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**TEACHERS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS IN CHINA  
– THEIR VIEWS ON SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES AND  
OPPORTUNITIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Inclusive education is becoming more and more popular in the world, since inclusive education is believed to be better learning opportunity in common educational setting, together with the spread of its appreciation of the good values of inclusion, equality, fairness and non-discrimination. This tendency has blown to China since its open-up to the world in late 1970s and the Chinese form of inclusive education, which is commonly known as Learning in Regular Classrooms (LRC) has now become the main approach to satisfying educational needs of students with disabilities. However, Chinese LRC is originally based on a pragmatic thinking to provide more students with disabilities with quality education, due to the fact that there are not enough special schools for a huge population of children and adolescents with disabilities. The country and its competent authorities have made a bunch of policies to support and promote the development of LRC, however, the practice is not always consistent with what is written in documents. Furthermore, unique Chinese culture and different local traditions and actualities decide that the development of inclusive education in China has to go along with its own characteristics. This thesis tries to describe the current situation of inclusive education in Beijing through in-service inclusive teachers' perspectives, so as to provide an angle to learn the overall developmental situation of inclusive education in China. The research reveals Beijing teachers' perspectives on inclusive education, their opinions, concerns and expectations, which are categorised into four main groups – parental, classroom-based, administrative and personal. The results turned out that Beijing teachers in inclusive classrooms were properly supported, while they were showing their expectation on more support. It also turned out they had specific concerns in parental issues, which was quite different from teachers in western countries.

Keywords: LRC, inclusive education, teachers in inclusive classrooms, Beijing, legislation, practice

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I always have the thought that we can use our own strength to make a better world if more and more people are joining, that why I joined the Master's degree programme in Development and International Cooperation and the programme in return encouraged me to explore ways to build a better future. With my specialization in education, I would like to write my master's thesis from the point of views both in development and education. As a 1990s Chinese citizen, born healthy in a small city, I am luckier than many others who have disabilities and cannot benefit from quality education. So the development is unbalanced and the access of quality education should be provided equally to every child regardless of their backgrounds, conditions and locations. This is my departure of writing this thesis.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction of the topic

Since brought up in 1950s, the concept of inclusive education has spread worldwide and transferred to all kinds of practices, resulting from its highly appreciated inner value of equality, fairness, non-discrimination, inclusion, together with the existing deficiencies of special education. The initiative was to address the problems brought by segregation of special students and regular students. With more than half a century's development, inclusive education is now not just a concept or a research topic, but it has also transferred to practices worldwide and becomes a solid and logic base for many international human rights treaties that prohibit any exclusion from or limitation to educational opportunities. According to the categories made by UNESCO (2014), inclusive education mainly focuses on six groups of people: Roma children, street children, child workers, people with disabilities, indigenous people and rural people. Regardless of socially ascribed or perceived differences, such as sex, age, ethnic origin, language, religion, nationality, social origin economic condition, ability, every child, youth and adult should enjoy the opportunity to receive quality education. This is the essence of inclusive education.

China has been participating in globalization positively since its open-up, and China has been significantly influenced by and involved in global educational movements since the beginning of opening and reform in 1978. How is inclusive education understood under contemporary Chinese circumstances? How is inclusive education understood in China compared to western predecessor countries? The way and extent of receiving the concept of inclusive education heavily affect, from policy makers, teachers in inclusive classrooms, to students attending inclusive schools and their behaviors accordingly. It also poses a significant influence on future educational development tendency. Among all the elements, inclusive teachers are one of the most crucial factors. They are key players in the frontline of inclusive education and directly

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affect the practice and development of inclusive education. They possess first-hand information, experience, reliable and meaningful data. To know inclusive teachers' needs, difficulties, perspectives and suggestions is crucial for the development of inclusive education, for both scientific research and practical implementation. There are two definitions for inclusive education, a broad definition aims to include students regardless of their sex, social background, disabilities, ethnic origins, religious belief, etc. into regular schools and a narrow definition aims to include students with disabilities. In my research, I would specify inclusive education as the narrow definition, students possessing other perceived differences would be out of the scope of my research. To be more specific, the focus is to include learners with physical disabilities and mental disabilities to regular schools at primary and junior secondary education periods, which is compulsory education period under Chinese circumstance (around 6 – 15 years old); this is in line with the data collected.

## **1.2 Inclusive education**

The concept of inclusive education originates directly in the civil rights movement in the United States begun in the 1950s and can be traced further back to the series of social movements for equality and freedom in the West in the years of the Renaissance and French Enlightenment (Deng 1999; Winzer 1993). However, before the official birth of inclusive education in 1990s, many educational movements and reforms that possessing inclusive meaning had taken place around the world (Wang & Zhao, 2008). After World War II, theorists and practitioners in Northern European countries were the first to advance the thinking of normalization, reform the traditional isolated and segregated manner of operating care-giving institutions, and allow people with disabilities to live and study in a normal social environment (Daunt 1993). Mainstreaming education, originated in the US in 1970s, is a practice of addressing the problems occurred in special education, by educating students with special needs in regular classrooms during specific time periods. Students spend certain time in regular classrooms with regular students, while special programs are still taken place in special

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classrooms with other students with special needs. Proponents of mainstreaming education assert that educating students with special needs along with their non-disabled peers fosters understanding, respect, tolerance and inclusion, although special students only stay in regular classrooms for a certain time period instead of whole schooling time. The Integrated Education (Integration) movement, started in Britain in early 1980s, attempts to bring children, teachers and parents both from Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions together into a balanced education, with the aim to provide students with opportunity to understand and respect different cultures and backgrounds (Macaulay, 2009). With the influence of western educational movement, Hong Kong authorities made policy to support 融合教育(rong he jiao yu, integrated education) in 1977, proposed to include special education to regular schools and put handicapped children into regular schools (Hui, 2003). In China, the similar form of inclusive education, Learning in a Regular Classroom (hereinafter referred to as LRC, in Chinese "随班就读", sui ban jiu du) has formulated and developed in late 1980s. Although the implementation of LRC is mainly based on a practical point of view, LRC policy has allowed the majority of Chinese students with minor disabilities to receive education by walking into regular classes.

In June 1994, representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organizations attended the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action was adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality. The statement made a commitment to Education for All, justifying the necessity and importance of providing education for all children, youth and adults. It claims that those children with special educational needs "must have access to regular schools" (Salamanca Statement, 1994, viii). The statement called upon all governments to give the "highest policy and budgetary priority" to improve education services so that all children could be included, regardless of differences or difficulties, to "adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education" and enroll all children in ordinary schools unless there were compelling reasons for doing otherwise, to develop demonstration projects and

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encourage exchanges with countries with inclusive schools, ensure that organizations of disabled people, along with parents and community bodies, are involved in planning decision-making, to put greater effort into pre-school strategies as well as vocational aspects of inclusive education, to ensure that both initial and in-service teacher training address the provision of inclusive education. (Salamanca Statement, 1994, ix) The statement also called on the international community to endorse the approach of inclusive schools by implementing practical and strategic changes. It is the first time that inclusive education was adopted by a distinguished international organization, a major United Nations organization and written in its policy paper. Although there was no legal obligation or compulsory duty of the statement, UNESCO was committed to use its funds over the five-year period, i.e.1996--2001, to create an expanded program for inclusive schools and community support projects, thus enabling the launch of pilot projects; to enhance teacher education in inclusive education field by getting support from teacher unions and associations; to stimulate the academic community to do more research into inclusive education and disseminate the findings and the reports. UNESCO, as one of the most influential and distinguished international educational agents all over the world, is playing as a leading organization, encouraging and instructing international participants from all over the world to contribute to the development of inclusive education. Therefore, the Salamanca Statement is normally and widely recognized as the official birth of inclusive education. Inclusive education officially passed away pure research stage and started to carry out in practice as a new educational form all globally.

### **1.3 Inclusive education in China**

#### **1.3.1 Relevant policies and treatment for people with disabilities in ancient China**

According to the records of The Rites of Zhou, during Xia Dynasty, Shang Dynasty and Zhou Dynasty (around BC 2100 – BC 771), there were already policies to reduce or



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remit taxation for people with disabilities. It recorded in the book that “以保息六养万民，一曰慈幼，二曰养老，三曰振穷，四曰恤贫，五曰宽疾，六曰安福”（《周礼 地官 大司徒》，The Rites of Zhou, Diguan, Dasitu），indicated the scope of groups that could benefit from taxation reduction or remission – children, senior people, poor people, unappreciated people, people with disabilities. The policy was also taken into effect, that local government servants were assigned to different areas to identify people’s level of disability, conduct detailed matters of taxation reduction or remission and arrange for people with disabilities（《周礼 地官 小司徒》，The Rites of Zhou, Diguan, Xiaositu). During the reform of the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring State period (770 BC – 221 BC), a policy called “养疾” (Yangji) was initiated, people with disabilities were supported by the government with food and clothes. Later during Qin Dynasty (221 BC – 207 BC), Han Dynasty (202 BC – 220 AD), the Three Kingdoms (around 184 AD – 280 AD), the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420 AD – 589 AD), some liberal emperors would assign ministers to facilitate the living of people with disabilities. For example, Emperor Xiaowen (Wei Dynasty, one dynasty of the Northern and Southern Dynasties) used to grant 5 hu (an ancient measurement, 1 hu equals to 100 liters) of rice to every person with disabilities who could not make their own living, he also established organizations to distribute medical support（《魏书 本纪第七下 高祖孝文皇》，Weishu, Benji No. 7 Second, Gaozu Xiaowendi). In order to support these policies financially, starting from Sui Dynasty (581 AD – 618 AD), a specific land system was set up. Sui Dynasty set up Beitian System (悲田制) and Tang Dynasty (618 AD – 907 AD) set up Futian System (福田制) so that relatively fixed financial support for people with disabilities could be ensured. In addition, organizations that specifically provided aid to people with disabilities were set up, for example Pujiubingfang (普救病坊, Sui Dynasty), Huiminyaoju (惠民药局, Yuan Dynasty) and Yangjiyuan (养济院, Qing Dynasty).

In ancient China, governments of different dynasties would provide aid to people with disabilities due to the influence of Confucianism as well as the need of ensuring the stability of their rule. As to education for people with disabilities in ancient China, as

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early as in Zhou Dynasty (around 11C BC – 256 BC), the royal court set up schools for training blind people to become musicians (《尚书-禹典》, The Book of History). In Zhou Dynasty, clergy (巫 wu, 祝 zhu) was an important position and this position was undertaken by people with disabilities. Therefore these people with disabilities had to receive education to become clergy and served the country afterwards (《荀子·王制》, Xunzi - Wangzhi). However, entering to the feudal society, education for people with disabilities was not developed accordingly. Apart from those people with disabilities from rich families, ordinary people with disabilities could barely receive systematic education. Qing Dynasty (1636 AD – 1912 AD) even had regulations to exclude people with disabilities from education. In 1902, Qing Dynasty adopted 《钦定小学章程》 (Regulations approved by the emperor on primary schools) and stipulated that people of low talent and people with diseases and disabilities should drop out from schools. In the following year 1903, 《奏定初等小学章程》 (the playing regulations on primary schools) was adopted and stipulated that children of school age could be exempted from school if they have mental disease or sensory disabilities.

In ancient China, people with disabilities were more provided with social welfare care instead of including them into systematic education. Due to the Confucian tradition, the goal of ancient Chinese education was to cultivate elites for the management of the feudal system (Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2012, p.120); people with disabilities were considered to be less talented and were not the target of education in ancient China.

### **1.3.2 Education for people with disabilities in 20<sup>th</sup> - century**

Europeans and Americans established the earliest special education schools for the deaf and the blind in China in the nineteenth century (Deng & Harris, 2008, p.196). They also raised social awareness of the right of children with disabilities to an education, in addition to spreading Christianity and performing humanitarian acts (Piao & Gu, 2006). Deng Xiao-ping, then vice chairman of the central committee of the Communist Party

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of China, Vice Premier of the State Council and the actual leader of China, well-known as the father of Reform and Opening-up policy, initiated the open-door reform policy in the mid-1970s. The concepts of mainstreaming and, subsequently, inclusion were introduced to China when China was opened up to the world (Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2012, p.117).

The well-known ‘Learning in Regular Classrooms’ (LRC, sometimes also referred to ‘Learning in a Regular Classroom’) model is considered as the Chinese practice of inclusive education. Before it was written into national policy paper and promoted nationwide, several pilot projects of including children with disabilities into regular classrooms had been implemented in certain areas of China. In 1987, several pilot projects for the purpose of “enabling children with visual impairment to learn in regular classes in the nearest elementary school in their own villages” in some rural regions of East, North, and Northeast China. (Xiao, 2007, p.10-11) In 1987, Hailun in Heilongjiang province took the lead in initiating experiments in LRC for deaf children. In 1987, the term “learn in regular classrooms” appeared in a national document for the first time. In a circular (draft for soliciting opinions) on the publication and issuance of the “Teaching Plan for Full-Day Schools (Classes) for Children with Mental Retardation,” the State Education Commission (1987) wrote:

“In the course of universalizing elementary education, the majority of mildly retarded children have already entered local ordinary elementary schools to ‘learn in regular classrooms’. This is beneficial for contacts and exchanges between mentally retarded and normal children. It is a feasible method for resolving the problem of school enrollment for mildly retarded children in various districts and especially in the rural areas that have yet to set up schools or classes for the retarded.”

