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Teachers' Perspectives on Improving Educational Inclusion through the Performing Arts: A qualitative study of primary schools in Shenzhen

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Abstract

This research focuses on teachers' perspectives on improving educational inclusion through the performing arts (music and dance) at primary schools in Shenzhen, China. Over the last decades, the Chinese government has attempted to develop inclusive policies and practices in schools, emphasising the importance of promoting educational equality. For example, The Learning in the Regular Classroom Programme (Ministry of Education, 1994) established that all children should be taught in mainstream schools. However, its relevant legislation has not been fully implemented, and educational inclusion in China requires further research. This study investigates schoolteachers' perspectives on using music and dance for promoting educational inclusion. It also elucidates any influence of their backgrounds on their perceptions and any gaps between policy intentions and reported practice.

The inquiry adopted a qualitative approach, including reviewing key policy documents and interviews with schoolteachers working in mainstream schools (Silverman, 2016). The document review systematically analysed key inclusive education policies and documents implemented in China since 1994. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in ten primary schools with a total of thirty-four teachers, including music and dance teachers, class tutors, headteachers and special education teachers. In-depth and contextual data were collected from the researcher diary and participants' interview transcripts on their experience of promoting educational inclusion and using music and dance to meet children's different needs, which were thematically analysed.

Data analyses highlighted six Key Findings focussing on diverse facilitating aspects and obstacles to implementing the inclusive practice and how teachers' background may influence their beliefs and self-efficacy towards inclusive education. Although educational policies and school environment have been more inclusive since the start of the 21st century, the lack of continuing professional development, poor school collaboration, insufficient educational resources and limited parental support were found as obstacles for teachers to meet children's different needs in mainstream school settings. Moreover, teachers with more theoretical knowledge of inclusive education or positive

experience of meeting children's needs tended to have more positive attitudes and higher self-efficacy in inclusive practices. Music and dance teachers showed stronger self-efficacy in meeting children's needs as they were confident of creating a more inclusive learning atmosphere in music and dance classes. Implications for policy and practice are considered in the conclusion chapter, and it also suggests that music and dance activities could be a vital element of a cost-efficient and effective approach for inclusive education in Chinese schools and beyond.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature:

Printed Name: Yinshu Zhu

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This thesis investigates the current situation and development of Inclusive Education (IE) in Shenzhen, China, with particular reference to the use of music and dance as tools for educational inclusion. This qualitative study was conducted with thirty-four participants in ten primary schools in Shenzhen, focusing on teachers' perceptions of perceived achievement and potential challenges for current inclusive practice and the use of music and dance activities as tools to improve the quality of IE. This chapter starts by presenting the research topic and rationale and an introduction to the research background, regarding both the background itself and my biographical background, followed by an explanation of the motivation for this research. Then, I present the objectives of the research and its research questions. Following this, the significance of the study is considered. Finally, I define some key terms used throughout the thesis before providing an outline of its structure and the focus of each chapter.

1.2 Research Topic and Background

This research focuses on teachers' perceptions of current inclusive practice and the potential for using music and dance as a tool to improve IE in primary schools in Shenzhen, China. Thirty-four participants from ten mainstream primary schools were involved in semi-structured interviews: sixteen music and dance teachers, ten class tutors, two headteachers and six special education teachers. This study explores the facilitators and barriers facing IE implementation for mainstream primary school teachers in Shenzhen and the potential factors influencing teachers' perspectives on IE and the role of music and dance in IE practice.

Recent global trends in the field of educational inclusion have raised more concerns about the implementation of IE and the pursuit of educational equity (Florian and Rouse, 2010; Liasidou, 2015; Pather and Slee, 2019). Meanwhile, the Chinese education system has attracted a great deal of attention internationally

because of good results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the rapid development of its economic and human resources. Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to the development of IE among all children in China (Yan and Deng, 2019; An, Hu and Horn, 2018).

As a large country that values education seriously, China has attempted to develop inclusive education policies and practices in schools since 1994. China was among the first nations to have endorsed the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994; Qu, 2019; Qian and Jiang, 2004). The Chinese government has emphasised the importance of promoting educational equity for children with different learning needs (China's Ministry of Education, 2014; An, Hu and Horn, 2018; Liu and Zhang, 2017), as well as launching a series of regulations and laws supporting educational inclusion (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four). After being in effect for more than two decades, educational inclusion in China has now entered a time of transition, and it faces many challenges and issues in terms of change and development, including more children with additional support needs (ASN) in mainstream schools and providing a more inclusive educational environment for more diverse children (Tong et al., 2017; Duan, 2015; Liu and Zhang, 2017).

