations of special needs) and assistance. The most recent regulation in effect for inclusive education and LRC was the 2010-2020 Outline National Program for Mid-Long Term of Educational Reform and Development proposed. This demonstrated the nation's will to expand the scale of LRC and to make inclusive education universal in China (Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). The above was a summary of the current legal and political status of LRC and inclusive education in the Chinese context. This paper now moves on to the statistical changes that inclusive education has made so far.

In terms of the enrollment rate of students with disabilities into regular schools in China, several researchers provided useful data. For instance, Su, Guo and Wang (2018) referred to the 2017 survey, in which only 45 % of school-age children with disabilities received educational opportunities, 28% of those with SEN who applied to regular schools were rejected. This was not an optimistic statistic and could lead one to imagine that inclusive education was far from being successful in China today. In terms of education stakeholders, Su, Guo and Wang (2018) revealed the number of teachers trained to meet the diverse needs of inclusive classrooms doubled in 2012 from 14.3 % in 2008 and had continued to grow every year since. At present, more and more teachers in mainstream schools are offered professional training, which is crucial to the quality of inclusive education. However, teacher education has not yet reached its target in terms of quantity and quality (more on this in the later section). Yan and Deng (2018) suggested that, for China, the

priorities were to increase the enrollment rate of students with SEN and relevant on-job training for formal education teachers.

In terms of the real learning experience of students with SEN in today's mainstream classrooms, Qu (2019) analyzed the data from a study in 2017, which manifested the truth stated that nearly 70 % of participants with mental disabilities or autism either were not engaged at all or need constant reminders to engage in class. What's more, only 36% of teachers said they would give attention to students with SEN in class learning. The results from this study might not be general given the limitation of the scale of participants, but an important reality can be drawn, i.e., the current situation of inclusive education in China is that the emphasis on expanding the regular school enrollment rate of disabled students was one welcome aspect but the quality of education and the participation in learning have still to be fully addressed. Other researchers (e.g. Yu, Su and Liu, 2011, Su, Guo and Wang, 2018) came up with an identical conclusion in discussing the status quo of LRC and inclusion. In addition to the timely updating of laws and policies, the practice was equally important. The progress of inclusive education in China could be witnessed, while the problems reflected by the current situation need further discussion and more attention.

In the studies of challenges that hindered the progress of inclusive education in China, some researchers primarily reached a consensus by mentioning China's exam-oriented educational background. For instance, Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) analyzed that under the deep-rooted elitism in the education system, students' diverse needs were often ignored compared to the strict academic criteria. When scores were the only assessment standard, teachers tended to worry that students with SEN would drag down the class or take up teaching time, making it difficult for these students to receive fair

treatment in class. In addition, Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017) argued that the scored-based model overlooked the individual's academic development needs. Thus, Chinese exam-oriented ideology was an obstacle to the successful practice of inclusive education.

Besides, the practice of inclusive education in the current Chinese education system still only focused on physical attendance. In other words, Su, Guo and Wang (2018) pointed out that mainstream schools promoted compulsory education by placing more children with disabilities into the classroom without making institutional changes to offer better education that suited their specific needs. Long before, Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) had already criticized the LRC's lack of commitment to mainstreaming by only providing education to students with disabilities. Besides, Yu, Su and Liu (2011) suggested that students with SEN need not only additional academic support but also care and protection from discrimination. China should further refer to the western countries' interpretation of inclusive education, fundamentally reform to provide every student with appropriate education was the essence of equality.

Last but not least, the most mentioned and troublesome issue raised by scholars was teacher preparation. Yu, Su and Liu (2011) revealed that the Chinese inclusive education system was facing a shortage of high-quality teachers to better serve students with SEN due to insufficient teacher education. As suggested by Xu, Cooper and Sin (2017), the key to improving the quality of LRC was the expertise of qualified teachers to provide effective teaching and support to students with special needs in general schools. Yan and Deng (2018) supplemented that: the knowledge and skills needed by practitioners of inclusive education to respond to diverse needs played a key role in students' classroom experience. Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) claimed

that it was common for students with disabilities to be neglected in regular classrooms because the teachers were not equipped with sufficient knowledge to help them, neither did these educators realize their responsibilities.

