



Special education provision in China – Characteristics and challenges as perceived by stakeholders

Ahmed M. Alduais^a, Meng Deng^b

^a *University of Verona, Department of Human Sciences (Psychology), Verona, Italy*

^b *East China Normal University, Department of Special Education, Shanghai, China*

Introduction. China provides special education students with the possibility of indirect enrolment in regular education (inclusion), attendance at special classes and regular education classes (mainstreaming), admission to special education schools (segregation), or admission to home education (exclusion). This promising large system of education has several shortfalls, such as the inadequacy of curriculum, the rivalry between segregation and inclusion trends, teacher preparation, and parents' awareness of their children's needs. *Objectives.* In-depth interviews were conducted to uncover these strengths and shortcomings from the perspective of Chinese stakeholders. *Methods.* Nine in-depth interviews were conducted with special education stakeholders in China. *Results.* Our findings present a detailed analysis that provides a visual summary of the main strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement, as well as specific features relevant to the Chinese context. *Conclusion.* The results of our study furthered this discussion by revealing our participants' long experience in the field and highlighting some of the current gaps – curriculum, teacher training, the rivalry between special education and inclusive education, and the need to increase parents' awareness of their children's rights in advance of a more inclusive society.

Keywords: special education, China, provision, inclusion, special education teachers

* Correspondence: Ahmed Alduais, ibnalduais@gmail.com,
ahmedmohammedsaleh.alduais_02@univr.it

Note. This paper is a part of a doctoral dissertation Alduais, A. (2020). *Inclusion and segregation: A study on special education development in China* [Doctoral dissertation, Beijing Normal University]. ProQuest. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2524128900?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>

Introduction

Special Education Development in China

The purpose of this study was to examine the conflict and challenges arising from special and inclusive education in China in relation to inclusion and segregation. Several studies have been conducted on related topics, including whether learning in regular classrooms (LRCs) is inclusion or vice versa. There is considerable uncertainty regarding whether current practices of providing special education, such as inclusion, mainstreaming, segregation, or exclusion, contribute to achieving equality, learning, and a sense of belonging for learners with special educational needs (SENs) or not.

A key objective of China's Medium and Long-Term Education Reform and Development Plan for 2010 to 2020 is to enhance equity and quality for all students and create a society in which learning is a lifelong activity (UNESCO, 2013). The nation strives to attain moderate prosperity by 2020. The study (Deng & Guo, 2007) indicates that since the 1980s, efforts have been made to improve special education services in China through inclusion, in particular LRC. This approach, however, needs periodic improvement. Furthermore, Deng et al. (2001) posited that special education has evolved into a viable project in China. China's special education system has evolved in a number of ways since 1980, among which are economic conditions, Confucian tradition, Western cultural influences, and the social-democratic ideology.

Thus, development in special education remains debatable. Research has demonstrated several shortcomings in the development of special education (e.g., Kritzer, 2011, 2012, 2014; Worrell & Taber, 2009). Conversely, some believe that special education is evolving and becoming a standard model (e.g., Pang, 2010).

Challenges

Researchers have also sought to improve special education in China by identifying areas for improvement. The recommendations made by Ellsworth and Zhang (2007) include the need to develop special education services in China in different areas, ensuring that parents have access to information regarding special education, and providing better teacher training. Yu et al. (2011) analyzed this issue in more detail, noting that teacher quality and the lack of national certification limits national special education services, international collaboration, increased funding, and additional special education undergraduate and graduate programs. These points were also reiterated by McLoughlin et al. (2005), who linked the need for such development to the growth and prosperity of China, making the case that China is at the brink of a new era due to social forces that will have an indelible effect on the country's future.

Further, inconsistent classifications and/or definitions of the special education population between China and international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) have hindered the development of special education in the PRC. Malinen et al. (2013) discussed this in their paper in a comparative manner. China has defined inclusion criteria as visual, hearing, language, intellectual, physical, and mental disabilities as opposed to cognition, mobility, self-care, getting along, life activities, and participation for the WHO.

Further, according to Hu & Szente (2010), the government must address the problem of limited special education services. They report that special education services were confined to certain types of disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities, visual impairment, and hearing impairment, ignoring other disabilities, such as emotional disorders and speech-language impairments. According to Huang et al. (2013), since the late 1970s, special education in the People's Republic of China has experienced substantial reform and rapid development. Education for children with severe developmental disabilities, especially autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), continues to be the greatest challenge in the field.

Apart from this, and according to Malinen et al. (2012), the development of special education can also be affected by the attitude of teachers themselves, in particular the tendency to promote inclusive education. To evaluate this, the researchers employed the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale, which considers three variables: efficacy of inclusive education, efficacy in collaboration, and efficacy in managing behavior. The authors suggested that future teacher education programs should emphasize the development of self-efficacy, especially collaboration skills, among teachers.

Suggestions for Development

The formalization of a standard model for special education services in China is merely a matter of time to certain academics. To cite just one example, Trube et al. (2013) concluded their qualitative paper on early childhood special education in China with the statement that education for all and education suited to one's needs and potentials are complemented to Chinese philosophy, and the country has made significant progress in some areas of special education. The Chinese special education system has levels that vary from one province to the next and according to the type of disability. It may be attributed to differences in population density as well as the strategic plans of each province (Holdsworth as cited in UNESCO, 1993). In support of this, Lytle et al. (2005) asserted that governments should begin to develop and implement deaf education programs as soon as possible. Their position was that deaf individuals had limited opportunities for higher education with limited or no support services, teacher preparation for deaf people, and few employment opportunities.