However, according to previous studies and compared with some Western countries, China's conception and realisation of educational inclusion are somewhat behind the times; it focuses more on supporting disabled children being mainly educated in special schools rather than providing all children with an inclusive learning environment (McCabe, 2002; Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004; Travers et al., 2014). In addition, the implementation of IE policies still faces different challenges owing to the scarce acknowledgement of IE concepts and the traditional whole-class teaching strategies employed to support children with ASN in the large-size mainstream classroom (Qu, 2019; Xu and Zhao, 2017; Liu and Zhang, 2017).

Douglas (2019) reviewed IE studies across twenty-two countries, and he outlined that to achieve the sustainable inclusion of all learners, there should be an achievable and empowering approach based upon a comprehensive and sensitive understanding of the current situation in each country's education system and schools in particular. The international literature also highlights the importance of creating a collaborative and inclusive environment by empowering and enabling school practitioners at schools (e.g., Baker and Zigmond, 1995; Forlin Keen and Barrett, 2008; Florian, 2009). When teachers fully understand the complexity of providing IE for all students, inclusive policies and regulations can be implemented in schools more effectively, thereby including more diverse students and reaching most of the students' potentials (Florian, 2009).

Engagement in music and dance activities has been considered as a valuable tool to improve educational inclusion in different contexts, including school choirs and ensembles (Cox and Stevens, 2017; Zitomer, 2016; Welch et al., 2020; Odena et al., 2016), and the idea of integrating music and dance into inclusive practice has also been suggested by some global organisations, such as UNESCO (2003; 2006; 2017) and InSEA (2018). Thus, in order to better understand inclusive practices in China, this study aims to investigate teachers' perspectives in-depth, which could illuminate the current stage of IE policy implementation and the potential of using music and dance to improve IE in schools.

1.3 Research Rationale

The rationale of this research is twofold. First, it has been highlighted in recent studies that exploring teachers' understanding of inclusion concerning children with ASN in mainstream schools in China is urgently needed, as more IE policies have been enacted, but few studies have examined the development of IE at the school level (Deng et al., 2017; Deng and Zhu, 2016). Second, the role of performing arts in facilitating the improvement of IE has been examined in the global context, as it is a cost-effective, accessible and feasible IE strategy for policy implementers (UNESCO, 2006; Hallam, 2010; Zitomer, 2016) and there is now a window of opportunity to investigate this topic in mainland China, driven

by policy reform and the desire in China to promote educational equity. This section will further explain the two folds of the research rationale.

First, since the start of the 21st century, China has enacted laws and policies aimed at providing equity and quality education for ASN; these measures include the Protection of Disabled Persons Law (National People's Congress, 2008) and Measures for the Administration of Disabled Persons in Learning in Regular Classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2011). However, the general conceptualisation of educational inclusion for all children is still vague and not emphasised within mainstream educational settings (Li, 2009; Yu, Su and Liu, 2011; Yuan et al., 2013). This is because the idea of 'inclusion' in China may need to be updated to a broader and inclusive context for all learners, rather than that of 'children with disabilities' (Qian and Jiang, 2004; Yu, Su and Liu, 2011). Also, some Chinese schools and teachers have been found to lack the focus and awareness required to identify and satisfy children's different educational needs (e.g., Peng, 2012; Liu and Zhang, 2017). According to previous studies, one of the main issues hindering the implementation of IE in China is that teachers may still lack accurate knowledge both theoretically and practically and a consensus on what inclusion means (Qu, 2019; Xu and Zhao, 2017; Liu and Zhang, 2017). More specifically, many teachers view and practice inclusion as mere physical integration (Qu, 2019).

Second, in the global context, art education is viewed as an effective tool for including all children and providing a more inclusive environment in educational settings (e.g., Ockelford, 2008; Welch et al., 2009; Cox and Stevens, 2017); however, in China, music and dance have not been fully considered as practical tools in inclusive practice (Cai et al., 2019; Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2018).