In conclusion, from the review of the current situation and problems of inclusive education in China by scholars, it could be seen that all were somewhat skeptical about the implementation of inclusive education. Besides, both data and reality reflected the weaknesses of the LRC model. Among them, the most discussed and most worthy of exploring was the issue of teacher quality. Therefore, the next focus of this review will be to explore the role of teachers in inclusive education and how to adjust their professional attitudes so as to strengthen their understandings of inclusive education.

3.4 Teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream schools

The introduction of inclusive education with Chinese special characteristics and the analysis of potential problems have laid a good foundation for the following. As mentioned previously, educators were a significant element among the disturbing factors affecting the development of inclusive education in China. Many scholars had reached a consensus that teachers were seen as key figures in implementing inclusive education (e.g. de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011). As suggested by Yan and Deng (2018), although educational reform requires policies, systems and organizations on a macro level, the changes brought about by successful reform were reflected in the teacher's thoughts and behaviors. Through the exploration of the factors that determined LRC practice, Mu et al. (2015) claimed that mainstream teachers' beliefs and attitudes were likely to influence their investment in inclusive education, which in turn was critical to ensure the success of inclusive

education practices in China. In addition, Lu et al. (2020) raised an interesting point that teachers' attitudes influenced not only disabled students' academic achievement and motivation but also the level of self-efficacy--the belief in their abilities as teachers to achieve an inclusive teaching goal and offer better education to students with SEN. With inclusive education receiving more and more attention in China in recent years, scholars have been exploring the perspectives of teachers on accepting and embracing students with SEN into normal classrooms (e.g. Mu et al., 2015, Yan and Deng, 2018).

Next, a review of past empirical studies will be presented to find out the different perceptions that regular teachers held towards the practice of inclusive education in mainstream schools' classrooms. All the selected studies were conducted in China, in which teachers with relative LRC teaching experience were taken as the research objects.

Many studies have shown that, to the exclusion of all other factors (i.e. additional care and attention, changes of the curriculum and teaching method), teachers did not resist inclusive education, nor did they ever treat students with SEN as a teaching burden. For example, as one of the scholars who have made many research contributions to Chinese inclusive education, Deng (2008) examined primary school teachers' attitudes towards inclusive practice in both urban and rural areas. Questionnaire was adopted as the quantitative research method to investigate the attitudes and opinions of 252 participants, all of whom were chosen from 24 urban schools and 33 rural schools respectively. The questionnaire used the five-point scale that ranged from 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree) for items to assess respondents' attitudes toward the practice of inclusive education. In the study, teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education were classified into three dimensions: positive, negative and preference for special school education. As the results showed,

most teachers from both urban and rural schools held a preferable attitude toward special school education while supporting the idea of inclusion. Significantly, compared with the rural respondents, the urban respondents were more likely to be negative about inclusion practice in regular classrooms, although cities generally provided better educational resources. Therefore, the researchers applied ANOVA analysis to explore the influence of some variables on teachers' attitudes. No significant difference was found between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and variables such as educational resources, teaching years and education training. Interestingly, this was slightly different from the conclusions of later researchers. Drawing from the study, teachers would prefer special schools to take over even though most of them supported inclusive education in regular classrooms. Despite the study was relatively early and the findings differed from the research of others (i.e. Feng, 2012, Mu et al., 2015), the significance of it lay in consideration of both urban and rural teachers and the comparison of urban and rural teachers' views on inclusive education. However, further empirical studies are needed to further explore teachers in both urban and rural areas.

In a recent study on teachers' attitudes towards students suffering from Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) who received general education under LRC policy, Lu et al. (2020) surveyed 410 participants from Guangdong province. The questionnaire included fourteen questions concerning the attitudes of teachers. Each question was designed as a Likert-type scale format with five options, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), in which the higher the total score, the better the respondents' attitude toward an inclusive classroom with ASD children. The average mean score was 3.20, which suggested that teachers tended to be positive in including students with ASD in mainstream school classrooms. The effects of other variables on attitudes were also taken into account. For instance, in terms of knowledge about ASD, the

Pearson correlation test results showed that there was a significant positive correlation between the knowledge about ASD and teachers' attitudes toward inclusion. As the study only focused on students with ASD in the context of inclusive education, it had certain limitations and might not be general enough. However, ASD was a type of special educational needs, and the placement of children with ASD in general schools was considered the most challenging by teachers (Peters and Forlin, 2010).