The State Education Commission also entrusted several cities and provinces to conduct LRC experiments. The primary objective of these experiments at that time was to explore viable measures for promoting LRC in the rural areas and resolve the problem of education for children with disabilities in remote and out-of-the-way districts in

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general. (Xiao, 2007)

In 1988, the Central Committee of Communist Party of China and the State Council jointly held the first national conference on special education in Beijing. In the meeting, the state formally made LRC for children with disabilities one of the policies for developing special education. In 1994, the state confirmed LRC policy in the form of law in Regulations on the Education of the Disabled Persons (1994). It was stipulated in Charter 3, Article 17, that “children and adolescents with disabilities of school age can receive compulsory education through following forms according to their own situations: 1) learning in regular classrooms in regular schools; 2) learning in special classrooms that established for education of children and adolescents with disabilities in regular schools, children welfare organizations or other organizations; 3) learning in special schools for education of children and adolescent with disabilities”. In order to promote LRC, the State Education Commission published Trial Measures on LRC Work of Disabled Children and Adolescents in 1994. The document has become the key document to instruct the work of LRC nationwide.

Although ‘Sui ban jiu du’ (LRC) as a new word first appeared in late 1980s, this form of educational placement already existed in 1950s in rural primary schools, for example in Daba mountain areas in Sichuan. Regular schools accepted students with disabilities in that area. (Li, 2009)

Many scholars argued about the relationship between LRC and inclusive education. Some people thought that LRC was a total Chinese originality, that LRC took China’s actual situation in aspects of social culture, economy and education into account and embodied Chinese national characters. Therefore LRC is a practice explored and concluded by Chinese people. (Piao, 1998) Some people thought that LRC was a Chinese application of mainstreaming, integration and inclusion after these thoughts were introduced to China. These people use the term inclusive education instead of LRC when talking about Chinese LRC model. However, most scholars in special education field are in favor of the third opinion, that LRC model was developed in

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response to both domestic need and international trends (Feng, 2010), the LRC model is neither a pure application of the Western inclusive education model nor an original invention of China (Piao, 2004). Several distinct differences between Chinese LRC and inclusive education have been identified by previous researches.

First, The LRC model aims to offer government-supported arrangements for children with special educational needs to be educated in neighborhood schools with their nondisabled peers (Deng & Manset, 2000). It is about providing access to education (Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2012), not about providing children with disabilities with free and appropriate education as advocated in the West (for example, Salend, 2011; Villa & Thousand, 2000). Many rural areas in China do not have special schools, poor condition and lack of resource make LRC the only and pragmatic option for providing special students with access to education.

Second, LRC was launched on the basis of Chinese theory. Its development was unavoidably influenced by inclusive education, but its origin is local. Special education developed from segregation to inclusion might be the universal rule and inner logic, the development of Chinese LRC and western inclusive education reflects the rule (Li, 2009), but not necessarily connected to each other on the origin.

Third, their relationships with special education differ. Inclusive education was launched on the belief that it was a better educational opportunity than special education, thus inclusive education is developing rapidly and becoming the major model to satisfy the educational need of students with disabilities. While in China, in addition to LRC, special education is also developing rapidly with support from policies and practice. In 2008, the state launched the biggest special schools construction projects since 1949. Within four years, central and local government invested over 5.4 billion RMB and constructed 1182 special schools in central and western China. Now the second round of project is under construction. The second round will mainly support the facilities' construction of secondary and vocational special schools, as well as higher education for students with special educational needs, so as to enlarge the scale of running schools.

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(Guangming Daily, 2013) Therefore, special education does not stop developing, it is developing with inclusive education hand in hand. Limited educational resources contributed to the fact that many students with special educational needs are still denied to education. The state has to enlarge the access of education for students with special educational needs. LRC and special education in China nowadays still cannot satisfy the huge educational need of students with special educational needs. They are two models need to be developed. If either of them stops developing, it would result in a regression of education for all.

It is worth noting that in administrative level Chinese LRC model is part of special education system in China. Unlike the western way that drawing a distinct line between inclusive education and special education, Chinese LRC model is seen as a complementary part to special education. In all kinds of policy paper, official educational development plan and leaders' speeches, LRC model is understood as a way of serving the development of special education, special school is supporting the smooth operation of LRC in return. When calculating statistics, LRC statistics were also listed as a subordinate to the upper theme of special education.

The basic policy for developing China's compulsory education for children and adolescents with disabilities is: big quantity of special classes and LRC classes as the main body and special schools as backbone, transfer special education from previous single and unitary form of schooling to a diversified form, so as to provide more school placements for children and adolescents with disabilities and speed the development of compulsory education of children and adolescents with disabilities. (Xiao, 2005) Under the support of this policy, many detailed measures in practice were adopted.

With the development of more than ten years, the biggest achievement of LRC is enabling a large number of children with disabilities of school age to get access to school education. Enrollment rate of children with disabilities receiving compulsory education has greatly increased. According to statistics of the Ministry of Education and China Disabled Persons Federation (CDPF), in 1987 55.25% (CDPF, 2008) of

children and adolescents with disabilities of school age were receiving education in schools; and the rate has increased to 63.19% (CDPF, 2007) in 2006. According to communiques published by China Disabled People Federation (a national organization for people with disabilities commissioned by the Chinese government), in 2003, there was 306,474 (CDPF, 2007) children and adolescents with disabilities of school age not attending schools; up to the end of 2013 there were 84,000 (CDPF, 2014) children and adolescents with disabilities of school age not attending schools. However, due to certain limitations, for example, the difficulty in collecting figures in some mountain areas, the exact figures may be not reliable. It is reasonable to admit that the number of children and adolescents with disabilities who are excluded from school has greatly decreased, but it is not easy to give precise number.

Among those students with disabilities who are studying at school, most of them are studying in regular schools. In 2012, there were 378,751 students with disabilities receiving education at school, among them 200,539 were studying in regular schools, including studying in attached special classes in regular schools and regular classes through LRC model, accounting for 52.74%. A detailed statistics are list below in Table 1.

Table 1. 2012 Basic Statistics of Special Education (Ministry of Education, 2013)

Form of education	Students
Special classes attached to primary schools	3,109
Followers in primary schools (LRC)	138,881
Special classes attached to junior high schools	144
Followers in junior high schools (LRC)	57,619
Total	199,753

It is worth noting that, the students with disabilities studying in regular classes through LRC model were called “followers” (in Chinese “随班生”). Literally they are not equal

members in regular classes with their peers, instead, they are using other regular students' place to study. It also implies that students with disabilities may experience exclusion within inclusive classes.

The number of students with disabilities studying under LRC model was 68,800 in 1993, when the statistics was counted for the first time (Ministry of Education, 2003), and nearly 20 years later, the number reaches 199,753. Below in Table 2 I concluded the number of students with disabilities studying in schools and the number of students with disabilities studying in regular schools. According to statistics of Ministry of Education, the number of students with disabilities studying in regular classrooms through LRC model and in special classes attached to regular schools accounts for more than 60% since the year of 2004, until the percentage decreased to 52.74% in 2012. In quantity, Learning in Regular Classrooms has become the main approach to satisfy educational needs of students with disabilities.

Table 2. 2004 – 2012 Number of students with disabilities studying in schools

Year	Students with disabilities studying in schools (regular schools and special schools)	Students with disabilities studying in regular schools	Percentage (%) of students with disabilities studying in regular schools
2012	378,751	199,753	52.74%
2011	398,736	255,233	64.01%
2010	425,613	259,601	60.99%
2009	428,125	269,163	62.87%
2008	Data missing	Data missing	
2007	419,316	272,055	64.88%
2006	362,946	221,819	61.12%
2005	364,409	230,047	63.13%
2004	371,813	242,970	65.35%



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The sudden decrease of students studying under LRC model looks distinct and unusual in statistics. The real reason resulted in the sudden decrease is not clear. One of the potential reason is that the development of special education and construction of special education schools have made it possible for more students with disabilities to study in special education schools. Central and local governments increased the investment in special education and more special education schools were built or under construction. Policies aiming to support the development of special education were adopted, for example, the Promotion Plan for special education (2014 - 2016), jointly adopted by Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, National Health and Family Planning Commission and China Disabled Persons Federation in 2014. In practice, in 2012 there were 1,853 special education schools (Ministry of Education, 2013) in China, increased around 100 special schools from last year which was 1,767 (Ministry of Education, 2013). While the usual annual increase of special schools is around 50 special schools. However, other potential reasons may explain the question, for example, change of definition or mistake in collecting data. It would be wise to notice that official statistics is not always reliable.

LRC requires teachers to realize and satisfy different educational needs and thus changed previous unitary teaching model. It also requires mutual help and cooperation among teachers and students. Xiao (2005) stated in a research that these values and measures also promoted the development of quality education. With the wide development of LRC, previous special education state which was closed and isolated is changing. More and more people are getting to understand children with disabilities and special education, which also contributes to the improvement of the whole society.

However, with the purpose of satisfying students' various educational needs and developing an optimal educational system, there are still many challenges to take, from policy level to practice level.

Compulsory Education Law (2006) and Law of the People's Republic of China on the

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Protection of Disabled Persons (2008) stipulate that “regular schools should accept children and adolescents with disabilities of school age with normal educational ability to study in regular classes, and provide support to their study and recovery”, however, there is no detailed regulations to instruct the implementation of LRC, nor detailed regulations to punish regular schools who deny school access of children and adolescents with disabilities. Financial support for LRC schools, in general, is not available. There are only five areas set financial support for LRC under special education fund, while in most areas in China there is no regular fund to support LRC. (Peng, 2012) When the regulations are ambiguous and un-mandatory, regular schools would rather take less students with special educational needs, who are supposed to be a drag on the school. Un-mandatory regulations and the lack of specific LRC funding have posted major challenges for the development of LRC.

In practice, all kinds of problems are challenging inclusive classrooms, for example unqualified teachers, insufficient resources, large-sized classes, lack of individualized education plan, lack of professional support, etc. We can have a look at current educational situation in China through some basic statistics:

In 2012, there were 228,585 regular primary schools, with 5,585,476 full-time teachers, and 96,958,985 students. There were 53,216 regular junior secondary schools, with 3,504,363 full-time teachers and 47,630,607 students. (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2013) The large scale of education itself is a big challenge. After several decades of development, the general qualification of teachers in China has improved a lot. However, if compared to western developed countries, there is still a distinct gap. Below in Table 3 I transcribed full-time teachers’ educational attainment situation in 2012 from Ministry and Education of the People’s Republic of China. In regular primary school and junior secondary school, teacher’s educational qualifications were generally low. For a long time, the required educational attainment for primary teachers is secondary normal school graduate, and associate bachelor for junior secondary school teachers. Even though the requirement on educational

qualification is low, some teachers could not reach the requirement, especially in rural areas. In addition, regular teachers are generally lack of basic knowledge and skills for special education. According to the statistics of 2012 published by the Ministry of Education (2013), that even in special education schools, only 20,388 out of 43,697 teachers in had received training in special education, accounts for 46.66%, not to mention regular teachers teaching in inclusive schools. One research investigated 137 normal universities and found out that only 19 universities of them occasionally or previously set up compulsory or optional courses of special education (Wang, 2006). A research on LRC teachers conducted by Department of Special Education of the Ministry of Education in 2007 showed that only 37.80% of teachers in inclusive classrooms had special education training or participated in special education seminars. (Peng, 2012) This results shows that most teachers in China do not possess basic knowledge and skill in special education.

Table 3. Number of full-time teachers in regular primary school and junior secondary school by educational attainment (2012)

Educational Attainment	Regular primary school	Junior secondary school
Graduate	14,459	36,424
Undergraduate	1,805,118	2,473,810
Associate Bachelor	2,922,865	963,243
High School Graduate	832,459	30,136
Below High School Graduate	10,575	750
Total	5,585,476	3,504,363

In addition to unqualified teachers, several other problems have been identified. For example, Peng (2012) pointed out that there existed problems and challenges in the public's attitude toward accepting students with disabilities in regular classes. Although Xiao (2005) claimed that LRC helped the public to understand and accept people with disabilities, it is hard to change everyone's attitude overnight and the resistance from

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society exists. Peng (2012) also pointed out that there was still huge space for improving the functions of special education schools in promoting LRC model.

Attention had been paid to LRC from national level. The development of special education and inclusive education were included into national development plan. The State Council and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC Central Committee) published “National medium and long term educational reform and development planning outline (2010 - 2020)” (《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 (2010-2020)》) in 2010. The planning outline requires continuous expansion of LRC and special classes installed within regular schools, the overall improvement of compulsory education universal level for children and adolescents with disabilities, etc.

In order to address the existing problems during the process of satisfying the educational needs of people with disabilities and respond to the “National medium and long term educational reform and development planning outline (2010 - 2020)”, the Ministry of Education, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, National Health and Family Planning Commission, China Disabled Persons Federation jointly adopted and published the “Promotion plan for special education (2014 - 2016)” (《特殊教育提升计划 (2014 - 2016)》) in January 2014. The overall goal of this promotion plan is to “promote inclusive education comprehensively and allow every child with disability to receive suitable education”. Detailed goals were also described in the document. “Through three years’ efforts, preliminarily establishing a special education system which is reasonably allocated, connected well among different school stages, integrated with regular and vocational schooling and combined with education and medical services. The conditions for running schools and the quality of education are further improved. Establishing a guarantee system for special education, which mainly relies on fiscal support, together with social support, fully covered, fluent and convenient. Generally forming a working pattern for special education, which is dominated by the government, facilitated by competent authorities and participated by

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various parties. Until 2016, compulsory education for children and adolescents with disabilities should be generally universal in the whole country; the enrollment rate of children and adolescents with visual, hearing and intellectual impairments should reach 90% and higher; opportunity of receiving education for other people with disabilities should significantly increase.” In this promotion plan, key tasks and main measures were also stipulated to fulfil the goals.