The Present Study

The following three research questions were addressed:

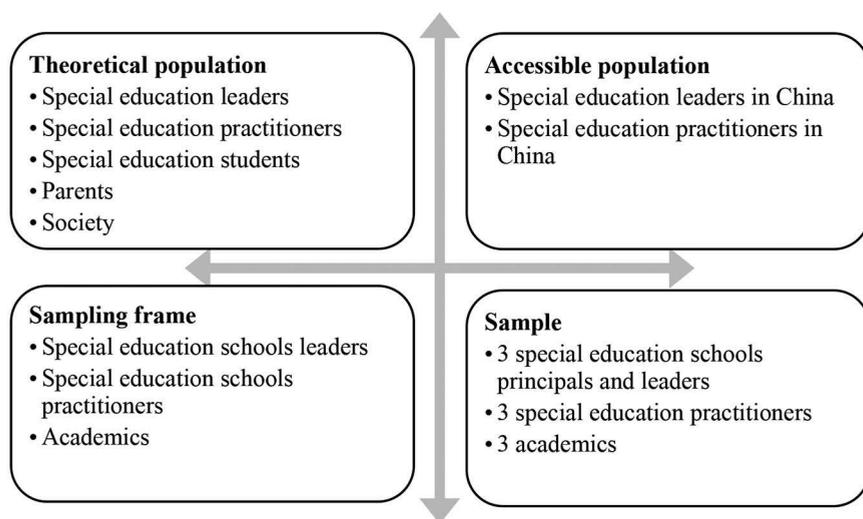
1. In what ways do stakeholders perceive the provision of special education in China?
2. In what ways do stakeholders comprehend the characteristics and challenges of special education in China?
3. What are some of the ways in which special education services are provided to ensure curriculum, teacher training, and parents' awareness are aligned with the needs of learners with special educational needs?

Methods

As a qualitative study from a constructivist perspective, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the current state of special education in China through stakeholders (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020; Yin, 2016). Qualitative research, including the research discussed in this paper, has the advantage of studying the context, which is the provision of special and inclusive education in China (Tracy, 2020). The remainder of the section outlines the study design, data collection, procedures, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and a description of the data analysis.

Study Participants

Based on the descriptions found in some studies (Bronfenbrenner 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007), the examined topic 'special education development' is organized and operated by the interactions and relationships among different factors within the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. This can include leaders and policymakers, special education practitioners, special education students, parents, society, and even the country's economy and policy. As a result of the study's scope, all these factors cannot be considered. Consequently, a non-probability sampling method was utilized, involving heterogeneous sampling of school principals and school practitioners, as well as expert sampling of three special education academics. The following paragraphs describe the sampling framework (Figure 1) and the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants (Table 1).

Figure 1*Sampling framework***Table 1***Sociodemographic characteristics of participants †*

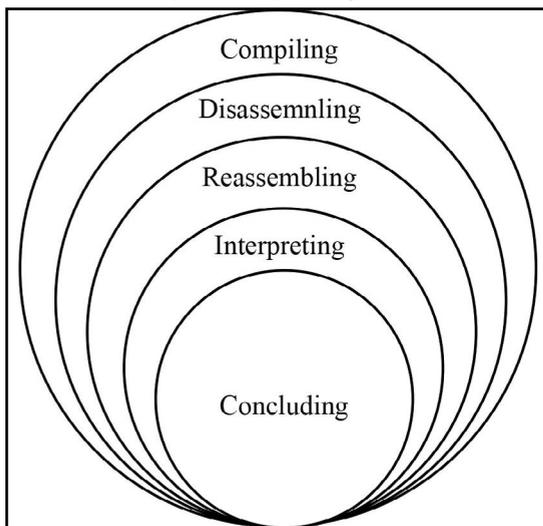
Position	Age	Gender	Experience	Location	Institution	Code
Director and principal	60	Male	39	Beijing	Special education school	SES-1
Principal	52	Female	31	Beijing	Intellectual disability school	IDS-1
Manager	35	Female	14	Beijing	Special education school	SES-2
Practitioner	38	Male	16	Beijing	Intellectual disability school	IDS-2
Practitioner	33	Female	7	Beijing	Special education school	SES-3
Practitioner	30	Female	3	Beijing	Intellectual disability school	IDS-3
Assistant professor	33	Male	11	Wuhan	Public university	PU-1
Postdoctoral fellow	29	Male	7	Beijing	Public university	PU-2
Assistant professor	30	Male	2	Chongqing	Public university	PU-3

Design

As part of the study design, the nine interviews were analyzed in five phases based on a thematic analysis. Based on their views and experiences, principals, practitioners, and academics provided valuable insight into the current state of special education in China. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Thematic analysis study design



Data collection

Between 1.05.2019 and 30.06.2019, data was collected in Beijing, China. Interviews were conducted at three different locations in Beijing: three at a special and inclusive education school, three at a school for people with intellectual disabilities, two at a university, and one on the internet. Interviews lasted from 50 to 75 minutes. Following the signing of consent forms, the interviews were recorded using mobile phones. Except for the online interview, which was conducted via WeChat, the consent form was verbally signed. The interview was arranged with four academics, but one declined to participate, citing a lack of desire to share his experience on the topic.

In accordance with the supervisor's list of interviewees, the research assistants and the researcher arranged the dates and locations for the interviews. The participants signed consent forms before the interview began. Assisting researchers provided them with the interview questions in Chinese as well.