Similar findings were informed by Mu et al. (2015), who studied LRC teachers' competencies of inclusive education in Beijing. It was stressed by the researchers that attitude was the major competency for the implementation of inclusive education. To answer the questions of what was teachers' perceptions towards students with SEN, researchers conducted a qualitative study through focus group and individual interviews. Surprisingly, only positive responses emerged from the interview data and the participants were not opposed to inclusive education. From the interview transcripts, one interviewee pointed out that the most important thing was to be kind to students with SEN, while the other insisted that no student should be left behind. These positive comments indicated educators' recognition of inclusive education and their determination to help students with difficulties. Apart from that, respondents believed that in addition to attitudes, the success of inclusive education also lay on educators' sufficient knowledge and skills to deal with disabled students. Support from parents, schools as well as the government were also seen as important. Despite the geographical limitation of the study, the qualitative research method contributed to a more intuitive and in-depth examination of the teachers' views.

The above was consistent with the findings of Peng (2011), whose research objects also mentioned the lack of corresponding knowledge, skills and support

from other stakeholders to educate students with SEN. However, contradictory responses were reported in terms of teachers' attitudes. Using a five-point scale in the questionnaire (1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree), the researchers surveyed 120 regular school teachers to reveal their perspectives on inclusive education. The mean item score on 'students with SEN should be taught in regular classrooms' was 3.37 with a relatively high standard deviation of 1.271, which suggested that there were disputes on this statement. Interestingly, 78.6% of the respondents believed that special institutions could offer better service to students with SEN. In addition, statistics showed that respondents believed they did not have sufficient knowledge and skills to deal with students with SEN compared with well-trained teachers in special schools. According to 90.8% of respondents, inclusive education was a good theory but failed to work well in practice (mean score was 1.79). These contradicting responses suggested that teachers, on the one hand, agreed with the inclusion theory; on the other hand, they preferred special schools that were more suitable for students with SEN. In general, the average mean score for the attitudes of teachers towards educating students with SEN in general classes was 2.73 (SD=0.633), which indicated that the majority of respondents were in the "uncertain" stage category and they were relatively negative about practicing inclusive education in mainstream schools. As for the limitations of the study, the author also failed to take regional differences into account since the questionnaire sample was solely limited to 36 schools in Sichuan province.

Teachers' perspectives on the effects of inclusive education for students with disabilities in general schools were further examined by Yao et al. (2018). They used focus group and individual interviews to investigate the views of LRC teachers on the outcomes of inclusive education practice in terms of school adjustment, social development and academic development. Nineteen mainstream teachers were selected as the focus group participants and were

asked to describe students with disabilities in the classroom. Later on, questions were raised during the individual interviews, including: 1. What are your expectations towards inclusive education? 2. Has inclusive education met your expectations? The results showed some positive attitudes toward inclusive practice. For instance, interviewees mentioned that children with disabilities developed self-care capability and could truly integrate into school life by increasing participation in classroom activities in an inclusive setting. In addition, the interviewees gave examples to indicate the positive influence that regular classroom learning had on disabled students' interpersonal relationships and learning outcomes. As a whole, participants held a relatively positive attitude on the changes that inclusive education could bring to children with SEN; at the same time, they also mentioned the existing challenges and limitations. A majority of teachers claimed that students with severe disabilities who were embraced in the regular classroom failed, in most cases, to get enough support and care to attain their special needs. Drawing from the interview data, disabled students were unable to catch up with others in terms of academic performance. The conclusion seemed to be the same as that of Peng (2011)--while acknowledging the positive effects of inclusive education, teachers maintained a negative attitude towards the implementation. As pointed out by the researcher, teachers thought that 'inclusion is nice but cannot be done'. It's worth noting that the small sample scale of the study was not able to represent all teachers' views on the effects of inclusive education in China.

The negative results of teachers' perspectives toward inclusive education practices were also reflected in Feng's (2012) study. The researchers conducted small-scale interviews with a sample of mainstream teachers from Shaoxing, then adopted the Self-Determination Theory model for interview data analysis. From the research findings, the interviewees showed strongly

negative feelings about inclusion, with both confusion and concerns about inclusion emerging in the responses. For instance, one interviewee pointed out that ‘inclusive education will lose its popularity under the stressful exam-oriented curriculum’. While another interviewee witnessed students with SEN who were bullied in ordinary schools when teachers turned a blind eye. This study showed teachers’ ignorance of inclusive education, they were neither positive about the future of inclusive education, nor did they have knowledge and expertise to address the SEN of their students. The evidence of the study indicated that, unless teachers were better trained and motivated, negative attitudes among them towards inclusion would continue to grow.