Chinese leaders have also made their promise to promote inclusive education in China. Ms LIU Yandong, the Vice Premier of China, then State Councilor, gave a speech in the 48<sup>th</sup> International Education Conference in 2008. She explained that the idea of inclusive education and Confucian educational ideas had something in common. She stated the China was making efforts to promote equal education that covers every citizen, and promoting inclusive education was one of its main approaches. (China Education Daily, 2008) Mr YUAN Guiren, the Minister of Ministry of Education, made his speech in the 2013 national working conference on education and said that, ensuring equal right of receiving education for people with special needs was one of the main tasks. He stated that “this year we will start to implement a 3-year plan for compulsory education of children and adolescents with disabilities, aiming to provide more educational opportunities for them through enlarging the scale of LRC, increasing special education resources, improving status and treatment for special teachers, etc.” (Yuan, 2013)

#### **1.4 Inclusive education in Beijing Municipality**

Beijing Municipality, where more than twenty millions people are living, is benefiting from its capital character in aspects of resources and policies, but also bearing burdens like huge population, management on large-scale education, etc. In 2013, there were 789,000 students studying in primary schools and 311,000 students studying in junior secondary schools, 8,348 students were studying in special education schools in Beijing. (Beijing Municipal Bureau of Statistics, 2014) According to the statistics published in

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May 2014, “Currently there are nearly 5,700 students with disabilities studying in 1,074 regular primary schools and regular junior secondary schools, accounts for 64% among in-school students with disabilities in compulsory education period”. (Gu, 2014)

In order to further instruct the development of LRC in Beijing, Administrative Measures on LRC work for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities in Beijing Municipality (Trial) was adopted and started to take effect on 1 March 2013. The Measures stipulated practical issues in LRC, for example, the assessment of students with disabilities, support for LRC and individual educational plan, aiming to provide general instructions on the implementation of LRC for Beijing inclusive schools.

### **1.5 Research task**

In this thesis, I have made use of the interview data, collected by Dr. Olli-Pekka MALINEN and two local research assistants, Ms. WANG Yanli and Ms. LI Shicong, in four inclusive schools in Beijing Municipality. The interview data was collected for an international comparative research project on teacher’s roles in inclusive education. The comparative research project has been set up to produce a knowledge base to shed light on how the development of inclusive education look from a teacher’s perspective in different countries including Finland, South Africa, Slovenia, Lithuania, China and England. (Savolainen, et al., 2012)

It is universally recognized that the effect of teachers and school staff is a very important determinant factor in successful implementation of inclusive education (Florian & Linklater, 2010). The attitudes, behaviors, and level of self-efficacy of teachers in inclusive classrooms are strongly significant for the development of inclusive education. My research task is: To describe teachers’ stories about their inclusive practice, pedagogies and reflect their stories towards LRC educational policies. Through listening to emic perspective from teachers inside inclusive schools, I can better understand systemic challenges and opportunities of inclusive education from the forefront.

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In this thesis, I have briefly introduced the current development of inclusive education (i.e. Chinese Learning in Regular Classrooms) in China and in Beijing. I generalized teachers' opinions on inclusive education concerning supports, difficulties and opportunities. I also enumerated some teachers' specific stories and speeches to describe the actions they took in inclusive classes, to reveal the difficulties they were facing and their expectations on inclusive education. Furthermore, I analyzed related policy papers, educational provisions and official documents to confirm or shed a light on teachers' speeches.

## **1.6 Methodology**

### **1.6.1 Sample**

Twenty teachers from four Beijing Municipality inclusive schools (referred to as School A to D) were interviewed to understand in-service teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. In each school, three individual interviews and one focus group interview by four teachers were conducted. In total, there were 16 interview texts by twenty teachers to be analyzed.

The four schools are located in the area of Beijing Municipality, the capital of the People's Republic of China. School A is a county level primary school located in Y county affiliated to Beijing, around two third of its students are holding rural household or non-local household. School B is a secondary school located in H District. School C is a primary school located in X District. School D is a primary school located in S District, which is a new development area and is far away from the city center. School D is located in a rural-urban fringe zone and there is a welfare house located nearby, thus many children from the welfare house are attending School D. School D therefore has a higher ratio of special/regular students than the other 3 schools.

It is worth noting that H District, where School B is located, has included "implementing inclusive and high quality special education" as one of its key tasks

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during the “twelfth five-year plan” period (2011 - 2015). In Article 15 of “Haidian District Twelfth Five-year Period Educational Development Plan” (Standing Committee of 14<sup>th</sup> People’s Congress of Haidian District, 2011), it was described detailed measures to fulfill the task, which are “improving the supporting and guarding system of LRC for children and adolescents with disabilities, promoting to build resource room in regular schools, building evaluation system for LRC, promoting research on individualized education for LRC, improving the educational quality of LRC”. While in the other three administrative regions where the other three schools are located, i.e. Y County, X District, S District, there were no specific policy concerning inclusive education or LRC in their “twelfth five-year” planning outlines. This might connect to the fact that H District has long tradition in education and is famous for its strength and emphasis on education.

Teacher participants vary in gender, age, teaching experience and experience with students with disabilities. Their teaching experience varies from half a year to thirty-one years. Majority of them are female teachers. Their teaching subjects include Chinese, English, mathematics, science, calligraphy, psychology and painting. Two of them are resource teachers, responsible for operating resource rooms in their schools. Resource room is the place that provides special students with special needs. Both of them are only resource teachers in their schools. One of them has academic background in applied psychology while the other resource teacher does not have academic background in relevant fields.

Interviews are originally collected and transcribed in Chinese; English translation is currently not available.

### **1.6.2 Data collection**

There will be used two kinds of data. One is documents data, including legislations, regulations, policy paper, official measures, leaders’ speech, etc. of national level and Beijing municipal level in relevant fields. The document data is collected through



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websites of related governmental departments, for example, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China (<http://www.moe.edu.cn/>) and China Disabled Persons Federation (<http://www.cdpf.org.cn/>).

Inclusive teacher participants' accounts of their experiences are the source of interview data. This interview data was collected by Dr. Olli-Pekka MALINEN, Ms. LI and Ms. WANG for an international comparative research on teachers' role in inclusive education, which covers the countries of Finland, China, South Africa, England, Lithuania and Slovenia. A total of 16 semi-structured interviews were carried out, including 12 individual interviews and 4 group interviews. Interviews were carried out on March 23 – April 12, 2012. The length of individual interviews varies from 21 minutes 32 seconds to 55 minutes 55 seconds, while the length of focus group interviews varies from 34 minutes 12 seconds to 1 hour 19minutes 2 seconds. Questions are structured under certain themes which cover but not limited in the scope of teaching methods, difficulties, limitations, expectations, etc. in inclusive classes.

Semi-structured interviews allow all participants to be asked the same questions within a flexible framework. Participants were encouraged to talk about their experiences through open-ended questions and the ordering of further questions was determined by their responses. The open nature of the questions aimed to encourage depth and vitality and to allow new concepts to emerge. (Dearnley, 2005)

The venues for the interviews were schools. It was the most convenient place for teachers to participate in the research and saved them time spent in transportation. A separate meeting room was prepared in every regular school, thus privacy was assured for the informants.

### **1.6.3 Reliability and credibility of the measurement**

The choice of interview as my data collection method fitted to my research purpose. My research aimed to listen to the voices of inclusive teachers, understand their

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perspectives and seek for the status quo of inclusive education in China. Therefore semi-structured interview was an appropriate method for both interviewers and interviewees. It allowed interaction between interviewers and interviewees and thus provided opportunity and flexibility to probe, expand, discuss and response. In addition to individual interview, focus group interview was also semi-structured. Interview questions were the same with those set in individual interview. However, the ordering of questions was not necessarily fixed. This was to allow flexibility and openness to both interviewers and interviewees. Focus group interview provided more possibility to discuss for interviewees who had alike experience but might differ in opinions, thus to stimulate their thinking and lead to in-depth exploration. The validity of the study was increased by the collection of data that were rich in their explanation and analysis (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Semi-structured interview allowed me to gain rich explanation and examples from inclusive teacher participants. However, due to limited time, it was not possible for participants to talk boundless, the whole interview process had to follow certain structure.

All the document data analyzed in the study were collected from official websites of relevant Chinese competent authorities. For most laws, legislations, regulations, measures, decrees, statistics, etc. policy paper, only Chinese version was provided and English version was not available. All these documents shall prevail in Chinese and English version was for reference. In case there was no English version, I translated the relevant documents by myself. Therefore, some texts extracted from governmental documents might lack of authority.

#### **1.6.4 Ethical issues**

Three basic principles guided the ethical issues of the research. They were: 1) Mutual respect – understanding others' aims and interests, not damaging self-esteem, and not being condescending; 2) Non-coercion and non-manipulation – not using force or threats or leading others to co-operate when it is against their interests; 3) Support for

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democratic values and institutions – commitment to equality and liberty. (House, 1990)

All information of interviewed teachers, their schools and collected data were only used for academic research. Formal permission was obtained from school administrators to enter all research fields. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to all participants. Their personal information will be confidential within the comparative research group and will never be disclosed to outsiders.

### **1.6.5 Analysis of the data**

I categorized the interview text into certain themes, which were determined by my research task. The themes include teachers' actions in inclusive classes, the support teachers could get, the difficulties teachers encountered, the challenges teachers were facing and teachers' expectations. I did not only analyze teachers' speech, but also considered interviewees' way of giving speech, using of modal particles and responses, because these were recorded in the text. I also crosschecked some information that teachers' provided so to confirm its reliability. In addition to the analysis of the text, I also compared the text with policy paper in field of education, especially in LRC, and speeches of Chinese leaders on relevant topics.

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## 2. MEETING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN CHINESE SCHOOLS

Inclusive education is an effort to seek for better education for students with disabilities than special education. Dunn (1968, p.5) stated in his famous article for inclusive education that “a better education than special class placement is needed for socioculturally deprived children with mild learning problems who have been labelled educable mentally retarded”. According to Dunn (1968) and Deno (1970), several limitations in special education made children with special needs come across problems. First, special education placement makes children fall between the cracks of the unilaterally defined categorical system and new categories still need to be developed to catch them. Second, the "dumping down" or "watered-down" curriculum in special education schools results in poor teaching and learning. Third, the quality of teachers trained for special education is relatively lower than real demand, and the number of special teachers is insufficient. Therefore, many teachers in special education schools are underqualified. Fourth, enthusiasm among teachers to teach in special schools is limited. Fifth, isolations of students with special needs result in stigma and social rejection. Sixth, lack of academic and social progress, which results in poor outcomes for students with special needs, especially in the stage of post-secondary and above. Seventh, encouraging homogeneous grouping deprives students with special needs of having a relationship with children from middle class homes. Dunn (1968) argued that, homogeneous grouping would affect slow learners and the underprivileged in a negative way, while in heterogeneous classes they learn much better and receive better attention from teachers.

Now almost a century has past, the research done by these scholars is not out of date. The same problems and the same origins of problems still exist, especially in some less developed countries like China. Most of the excluded students come from poor, broken, socio-culturally deprived, low status ethnic groups. There are still all kinds of

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assessment and diagnostic procedures that aim at finding out what is wrong with the child in order to give label and make them eligible for special education. Many deficits of special education still exist due to its inner logic of putting children with special needs together and excluding them from regular education.

Therefore, inclusive education seems to be a better educational placement for students with disabilities in theory. However, Lindsay (2007) reviewed studies published 2000-2005 addressed effectiveness of inclusive education and these studies were only marginally positive overall. The weight of evidence could not be said to provide a clear endorsement for the positive effects of inclusion. (Lindsay, 2007)

Inclusion as a major policy initiative for the education of children and young people with special needs and disabilities, writers have been debating for decades whether the policy is evident-based or right-based. However, research evidence is only one of several influences taken into account by politicians to formulate a policy (Lindsay, 2007). Societies are not homogeneous; they vary greatly in cultures, relations, patterns and existing problems. In China, in the big mix of society with huge population and all kinds of problems, the LRC policy is more likely need-based.

LRC model requires less investment but can quickly provide educational access to students with disabilities. It is a more effective and convenient way to promote compulsory education nationwide than special education.

“坚持多种形式办学，逐步形成以一定数量的特殊教育学校为骨干、以大量的特教班和随班就读为主体、城乡兼顾地发展残疾儿童少年教育的新格局。” “Insist to running schools in multiple models, progressively form a new pattern of developing education for children and adolescents with disabilities, which is certain number of special schools as backbone, many special classes and LRC classes as the main body and combine the development in urban and rural areas.” This is the developmental model of education for students with disabilities set by the Ministry of Education. According to statistics published by Ministry of Education, in 2012, 378,800 students

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with disabilities were studying in schools. The percentage of students with disabilities receiving compulsory education was 72.1%, increased 10% compared to the year of 2008. Among them 199,800 students with disabilities were studying in regular schools. In the year of 2012, 52.75% students with disabilities attending schools were studying in regular schools. Two parts contributed to this figure, students with disabilities attending special classes affiliated to regular schools and student with disabilities attending regular classes in regular schools. This figure was 64.01% in the year of 2011. In general, more than half students with disabilities who were attending schools were studying under the LRC model.