Thus, there is a gap in research in terms of updating the concept of educational inclusion for all children and addressing the educational needs of children with ASN through music and dance in China. To fill this gap, this research aims to explore teachers' perspectives on using music and dance to promote educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen and explore the potential reasons behind their viewpoints. Moreover, the study aims to put forward implications

for educational policies and pedagogy, with the intent of suggesting improvements for IE in China. The results and analysis might be helpful for other countries facing similar challenges when improving educational inclusion.

The intention is not to discover teacher perceptions in the context of China as a whole since the country is vast and diverse. I choose Shenzhen as the focus of inquiry-based on its necessity and manageability. First, as one of the most well-developed cities in China with better educational resources and opportunities than many, Shenzhen could be the leader in this educational trend and a precursor guiding the future development of IE across the country. Shenzhen is worth investigation because of the way its education system has developed owing to its capacity to implement educational reforms alongside rapid economic development; it is a well-developed city with a vibrant economy and ranked as the eighth largest financial centre in the world according to the Global Financial Centres Index 28 (Wardle and Mainelli, 2020). In addition, I have friends and family members who were working in primary schools in Shenzhen, which helped me gain access to schools (see Section 5.4).

In summary, previous research relating to inclusive education in the Chinese context is limited; more studies are needed to deeply explore teachers' roles and perceptions regarding inclusive education (Deng et al., 2017; Cai et al., 2019; Peng and Kang, 2020). In particular, the idea of using music and dance as a tool to engage children with ASN and establish a more inclusive environment at primary schools is relatively new in China; there has been minimal research conducted in this field in Shenzhen before now. Apart from a wish to fill the academic and knowledge gap by researching IE in China, my personal experience also significantly influenced my decision.

1.4 Personal Motivation

In this research, I am specifically interested in the process of including more children with different needs in primary schools through the performing arts, especially dance and music activities. The initial idea was derived from my personal experiences, including study and teaching experiences. Performing arts, especially music and dance, have affected me deeply throughout my life.

With a bachelor's degree in Performing Arts and a master's in Education, I have been practising ballroom dancing for nine years, and I have seen first-hand how art can positively change one's life. As a child, I moved three times from one city to another in China. Each time I moved to a new place, arts education activities helped me feel part of the new community. For example, the group dance performance at a welcome party or New Year celebration gathered my classmates and me, giving me opportunities to interact more with peers.

After leaving school, I completed a bachelor's degree in Performance Arts Education at Jiangxi Normal University in China. During my undergraduate years, I worked as a dance teacher for children in an after-school dance studio for three years, and after that, I taught dance at two universities in China. These experiences helped me gain a better practical understanding of teaching, and it underlined for me just how important art participation could be for people. Then, I obtained my master's degree in Educational Studies at Glasgow, where I wrote my master's dissertation on the development of IE in Scotland and China on both political and practical levels (Zhu, 2017). Starting the doctorate shortly after completing my master's, I believe this was the perfect time to investigate my initial ideas regarding using art education to offer better quality education to more children.

Having grown up and attended school in China, I am familiar with the culture and the education system. Furthermore, my bachelor's degree at Jiangxi Normal University focused on cultivating qualified teachers in Chinese schools. Therefore, choosing China as my focus was a logical decision. It enabled me to review the literature on educational inclusion for children with ASN worldwide while also allowing me to reflect on policy and practice in Chinese schools.

1.5 Research Aim and Questions

This study aims to explore what teachers believe about the conceptualisation of IE and to what extent they implement current IE policies through music and dance in primary education settings (both in private and state-funded schools) in

Shenzhen. It will discuss how teachers' backgrounds and experience could influence their perceptions and implementation of improving the inclusive learning environment in primary schools and classrooms.

An interpretative approach is adopted (see Chapter Five) to allow the researcher to focus on different perceptions of and responses to the improvement of educational inclusion. The research method was designed based on the research aim and questions, and three questions were shaped by a critical distillation of the evidence from the existing theoretical knowledge, research and policies that will be reviewed in Chapters Two, Three and Four. The LRC programme has been developed in China for decades for improving equal education for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties (Cao, 1988; Deng and Zhu, 2016); meanwhile, relevant policies and regulations were enacted to guide inclusive practice in China (Xiao, 2007; Zhan, 2010). There is evidence that teachers play a crucial role in implementing inclusive work (Florian, 2009), so it is valuable to discover how their beliefs and self-efficacy are influenced and what is their daily practice for meeting children's diverse needs at the school level. Moreover, in the global context, many attempts have been made to improve social inclusion and educational inclusion through music and dance (Welch et al., 2020; Surujlal, 2013); however, there is a lack of research focused on using performing arts as the tool to improve the quality of inclusive education in China.