Procedures

Data collection was undertaken through in-depth interviews with stakeholders in special education, primarily the nine interviews. Yin (2018) described in-depth interviews as “unstructured interviews and intensive interviews” that are “conversational in nature” (p. 351). An in-depth interview was chosen to elicit additional information from the participants and allow them to freely share their experiences and knowledge about inclusion and segregation, as well as special education in general (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2014), interviewing is a valuable method of validating previously collected data. The primary goal of an interview, he stated, “may be primarily to corroborate some conclusions that you already believe have been established, rather than to explore broader, open-ended topics” (p. 179), although the interview process had the intention of collecting more data than simply validating quantitative findings.

Trustworthiness

We analyzed the nine interviews primarily using content analysis and thematic analysis (Allen, 2017; Trochim, 2006). A thematic analysis involves various phases that ensure trustworthiness (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). For this study, various methods were used to determine trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is defined by four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Each of these criteria was examined using a particular method at each stage of thematic analysis, namely compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. Table 2 shows five phases of establishing trustworthiness and the methods involved.

Table 2

Establishing trustworthiness at the five phases of thematic analysis

Phase	Concepts	Means	Explanation
Compiling	Credibility	Triangulation	Nine interviews were conducted, but the theme and questions for the interviews were controlled to allow the verification of the collected data.
	Transferability	Thick description	The methods section of this study provides a detailed description of data collection.
	Dependability	Detailed documentation	On the procedure section of this study, all the steps for compiling the data are documented and explained in detail.
	Confirmability	Peer checking	A total of three special education researchers and the researcher verified the collected data.

Phase	Concepts	Means	Explanation
Disassembling	Credibility	Triangulation	In-depth interviews led to the collection of too much data. Transcription of the first interview took too long, resulting in dense data. Therefore, a decision was made to transcribe data selectively.
	Transferability	Thick description	The procedure and data analysis section provides a detailed coding and analysis description.
	Dependability	Detailed documentation	Each step, process, and procedure of data disassembly is documented in detail.
	Confirmability	Peer checking	Three researchers participated in the interviewing, transcription, and translation into English, and one researcher also checked the coding of themes and analysis steps.
Reassembling	Credibility	The emic or folk perspectives of the participants	Research assistants who assisted the researcher in data collection were instructed to refrain from changing the questions or attempting to direct the interview toward a specific conclusion.
	Transferability	Thick description	A detailed description of the final themes is presented on the data analysis page.
	Dependability	Detailed documentation	Each of the steps, processes, and procedures involved in reassembling data are documented in detail.
	Confirmability	Peer checking	To ensure the final data was not beyond the scope of the study, the generated and emerging themes were compared to the objectives of the study. This was verified by a colleague with a similar background.
Interpreting	Credibility	Progressive subjectivity checks	From time to time, the researcher assessed how the analyzed data is supporting or opposing some of the proposed theories. This issue has been left as part of the discussion of the study, limitations, and future research.
	Transferability	Thick description	Interpretation procedures are detailed in the section on procedures and data analysis.
	Dependability	Detailed documentation	We have carefully documented each step, process, and procedure of data interpretation.
	Confirmability	Repeated checking	Continual checks are conducted to ensure accuracy.

Phase	Concepts	Means	Explanation
Concluding	Credibility	Peer debriefing	Peers have suggested that the conclusion should be focused on the relevance and contribution to the field, society, and country.
	Transferability	Thick description	Results are described, analyzed, and explained, while results and conclusions are discussed and derived.
	Dependability	Detailed documentation	A detailed description of all steps, processes and procedures is provided.
	Confirmability	Peer checking	The conclusions are peer-reviewed and reflect the results of the findings while answering the study's questions.

Ethical Concerns

Because most interviewees do not speak English well enough to conduct interviews in English, the supervisor arranged the interview consent at the beginning. Prior to the interview, each interviewee signed the consent form. In the ninth interview, the consent form was verbally approved.

Furthermore, the use of ethics is ensured during interviewing, during which the visited schools request that the names of the schools and universities be kept confidential. The names and affiliations of interviewees were also coded upon request.

Data Analysis

It was decided to proceed with the analysis of the interviews in five phases: compilation, disassembly, reassembly, interpretation, and conclusion. Following compilation, disassembly, and reassembling of the data, the analysis was arranged in accordance with the views and experiences of leaders, practitioners, and academics. Accordingly, the remainder of the analysis is guided by the themes that appeared on the interview form (See Figures 3 and 4). As well as summarizing and paraphrasing, selected excerpts were chosen for their relevance to the themes. Throughout the results, discussion, and analysis of the study, we referred to the interviewees by their titles (director, principal, manager, special education practitioner, and special education academic/expert). Therefore, we have replaced the names of the schools and universities associated with the interviewees (special education school, intellectual disability school, university in Beijing, university in Wuhan, university in southwest China).

Figure 3
Sample data extraction screenshot for provision, strengths, weaknesses & unique features.
Status of special education I

Interviewee	Subtheme		
	Better provision	Main strengths	Main weaknesses
Director and principal	Shortage of educational resources; More people should study special education, and there should also be relevant courses of special education in the pre-service training of ordinary teachers	The advantage of the administrative system, the Chinese government stipulated what tasks to achieve, the school must do	Teachers expect more experts to do some training, so that there will be more students and more lectures
Principal	We need to improve integrated education to create an integrated environment for kids. Secondly, we should improve the development of Special Education, especially on teachers' training. Then we can have enough people for this cause	Large population. Because of a large number of people in a major means a promising trend. Another advantage is the collective force. What's more, China's cultural environment is suitable for the development of Special Education. Because in China, people are considered as a whole, which is a great humanistic concept	China was a poor country so it's hard for other people to help the disabled. We have traditional strengths, but we don't have enough materials and knowledge of this subject
			Chinese culture provides distinctive characteristics of China's Special Education. We have traditional Chinese medical adjustments, including acupuncture. This is the support of Chinese culture. At the same time, we've got a lot of help from our government.