*Trial Measures on LRC Work of Disabled Children and Adolescents* (hereinafter referred to as the *Measures*) (State Education Commission, 1994) stipulates that the target objects of LRC model are children and adolescents with visual disability (including blindness and low vision), hearing disability (including deafness and hard of hearing), and mental disability (mild mental retardation, some schools can accept students with moderate mental retardation if conditions allow). Regular schools only accept certain categories of students with disabilities. For example, children and adolescents with speech disability do not fit the scope of LRC. However, people with hearing disability are usually accompanied by certain speech problems. The *Measures* do not provide a very explicit description of targeting groups of LRC. From the interview, some teachers disclosed that there were students with speech problems, physical disability and students with brain paralysis in class, which was incompliant with the *Measures*. There exists certain flexibility from policy to practice in this sense. Regular schools have autonomy of certain extent in deciding whether to accept a kid with disabilities or not.

What kind of students with disabilities go to regular schools through LRC model while what kind of students with disabilities go to special education schools? In general, students with mild disabilities would study in regular schools while students with severe disabilities study in special schools. Before entering regular schools through LRC

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model, children and adolescents with disabilities need to take certain test to identify their disability's category and level. According to the *Measures*, if conditions allow, the test result should be the basis of the decision of whether accepting a kid with disabilities into regular schools or not. In rural areas where testing conditions do not allow, schools can take the autonomy to make the decision.

Even though students' disability belongs to the same category, they go to different schools according to their different level of disability. "Students with better speech ability all go to regular schools, while those who left in special schools only have bad speech ability", one teacher responsible for speech training in a special school disclosed to the media, and the teacher is in fact sub-consciously admitted that inclusive education was superior to special education and was a better educational opportunity for students with disabilities than special education.

LRC model is obviously more welcomed by parents of students with disabilities. My observation is in consistency with the research of Chrissie Rogers (2007). It is quite clear that parents do have an expectation for their children to attend mainstream school. All the parents in her research initially expected their child would be educated in a mainstream school regardless of an impairment. (Rogers, 2007) Regular schools usually are equipped with better resource and can provide more opportunities to students. Parents can send their kids to neighborhood schools which saves a lot trouble, especially for those whose children have physical disabilities. Attending regular schools also contributes to avoiding prejudice and discrimination from people to certain extent, as well as negative labels and social rejection.

In this sense, LRC model is a better educational option than special education for students with disabilities, and I believe that proponents of inclusive education can name much more benefits of inclusive education. There were special teachers and parents regarding LRC as a better option than special education for students with disabilities, and parents were making efforts to put their kids with disabilities into regular schools.

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“Admission for students with disabilities is quite strict,” said a teacher from School C, “if they are too much (the disability is too severe), we would recommend them to go to special education school.” Regular schools usually have strict admission requirements and limited quota for students with disabilities. Although School C is now paying much attention to the education of accepted students with disabilities, they do not want to accept too many students with disabilities which will definitely cost more energy and resources, with the risk of lower their average academic performance.

Therefore, pre-school rehabilitation program becomes crucial for those students with disabilities who want to study in regular schools. “The students with hearing impairment in our school all had good rehabilitation program before entering school.” said a teacher from School C.

On the contrary, some scholars considered that special education was an effective way to education students with disabilities. For example, Johnson (1962) thought that special education possessed its distinct advantages: low teacher-pupil ratios, specially trained teachers, greater individualization of instruction in a homogeneous classroom, and an increased curricular emphasis on social and vocational goals. In contrary to the opinions of some special teachers and parents, some inclusive teachers shared the same opinion with Johnson (1962) and thought that special education was better for the development of students with disabilities. Several reasons contribute to this conclusion.

First, all the students are using the same unified text book, regardless of regular students or students with disabilities. It is universally agreed that in order to satisfy students’ special educational need, different curriculum should be developed and applied to different students. It is stipulated in Article 14 in the *Measures* (State Education Commission, 1994) that “In general, students with disabilities studying under the LRC model should use the same text book with regular students (blind students can use text book in braille), students with mild mental retardation use text book used in mental retardation school.” According to this regulation, regular schools have certain flexibility to adjust the use of textbook for students with disabilities. When it comes to



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practice, the four interviewed regular schools in Beijing are using the same text book for both regular students and students with disabilities. Even for students with mental retardation, the unified textbook is applied. In general, municipal commission of education assigns unified textbook and all schools within Beijing municipality are using the same textbook.

Ms ZHU Muju, then Deputy Director of Department of Basic Education of the Ministry of Education, mentioned on 30 November 2000 that “The text books of science subjects used in primary school and secondary school are too difficult, the degree of difficulty should rank the first in the world.” (New Youth, 2001) If for regular students the text book is too difficult, then we can imagine what it means to students with disabilities. School B is a secondary school, the knowledge taught in School B is more difficult than in School A, C and D. Within the four teacher informants’ classes, there are three students with mental retardation (one is severe mental retardation and two are mild mental retardation) studying under LRC model. There is no special text book for these students with special educational needs. The teaching progress of the whole class cannot be lagged behind, some teachers would take spare time to tutor these left behind students individually. However, the unified text book has become a big hindrance for LRC students to integrate into regular classes. Our interviewed teachers working in inclusive classes have also recognized this problem.

Second, the difficulty level of exams is high. The stereotyped Chinese thinking that the goal of study is to have better academic performance and better grade greatly affects people’s thinking, behavior and the planning and implementation of a class. In regular schools, regular students usually have better academic performance than students with disabilities. It is very difficult for students with disabilities to exceed regular students in grading, and some teachers regard it as a kind of failure. Under the difficult exams, it is even harder for students with disabilities, especially those with mental retardation to achieve good academic performance. “During the beginning of this semester, a kid transferred to a school for deaf-mutes to learn technology. This might be more helpful

for him in the future. After all, he is surely cannot exceed regular students when studying with them. And when entering to secondary school, teachers would pay less attention to him than in primary school and he has to learn by himself then.” said a teacher from School C. Another teacher from School C supplemented that, “we sometimes would suggest parents sending their kids with disabilities to special education schools. Some kids with disabilities just don’t understand what teacher said in class and this is very difficult for both teachers and students with disabilities.”

Third, special education training for teachers in inclusive classes is limited. Within the 20 interviewed teachers in inclusive classes, only one teacher mentioned that she had pre-service training in special education, while the others had received in-service training for taking care of LRC students. The depth and breadth of trainings vary, but their common opinion was that the training was not adequate to support their work in inclusive classes. “Teachers in special education schools are specially trained for the education of students with disabilities and they can better take care of these kids.” one teacher believed so. Here I transcribed two tables from the website of Ministry of Education (<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s7567/list.html>), recorded the educational qualification of full-time teachers in special education schools (Table 4), regular primary school and junior secondary schools (Table 5).

Table 4. Number of Full-time Teachers in Special Education Schools by Educational Qualification (2012)

	Total	Graduate	Undergraduate	Associate Bachelor	High School Graduate	Below High School Graduate
Total	43697	614	22480	17665	2849	89
Of Which: Female	31624	463	16546	12790	1763	62
Trained in Special Education	20388	414	14002	9674	1345	47

Table 5. Number of Full-time Teachers in Regular Primary Schools and Junior Secondary Schools by Educational Qualification (2012)

Educational Qualification	Total	Regular Primary Schools		Junior Primary Schools	
		total	Of Which: Female	total	Of Which: Female
total	9089839	5585476	3328015	3504363	1784590
Of Which: Female	5112605	3328015		1784590	
Minorities	893846	585636	305741	308210	148185
Graduate	50883	14459	10700	36424	24344
Undergraduate	4278928	1805118	1309501	2473810	1362492
Associate Bachelor	3886108	2922865	1738961	963243	390956
High School Graduate	862595	832459	266793	30136	6676
Below High School Graduate	11325	10575	2060	750	122

According to the statistics of 2012, the percentage of full-time teachers with undergraduate degree or higher accounted for 52.85% in special educational schools, slightly higher than 47.63% in regular primary schools and junior secondary schools. In special education schools, nearly half (46.66%) of full-time teachers received training for special education.

Fourth, the relatively big class size makes teachers in inclusive classes hard to pay enough attention to LRC students. In China, one class teacher is in charge of one class, s/he is also responsible for teaching one or two subjects for one or more classes. Other subject teachers are responsible for teaching different subjects, without obligation to take care of students other than their studies in corresponding subject. In the four inclusive schools, the same common model applied. “The workload is really too tiring, I teach Chinese and mathematics, and I am also the class teacher in charge of the whole class.” a teacher from School A said. She had 40 students in her class and one of them

was LRC student with mild mental retardation. In Table 6 I collected the statistics of average class size from Beijing Municipal Commission of Education and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.

Table 6 Class size in primary schools and junior secondary schools

	Primary schools			Junior secondary schools		
	Students (person)	Classes	Average class size	Students (person)	Classes	Average class size
China (2012)	96,958,985	2,566,539	37.78	47,630,307	947,575	50.27
Beijing (2013 - 2014)	789,276	23,455	33.65	310,568	9,521	32.62

According to *Standard of Conditions for Running Primary and Secondary Schools in Beijing* (2005), class size of junior secondary schools and primary schools in Beijing is not allowed to exceed 40 students in principle. It showed from the statistics that the average class size in Beijing is within the required limit and is smaller than the average class size in the whole country. However, some individual exceptions can be found in Beijing, especially in unofficial migrant schools (Yan, 2012). While calculating the data got from interviews, almost half of the class size exceeded 40.

In other parts of China, average class size is slightly bigger than Beijing. Some extreme examples with big class size can also be found. For example, it was reported by media (Jiangxi News, 2005) that in the attached primary school of Nanjing Normal University, class size reached 80 in Grade One and the smallest class size reached 76 students.

Fifth, some students with special educational needs would disturb class principles and thus affect the study of other students negatively. Although kids are generally more lively and active, students with disabilities are more likely to be connected with behavior problems, according to our teacher in Beijing inclusive schools.

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### **3. RESULTS**

Research in the United States and Europe on special education and efforts to include more students with special educational needs in mainstream schools and classrooms confirmed that this agenda would provide better educational results for students with disabilities (Ferguson, 2008). However, the development of inclusive education is not going smoothly, many difficulties have appeared and many challenges are there to be taken up. The effect of teachers, families, guidance counselors, and school managements is very important determinant factor in successful implementation of inclusive education (Florian & Linklater, 2010), and these factors are in consistency with the difficulties and challenges inclusive education meets.

Including students with disabilities into regular classrooms has greatly affected regular teachers and altered their roles in classroom. Teaching has become considerably more multifaceted, with greater responsibility being devolved to schools and individual teachers (Forlin & Forlin, 1996). Concerning these changes, regular teachers in inclusive classrooms have been confronted with various difficulties and challenges, in the meanwhile, they also receive support to facilitate their work in inclusive classrooms. These difficulties, challenges and support are in highly consistency with each other, identifying from regular teachers' perspectives. They can be generally classified into four clusters: parental, classroom-based, administrative, and personal.

#### **3.1 Parents and family**

It is quite clear that parents have a very distinct influence on child's education. The cooperation between parents and teachers is very important. Smooth communication and good cooperation between parents and teachers can be a solid foundation of students' success in school, while lack of communication or unsatisfactory cooperation may result in misunderstanding situations and even bad performance of students.

Schools and teachers would consider students' family and parents as a partner in the

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process of educating students. It is commonly recognized that the responsibility of educating a child is shared by both school and family. Schools and teachers expect solid support from parents and make a lot efforts to try to ensure good communication and good cooperation with them.

A family-school interaction platform was built for facilitating the communication between teachers and parents in School A. This platform allows teachers and parents communicate via SMS, teachers can send notices to a group of parents or take individual communication with one parent. This platform looks very common, just like using email sending messages, however, it provides a significant approach for family-school communication. Many schools do not have a systemic and effective method to reach and communicate with students' parents in China, especially in rural areas. Email, for example, is not accessible for everyone. In areas where stable electricity is not available, Internet is a luxury. On the other side, email is not commonly used as a priority communication method. Many Chinese people do not even have an email address, especially among older generations. Instead, mobile phone is popularly used in China. Phone call and SMS are the most effective ways to reach people and spread notification. Recalling my personal experience in primary school, teachers wrote or asked students to write what they want to say in our notebook and asked parent to sign it so that to prove that parent had got the information. School C is using Fetion to facilitate the communication between parents and teachers. Fetion is an instant messaging (IM) client developed by China Mobile, a Chinese telecommunications company. It allows users to send and receive SMS free of charge between PCs and mobile phones (no need to connect to Internet) (Wikipedia, 2013). Schools have recognized the importance of support from parents and are making efforts to smooth the cooperation between schools and students' families. School D employs the similar platform with School A as the main communication method between teachers and parents. Our interviewed schools have chosen relatively effective methods to keep communication with parents. No matter how well teachers and parents communicate, the channels are open in the first place.