Therefore, this study aims to explore educators' perceptions of their preparation for promoting educational inclusion, and their understanding of the role of music and dance in improving inclusive practice in Shenzhen. Based on the evidence with my understanding, three main questions were developed:

1. What is the influence, if any, of teachers' backgrounds on the perceived possibilities of inclusive education and the employment of music and dance activities for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?

2. What are teachers' perspectives on the practical factors hindering and facilitating the development of inclusive education and the employment of music and dance to include children with additional support needs in primary schools in Shenzhen?

3. What are the similarities and differences between policy goals and teachers' views on practices for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?

Furthermore, I aim to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches adopted by policymakers and educators to promote educational inclusion. This will, I hope, provide a deeper understanding of social and cultural inclusion as a whole. Lastly, I intend to offer suggestions for future studies on how to provide more inclusive educational settings through performing art education in Shenzhen and other urban areas where similar challenges have been experienced.

1.6 General Definitions of Key Terms

Because of the complexities of terms related to IE in different contexts, it is essential to present working definitions of some key terms used in this thesis. This section outlines the definitions used for the following key terms: Inclusive education, Children with additional support needs, Performing arts, Music and dance teacher, Special education teacher, Class tutor and Mainstream school.

1.6.1 Inclusive Education (IE)

UNESCO (2017, 2020) has provided definitions of inclusion and equity: 'Inclusion is a process that helps overcome barriers limiting the presence, participation and achievement of learners' (UNESCO, 2020, p.24); and 'Equity is about ensuring fairness, where the education of all learners is seen as having equal importance' (UNESCO, 2017, p.13). Inclusive education is by no means a clearly and universally defined or understood concept (e.g. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006; Haug, 2017; Hardy and Woodcock, 2015). In this study, IE is defined following Ainscow's (2020) suggestion that IE 'involves a process that is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers to the presence, participation and achievement of all students' (p.9). Moreover, educational inclusion refers to providing quality and equity education for all children, and it

emphasises the importance of preparing schools to meet children's different needs (Ainscow and Sandill, 2010).

1.6.2 Children with Additional Support Needs (ASN)

The definition of children with additional support needs (ASN) is adopted from the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, and it lists potential factors that might impact children's ability to learn: a) learning environment, b) family circumstances, c) disability or health, and d) social or emotional factors. I decided to adopt this term to eliminate categorising children, which accords with my conception of inclusive education. I believe that any child might have learning difficulties at different moments because of their physical, emotional, environmental, or family issues, and I assume that IE supports providing equitable education for all children regardless of their background, physical condition, and abilities.

1.6.3 Performing Arts

Music and dance are considered as the main forms of performing arts in this inquiry as they are compulsory activities in primary schools in China. The drama was not considered for this study because it is not included in the curriculum for primary school education in China (Cui, Lei and Zhou, 2020). Likewise, music school teachers in primary schools in China teach music and dance but not drama, as their educational background and teaching certificates mainly focus on music and dance (Dang and Chen, 2021).

1.6.4 Music and Dance Teachers

Music and dance teachers are teachers with educational backgrounds in performing arts who have completed teaching certificates that qualify them to teach music and dance classes. In China, primary school music and dance teachers are specialists; they studied for a minimum of three to four years and

obtained degrees in relevant majors from universities or colleges (Yu and Leung, 2019).

1.6.5 Special Education Teachers

Special education teachers in mainstream schools are a recent development in China, as the authorities have started to manage resource rooms to support the learning of children with ASN in mainstream schools since 1997 (Poon-McBrayer, 2017; Liu and Zhang, 2017). In this study, special education teachers are teachers with educational backgrounds in special education or inclusive education who work in resource rooms offering additional support and assistance for children with ASN in mainstream schools. Special education teachers do not teach in classrooms for all children, but they provide after-class tutoring and activities in resource rooms for children with ASN. Special education teachers study for at least three to four years at the university level, which develops them as specialists in the field of inclusive education or special education (Chen et al., 2020).