An ‘Inclusive Teachers Competency Questionnaire’ was developed by Deng (2016) to examine teachers’ competency to teach students with SEN in regular classrooms. There were four factors concerning teachers’ competency, among which, the third one focused on teachers’ attitudes and beliefs (AB) towards inclusive education. Five items were involved in the questionnaire to investigate teachers’ AB. The researchers surveyed 401 mainstream teachers of 287 schools in Beijing and received 311 valid responses. It could be concluded from the research findings that teachers were still concerned about their skill and professional knowledge to cope with students’ special educational needs in regular schools’ classrooms. Their attitudes and beliefs towards practicing inclusive education in mainstream schools remained negative and critical. As for the limitations, researchers highlighted the possibilities that teachers’ attitudes might vary depending on teaching experience, regional differences and other factors that should be taken into account in future studies.

Moreover, Liu, Holmes and Albright (2019) conducted a longitudinal study on Chinese teachers’ perceptions of inclusive education. In 2013, a total of 215 teachers were involved in a questionnaire survey (stage 1) that contained 22

items to measure the participants' attitudes toward inclusion. The researcher carried out a follow-up study (stage 2) of the same participants in 2016 to explore the potential changes in teachers' perceptions of inclusive education. During the two stages of the questionnaire surveys, respondents were asked to rate the items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = disagree, 3=neutral, 5 =agree). The total score of each respondent was used to evaluate the teacher's general attitude towards inclusive education, in which higher scores indicated positive attitudes. As the results showed, the average mean score for teachers' perceptions of inclusive education was 2.83 in stage 1's survey, which revealed a slightly negative attitude of teachers, compared to 3.32 in stage 2. It seems that the perceptions of teachers had changed in the past three years, i.e., a growing positive attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in mainstream schools could be identified. As the author concluded, the quantitative findings suggested that the implementation of inclusive education was more likely to be supported and recognized by teachers over time. Besides, the researchers indicated that teachers' perceptions of inclusive education would be influenced by factors like school environment, self-awareness, etc., which would require future studies to verify.

In conclusion, several researchers agreed that teachers' attitude was an important factor in the successful practice of inclusive education in China. Out of eight studies that examined regular teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, three showed positive results and five turned out to be either negative or undecided. In the review, it seemed that the majority of teachers agreed with inclusive education and believed that all students (especially those with SEN) should have the right to study in a regular classroom. However, they were not optimistic that the inclusive theory would work well in practice. Several authors concluded the reason for the negative attitude was that teachers were

not confident in their abilities and professional knowledge to cope with the needs of disabled students, as well as the lack of support and resources from academic administrators and the government. As mentioned previously, these were also obstacles to the further development of inclusive education in China. Whether they held a positive, negative or neutral attitude toward inclusion, many teachers mentioned the challenges and difficulties they faced. Teachers' concerns about inclusive education were caused by many factors, it was also necessary to find out the factors that affect their attitudes, thus making adjustments to help them develop the right attitudes and behavior. As for the limitations of the review, not all studies adopted the same research method to examine teachers' attitudes, each study included different variables and was conducted in different cities in China. Besides, some sample sizes were relatively small and the results might not be general enough.

3.5 Potential challenges teachers are facing

From previous reviews, the negative attitude of teachers was not a rejection of inclusive education, but rather a lack of confidence to cope with students with diverse needs in a regular classroom. Nonetheless, a majority of them were concerned about the implementation of inclusive education. In order to come up with appropriate ways to change teachers' attitudes and help them better practice inclusive education, it is necessary to first understand the difficulties and challenges they are facing.

Several scholars have drawn almost identical conclusions about the challenges faced by teachers teaching students with SEN in regular schools. Among whom, Peng (2011) designed an open-ended question in the questionnaire and asked 98 teachers to list three challenges they were confronted with. Four challenges were summarized from the data, including:

1. Too heavy a teaching workload

Respondents mentioned that they had to put in more time and energy to deal with students with SEN while coping with the pressure of regular schoolwork, which made them feel overburdened.