Figure 4
Sample data extraction screenshot for needed areas for the development of special and inclusive education provision.
Status of special education II

Interviewee	Subtheme			
	Curriculum design	Regular education and inclusion	Teachers' qualification	
Director and principal	<p>The guidelines for children with moderate mental retardation, which were prescribed in textbooks and curricula at that time, played a great role in the initial stage of special education. A new round of curriculum reform began in 2011, but the relevance to special education was small. Little practicality. So we wrote our own textbooks, which we couldn't wait for, and the national curriculum wasn't always right for us</p>	<p>Special education needs to be tailored, but not in regular schools. But with the construction of this resource classroom, this situation will be improved. But it is still not enough to meet the needs of exceptional children</p>	<p>The purpose of our special education guidance center is to train teachers, who may not be competent enough. But they are not unqualified, as long as they are patient, loving and competent</p>	<p>Parents' awareness and economic level</p> <p>Most parents know their children's educational needs, but some parents don't; they don't know exactly what the problem is and how to educate them. In fact, many obstacles can not be cured, only can improve, therefore, parents are easy to be deceived</p>
Principal	<p>Some good schools already have great curriculum. But some new schools are lagging behind and they need a more unified standard; I think good teachers mean good curriculum. That's why it's difficult to devise good curriculum. Because that requires good teachers and principals with professional backgrounds</p>	<p>As for now it's not the case. Because it's really difficult. What they have for special kids meet the needs. But that depends on schools. And there is a huge difference among different schools.</p>	<p>On a whole, special education teachers' education backgrounds and experience meet the needs. But that varies as well; Integrated education teachers have background in the subject and Special Education. But they are not professional enough</p>	<p>I don't know a lot about that. It's easy to confirm cases now. But we don't have good enough education and resources afterwards. As for money and service, they are different for each person. But we've got national subsidies on that</p>

Results

Status of special education

Special education status was analyzed through factors related to the development of special education development in China, including suggestions for better provision, main strengths, main weaknesses, and unique features characterizing special education in China.

Results overview

Ten questions guided the discussion throughout the interview, but open discussion within these topics was also allowed. First, two questions asked the participants to tell a personal story about their motivations for working in special education. There were two administrators who moved from teaching to administration compared to the director and principal with 39 years of experience who was assigned. As reported by three practitioners, their reasons seemed to be like those reported by three academics, who also stated they chose to work in special education because of its challenges and because they believed it would offer a better job, except for the assistant professor with two years of experience in this field, who stated that he was mandated to work in this field.

The remaining questions addressed providing better special education, the strengths of special education in China, its weaknesses, and the unique characteristics that characterize special education in China. For each of the above four aspects categorized in the interpretation section, the interviewees stated several suggestions and factors (See Figure 5). As a follow-up to the first part of this topic, the second part focused on four different aspects: curriculum design, regular versus special education, the qualification of teachers, and lastly, parents' awareness and socioeconomic background (See Figure 6).

Characteristics of special and inclusive education

Better provision suggestions

Several suggestions were proposed by the participants towards better provision of special education (See Figure 5). These suggestions seem to be variable, but, interestingly, most participants think that most of them could be resolved through laws, policies, and regulations of special education.

Strengths

The participants also reported many factors as the main strengths of the current special education state. Although minor contradictions are observed between the suggestions for better provision and main strengths (e.g., spending more on special education and being funded), the rest of the factors seem logical and match the current state of special education in the nation.