1.6.6 Class Tutors

Class tutors are teachers in charge of the whole class, teaching one specific subject in the mainstream classroom. Class tutors are responsible for delivering schools' instructions and guidance to teachers and parents. They are required to be familiar with the situation and progress of every child in the class. Class sizes in the study vary, ranging between 6 to 65 in both state and private primary schools. The average class size of state-funded primary schools is around 56 to 65 (Ministry of Education, 2018).

1.6.7 Mainstream Schools

All ten participating schools in the study are mainstream (as opposed to specialist schools for children with ASN). Of the ten participating schools, seven were state primary schools accepting children who live in nearby

neighbourhoods, and three were private schools with the freedom to enrol children without considering their home addresses (see Section 5.4.3 for a profile of all participating schools).

1.7 The Significance of the Study

I hope this study is significant for four reasons:

1. Considering the number of children with learning difficulties in China (e.g. Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2018; Lei and Yang, 2020), studies on IE in the Chinese context are limited in the existing literature; this study will help add more knowledge and reflection to the literature and official statistics (e.g. Ministry of Education, 2014; 2017).
2. None of the existing studies collected data on both general education teachers and special education teachers in mainstream schools in Shenzhen. This study is focused on developing an in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives, thereby providing a more comprehensive review of the current situation and development of IE in Shenzhen.
3. Limited research relates to teachers' perceptions of IE and performing arts in China. A few studies investigated Chinese' teachers' beliefs and values in IE terms; however, the idea of integrating music and dance in IE was not emphasised (e.g. Lei and Yang, 2020; Liu and Jiang, 2008). This study collected data from teachers about their views of the perceived benefits of music and dance in IE and their daily inclusive practices.
4. Based on the interview transcripts from 34 participants about inclusive practice in ten schools in Shenzhen and the review of current IE policies and regulations in China, it is expected that the study will yield information that can be taken into consideration in future policymaking and broaden thinking during the planning of successful IE teaching strategies.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis comprises eight chapters. After the opening chapter introducing the study, I review the relevant literature, outline the methodology, and discuss the

data in subsequent chapters. The conclusions and implications of the study are laid out in the final chapters. The outline of all chapters are as follows:

Chapter Two reviews educational inclusion both in the global context and in China specifically. I show that the concept of inclusive education may be different in various regions and that the idea of what inclusive education is has been frequently updated. Promoting educational equality is consistently the core objective for most of the world, but the implementation of IE faces different challenges for practitioners in other countries. Thus, this chapter focuses on teachers' perceptions of IE policy and practices within the global context; relevant research is analysed, and teachers' beliefs, self-efficacy, and concerns around IE are considered.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the literature on music and dance in improving educational inclusion. I provide an overview of the reported benefits music and dance can bring to IE, looking back on previous research in this area and connecting those studies with this research. Furthermore, I outline the feasibility of using dance and music education to create a more inclusive learning environment for children with different needs. The reasons I choose to examine previous research in the global context are not only to provide a broader view to discuss this topic but also to the limited nature of research into using dance and music to improve educational inclusion in China. Research on teachers' perspectives is particularly limited, and this limitation is the gap identified for this study to focus on.

Chapter Four interrogates the legal and policy developments in promoting IE in China since 1986. The educational systems and policies for improving IE and curriculum settings are also considered. Based on a review of relevant policy documents, I examine the improvements in inclusive policies over the last two decades and argue for the apparent insufficiency of policymaking and policy implementation.

Chapter Five explains the qualitative methodology employed in this research. I present the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methods used to frame this study. I also detail the study's design and fieldwork development process in China. Issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations are discussed before introducing data analysis processes.

Chapter Six presents the study's empirical findings in seven parts according to the main seven themes emerging from the interviews and research diary. These seven themes include the following: Teachers' perceptions of improving educational inclusion through music and dance; Expectations of creating an inclusive learning environment; Teachers' values and expectations regarding 'achievement'; Teachers' commitment to their careers; Inclusive education in practice at the school level; Teachers' theoretical knowledge of inclusive education policy and Teachers' consciousness of children's background. All seven themes and sixteen sub-themes are listed with explanations and direct quotes from the original data for clarification.