2. Lack of training, understanding, skills and knowledge

Many respondents reported a lack of professional knowledge and skills to teach students with special needs, and some teachers reported that they simply did not understand, let alone practice, the concept of inclusion. They blamed the lack of professional training; thus they had no idea how to adjust the curriculum and pedagogy to serve students with SEN in regular classrooms.

3. Communication difficulties

Some teachers found communication a problem when dealing with students with disabilities (such as hearing and speaking difficulties). These students were more introverted and sensitive than the regular students, and the teachers didn't know how to approach them appropriately.

4. Insufficient support

A majority of respondents stressed the importance of sufficient support. From the responses, teachers were eager for parents to recognize the special educational needs of their children, and to cooperate with teachers instead of having high expectations of their child's academic performance. At the same time, support from schools and the reform of the education system were also necessary. As some respondents pointed out, the exam-oriented education system was a barrier to the realization of inclusive education. Besides, the government should also accelerate the implementation of policies.

The above challenges were broadly consistent with most research findings in this area. For instance, Mu et al. (2015) listed attitudes, skills, knowledge and agency as the key aspects for teachers' competence to implement successful inclusive education in mainstream school's classrooms. The researchers interviewed LRC teachers to understand their interpretations of difficulties and professional competences. Drawing from the interview transcripts, some interviewees mentioned the importance of professional knowledge to implement inclusive education as one of the main factors. Besides, some interviewees reported that it was very challenging to handle students with SEN. That was because they, as teachers, lacked skills to solve the problems that having students with SEN in regular classrooms might bring. In addition, seeking resources was the key challenging issue mentioned by interviewees. Some teachers found it important to actively seek support and help when they were in trouble as LRC teachers. The author concluded that, apart from teachers' perspectives of inclusive education, skills, knowledge and resources were the major concerns that they, as teachers, felt inadequate to deal with.

Furthermore, Liu et al. (2019) drew the same conclusion by examining teachers' experiences in teaching students with SEN in general classrooms. The interview data were coded into three themes, the third of which was related to the challenges faced by the teachers in providing additional support to disabled students. In the interview, teachers mentioned they suffered low self-efficacy due to the inappropriate curriculum, inadequate teaching materials and academic evaluation systems. Besides, interviewees felt a sense of helplessness due to the lack of support. They tended to ask for help from and the involvement of administrators, special school teachers and parents. One interviewee added that the presence of students with SEN in the class increased the burden and the heavy workload made them incapable of handling

everything properly. The findings were also agreed by (Feng, 2012), who revealed, through the interview transcripts, the challenges in inclusive teacher education in China: statements like ‘lack of training’, ‘knowledge deficiency’, ‘limited understanding towards inclusive education’ and ‘no support’ were considered by teachers to be the most intractable problems they were facing at this stage.

Although each study took a different sample, the answers were much the same. When teachers dealt with students with SEN, they mainly faced barriers such as overwork, lack of skills and professional knowledge, insufficient training for inclusive education, deficient external support and resources. If schools and governments recognize teachers' difficulties and offer help, it will ease their burden and give them the confidence to provide better teaching experience for students with SEN.

3.6 Professional training for mainstream school teachers to cope with inclusive education

According to scholars, although policies had given priority to teacher training since the implementation of inclusive education, the reality was that LRC training to meet students' SEN was not always included in teacher education (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2012). Thus, teachers repeatedly mentioned the lack of professional knowledge and expertise as they did not know how to interact with disabled students appropriately. This directly violated the original intention of inclusive education. Teacher education was not only a problem for teachers but also a challenge for the Chinese education system. As Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) previously claimed, teacher education was the decisive factor for the success of inclusive programs. Only by strengthening teacher training can teachers take better care of SEN students

and promote the development of inclusive education in China.