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What kinds of support do teachers need from parents and what are teachers' expectations for parents? Family education has its own functions and responsibilities. Family education should play the role of developing child's interests, while school education pays more attention to child's academic development. In this sense, family education and school education are complementary. Good cooperation between family and school can avoid repeated labor, adjust to child's needs rapidly, and avoid educational omission and vacuum. (Huang, 2001)

Family education and school education complement to each other, and also affect each other. Cultivating children's interests, confidence and proper behavior at home brings positive elements for school education; in return, good school education helps cultivate knowledgeable and socialized kids that are welcomed at home and in society. A teacher from School D shared a story with us on this issue. "There is a kid in my class, tall and handsome. But he was always being timid and dared not to answer questions in class. He used to study in downtown Beijing, so I thought he might not feel comfortable here yet. Later I visited his home and got to know his living situation. His mother said that he wasn't good at communicating with his stepfather, which may lead to his lack of boy's characteristics, like liveliness and braveness. So we decided to cooperate and help the kid develop his self-confidence. At home, his step father tried to communicate with him and play with him. At school, I entrusted him to organize class activities and encouraged him to play with other kids. Gradually he is more and more brave and his academic performance improved a lot."

In general, teachers rely relatively heavily on parents' support at home. To certain extent, teachers are demanding on parents. Basically, parents are asked to supervise children to do homework at home, to check whether required quantity of homework are completed, whether certain requirements are achieved, whether texts are recited, to give children dictation at home, to sign in children's homework (indicating that all the homework has finished), etc. If possible, parents are also asked to tutor their children's study at home.

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In School D many students are from a nearby welfare house, “of course we cannot require the teachers in welfare house to tutor these kids’ homework like parents, because one teacher there has to take care of several children. But the support from parents and society is surely not enough.” A teacher from School D said. “The support from parents is not enough” is not just an individual opinion, but an overall opinion from the teachers. Insufficient support from parents, according to teachers’ opinion, contributes to difficulties and challenges between family-school cooperation.

Difficulties and challenges come along when contradiction between school and family occurs. Both family and school have expectations on each other. According to Huang (2001), Chinese schools are concentrating on academic education and paying highly attention to students’ scores and enrolment rate. They usually extend school class to family, requiring parents to check homework and sign, some are requiring parents to make certain questions to test their children on daily basis. Schools want to be the core of education and want parents to follow their order. Schools demand parents to cooperate with them to help students achieve better academic performance. The purpose of having parent-teacher conference is not hearing parents “precious comments”, but to raise teachers’ demands on parents. The conference usually brings parents the pressure of students’ academic performance. Huang (2001) criticized that schools shirk part of responsibilities which they should take to family education.

On the other hand, parents do not fully understand the importance of family education and their good cooperation with schools. Huang (2001) concluded three categories of unqualified family education, shirking responsibility, indulgence, and fear of difficulty. The first category of parents think that their responsibility is only to feed children and ensure the health of children, while education is not their issue. Schools and teachers should be fully responsible for their education. Once a child has any problem, parents shirk the responsibility to teachers and school. They always emphasize how busy they are and say “one sentence of teacher is much better than a hundred sentences of mine”(老师说一句，顶我一百句). The second category of teacher believe that “you



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will cross the bridge when you get to it” (船到桥头自然直). It is a traditional Chinese saying meaning that in the end things will mend. These parents take an attitude of indulgence and sometimes even totally give up family education. The third category of parents state that their low academic level and generation gap make it difficult for them to communicate with their children and thus incapable of educating their children.

The contradiction between teachers and parents were vividly displayed during our interviews. One teacher from School B even described it as “the biggest problem in our working”. Another teacher from School C described the problem as “it makes me headache the most”.

Some teachers contributed the contradiction to parents’ low quality, which is closely connected to their socio-economic position. Traditionally, the socio-economic position of adolescents has been measured using information about parents’ occupation, parents’ level of education, or household income (West & Sweeting, 2004). “In my class, two kids’ mothers are illiterate, and some parents are not able to sign their own names.” one teacher from School C disclosed. The teacher thought that parents’ general low educational qualification and low quality had posed a problem for her works in inclusive class.

School A is a county level primary school, “most students are from nearby villages. Their parents’ capability and knowledge are limited, but they relatively emphasize their children’s academic performance.” When doing the group interview in School A, all the teachers agreed that parents’ low quality affects much. “Parents cannot do well in tutoring homework at home.” My findings is in consistency with Huang (2001). Teachers would demand parents to assist their teaching at home. Teachers were complaining that parents were always too busy and could not take care of students’ studies. Teachers agreed that parents were more concerning students’ daily living conditions, while the support for their studies was not enough.

“He (a parent) just pushes all the responsibility to teachers and takes it as granted. This

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is really hard for us to communicate. Our education cannot get response from family education.” A teacher complained during our interview.

Concerning family education, I found a unique situation here in China compared to western societies. The prevalence of multigenerational coresidence is relatively high here in China. Some children are taken care of by their grandparents, instead of their parents. This kind of situation is especially common for what we called transient students, who do not have local household (Hukou) and are “borrowing a study place as a nonlocal citizen”. Their parents are busy making money and grandparents are in charge of taking care of these students.

Previous research in the US found out that grandparents did not exert significant direct influences on grandchildren’s outcomes, as their influences were completely mediated through the middle generation. In the Chinese tradition, the ideal family structure is a patrilineal, extended household with multiple generations living under the same roof. A research conducted in rural China found out that living with grandparents of little education did not affect children’s educational attainment, living with well-educated grandparents significantly reduced children’s likelihood of school dropout. (Zeng & Xie, 2011)

However, teachers’ opinion seemed less positive than previous research. “Some grandparents cannot even cultivate children’s good habits and behavior. They just indulge this responsibility to teachers. Sometimes they do not trust teachers, do not negotiate with teachers. Children are influenced by family members and their interruptive behavior occurred in class.” A teacher from School C complained. From teacher’s perspective, grandparents are used to spoiling children, which would cultivate children’s ego and bad temper. It may not affect their academic performance directly, but it surely complicates class management and increases teacher’s workload. In addition, teacher’s demand of tutoring students’ homework usually gets no response from grandparents.

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While some teachers stated that parents with high educational qualification are even trickier and harder to communicate with. “They think their theoretic level is high, and what I said has already been understood by themselves. These parents with high educational qualification usually respond to us with silence.” A teacher from School C complained and told us a story. “There is a kid in my class, his parents are PhD in Chinese Academy of Sciences. The kid’s studies is very good, but he is only concerned himself and has some behavior problem. Once in a painting class, a student touched him by accident. He revenged by painting the student’s whole bag. I asked his father to come to school, but his father didn’t want to communicate. He just said that ‘ok, I will go back and think about it’. He didn’t even show his attitude.”

Teachers themselves also realized that the communication with parents is a big problem, especially with parents whose children have disabilities. Those parents are more sensitive, they do not want people to treat their kids differently, sometimes they even “deny that their kid has intellectual impairment”, according to teachers in inclusive classes.

Teachers and schools are making efforts to facilitate communication with parents. In addition to common ways of making phone calls, sending SMS and face-to-face talking, teachers gained support from the employment of technology, like above mentioned family-school interaction platform and Fetion. “Through communication, most parents are prone to agree with my work”, a teacher who is characterized with strictness said, “when they see their children’s scores improve, they would realize what they did is good for their children.” Better academic performance and higher scores are the same pursuit of teachers and parents, therefore it becomes the lubricant to smoothen teacher-parent contradiction. However, teachers are still expecting more actual support for students’ studies from parents, although they showed their understanding on parents’ limited educational qualification. “We need organize training on parents,” a teacher from School C said, “we would circulate homework of good practice among parents so that parents would know what is the standard and how to make requirement on their

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own kid”.

In School D, a Parents Commission was newly founded in 2012 on a class basis as the organization for parents. The commission functions to facilitate the communication between parents and school. Parents can raise their opinions and suggestions via the commission. The commission also provide support to teachers and school when needed. For example, when class organizes outdoor activities, the commission will assign parents to facilitate activity arrangement and arrange outdoor protections.

On the contrary of their positive attitude, teachers also showed their helplessness. “Of course we would try our best to cooperate with parents, but what can we do if it doesn’t work? We can’t leave the kid behind.” A teacher from School C compared students to time bomb, “it will bomb any time. It is him that did something wrong, but he will involve and hurt other people.”

Forlin (2001) identified potential stressors for regular class teachers in inclusive education. One result of the research is that a large number of the least stressful issues for teachers during inclusion are related to interactions with the child’s parent(s). While my findings from these Beijing inclusive schools somehow contradicted with her finding in Australia. When talking about support these inclusive teachers can get, they would identify support from students’ parents. However, later they transferred to complain that parents’ support was insufficient, parents are difficult to communicate with, or even parents are playing a negative role on kids’ education. There were even two teacher in inclusive classes identifying parental issue as the biggest problem in their work.

### **3.2 Classroom-based issues**

One teacher working in an inclusive classroom without any training in special education will be confronted with many difficulties without doubt. A research concluded the overall situation of inclusive classroom that professional support is not enough.

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Problems and difficulties within inclusive classrooms usually cannot get solved in time. (Xiao, 2005) When implementing LRC model in regular classrooms, teachers in inclusive classes are confronted with various problems, encountered with all kinds of challenges and also provided with many supports. What kinds of support are available for them? Can these supports address corresponding problems? Considering the low level of special training on teachers in inclusive classes in China, it would be interesting to have a look at what in-service teachers' opinions on classroom-based issues concerning inclusive education.

### **Resource center, resource room and resource teacher**

Resource room is an educational measure, installed in regular schools for satisfying special educational needs of students with special educational needs by providing individualized instructions (Yang & Xu, 2004). Resource rooms have been recognized as an effective educational measure in facilitating students with special educational needs studying in inclusive schools in developed countries and areas. Resource rooms are usually operated by professional resource teachers and are equipped with all kinds of text materials, tools, educational media, equipment, etc.

Resource center is a place providing the same functions as resource room on a wider basis than individual school. Resource center can be established on district basis or municipal basis. This is because in China not every school has adequate conditions to build their own resource room, resource center then provides inclusive schools within its administrative region support and shared resource.

A national LRC working experience exchange conference held in 2003 concluded that during the process of implementing LRC, special schools have become the resource center for inclusive schools by making use of their obvious resource advantages. Special education schools assign professional special education teachers to mentor students with special educational needs in inclusive schools, make students with disabilities receive regular intensive training in special educational schools and provide

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consulting service and instructions to their parents. These measures and supports have significantly improved the education quality of LRC model. (Ministry of Education, 2003)

In Article 19 of Trial Measures on LRC Work of Disabled Children and Adolescents (State Education Commission, 1994), specific regulations on resource room and resource teacher have been stipulated. It is stipulated that primary schools of county level and town level with adequate conditions or with an expensive population of students with disabilities should gradually establish mentoring room, and equip it with necessary teaching tools, learning tools, rehabilitation training equipment and literature material. Full-time or part-time mentoring teachers should be assigned to operate mentoring room. Mentoring teachers should receive professional training for special education. Resource teacher's main responsibilities include aiding students with disabilities to study by tutoring them after school hours, instructing students to choose and use visual aid, hearing-aid, etc. auxiliary appliance correctly, arranging rehabilitation training for students with disabilities, cultivating their social adaptive ability, helping inclusive teachers make out individual teaching plan and assess progress situation of students with disabilities, promoting and popularizing knowledge and methods on special education, providing consulting service, etc. The "Promotion plan for special education (2014 - 2016)" includes improving conditions for running schools as a main measure to improve special education. It is stipulated in the promotion plan that "(government) support and undertake to build resource room in regular schools with a relatively big number of students with disabilities studying under the LRC model" (Ministry of Education, et al, 2014).

In practice, resource room is not seen in every inclusive school, as in some schools economic conditions do not permit. Resource room may also have other names in practice, for example psychological counseling room, but they are performing the same function – to facilitate learning process of students with disabilities.

The establishment of resource room in Beijing Municipality started in the period of

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“tenth five-year plan” (2001 - 2005). In order to further promote the development of LRC to a new stage, the municipal commission of education invested to build resource rooms in 20 chosen inclusive schools. (Yang & Xu, 2004)

School A has a psychological room, with a psychological teacher; School B has a resource room, with three full-time resource teachers; School C has a resource room with a part-time resource teacher; School D has a resource room with a part-time resource teacher. In all interviewed schools, a resource room has been established and teacher(s) has been assigned to be in charge of the operation of the resource room. However, in the interviews, teachers from School A did not indicate whether the resource teacher of their school was working on full-time or part-time basis.

Although resource rooms have been established in all the four interviewed schools, we cannot ignore the fact that educational resources is distributed greatly unevenly in China. It is worth noting that resource rooms are commonly seen in first-tier cities and rich areas like Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu Province, etc., while in most inclusive schools in second-tier cities and poorer areas, establishing resource rooms is not yet in the agenda. Even in Beijing, according a teacher from School D, not every inclusive school has a resource room. “Our resource room was established in 2008, arranged by District Special Education Center. Several schools were chosen. Because our school is near to a welfare house, the center gave us the priority. The resource room was established with joint venture from municipal commission of education, district commission of education and the school itself.”

Resource room is not only open for students with disabilities who are studying under LRC model and having special educational needs, it is also catering for the educational needs of regular students who have learning disorder, behavior problem or psychological problem.

“Nowadays the work of mentoring student with disabilities studying under LRC model and psychological health education is in fact mingled together. Therefore, the function

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of resource class is not only mentoring some students with disabilities studying under LRC model, but also to address the psychological problems of some regular students by providing psychological counselling and instruction. So there are three full-time psychological teachers in our school. Compared to other schools, we have relatively more psychological teachers.” A teacher from School B disclosed.

On one hand, resource room has been established in inclusive schools; while on the other hand, how does the resource room function in facilitating teaching and learning process for teachers and students with disabilities in inclusive classes?