Chapter Seven begins with presenting major points from the six Key Findings in response to the research questions. Key Findings One and Two reflect how teachers beliefs and self-efficacy of IE could be affected by their different backgrounds. However, they all believed that music and dance could be a useful tool to improve inclusion at schools. Key Findings Three and Four examine practical factors that hindered inclusive practice, including the lack of continuing professional development for teachers, poor school collaboration, insufficient educational resources and limited parental support. Key Finding Five presents some participants' experiences of successful inclusive practice, comprising the development of an inclusive climate and achievements of the Learning in Regular Classroom (LRC) programme. The last one, Key Finding Six, highlights a gap between statutory policy and school realities in IE. I then continue with a discussion of the six Key Findings in the light of each research question in connection with the relevant literature, policy documents and theoretical ideas. This discussion chapter provides the evidence for answering the research questions in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight answers the three main research questions before summarising the research journey and highlighting its original theoretical and practical contributions. I continue to examine the practical implications and recommendations for future policy, practice, and research in IE. This chapter concludes with the limitations of the study, suggestions for further research and final reflections.

Chapter Two: Literature Review on Inclusive Education

2.1 Introduction to Chapter Two

Since 1994, UNESCO has, through the Salamanca Statement, acknowledged that educational exclusion might create adverse outcomes for students, schools, and even societies (UNESCO, 1994). Moreover, UNESCO has insisted that schools have a responsibility to accommodate and include all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, ethnic, linguistic, or other characteristics (UNESCO, 1994; 2020).

In this chapter, the concept and development of IE will be discussed within a global context and in China's context, specifically. The chapter is organised into three main sections: Section 2.2 focuses on identifying the concept and overall development of IE globally and in China. Section 2.3 reflects on the current challenges of IE in different areas worldwide and in China specifically. Section 2.4 discusses teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy in IE and their concerns regarding successful inclusive practice.

To search for relevant studies, many electronic databases (including the British Education Index, PsychINFO, ERIC, OECD, Social Science Citation Index, Taylor and Frances Group, the University of Glasgow's online library, CNKI) were utilised. I started with a shorter list of keywords that resulted in thousands of publications that were difficult to process, so I added more relevant keywords to narrow down my list. The following keywords relevant to inclusive education were used for searching: 'inclusive education', 'inclusion', 'integration', 'mainstreaming', 'additional educational needs', 'special needs children', 'children with ASN', 'impaired', 'special educational needs', 'impairment', 'disorders', 'disabled', 'handicapped', and 'disabilities', 'learning difficulties', 'additional supports', 'inclusive policies', 'inclusive practices', 'learning in regular classroom' (for China only).

2.2 Inclusive Education in the Global Context and China

This section discusses the concept and development of IE worldwide and in China specifically, taking into account the important contribution of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). In 1994, 25 international organisations and 88 national government representatives gathered in Salamanca for an educational meeting to enhance and safeguard the rights of every child to receive a respectful and decent education (Ibid). At that meeting, they drafted the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, which begins with a commitment to Education for All - a milestone in the development of IE. The statement strengthened and re-emphasised the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1993). The Salamanca Statement proclaims the inviolability of the right to fundamental education, recognition of diversity, and access for children with special needs to regular schooling:

> Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide practical education to the majority of children, and improve the efficiency and, ultimately, the cost-effectiveness, of the entire education system. (UNESCO, 1994, p.viii).

The ideas emanating from the Salamanca Statement have been consistently supported and followed by many countries, and with it, different understandings of inclusion and policies have emerged (Ainscow, 2002; UNESCO, 2017; UNESCO, 2020). Globally, due to various geographical factors and different cultural and historical backgrounds within different countries, a variety of views and considerations regarding inclusion and inclusive education currently exist in parallel with one another (Clark, Dyson and Millward, 1995; (Florian, Black-Hawkins and Rouse, 2017); Ainscow, Slee and Best, 2019).

Inclusive education can be a complex concept that is difficult to define, opening up a range of conceptions and thoughts worldwide. In the global context, IE is

increasingly recognised as a reform that supports and embraces diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001). Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997) describe IE as being “a global agenda” because it involves not only the provision of appropriate and effective education for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) in mainstream schools but also promotes an underlying development in society’s attitudes towards people who might come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, inclusion and IE are not defined as being the particular treatment or care for children with disabilities in a special and excluded setting (segregation); instead, it is considered an entitlement for everyone seeking support to be supported in an inclusive environment without the necessity of being segregated (Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty, 1997). It is important to note that the original notion of IE is rooted in critiques of special education that raised concerns about segregated education, inappropriate settlement of students from minority groups in special education provision, and unsuitable expectations regarding students with ASN (Florian, 2015).