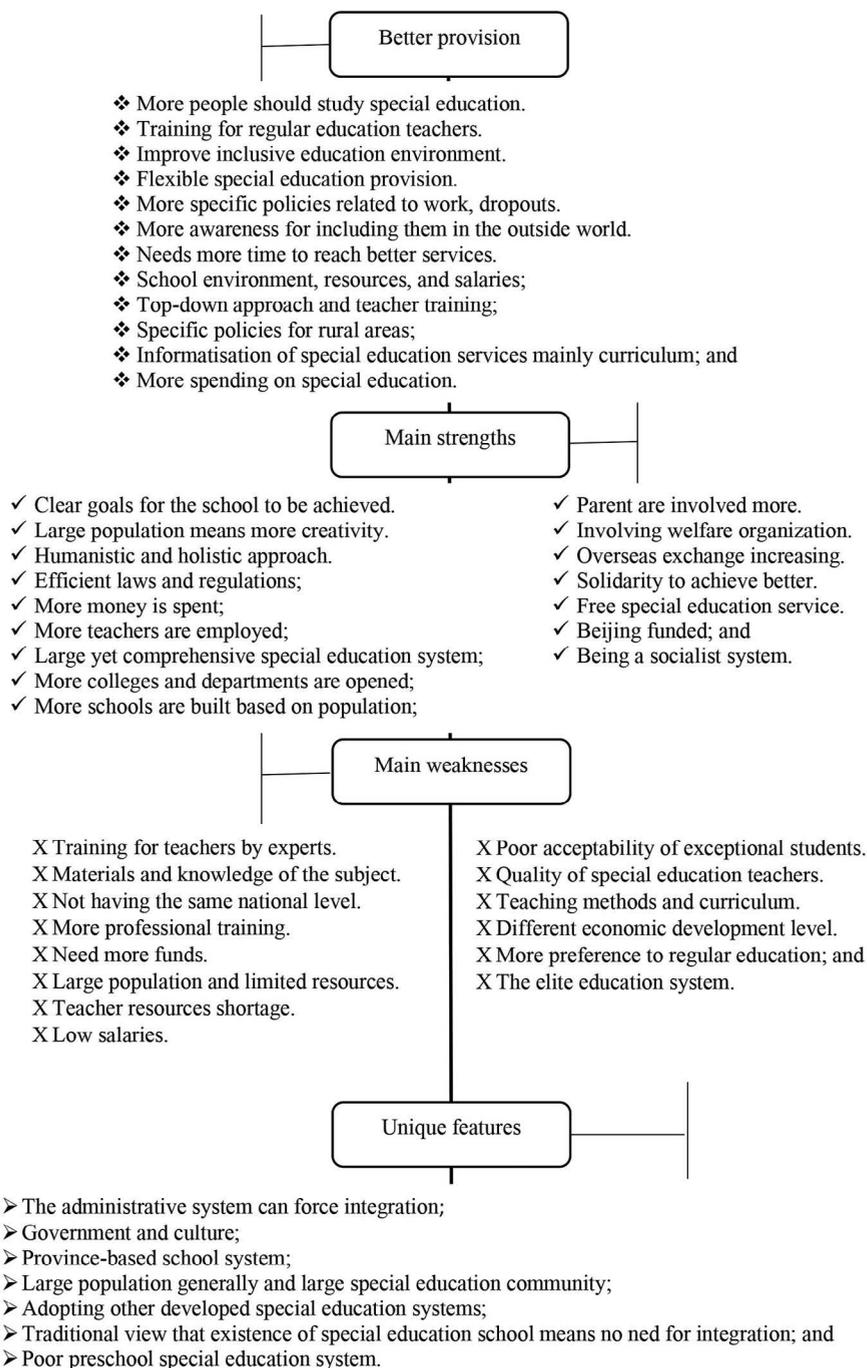
Weaknesses

To balance the elicited views from the participants and reach a comprehensive overview of special education development, the participants were also asked about the main weaknesses of special education. They expressed their concerns about different aspects. Interestingly, some of the participants indicated that there was more bias to regular education when it came to inclusive education. This could indicate an emerging pattern of special education that special education personnel tend to promote special education (segregation) instead of inclusion to keep their privileges which might be vanishing when merged with inclusive education.

Unique features

The participants were encouraged to discuss any features they thought might be unique to China. A significant view here is that the existence of special education contradicts the tendency towards inclusive education. Although this point was discredited by some participants who argued the relationship between special education and other forms of education was parallel. In other words, special education serves regular education by attempting to decrease the severity of disability level and then transferring students to regular education.

In short, the analysis of suggestions for better provision, main strengths, main weaknesses, and unique features in China's special education indicated a standard special education system manifesting pluses and minuses and country-specific features. The major argument is that enough laws, policies, and regulations do exist, but they are not accurately implemented. Another argument is that specific policies related to each province and the central fund for under-developing areas should be made towards a balanced and national special education system.

Figure 5*Status of special education I*

Challenges manifesting the status of special and inclusive education

Further analysis of the status of special education included other factors. While education is currently developing, more efficient and effective efforts should be put into developing special education in China because the designed curriculum does not match the needs of special education and inclusive education, inclusive education is negatively impacting regular education, teachers of special education and mainly those of regular education are not well-trained to teach special education in inclusive education classrooms, and parents do not have enough awareness about the needs of their children with special needs and are not financially prepared to meet their needs, wants and demands.