“Concerning student’s problem, sometimes I would go to the resource teacher and communicate with her. When I am really busy and have no time to solve the problem or the problem is worth researching, I would ask her to discuss the problem with me and do some research together.” A teacher from School D disclosed.

Ms. L is a part-time resource teacher in School D. She has academic background in psychology and was recruited as a resource teacher in School D. Ms. L is also working as an English teacher due to current shortage of teachers in the school. “Currently there are five to six students participating activities in resource room regularly, and there are some other students coming to resource room irregularly. There are some students from the welfare house, and they have relatively heavy impairments both psychologically and physically. So they would come to me every week. Generally I will arrange five to six students as a group and do group training. If class teacher reflects to me that some student is having a problem, I will have a private communication with the student.”

When being asked about the function of resource room, Ms. L gave us her opinion. “I think resource room has been playing a positive role in promoting the development of both students with special educational needs and regular students. Take students with special educational needs for example. Resource room provides them with a place, a space. We bring special kids into regular school and hope that they can grow up like regular kids. However, they clearly know that they are special. While in a resource room,



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they would think that they are equal with other people here, because all the kids coming to resource room are seeking for satisfaction of special needs. Every Thursday (when regular activity held in resource room) when they come here (the resource room), they regard themselves as equal as others. So I think that resource room does not necessarily bring them some improvement on certain aspects, but brings them psychological relief. It makes them really realize that there are people who care about me, there is a place that I can come but you can't. Sometimes, they are quite proud about it, saying that 'I have activity on Thursday. I can come but you can't'. Maybe there is still a gap between them with regular students in aspect of academic performance, but they can well build their self-efficacy and self-confidence in resource room."

"There is a psychological room located in the third floor, but I don't know much about it because I have never been there." A teacher from School A said. The teacher has been teaching mathematics in School A for seven years. She explained that when students have any problem, they tend to come to class teacher; if class teacher can solve their problem, there is no need to go to the psychological room. There is one student with disabilities in her class, with physical disability out of brain paralysis, and the student with disabilities never used the psychological room either.

A teacher from School C disclosed to us that "Normally students with behavior problems are not willing to go to resource room. If they don't want to go there, we teachers cannot force them."

In addition to support from resource center, resource room and resource teacher, inclusive schools and teachers in inclusive classes are getting support from special education schools/centers.

"The Special Education Center of X District organizes training for special education for us teachers working in inclusive classes." A teacher from School C disclosed. Another teacher from School D shared the same information that, "Special education school would provide us with opportunity to receive training for special education.

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They would also assign experts to our school to observe our teaching and give us comments and instructions.”

Ms. D has been working in School C for 22 years. She is teaching psychology and is also in charge of the resource room at school. She doesn't have relevant academic background in special education, but she is receiving one-to-one instruction from an expert assigned by the Special Education Center of X District.

The resource teachers usually hold more than one post in inclusive schools in China. In addition for the work in resource room, they are also subject teachers in regular classes. According to Yang and Xu (2004), teaching hours is one of the main factors for schools to assess teachers, while resource teachers' work in resource room is not calculated into their teaching hours and have to complete their work load by teaching other subjects in regular classes. The other reason is that schools are in shortage of authorized number (bianzhi, 编制) of teachers. It means only limited number of teachers can work as “authorized teachers”. Plus some part-time resource teachers are originally subject teachers, school therefore arranges subject teaching work for them. Resource teachers have to do also other administrative work, like preparing materials, writing reports, and receiving training among many other work. Much time has been cost in other work rather than working as a resource teacher. Insufficient time brings difficulties and challenges to these part-time resource teachers in satisfying students' special educational needs. Because of huge work load, they have little time to communicate with students with special educational needs, to think about their problems and to seek for corresponding solutions. This has been identified as a major difficulty for resource teachers (Yang & Xu, 2004).

Lack of professional knowledge is identified as another major difficulty for resource teachers. Although many resource teachers have received relevant training for knowledge and skills in special education, they still feel that they have difficulty in understanding students and providing students with effective support due to their lack of systemic studying in special education. (Yang & Xu, 2004) My finding from the

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teachers in Beijing inclusive schools shared the same concern. They still thought that there was lack of teachers who were specialized in special education in inclusive schools.

### **Scientific research**

Teaching and researching organization is a unique situation in China. The organizations exist in basic education field and function as a leader to instruct the teaching of every subject. Participating in teaching research is regarded as a duty of every educational worker. Teaching and researching organization of all levels are responsible for organizing, leading and instructing teaching and researching activities. In different schools, the organization can be called teaching and researching group or teaching and researching section.

In addition to teaching in class, doing research is supposed to be teachers' responsibility, which in return support their teaching in class. Some of the interviewees were responsible for both teaching and doing relevant research in school. Some of them mostly teach but also contribute to school level research.

Teaching and researching group (教研组) is the section in school that is responsible for doing research in teaching related filed. It originated from the influence of the former Soviet Union. Teachers belongs to different teaching and researching group according to their teaching subjects or work category in school. They usually discuss about practical problems concerning class teaching, for example preparation of a lesson, maintaining class principles, exams, and doing evaluation. The construction and function of teaching and researching group may vary in different schools. It might be a loose organization of a certain group of teachers, which does not have real research purpose, just aiming to share information and give support to each other. It can also be a teachers' group with serious research aims, supported by certain research funding.

According to a teacher from School A, teaching and researching group organizes regular activities to help improve teachers' teaching quality. The most common activity

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is lesson observation and evaluation. Teacher colleagues observe one teacher's class; afterward teachers discuss and giving comments on the observed lesson. One of the informants from School A is a scientific-research-oriented teacher, she told us that "it is very free and independent to do research here. You can do research independently, or research on a topic set by the teaching and researching group with other teachers." She thought that the researches were very practical, close to class teaching, thus the results could benefit in-service teachers and could be tested in real actual classes.

School B seems to have a loose construction of teaching and researching group, the members within one group would have random discussion when they were confronted with problems or difficulties. It was more like seeking support from colleagues instead of serious research. However, although teachers did not have to do research themselves, they were gaining scientific research support from professional researchers. "Our school would invite professional researchers to school, twice to three times every year, sometimes even more. Like this semester, it has been four to five times. Professional researchers would observe our teaching session and gave us comments." A teacher from School B disclosed.

In School C, there is a teaching and researching group for LRC. "The LRC group has regular activities every month, sometimes even led by the school principal. Usually there are presentations, for example, on the topics of psychological adjustment of children with special educational needs, the use of sand table, and so on. Every teaching and researching group has its own activities." School C was also doing its own research. According to a teacher, during the "eleventh five-year plan" period, their research topic was the reflection ability of teachers.

Teachers in School D stated that they benefitted a lot from professional researchers. Researchers were not necessarily staff in the school, they could be staff in S District Examination and Research Center. "The Examination and Research Center developed a platform where we can get resource. Their professional researchers would often upload courseware, teaching methods, teaching ideas to the platform. We can also

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communicate and interact with these researchers in the platform. We can ask questions and they will help us solve problems in a remote form. It is actually very good and very convenient.”

Although these in-service teachers were literally members of teaching and researching group, they were not necessarily doing serious scientific research. By joining the group, they gain access to information, group activities, trainings, and other support, which are supporting their own teaching in inclusive classes.

### **Daily management in inclusive classrooms**

Chris Forlin (2001) had a research on potential stressors for inclusive teachers and identified several stressors for inclusive teachers, among which the management of inclusive class is a major stressor. Among identified stressors, difficulty in monitoring other students while attending to this child with disabilities was stressful for 96 per cent of teachers. They were particularly stressed by concern that the education of the majority of children was not affected by their need to focus on the child with a disability. The actual behavior of the child with the disability was identified as the second most stressful for inclusive teachers. Over 70 per cent of teachers reported that the child disturbed others in the class. More disconcertingly, 43 per cent of teachers indicated that the child actually physically attacked others. (Forlin, 2001) All these above mentioned issues are connected to the management of inclusive classes. The management of inclusive classes has been challenging inclusive teachers due to its nature of complication and multi-task demands. In inclusive classes, teachers have to maintain class discipline and ensure high quality teaching so that to ensure a normal order and that regular students won't be disturbed by students with disabilities; in the meanwhile, inclusive teachers have to satisfy special educational needs of students with disabilities and make an inclusive environment for them. Inclusive teachers also need to adjust their old class principles and standards to adapt to the conditions of students with disabilities.

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Although teachers are increasingly being required to cater for children with disabilities in their classrooms, there is grave concern that they still continue to focus mainly on the typically achieving students rather than those with special needs (Clark *et al.*, 1997). With the traditional emphasis on examination and entering to a higher school, the regular students, as the majority, are still the priority in inclusive classrooms. Exam scores are still almost the sole way to gain a place in university, and they determine whether one will enter top-level national universities or less prestigious local universities (Du & Wu, 2001). This exam-oriented education has resulted in a situation where most educational activities are designed to meet the requirements of standardized exams rather than the learning needs of students (Zhang, 2010). Exam scores is the priority for students, parents, teachers and schools. At the same time teachers and schools are working for a better enrolment rate, which determines that they would pay more attention on typically achieving students. Students' scores and enrolment rate are also key factors to assess a teacher's work. This fact decides that they cannot spend too much time and energy on students with disabilities in class, because it may risk the overall academic performance of the majority regular students, the teacher's own career and "achievement" of schools.

The reviewed teachers introduced some teaching methods they used in inclusive classrooms. These methods which were considered effective, contributed to better exam scores of students eventually, according to the teachers. "I think we teachers are not just passing on knowledge to students. Instead we should lead students and help them develop their thinking." A teacher was introducing her teaching idea and revealed her attention on examination scores, "Because the examinations in China that the contents of examinations differ. By developing students' thinking, they should know how to answer different questions."

One informant from School C admitted that "I wouldn't slow my teaching speed because of him (the student with disabilities in class), because the limited teaching hours is there. I cannot slow the teaching progress because of one person or one

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question.”

However, the teachers in inclusive classes did not simply forget the children with disabilities and neglect their special educational needs. They were not willing to sacrifice class hours, but they would tutor children with disabilities using their private time. I will discuss more about it in the following part on personal issues.

There is one case in School C that a student with heavy hearing impairment physically attacked other student, which is exactly identified as a major concern for inclusive teachers by Forlin (2001). “The kid cannot speak fluently, so when he had a problem with some classmate he did not quarrel with or explain to the student. Sometimes he kept silent, and sometimes he would physically attack others. He has his own way of solving problem (physically attack), which in our opinion is the worst way. Sometimes he would come to me, usually when he couldn’t defeat his counterpart.”

Faced all kinds of difficulties and challenges within inclusive classrooms, teachers revealed their worry, mostly for students with special educational needs. Although Learning in Regular Classrooms has been the main educational placement for satisfying educational needs of students with disabilities, inclusive teachers worried that these students with disabilities would end up with “sitting” in regular classrooms instead of “learning” in regular classrooms. The traditional teaching approach that impose uniformity in all cases makes it difficult for students with special educational needs to gain enough and proper needs in class. Instead of blaming the child for failure, their insufficiencies should be attributed to the environment. In this sense, inclusion means more than just placing the student in the normal classrooms; inclusion should be considered as an environment where the student may integrate with students of the same age, while their special needs are still being met (Gökdere, 2012).

The teachers found several ways to cope with behavior problems of students with special educational needs. One method commonly used and reported as effective is to assign tasks and responsibilities to these students. One student from School A was

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described by his teacher as “naughty and has some behavior problem. Although the kid is naughty and his academic performance is not that good, he likes labor.” So the teacher encouraged him to take the responsibility to keep the class clean. It turned out that it helped the kid improve his self-confidence and his relationship with other students. One student with intellectual impairment from School B was assigned to be the “regular monitor” in class and was responsible for distributing notices, collecting notices and organizing class conference. According to the teachers, giving students with special educational needs tasks and opportunities to serve the class helped them be included in class and mingle with other regular students. In School C and School D there were similar examples given by teachers.

Except for the above mentioned methods in managing inclusive classes, there are some other effective methods introduced by teachers. For example, doing group work, having study mate, group competition, and private tutoring.

### **Advanced equipment**

Multimedia teaching equipment nowadays has been commonly used in primary and secondary schools in China, especially in more developed areas. All the four schools were equipped with multimedia teaching equipment, some even equipped with other advanced equipment, like interactive whiteboard.

Multimedia teaching equipment generally consists of computer, screen and projector. The teachers reflected that they would use multimedia teaching equipment every day and the equipment had greatly facilitated and improved their teaching. On the other hand, some teachers reflected that they did not know how to operate some advanced machine. A teacher from School D reflected that “not many teachers know how to use the interactive whiteboard”. Relevant training had been organized in municipal level, according to another informant in School D, “but not every teacher has participated in that training”.



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### 3.3 Administrative

Administrative issues have a wide range from policy making to practical implementation. Many policies have been adopted in forms of law, regulation, legislation and measure of national level, municipal level or district level, with purposes to support, instruct and promote the development of LRC. I have mentioned some policies concerning special education and inclusive education in previous parts, and also described some actualities of how they were realized or implemented in practical field. Some of the policies were followed as instructions, schools adopted related measures to reach the regulated articles. However, some articles just existed as written policy and sometimes was even neglected. Some regulations were not implemented in practice and were not known by the public. For example, it was stipulated in Article 24 of the *Trial Measures on LRC Work of Disabled Children and Adolescents* (State Education Commission, 1994) that local educational authorities and schools should consider its own actuality and make measures of awards and remuneration for teachers working in inclusive classes, so that to encourage teachers to positively participate in LRC work. Although this article was adopted in 1994 in a major national policy paper for inclusive education, many teachers working in inclusive classes did not get their remuneration for extra work, they were getting the same payment as regular teachers who did not have to take care of children with special educational needs. According to the teachers from School A, there was no extra remuneration for teachers working in inclusive classes in School A, teachers were more encouraged to work for LRC by the universally appreciated spirit of being a devotee, which I would discuss more in the following part.