It can be seen that there are various understandings of ‘inclusive education’ owing to different cultural backgrounds. Some people insist that inclusive education is a further development of special education (Boyer, 1979); however, other people believe that inclusive education is not a synonym for special education at all but an alternative to a traditional educational arrangement for children with disabilities or additional needs (Ballard, 2000; Ainscow, Slee and Best, 2019). From my perspective, the concept and objective of inclusive education align with Ballard’s perspective as it involves identifying and removing all barriers for all children in schools, thereby including all of them and providing them with high-quality attention, care, and education (Ballard, 2000). In the following subsection, I will explore the development of IE in the global context and in China specifically.

2.2.1 Understanding Inclusive Education in the Global Context: From integration to inclusion

Before exploring the development and situation of IE in China, it is worthy of driving into the overview of IE in the global context, as IE has been recognised as a global trend, and it could be necessary to look at it from different contexts. Through looking up IE's development and challenges in diverse countries, potential comparison and reflection could be generated to analyse IE in China. In this subsection, I will elucidate the transition from integration to inclusion and the terminology changes in the field of IE.

UNESCO informed the world of the latest thinking and practices about IE globally in 2019 as a part of celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Salamanca conference, collating information from Latin America, Africa, Asia, India, Europe, and countries in the Pacific region about their recent developments in IE (UNESCO, 2020). It concluded that the Salamanca conference led to a series of regional initiatives for inclusion in many countries and encouraging developments around the world.

Internationally, research from a social justice perspective has recommended moving away from integration to inclusion (Rustemier, 2002; Ainscow, 2002, Lo, 2007; Furrer and Skinner, 2003; Florian, 2014). The difference between integration and inclusion in education relates to access and quality; integration focuses more on the rights of children with ASN to attend mainstream school, while inclusive education tends to focus more on ensuring the quality of learning experiences of children with ASN in mainstream schools (UNESCO, 2020; Lo, 2007). As ideas regarding inclusive education are updated alongside continuous reflection about inclusive practices, many researchers (e.g. Florian, 2019; Ainscow, Slee and Best, 2019; Bond et al., 2007; Prince and Hadwin, 2013) believe that in the twenty-first century, in order to cope with the new challenges for inclusion, it is necessary for inclusive education to be reconsidered and deconstructed further from integration, both in terms of knowledge and practice.

The idea of inclusion has taken the place of integration and become an educational policy trend worldwide, emphasising that inclusion has been widely accepted as a general education principle (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Hornby, 2014; Robinson, 2020). Integrating children with ASN into mainstream schools in an inappropriate way might cause them to experience severe isolation and segregation, thereby distorting the meaning of mainstreaming (Forlin, 2010). Therefore, the term 'inclusive education' has been adopted worldwide, advocating that mainstream schools should address different forms of exclusion and inequality across all children's school access and learning processes. Even though the idea of IE with equity is promoted worldwide, it was suggested that analysing the local situation and background is essential to identify and address barriers to improving education for all, rather than importing practices from elsewhere without modification (UNESCO, 2020).

It was interesting to note that there has been a global debate and change on the terminology of IE. In some contexts, official statements tend to use 'inclusion' rather than 'integration', for example, England (Norwich, Warnock and Terzi, 2010) and Scotland (BlackHawkins, Florian, and Rouse, 2007); but some countries prefer to use 'integration' or 'special needs education' instead of 'inclusion', such as Germany (Paseka and Schwab, 2020) and the United States (Dorries and Haller, 2001; Bemiller, 2019).