Curriculum

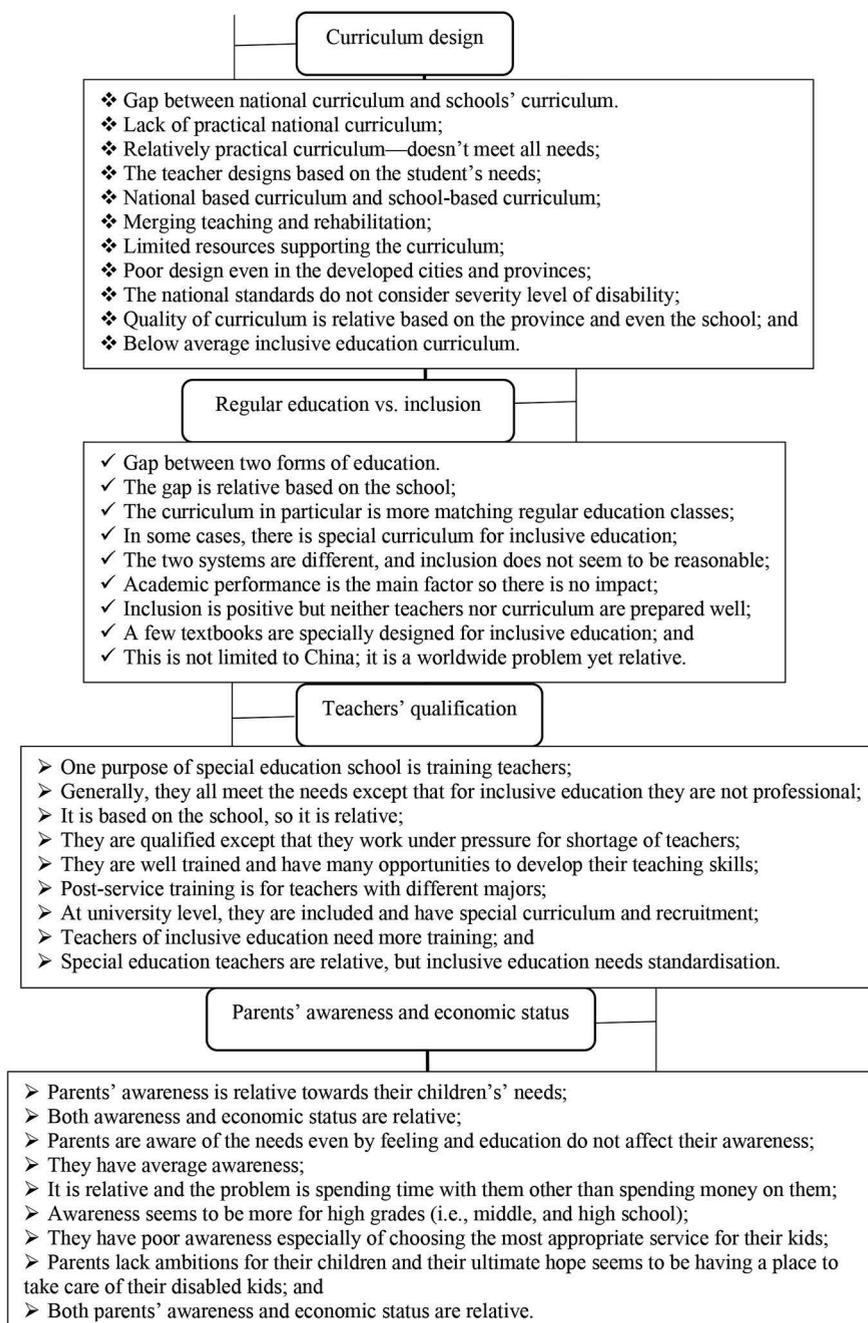
First, more efficient and effective efforts should be put into developing special education in China because the designed curriculum does not match the needs of special education and inclusive education. Although the flexibility of curriculum design matches the learners' different needs, it is still seen as a major weakness of the current curriculum of special education including all its categories.

Inclusive education impact on regular education

Additionally, inclusive education negatively impacts regular education. Despite this, "IDS-3" argued the other way claiming, that academic performance is the main factor, so there is no impact on regular education, and "PU-3" claimed that "this is not limited to China; it is a worldwide problem yet relative".

Teachers of special education and inclusive education

Also, more efficient and effective efforts should be put into developing special education in China because special education teachers and particularly regular education teachers are not well-trained to teach special education in inclusive education classrooms. Others think that "teachers of inclusive education need more training" and that "special education teachers are relative, but inclusive education needs standardization" (SES-1; IDS-1).

Figure 6*Status of special education II*

Parents' awareness of the needs of their children

Finally, parents do not have enough awareness about the needs of their children with special needs and are not financially prepared to meet their needs, wants, and demands. On the other hand, some disagree and believe that “they have poor awareness especially of choosing the most appropriate service for their kids” and “parents lack ambitions for their children and their ultimate hope seems to be having a place to take care of their disabled kids” (PU-1; PU-2).

Thus, while special education is leveling up to match the needs of the special education community and build a harmonious and productive society, more efficient and effective efforts should be put into developing special education in China.

Discussion

By conducting the current study, the authors sought to explore the current state of special education and inclusive education in China. These characteristics and challenges were explored through interviews with stakeholders. The findings of this study offered a comprehensive view of the special education system in China that contributed to a deeper understanding.

The findings include the following: 1) the various methods of providing special education are valuable, however further reforms are needed, including increasing salaries, issuing specific policies for developing and underdeveloped areas, 2) the current system has several strengths, such as parents' involvement, government funding, and more employment of teachers and staff, 3) the current system has several weaknesses, including the lack of training for teachers, gaps between provinces and cities, and parents' preference for regular education, 4) the Chinese context is unique due to compulsory integration laws, provincial school systems, and a large population.

Furthermore, they include other factors that must be addressed for the special education system to be improved. These include: 5) the curriculum does not match the needs of special education and inclusive education, 6) inclusive education negatively impacts regular education, 7) most special education teachers do not have the appropriate training to teach special education in inclusive education classes, and 8) parents are not adequately informed about the needs of their children with special needs, and they are not financially prepared to meet those needs.

The results of this study are consistent with recent research on special education and inclusive education. Several studies have reported significant progress in the provision of special education services in China (Alduais, 2020; Alduais et al., 2019; Alduais & Deng, 2019). Additionally, other studies have highlighted the current challenges of inclusive and special education described in our study, which increase during the pandemic outbreaks (Jia & Santi, 2021),

teacher conflict when transitioning into inclusive classes (Xie, Deng, & Zhu, 2021), and social support to inclusive education teachers (Xie, Deng, & Ma, 2021).