From administrative point of view, the laws and regulations for LRC are not sound. Although existing laws and regulations on special education have promoted the development of LRC positively, no matter the newly revised “Compulsory Education Law” or the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons” still has dramatic space to improve for supporting and protecting students with

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disabilities learning in regular classes. There is no protection on administrative support for LRC. Considering the fact that there is no full-time official responsible for special education in educational administrative department of county level, it is not an easy job to conduct effective implementation of LRC in regular schools, not to mention to provide support to LRC. Furthermore, LRC is lacking of financial support. In most areas there is no regular budget for LRC. (Peng, 2012) According to Forlin (2001), the most stressful administrative issues for teachers included those that were perceived as interfering with a teacher's instruction time, including increasing amounts of paperwork, extracurricular demands and interpersonal conflicts.

Considering the dissatisfactory findings from previous literature, surprisingly I heard much positive opinions on administrative support for LRC from the teachers in Beijing inclusive schools.

According to the teachers, the most direct administrative support for them were coming from their school leaders. It is very crucial to have support from school leaders, because they are more experienced in educational field, they are in charge of all the school resources and they can help teachers get access to other resource out of school. According to the teachers from School B, sometimes they went to school leaders when a problem occurred. "Sometimes I go to Director L, who is responsible for the Department of Junior High, and sometimes I can even go to the principal to reflect my problem. Because they usually have a more comprehensive prospective to view the problem and can offer me some suggestions, thus I can adjust my own working conditions as soon as possible." A teacher from School B disclosed. Schools were also trying to organize trainings for teachers and gaining other resources out of schools, which was appreciated a lot by school teachers.

Comparing to getting physical administrative support from school leaders, spiritual support and emotional comfort from administration are no less effective and important. When asked where inclusive teachers can get support from, one teacher from School A immediately referred to the school principal. "Our principal is fair and square.

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Sometimes when we teachers had disagreement with student's parents, our principal would deal with it with fair and justice. If the wrong goes to the teacher, our principal would not cover up, if they wrong is not the teacher's, our principal would argue strongly on just grounds. I think this is a very good point. Working under this kind of leaders, we feel very happy. Another example is our Director Z, who was promoted from teacher position to director. He can truly understand and share teachers' feeling and work for the good of teachers and students."

In general, the teachers gave very positive comments on supports from school leaders. "No matter what problem you occurred, they (school leaders) would try to find an approach and solve the problem." A teacher from School C generalized.

During our interview, we found an interesting tendency, that in primary schools, school administrative support tended to lean to senior grades. This might result from an exam orientation emphasis. Stepping to senior grades, there is district unified testing and every school is getting ranked according to their students' scores. "School is paying highly emphasis on this (ranking), the principal would chair parent-teacher conference then and it is actually to remind parents of paying more attention to their children's study." A teacher from School C disclosed.

Certain limitations would lay from administrative level, mainly in aspects of time and money. The informants gave an overall positive comments on administrative support they can get, however, they reported that when a request concerning a big quantity of money or month-long time, then it would not be easy to get the request fulfilled. "If we need any equipment, we can apply for it to our director. But if the thing is not necessary or too costly, it would be hard to get the application approved. Usually if the equipment benefits the development of students, school leaders would support; but it need some time to be approved if the equipment costs 40 or 50 thousands." A teacher from School D disclosed, "School is not likely to allow a teacher to spend one or two months to have training, because there is a lot work to do at school. For short-term training, the school is very supportive."

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### **In-service training**

More training for knowledge and skills for special education is not only the expectation of resource teachers, but also a general expectation of teachers in inclusive classes, according to the informants in Beijing. When asked whether they have any expectations, all the teachers mentioned that they would like to have more opportunities of training, seminar or other approaches to improve themselves professionally.

Many researches have proved the importance of training on teachers for better quality of inclusive education. For example, Gökdere's study (2012) suggested that professional development workshops and seminars on special and inclusive education would improve the knowledge of in-service elementary teachers and enhance the qualification of the inclusive practices.

The 2003 national LRC working experience exchange conference held by the Ministry of Education identified strengthened training for teachers in inclusive classes as an achievement of more than ten years of LRC work. "Through trainings in aspects of identifying, screening, management, teaching, evaluation, and so on, teachers primarily acquired the characteristics of children with disabilities and basic teaching methods, which helped teachers gain a foundation for developing LRC model in regular schools." (Ministry of Education, 2003) Although confirmed the achievement in training for teachers in inclusive classes, the conference also admitted in its minutes that the trainings was not enough. Therefore, within the Measures to further promote the development of LRC, there was "to strengthen training for teachers working under LRC model". It also described detailed instructions. "To provide materials, counselling and instructions for inclusive teachers. Local competent authorities should systematically organize training for inclusive teachers on a basis of county administrative level and depend on county special education school. In case there is no special education school of county level, then it should dependent on special education school of municipal level." (Ministry of Education, 2003) Similar regulations on strengthening trainings for teachers in inclusive classes were stipulated in Suggestions on Further Strengthening

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LRC Work in Beijing Municipality (Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, et al., 2013).

The State Council and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC Central Committee) published “National medium and long term educational reform and development planning outline (2010 - 2020)” (《国家中长期教育改革和发展规划纲要 (2010-2020)》) in 2010. In this document, “to build a professional group of teachers with high quality” was seen as one of the key measures to ensure the realization of goals set in the outline.

In current Chinese laws and legislations, for example, Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of the Disabled Persons (2008), Regulations on the Education of the Disabled Persons (1994), and Several Suggestions on Developing Special Education (1989), they had clearly stipulated that regular normal colleges should set course on special education. However, According to Wang’s survey on 137 normal colleges in 2003, only 19 colleges out of 137 offered courses on special education, accounting for 13.9%. Within the 19 normal colleges, only a few were offering courses on special education every year, the majority of them just offered special education course occasionally. Awareness rate of the above policy was only 31.4% among the 137 normal colleges. (Wang, 2006)

Pre-service training on special education and inclusive education is quite limited in China. Prospective inclusive teachers may have no preparation for various special educational needs at all, since they are not prepared for themselves in normal universities. If pre-service training for special education is not sufficient, then how about the possibility to have in-service training for special education? A research on LRC teachers conducted by Department of Special Education of the Ministry of Education in 2007 showed that only 37.80% of teachers working in inclusive classes had special education training or participated in special education seminars. (Peng, 2012) This is a research done on the scale of the whole country. If we only consider the situation in Beijing Municipality, where educational resource is relatively adequate, the

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percentage of receiving relevant training should be higher. On the contrary, in rural areas and western mountain areas, the opportunity of receiving in-service training would be less than in other parts of China. A survey conducted in six provinces in western China found out that 81.4% of teachers working in inclusive classes did not receive any training for special education or inclusive education (Hua, 2003). A research on current situation of special education in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region found out that all the teachers working in inclusive classes in the region did not receive professional training for special education or inclusive education (Jian, 2009).

According to the informants from Beijing inclusive schools, all of them had experience in receiving training, which were mainly in-service trainings arranged by schools, district education commission or municipal commission of education, by means of seminars, workshops, demonstration lesson for special education or LRC model.

“It is very often to have training opportunities in our school. There are trainings about general teaching, subject teaching, moral education, and many other themes. There are also some trainings for LRC.” The teachers from School A disclosed. Usually, there were two kinds of training for LRC, internal training and external training. Internal training was organized by School A itself, and external training was organized by district commission of education or municipal commission of education, usually in the forms of demonstration lesson and seminar. When asked about the frequency of training for LRC in School A, we got the answer that “not regularly scheduled”. According to a personal experience of a teacher from School A, that she had two trainings for LRC last year. One internal training was given by the Dean of teaching affair office. The other was an external seminal on LRC, including a field visit to other inclusive schools. Another teacher from School A disclosed that “in previous two years, I attended several trainings of municipal level. At that time, it seemed that I went to trainings quite often, but I haven’t had any training yet this year.” In general, the informants were holding very positive attitude toward these in-service trainings for LRC and were satisfied with the support from these trainings. They showed that through in-service trainings they

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had known much more about theories of LRC, these trainings were very helpful and they would like to participate in these trainings. However, teachers still showed their expectations on more trainings. “It would be better to have more trainings on theories, like what is inclusive education and what should be done to better implement inclusive education. I have attended relevant trainings, but there are many teachers in our county that do not have related knowledge on these theories.” The teacher continued, “And for teaching methods in class, we should have more opportunities to see how other teachers do in class. We need to exchange experience and learn from each other.” Concerning the level of training, the teachers showed that they want to have training which was “at least of Beijing municipal level”. A teacher thought that trainings of national level would be interesting, “Actually I think there are multiple forms of inclusive teaching, and every area differs from each other.” Another teacher expected on trainings of international level, “Actually I want to know how inclusive education is operated in foreign countries.”

School B is located within the administrative region of H District, which has specific policy concerning inclusive education and LRC in its “twelfth five-year educational development plan”. An informant from School B disclosed that in order to implement the policy of improving the educational quality of LRC, trainings of different levels had been arranged. H District Teachers Training College was providing trainings for teachers once a week, and training themes included text analysis, teaching methods, LRC, and so on. Furthermore, this weekly training was compulsory for in-service teachers. Other trainings of district level and municipal level varied in topics and had various targets, some might target key teachers and some might target schools of relatively weak teaching quality. In-service teachers in School B were also encouraged to take on-job graduate study. The tuition of graduate study would be covered by the state, the school and the teacher. Internal trainings organized by School B was regularly scheduled. Experts were invited to conduct these trainings and facilitate teachers’ communication with each other, exchange of experience and process of doing research. A teacher from School B gave us a vivid example of a training for LRC. “Last semester,

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we had a training on teachers in inclusive classes, both class teachers and subject teachers teaching in inclusive classes participated. We spent two weeks in training, discussing about how to prepare teaching plan and how to teach in class. Every teacher shared their teaching plans and experts were invited to help us optimize our teaching plans. At last we selected Teacher W as the representative of our school to give a demonstration lesson in Beijing Municipality.”

Teachers from School C were receiving trainings for LRC from a Beijing municipal special education center, X District special education center and their own school. “LRC is the specialty of our school, so the school is paying highly attention to the work of LRC and the special education centers are especially organizing trainings for us. Some trainings are organized by a Beijing municipal special education center, and X District special education center is also organizing trainings for us.” A teacher from School C disclosed. Teacher L is a researcher specialized in LRC in School C. L told us that “this semester I participated in LRC activity of district level as a LRC researcher. The activity was observing demonstration lessons and giving comments. We also listened to other schools’ working experience on LRC.” L found that this kind of training and activity was very fruitful. “Personally I think these trainings are very fruitful. They are actual and concrete lessons given in inclusive classrooms. I learned from their experience and I learned some practical teaching methods from them.” School C was also organizing internal trainings for teachers in inclusive classes. “Resource teacher and school leaders would organize many trainings. In every grade there are students with special educational needs studying under the LRC model. Our school invited Principal W from a special education school to teach us how to take care of and teach these students with special educational needs.” The informants from School C also showed their own expectation on in-service trainings. “I like the training conducted by invited experts, because they would concentrate on our problems in inclusive classrooms and helped us to design a lesson. They brought us some idea and I like this kind of training. But the bad thing is that this kind of opportunity is rare, only once a semester. In addition, I also want to have one-to-one training. Like one



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experienced master training one apprentice, I want a highly experienced teacher to train me very much.”

Teacher N is a resource teacher in School D, she introduced to us the situation of training for special education in her school. “Special education schools would provide us training opportunities and this is our main source to learn theories. Then we have regular activity for resource teachers every Wednesday. Resource teachers from different schools would gather together, communicate and exchange ideas. For example, I know one teacher who is very good at individual training, then I can go to observe his/her lesson. It is an activity among the municipal scope, not only limited in our district. We can go to other schools to observe their classes and learn from their experience. These two are the main approaches.” Although N thought that the training activities were helpful, “only depending on these trainings is not enough”. N is the only resource teacher in School D and has no academic background in relevant field of special education, inclusive education or psychology. She regarded herself as “switched to the profession of a resource teacher”. “I think we should have a professional teacher specialized in special education in our school, at least one professional resource teacher. Although I am learning and getting training, learning is a process requires time. I am not professional and I might delay the development of children with special educational needs in certain aspects.” Another teacher from School D disclosed that special education school would assign special education experts to school D, giving them demonstration lessons and conducting workshops. “Giving us a demonstration lesson and we can learn from it, but there are not many demonstration lessons.” Another teacher added that, “there seem to have only one this kind of demonstration lesson on LRC in every two to three years.”