In the Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (UNESCO, 2009), it was stressed that empowering educators with confidence and skills in the process of inclusion would leave a positive impact on teachers' attitudes and performance. Also, teachers need to be regularly trained and ready to assist children and young people in their development and learning processes. Back in the context of China, Yu, Su and Liu (2011) mentioned the improvements made by the Constitution to emphasize teacher education in the inclusive process. Under Article 28 of the State Council (2008), the State shall, in a planned way, establish colleges for special education in various forms, offer professional classes or lectures to enable teachers to master the necessary knowledge of teaching students with SEN in ordinary schools. Thus, the researchers suggested two approaches of offering special education training: the first was pre-service teacher preparation, which provided a systematic training program of choice for those who wanted to commit to inclusive education in the future. These programs ranged in educational level from a Bachelor's degree to a Ph.D. The second was short-term and intensive in-service training sponsored by educational institutions, especially for teachers already involved in the LRC program.

Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2012) also stressed the importance of enrolling teachers into training institutions with associate degrees and the need for such institutions to be expanded in number in the future. In addition, Feng (2012) supplemented that inclusive teacher education should be improved both quantitatively and qualitatively. In addition to adding the content of inclusive education training to general teacher education and establishing more institutions for LRC teachers, the expertise provided should also be adequate and up-to-date.

Wang and Mu (2014) put forward some new suggestions in terms of teacher preparation for inclusive education. As for pre-service training, in addition to increasing the number of normal colleges specializing in special teacher education or offering special education courses, there were three points to note in quality: the overall goal, the professional goal and the career goal. As explained by the researchers, the overall goals focused on the cultivation of teachers who were compassionate and adhered to professional practices informed by science. The professional goals were to master the basic theories and pedagogy of special needs education and to develop professional competence and practical skills in inclusive education. The career goals were to equip graduates with the self-efficacy and confidence to teach and practice inclusive education well in mainstream schools.

Wang and Mu (2014) added that each inclusive education program should set up sub majors for specific educational needs, for example, hearing difficulty, visual impairment or intellectual disability. Pre-service teachers could then choose the type of students they were able to serve after graduation. This was consistent with the idea of Fei (2007), who agreed that teachers should carry out specific training according to the specific needs of students.

Similarly, in terms of in-service teacher education, short term but intensive training should target at helping LRC teachers improve their teaching methods, update professional knowledge, promote the application of inclusive education technologies, and better solve problems encountered in dealing with students with SEN (Wang and Mu, 2014).

The prerequisite for the success of inclusive education is to solve the shortage of qualified teachers. The government should also increase the inputs in teacher education for students with SEN, remove the obstacles encountered

by LRC teachers in the practice of inclusive education and help them perform better in class.

4. DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The literature synthesis above presented the views and findings of researchers on the issues of inclusive education. For a long time, there have been various discussions about the definition of inclusive education, but ultimately inclusion represents a kind of education that embraces every individual in ordinary schools and provides additional support for those with special needs to better integrate. International law and justice of the United Nations recognizes education as a basic human right and every individual is entitled to equal access. The concept of inclusive education as the realization of social equity has gradually gained popularity. The education system has undergone dramatic changes over the past few decades, i.e., many countries have made it a development goal to educate children with disabilities in regular schools (de Boer, Pijl and Minnaert, 2011). Inclusive education has always been a controversial topic. Recently, researchers have had similar understandings of the theory and the desirability of inclusive education and have agreed that there are many challenges to build an inclusive society.

However, there have been disputes that contemporary inclusive education focuses mainly on the physical attendance of students with SEN in regular schools rather than making substantive changes to the education system to better meet their needs. As argued by scholars, inclusion does not only mean increasing enrollment rates for people with disabilities but also needs to be supported by national legislation and policies. Thus, this researcher's first recommendation is:

- To continue to use national legislation and policy to better support students with SEN.

In addition, due to differences in culture and visions of development, different countries have taken different approaches to implement inclusive education. As the research topic was set in the Chinese context, many scholars have mentioned the deep-rooted Confucianism when studying the history of inclusive education in China (e.g. Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004, Yu, Su and Liu, 2011). The review showed that Confucius, as the great educator and thinker, was the first to break down the educational hierarchy and propose 'education for all'. Scholars argued that this was the first interpretation in Chinese history of how to treat the disabled. An ideal society was inclusive of every individual; those with SEN would be looked after, however, Confucius did not refer to education as a right. Thus, there had been little response from society or general educational institutions to people with SEN, the concerns for the disabled was simply out of sympathy. In any case, Confucianism continued to this day, and its advanced awareness of educational equity has undoubtedly exerted a positive influence on inclusive education and special education in contemporary China.