Several interpretations are possible to further comprehend the above findings. First, the existence of four types of special education, including direct inclusion in regular education, mainstreaming, segregation, and exclusion, indicates the existence of well-established legislation, laws, and policies. The parents of children with special educational needs have four options to enroll their children. Although these options are not fully optional for parents, as they depend on the enrolment procedures and the decision of the school after initial screening, these four options are continuous. Therefore, learners who are categorized as having minor problems are required to participate in the regular education system. Those reported as having minor difficulties, but still hindering their enrolment in regular education, are recommended to take mainstreaming classes before returning to regular classes. Special education schools are provided for those who have major disabilities (i.e., segregation). According to their progress and recovery, they may be transferred to either of the first two options. The most severely disabled children who cannot attend special education schools are excluded and provided with home education (i.e., exclusion). Therefore, it is evident that a large system of education with different forms of provision would require many staff, facilities, and costs. This would result in some shortcomings.

Second, the curriculum plays a crucial role in the development of any educational system. There appears to be confusion on two levels: first, there is no national curriculum, although there are national guidelines and policies. Secondly, the curriculum for special education, and more importantly, inclusive education, is not standardized. It is problematic for teachers and students alike to use the regular education curriculum for inclusive education. Thus, a third interpretation is that the expansion of special education could have a negative impact on the promotion of inclusive education. Like the impact of inclusive education on regular education, it impacts regular education via teachers who are not prepared to run inclusive classes or learners who are not prepared psychologically and socially to accept such an inclusive environment.

Fourth, parents must understand the needs of their children with special needs to ensure their future success. Although the evidence we collected indicated that parents in China are aware of these needs, whether educational, social, or psychological, the evidence also includes opposing views. It is also pertinent to note that the degree of awareness depends on the economic level and educational level of the parents. In rural areas, parents often choose to leave their children at home and limit their education to basic courses (primary school level) due to the cost of caring for such children.

In light of these interpretations, at least two implications are possible. A first step for the Chinese government would be to shift the development level for special education and inclusive education from quantity to quality and from macro to micro level. In other words, there should be more specific policies and more money allocated to bridge the gap among the various provinces in China. It is pertinent to establish specific policies for inclusive education classes and ensure that regular education teachers are ready to teach inclusive education classes. Secondly, the government spends a great deal on special education, which allows them to run a quadripartite system. A powerful economy, many people, a sophisticated educational system, and many persons with special education needs make this a compelling case. However, the current situation should also continue to advance the provision of services for special education, including the training of teachers.

Limitations

In this study, we explored the current state of special education and inclusive education provision in China from the perspective of stakeholders. This study does, however, have some limitations. First, it would have been more credible if parents of both special education and regular education students, and regular education teachers, had been included in the study. In addition, if stakeholders from the four provision methods were included: from regular education schools, inclusive classes, mainstreaming classes, and special education schools, the generated views would have had a greater likelihood of being substantiated.

Conclusion

The findings of this study uncovered the experiences and opinions of Chinese stakeholders concerning the characteristics and challenges of special education in China. Our study found that the current provision methods are comprehensive, but they need to be refined and standardized across the country. Several laws and policies need to be enacted by the government to address reported shortcomings in the curriculum, teacher training, gaps between the four forms of education, parents' awareness, and their socioeconomic standing. These challenges are present in any setting, let alone a country with such a large population as China. However, it becomes more evident when we consider that learners with Special Educational Needs have the right to live a quality life, learn, and belong to the world.

References

- Alduais, A. (2020). *Inclusion and segregation: A study on special education development in China* [Doctoral dissertation, Beijing Normal University]. ProQuest. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2524128900?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>
- Alduais, A., & Deng, M. (2019). The effect of the national plan (2010–2020) on the development of special education in China: Evidence from before–after design at a 7-year interval. *Education Sciences, 9*(2), Article 95. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci9020095>
- Alduais, A., Sang, G., & Deng, M. (2019). Examining the development of special education in the People’s Republic of China between 2010 and 2014. *Azerbaijan Journal of Educational Studies, 686*(1), 115-140. <https://doi.org/10.29228/edu.45>
- Allen, M. (2017). *The SAGE encyclopedia of communication research methods* (Vols. 1-4). Sage.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). Developmental ecology through space and time: A future perspective. In P. Moen, G. H. Elder, Jr., & K. Lüscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context: Perspectives on the ecology of human development* (pp. 619-647). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10176-018>
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Ceci, S. J. (1994). Nature-nurture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model. *Psychological Review, 101*(4), 568-586. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.101.4.568>
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Evans, G. W. (2000). Developmental science in the 21st century: Emerging questions, theoretical models, research designs and empirical findings. *Social Development, 9*(1), 115-125. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9507.00114>
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). The bioecological model of human development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., Vol. 1, pp. 793-828). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470147658.chpsy0114>
- Castleberry, A., & Nolen, A. (2018). Thematic analysis of qualitative research data: Is it as easy as it sounds? *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching & Learning, 10*(6), 807-815. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2018.03.019>
- Deng, M., & Guo, L. (2007). Local special education administrators’ understanding of inclusive education in China. *International Journal of Educational Development, 27*(6), 697-707. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2007.02.005>
- Deng, M., Poon-McBrayer, K. F., & Farnsworth, E. B. (2001). The development of special education in China: A sociocultural review. *Remedial and Special Education, 22*(5), 288-298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074193250102200504>
- Ellsworth, N. J., & Zhang, C. (2007). Progress and challenges in China’s special education development: Observations, reflections, and recommendations. *Remedial and Special Education, 28*(1), 58-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325070280010601>
- Hu, B. Y., & Szente, J. (2010). Education of young Chinese migrant children: Challenges and prospects. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 37*(6), 477-482. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-009-0362-8>
- Huang, A. X., Jia, M., & Wheeler, J. J. (2013). Children with autism in the People’s Republic of China: Diagnosis, legal issues, and educational services. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 43*(9), 1991-2001. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-012-1722-6>
- Järvinen, M., & Mik-Meyer, N. (Eds.). (2020). *Qualitative Analysis: Eight Approaches for the Social Sciences*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