According to the general situation of the four inclusive schools, their teachers working in inclusive classes had opportunity of receiving all kinds of in-service trainings, from municipal level, district level to school level on varying themes. There were regular trainings and compulsory trainings, which teachers were required to participate as part

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of their work. While some other trainings might have specific access requirement and limitation on participants. In-service teachers were also encouraged to have individual on-job study to get a systemic training. These scope of in-service training was very broad, including all kinds of topic concerning school education, for example, educational theories, teaching methods, curriculum demands, and LRC. Trainings for special education, inclusive education or LRC only accounted for a small part of all these trainings, usually provided by special education schools and special education centers of their respective administrative regions. Due to the lack of pre-service trainings for special education and limited number of in-service trainings for special education and LRC, the teachers working in inclusive classes showed their common expectations on more various trainings for special education. Some teachers wanted to have more trainings on theories in inclusive education, while some teachers wanted to have more trainings on practical teaching methods for LRC.

### **3.4 Personal issues**

According to Forlin (2001), a teacher's personal commitment to maintaining effective teaching for all children in their classes was identified as the highest levels of stress among other factors. Teachers tend to worry that they do not have the ability to master the progress inside inclusive classrooms, which was confirmed by the informants. Compared to the other three aspects I have described above, the informants working in inclusive classes showed more concerns in personal issues concerning inclusive education instead of self-confidence. In-service teachers' attitude toward inclusive education, students with disabilities together with their level of self-confidence also have impact on their own work.

Forlin (2001) found that the highest level of stress appear to come from a teacher's personal commitment to maintaining effective teaching for all children in their classes. Some teachers in Beijing showed their concern on students' small progress than expected in inclusive classrooms. "For me this is a difficulty. Although there is progress

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of student with disabilities, I always think from the bottom of my heart that it would be better if there were more progress.” A teacher from School A expressed. A teacher from School B expressed her confusion on not knowing how to help students with special educational needs improve. During the interviews, some teachers viewed their “unqualified performance in inclusive classrooms” as a difficulty. Some of them were not satisfied with the achieved progress, some were still “looking for more effective teaching methods”, some were not confident, and some even “get confused”. Teachers’ personal commitment to effective teaching is actually placing stress on their work when the actuality inside inclusive classrooms does not reach their expectation, thus becoming a potential challenge for teachers working in inclusive classes.

It is naturally to find that as human beings teachers would be influenced by external disturbances or inner emotion. A teacher from School C used the word “gap” to describe her feeling when she changed her teaching job from a regular school to an inclusive school. “When I first came here, I felt a distinctive gap. The students from my former school, they learn fast. However, the students here are learning slowly. There was once a kid who could not even memorize one single English word in a whole class. The kid cannot write Chinese characters properly, usually turned upside down ...” The teacher was shocked by her new students at first, later she continued, “Though I felt a huge gap, I had to adjust my attitude and mindset to work in inclusive classes.”

Workload was identified by Farber (1991) as a major problem for teachers in inclusive classes who are trying to prioritize the allocation of their time to be spent with either one or two children with special educational needs or with the majority of the class. Workload should have belonged to administrative issues. I tend to explain it here because this potential problem has been well handled by teachers through their personal commitment and habits.

Within Chinese culture, teachers are usually compared to mothers and gardener, who are characterized as self-sacrifice, selflessness and greatness. What teacher to student is what mother to child, is what gardener to flower. There is a popular Chinese poem

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describing teachers that “春蚕到死丝方尽，蜡炬成灰泪始干”， meaning that spring silkworms make silk till death and wax torch burn till ashes. People use this ancient poem to praise teachers’ great spirits of self-sacrifice and selflessness. There is strong cultural foundation, long history and tradition that teacher work overload and make use of their spare time to tutor students. Teachers are used to the working overload tradition and students and parents have taken it as granted. School A was encouraging teachers to be “dedicative teachers” and School B was promoting “mother’s love education”.

A teacher from School C disclosed that “there is requirement in school that teachers should give twice extra tutoring sessions to students every month. In reality the times that teachers give extra tutoring to students are much more than required, because teachers just do it whenever they have time and we did it not because of the requirement from school.” Extra tutoring was very common and so it was in the four Beijing inclusive schools. For students who were left behind, teachers helped them review what had been taught in class, and most students with disabilities belonged to this category; while for students who could learn fast, teachers would instruct them to learn new things so as to satisfy their educational needs. Extra tutoring was taken regularly and irregularly. One of the well-known regular extra tutoring is called “lunch class” (饭班). Lunch class originally refers to students’ dining activity during lunch time. Teachers usually make use of lunch time to give extra tutoring to students, thus lunch class now becomes a real class. However, a teacher also emphasized that “although we are using break time to tutor students, we would consider students’ condition and time”. Teachers stated that they would leave enough rest time so that students wouldn’t feel too tiring.

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## 4. CONCLUSION

With the stories and experience of in-service teachers in inclusive classes lie at the heart of the research, I briefly introduced the overall situation of inclusive education in China and described how the teachers negotiate with this system and what their expectations on inclusive education.

From practical level, the teachers were receiving support, faced with difficulties and challenges from four categories – parental/family issues, classroom-based issues, administrative issues and personal issues.

Parental/family issues were identified as one of the major challenges for the teachers in inclusive classes. Although the teachers and schools had tried to facilitate the cooperation with students' families, teachers complained that some parents' low quality and low educational attainment made it difficult to communicate successfully. The teachers' demands could not get proper response from the parents. And the teachers found it quite time-consuming and energy-consuming to deal with parental/family issues, which sometimes may even create conflicts. Therefore surprisingly, the teachers showed their heavy concerns on parental/family issues and there were two teachers identified it as the most challenging issue in working in inclusive classes.

Within inclusive classrooms, teachers were receiving support from resource center/room, resource teachers, special school, special center, teaching and researching group, and colleagues. Resource center/room and special schools helped the teachers facilitate their teaching activities with students with disabilities, and some resource teachers provided rehabilitation and consulting service to student with disabilities. Most informants had concluded their own teaching methods in inclusive classes. Their main concern in class was how to allocate time on regular students and students with disabilities properly. It turned out that most teachers would mainly focus on the typically achieving students rather than those with special educational needs. They

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justified this behavior with limited teaching hours and pressure from examination and enrolment rate to a higher school.

According to the teachers, their most direct administrative support was from school leaders and they gave quite positive comments on their leaders' work. The teachers also gained much support from trainings, which were organized by all levels of educational administrations. Almost all the teachers were expecting more trainings, especially on themes related to inclusive education and LRC. Many policies had been adopted from all levels, however, the functions of policies were not ideally realized in implementation and there was still a gap from policy to practice in inclusive education in China. Many policies concerning the rights of persons with disabilities, education for children and adolescents with disabilities, special education, inclusive education and LRC were adopted from various administrative levels. Some were adopted early in 1980s or 1990s and were amended through time. However, there is much space for improvement. For example, detailed instructions for implementation of LRC is not given, thus created ambiguity in practice. The regulations are not compulsory, thus schools have certain autonomy in deciding issues concerning LRC. Penalty measures are not adopted for those who violates relevant regulations, which greatly decreased the effectiveness of LRC related regulations. Furthermore, the awareness of some regulations are quite low among teachers in inclusive classes. For example, the regulation on allowance for teachers working in inclusive classes was not known by teachers from School A. It is stipulated that teachers working in inclusive classes should get extra remuneration for their work of taking care of both regular students and students with disabilities. While in practice, the teachers in School A were getting the same remuneration with other regular teachers who were not teaching in inclusive classrooms.

The teachers working in inclusive classes were quite self-motivated, and at the same time, they were self-demotivated to certain extent. The traditional Confucian ideas, Chinese traditional expectation and appreciation on teachers, and Chinese teachers' spirits of self-sacrifice were motivations for the teachers to work with students with

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disabilities. They were not demotivated by the complexity and huge workload of working in inclusive classes, instead, they were willing to spend their spare time to tutor students with special educational needs. Their depression and stress in inclusive classes came from limited progress of students with disabilities. The teachers' personal commitment to effective teaching placed a mental burden for themselves. When their expectations on students could not be reached, their self-confidence decreased and thus affected their work in inclusive classes. This is the major reason why the teachers were expecting more trainings.

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## 5. DISCUSSION

Different from studies done in western countries, for example Forlin (2001), who identified interactions with the child's parent(s) as one of the least stressful issues for teachers during inclusion, I found that the teachers in Beijing inclusive schools were stressed due to parental issues. While my finding on parental issues is similar to some studies done in China, for example Yue's (2002) study, that there was prejudice of different levels on parent-teacher collaboration, both from parents and teachers. The prejudice affected smooth cooperation between parents and teachers to certain extent. The inconsistency may result from different culture between China and western countries, which affect how teachers view inclusive education.

My findings on classroom-based issues is similar to Xiao's (2005) study, that although there is support for teachers, problems and difficulties within inclusive classrooms usually cannot get solved in time. Some teachers were not used to turning to resource room or resource teacher for help, and professional resource teacher was not available in every inclusive school. Most teachers admitted that they would concentrate on regular students in class, since these students were the majority in class and teachers did not want to waste the majority's time. In this sense, the teachers simply ignored the special educational needs of students with disabilities in inclusive classes. Students with disabilities were not included into regular classes. The teachers justified their behavior with pressures from and emphasis on exam scores and enrolment rate. Like an informant said, some students with disabilities may end up with "sitting in regular classrooms" instead of "learning in regular classrooms". The way of addressing students with disabilities studying in regular classes also implies their awkward circumstance in inclusive classes. "随班生", officially translated as "followers" by the Ministry of Education, implies that the students with disabilities are not real members in class, they are just following other students to study in regular classes. However, on the other hand, teachers would make use of their spare time to tutor the students with disabilities individually, so as to help them learn and catch up with their peers. To



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certain extent, regular students and students with disabilities' learning activities were still separated in inclusive schools. Maybe when teachers have more flexibility, support and special education skills, they can be more successful teachers in inclusive classes.

To sum up, much support are available for teachers' work in inclusive classes, for example, from state and municipal policies and regulations, from special education schools and centers, and from their school leaders and colleagues. However, the teachers did reflect that the support was not enough for their work in inclusive classes. They sometimes would feel helpless and worried about not knowing how to progress with their work in inclusive classes. In general, my findings confirmed that the development of LRC in China was not smooth and perfect. In order to address existing problems of LRC, many scholars have raised their suggestions and proposals (For example, Peng, 2012; Xiao, 2007). They proposed that systemic legislative support should be built to support students with disabilities learning in regular classrooms; building professional and responsible administration of all levels to instruct the work of LRC; setting specific financial budget to support daily work and development of LRC; improving pre-service training for special education and broadening access to in-service training for special education; reforming curriculum so as to ensure educational quality for students with disabilities; and strengthening the cooperation between inclusive schools and special schools.

Due to time constraints, my research is based on limited interviewees, specific interviewed schools in specific area. Luckily, my familiarity of Chinese culture and Chinese language eased my research process in analyzing data. By describing the stories of the informants, I hope readers can find an angle to view the development of inclusive education in whole China. However, I have to admit that this research may be not representative enough to tell the actuality of the implementation of inclusive education and teachers' perspective towards inclusive education in Beijing. Further studies and researches are needed to learn more about teachers' role in inclusive classes in the whole China. Therefore, I suggest quantitative research in the future to examine

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the attitude of teachers in inclusive classrooms. I am convinced that quantitative research would be effective to examine actual and precise perspectives and needs of teachers in inclusive classes, thus can contribute to further and better development of inclusive education in China.

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## APPENDIX: SOME CHINESE CONCEPTS

**LRC:** Learning in Regular Classrooms, 随班就读 sui ban ji du. LRC is commonly known as the Chinese practice of inclusive education.

**Compulsory education:** 义务教育 yi wu jiao yu. In China, compulsory education consists of primary education (around 6 – 12 years old) and junior secondary education (around 12 – 15 years old). It is compulsory for every Chinese citizen to receive compulsory education, according to Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (2006).

**Confucianism:** 儒家思想 ru jia si xiang. An ethical and philosophical system developed from Chinese philosopher Confucius (551 – 479 BC), has been the core of Chinese culture. Its main opinions include benevolence (仁), love for humanity (博爱), entering into the society positively (积极入世), providing education to all the people without discrimination (有教无类), etc.

**Follower:** 随读生 sui du sheng. Followers are those students with disabilities who are studying in regular schools thought LRC model. The English term was given by the Ministry of Education. There is criticism that the name suggests that these students are just following regular students to study in regular schools, and they are not real members in regular classrooms.

**Migrant school:** 打工子弟学校 dagong zidi xuexiao. Migrant schools are open for students who do not have local residence permit (Hukou). Their parents are usually migrant workers working in big cities. There are private migrant schools and public migrant schools, some are registered in relevant education authorities. They are mostly located in rural-urban fringe zone, where floating population resides and rent is low.

**Hukou:** 户口 hukou. A hukou is a record in the system of household registration required by law in the People's Republic of China (mainland China). A household registration record officially identifies a person as a resident of an area and includes identifying information such as name, parents, spouse, and date of birth. (Wikipedia, 2014) People without local hukou cannot enjoy the same public welfare as local hukou holders. For example, they have to pay extra money to send their kid to local public schools.

**Bianzhi:** 编制 bianzhi. Bianzhi refers to the authorized size of an organization, its number of staff and the allocation of positions. Usually the authorized size is decided by personnel authority and financial authority would allocate funds according to the authorized size. The authorized size of public school is decided by local government.

**Teaching and researching organization:** 教研组织 jiaoyan zuzhi. Teaching and researching organization is a unique situation in China. The organizations exist in basic education field and function as a leader to instruct the teaching of every subject. Participating in teaching research is regarded as a duty of every educational worker. Teaching and researching organization of all levels are responsible for organizing, leading and instructing teaching and researching activities. In different schools, the organization can be called teaching and researching group or teaching and researching section.