Besides, with the review of the development of inclusive education in China, some studies mentioned the term 'special schools'. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, several special schools had been specifically set up to accommodate students with SEN. Before LRC was popularized in China, special schools were the only option for disabled children to receive a formal education. Nowadays in China, LRC and special schools are developing in parallel, but disabled learners accepted by ordinary schools account for the majority. Over the years, there have been mixed views of special schools, with some researchers arguing that it provided students with

more specialized education (e.g. Feng, 2010), others arguing that it was exclusive (e.g. Deng and Zhu, 2016). A critical review of the literature revealed that LRC was in the best position to respond to the United Nations' call for educational equality and inclusion, because special institutions deprived disabled individuals of the right to be educated with others. However, compared to a special school, a mainstream school did not take primary responsibility for educating students with SEN, rather it attached greater importance to the academic achievement of normal students. This researcher's second recommendation is that:

- there should be more research on the advantages and disadvantages of special schools and ordinary schools to explore which is more suitable for disabled learners in China.

The adoption of the LRC model marked the beginning of inclusive education in China. As a theoretical model with Chinese characteristics, LRC was often compared with western inclusion. From the literature review, researchers claimed that while western inclusive education aimed at empowering students with SEN to receive general education, LRC was a national strategy in China to accelerate the enrollment rate of disabled children after the reform and opening up. The state guaranteed compulsory education for students with SEN and promoted domestic economic development by popularizing LRC (Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2017). Due to the defects of the LRC model, researchers of the selected studies held a negative attitude towards the current situation of Chinese inclusive education. China has not developed a social environment in which individual differences are fully embraced. While policies and legislation on educational equality have gradually taken shape, there is still a long way to go before realizing an inclusive society.

The major part of this review was the exploration of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Scholars were inclined to regard teachers' attitudes toward inclusion as the most important factor for the successful implementation of inclusive education in China (e.g. Deng, 2008, Feng, 2012). The previous section presented an overview of studies that examined Chinese teachers' perspectives on embracing children with disabilities into mainstream schools, potential factors affecting attitudes were also taken into account. The synthesis showed that teachers' attitudes could be classified into three categories: positive, negative and uncertain. It was interesting that, in the selected studies, some participants agreed with the statement that all children should be educated in the regular classroom while holding a negative attitude towards the implementation of inclusive education. From the research results, teachers' abilities and knowledge, professional training and external supports were the factors that influenced negative attitudes. Moreover, these factors were also mentioned by the vast majority of respondents in studies examining the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with students with SEN. Only by removing these obstacles would it be possible to change teachers' attitudes and to provide students with education more suited to individual differences and needs. However, most of these studies had limitations, for example, some did not take into account the influence of other variables such as regional differences. Other samples only covered high school teachers, thus it was not clear what the views of primary, or university teachers were. This researcher's third recommendation is:

- More comprehensive and large-scale studies of Chinese teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and potential challenges are required.

Last but not least, scholars suggested that China lacked qualified educators

to implement successful inclusive education. The way to improve teacher preparation was to provide comprehensive and up-to-date professional training for students with special educational needs (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2012). Comparing the study done 16 years ago with that done in recent years, teacher education had made some progress but there were still deficiencies. Several scholars had put forward: establishing training institutions for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers respectively. What's more, this is the author's final recommendation:

- teacher training for inclusive education should be improved both in quality and quantity.

5. CONCLUSION:

This research study aimed at examining a few issues concerning inclusive education in China. Through the review of past articles, the research questions listed in the introduction section were investigated.

The first research question - How has inclusive education developed in the Chinese educational context and what hinders the implementation of inclusion in China? - listed relevant international legislation, national and local policies and some scholars' interpretations of inclusive education. On the whole, the theory of inclusion was to foster an all-embracing education system, especially for people with SEN. This author concludes that:

- education is a basic human right and it is a major responsibility of ordinary schools to provide a better and more appropriate education for all.

Inclusive education has become a worldwide trend and serves as a way to

achieve equality and social justice. Scholars are also aware of the challenges faced in the inclusive process. While responding positively, this author believes that:

- countries should also realize that inclusive education needs more substantial changes in curriculum, teaching methods and the education system more generally.