- Jia, L., & Santi, M. (2021). Inclusive education for students with disabilities in the global COVID-19 outbreak emergency: Some facts and thoughts from China. *Disability & Society*, 36(7), 1186-1191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2021.1925226>
- Kritzer, J. B. (2011). Special education in China. *Eastern Education Journal*, 40(1), 57-63.
- Kritzer, J. B. (2012). Comparing special education in the United States and China. *International Journal of Special Education*, 27(2), 52-56.
- Kritzer, J. B. (2014). A four-country comparison: Special education in the United States, China, India, and Thailand. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 4(23), 3370-3382. <https://doi.org/10.9734/BJAST/2014/8674>
- Lytle, R. R., Johnson, K. E., & Hui, Y. J. (2005). Deaf education in China: History, current issues, and emerging deaf voices. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 150(5), 457-469. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2006.0009>
- Malinen, O. P., Savolainen, H., & Xu, J. (2012). Beijing in-service teachers' self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusive education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(4), 526-534. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.12.004>
- Malinen, O. P., Savolainen, H., Engelbrecht, P., Xu, J., Nel, M., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2013). Exploring teacher self-efficacy for inclusive practices in three diverse countries. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 33, 34-44. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.02.004>
- Mcloughlin, C. S., Zhou, Z., & Clark, E. (2005). Reflections on the development and status of contemporary special education services in China. *Psychology in the Schools*, 42(3), 273-283. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20078>
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
- Pang, Y. (2010). How China's special education law impacts the living status of individuals with disabilities. *Making Connections*, 11(2), 59-70.
- Tracy, S. J. (2020). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Trochim, W. M. (2006). *The research methods knowledge base* (2nd ed.). Atomic Dog.
- Trube, M. B., Li, W., & Chi, Y. P. (2013). Early childhood special education in China. In S. C. Wortham (Ed.), *Common characteristics and unique qualities in preschool programs: Global perspectives in early childhood education* (pp. 103-113). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-4972-6_10
- UNESCO. (2013). *UNESCO Country programming document: For the People's Republic of China 2011–2015*. UNESCO Beijing Office. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000220183>
- UNESCO. (1993). *Making it happen: Examples of good practice in special needs education and community-based programmes*. UNESCO Special Education. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000096884>
- Worrell, J. L., & Taber, M. (2009). Special education practices in China and the United States: What is to come next? *International Journal of Special Education*, 24(3), 132-142.
- Xie, Z., Deng, M., & Ma, Y. (2021). Measuring social support perceived by inclusive education teachers in China. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2021.1925224>
- Xie, Z., Deng, M., & Zhu, Z. (2021). From regular education teachers to special educators: The role transformation of resource room teachers in Chinese inclusive education schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1968516>

- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods)*. Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Yu, L., Su, X., & Liu, C. (2011). Issues of teacher education and inclusion in China. *Prospects*, 41(3), Article 355. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-011-9204-8>

Obezbeđivanje specijalne edukacije u Kini – Karakteristike i izazovi iz ugla zainteresovanih aktera

Ahmed M. Alduais^a, Meng Deng^b

^a Univerzitet u Veroni, Departman za humanističke nauke (Psihologija), Verona, Italija

^b Pedagoški univerzitet u Istočnoj Kini, Institut za specijalnu edukaciju, Šangaj, Narodna Republika Kina

Uvod: Učenicima s posebnim obrazovnim potrebama u Kini pruža se mogućnost indirektnog uključivanja u redovno obrazovanje (inkluzija), pohađanja specijalnih i redovnih odeljenja (mainstreaming), upisa u specijalne škole (segregacija) ili pohađanja kućne nastave (ekskluzija). Ovaj obećavajuće glomazni edukativni sistem ima nekoliko nedostataka, kao što su: neadekvatnost kurikuluma, suparništvo između trendova segregacije i inkluzije, priprema nastavnika i svest roditelja o potrebama svoje dece. *Ciljevi:* Sprovedeni su dubinski intervjui kako bi se ustanovile sve ove jake strane i nedostaci iz perspektive zainteresovanih aktera u Kini. *Metode:* Realizovano je devet dubinskih intervjuova sa različitim akterima u oblasti specijalne edukacije u Kini. *Rezultati:* Dobijeni nalazi su prezentovani kroz detaljnu analizu kojom je obezbeđen vizuelni pregled glavnih snaga, slabosti, predloga za poboljšanje aktuelnog stanja, kao i specifičnih karakteristika relevantnih za kineski kontekst. *Zaključak:* Rezultati istraživanja su dali doprinos razmatranju ove teme otkrivanjem dugogodišnjeg iskustva aktera u oblasti specijalne edukacije i isticanjem nekih od trenutnih nedostataka – kurikuluma, pripreme nastavnika, suparništva između specijalne i inkluzivne edukacije, kao i potrebe da se poveća svest roditelja o pravima njihove dece u smeru izgradnje inkluzivnijeg društva.

Ključne reči: specijalna edukacija, Kina, obezbeđivanje, inkluzija, defektolozi

PRIMLJENO: 01.01.2022.

REVIDIRANO: 20.02.2022.

PRIHVACENO: 26.02.2022.