Concerning the history of inclusive education in the context of China, some important historical turning points were stressed in the review. The earliest Chinese interpretation of ‘education for all’ appeared in the period of Confucius, although it was slightly different from inclusion. People with SEN were oppressed in society for thousands of years until the founding of PRC in 1949. The establishment of special schools since then provided them with formal educational services. For a while, international cultural imports continued to be restricted in China. After the reforms and opening up, the right of people to study in ordinary schools has finally been put into legislation and the idea of inclusive education began to take shape. In the following decades, LRC had been widely accepted as an inclusive education model but with Chinese characteristics. It took China a long time to provide disabled people with the opportunity to study in regular classrooms but when it did the implementation of LRC was not only a key national development strategy but also laid the foundation for the realization of social equity. This is another key conclusion of this author:

- LRC has not only been a key national development strategy but also continued to support the development of social equity.

In terms of the development of inclusive education and the current situation, this study revealed the substantial changes and deficiencies brought

about by LRC. In recent years, the government has attached great importance to the reform of relevant legislation and policies, and the nine-year compulsory education system is committed to increasing the enrollment of disabled children into mainstream schools. However, inadequate teacher preparation and the stressful exam-oriented curriculum had a negative impact on disabled students' learning experience in ordinary classrooms. Thus, this author concludes that:

- there is a long way before inclusive education completely takes effect nationally, the LRC model should ensure the rights of students with SEN rather than stressing the rapid expansion of enrollment rate.

The key issue of the study--the attitudes of mainstream teachers toward inclusive education - was generally answered from a number of empirical research papers in the review. This author draws a conclusion from the review that:

- teachers' perceptions were mainly divided into positive, negative and neutral. Some were optimistic about the implementation of inclusive education, while others were skeptical about its effectiveness.

In general, teachers recognized every student's right to study in regular classrooms. However, some teachers were not confident in their abilities and expertise to deal with disabled students. Instead, they believed special schools were the right place for them.

Regarding the potential challenges that teachers faced when dealing with students with SEN in regular classes, four issues emerged:

- i) Teachers suffered an increased workload when offering additional care to

disabled students.

- ii) They were aware of a lack of skills and professional knowledge to cope with inclusive education.
 - iii) A majority of teachers did not receive effective and sufficient professional training on teaching students with SEN.
 - iv) There was a shortage of support and resources from schools, institutions and the government.
- Addressing the issues above is another key conclusion of this author.

The last research question concerned teacher training in response to inclusive education. The review revealed scholars' suggestions on teacher education. As a whole, these suggestions are part of this researcher's conclusions:

- in addition to increasing the number of educational institutions that provided training programs, the training content should also be improved in terms of quality.

Nowadays, China has not paid enough attention to the training of LRC teachers. Besides, inclusive education training for pre-service teachers and in-service teachers should be different. Those who want to join an inclusive class with disabled students after graduation should receive systematic and comprehensive training in colleges. For in-service teachers, the training should be up-to-date and effective, so that they could better interact with disabled students in the class, meet their needs and promote the implementation of inclusive education in China.

In the end, this study explored the hot issues of inclusive education in the context of China. Based on the review and synthesis of previous scholars' research results, this article drew conclusions about the issues of the

development and challenges of inclusive education in China, the perspectives of Chinese educators and strategies to promote the implementation of inclusive education. In addition to the deficiencies and limitations to be improved, this author hopes that the study will contribute to China's education reform and inspire future scholars to do more research in this field.

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7. APPENDIX:

Table 1: the selection of literature for the review (page number are displayed)

papers themes	definition s	history of Chinese inclusive education	current situation and problems	teachers' attitudes	potential challenges	profession al training
1 policy guidelines (book)	4,8					17
2 review	401					
3 survey			385	385		395
4 review	54	55,59	66			
5 survey			948			
6 review	88	91	89			
7 review		143				149

8 review (book)		section 1				
9 policy(book)	chapter 1					
10 review		356	357			
11 review		9	12			17
12 review	23	22,26				
13 review		143	151			149
14 survey				105	106	
15 survey, interview, case study				332	334,342	333
16 review		117	120			
17 review	297,299					
18 interview		1		2,14	3	

19 interview,survey		574		572,573		578
20 interview			553	355		
21 review						
22 review	331					
23 survey		2				
24 survey				4,5,8		
25 survey				484.487	109	
26 survey				6		
27 survey				422		