It is not surprising that because of the various contexts of countries across the globe, different world areas have different understandings of these updated concepts of inclusion and implement them differently (Krischler, Powell and Pit-Ten, 2019). In England, the Warnock Report in 1978 signalled a transition from the medical model of disability towards a social one, and the term "handicapped children" was replaced by children with special educational needs and difficulties (SEND) in this report (Warnock, 1978). In Scotland, the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (amended in 2009) replaced the term 'special educational needs'(SEN) with 'additional support needs' (ASN). The term ASN provides a broader definition of special educational

needs to include learners who may require additional support for any reason. This might include, for example, those who experience social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties, learners for whom English is an additional language, and those who are looked after by the local authority. In the United States, although the term ‘inclusion’ is not mentioned in federal legislation in the US, some of its terminology about IE reflect inclusion in reality: to give some examples, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Zero Reject and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Biklen, 1982; Haug, 2017). These terminologies and a series of laws and legislation delivered both information and conceptions about protecting the educational rights and equity of children with disabilities and learning difficulties. To some extent, any use or shift of terminology and language of inclusive education might reflect the different notions, priorities and ideologies present when educating children with different needs in the mainstream setting.

Therefore, IE represents a shift from pre-identifying children requiring special needs with a particular category to eliminating barriers to their learning process and participation in mainstream schooling (Florian, Black-Hawkins and Rouse, 2017). Furthermore, apart from the divergence regarding the notion of inclusion and IE, the theories in different countries on defining children according to their individual educational needs are not in agreement.

2.2.2 Inclusive Education in China: Learning in regular classrooms (LRC)

In the 1980s, a new concept of special education concerning 'inclusion' and 'mainstreaming' was first introduced, then gradually being accepted in China (Lee, 1995). In 1997, with the first spread of these Western educational theories and practices, China began attempts to set up an inclusive education system with Chinese characteristics called 'Sui ban jiu du' (Learning in the regular classroom)– a strategy and programme of improving IE in China (Cao, 1988; Liu, Wu and Chen, 2013). 'Sui ban jiu du', literally translated as 'learning in regular classrooms' (LRC), refers to an educational format of provision for the aim of children with learning or physical difficulties receiving general education in regular classes together with their peers without disabilities (Chen, 2004).

From a historical perspective, some literature (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004; Ye and Piao, 1995; Piao, 1992) has indicated that the origin of special education can be traced back 2000 years to an influential Confucian text, The Book of Rites:

> People should respect others' parents and treat others' children like their own: all those bachelors, widows, orphans, single, handicapped and sick should be supported. (Piao, 1992, p.35)

Inclusive researchers Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) reclaim that Confucian ideology should be considered significant when examining the development of special education in China because it can be recognised as the foundation of Chinese culture and political development over the past two centuries. Confucius ideology emphasises the importance of morals, order, harmony and mutual obligations, strictly abiding by a hierarchy rising from ordinary citizens to the emperor (Liang,1995). For the past many decades, people with disabilities have been occupying the lowest social status despite the existence of many sympathetic attitudes (Yang and Wang, 1994). Under the influence of the global trend of promoting IE, China started to realise the importance of equal opportunities for children with disabilities, and the first special school for blind children was founded in the nineteenth century (Pang and Richey, 2006). Since then, China has been making many efforts to develop the educational provision of providing equal opportunities for children with disabilities. In 1949, 42 special schools were established to serve more than 2,000 students with hearing or eyesight problems (Ibid.). However, owing to the political disturbances from the 1950s to the 1970s, the number of schools and the enrolment rates of students with disabilities failed to increase (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004).

In the 1980s, during the open reform policy and economic reconstruction, education was identified as the best route to develop technology and science (Chen, 1996). In 1986, the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China was issued, which mandated that "all children who have reached the age of six shall be enrolled in school and receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years" (National People’s Congress, 1986, p.41). This law

enshrined the rights of all children to receive free and compulsory education, and those with disabilities were included. Moreover, with the passing of this Compulsory Education Law, schools were requested to accept children with ASN, and the enrolment rates of students with disabilities became an essential component of assessment during official local education inspections (Liang, 1995).

The LRC model has been heavily promoted over the last 35 years in China owing to the many benefits it provides, as some researchers have mentioned. Xiao (2007) considered that,

> The LRC model means that children receive special education in general education classrooms, and it is a successful education experiment, an educational innovation, and an effective educational approach for the conditions in China. (p. 13)

Additionally, Deng and Zhu (2007) also express that,

> LRC is a form of special education for students with disabilities explored by China's special education professionals under the influence of Western mainstreaming in light of China's special education, and it enables children with disabilities to enter ordinary schools in their vicinity and to undergo compulsory education in a fairly economical and rapid manner. (pp. 23-24)

Although the goal of providing free education for all school-age children was promising, there were still about 34 million people with disabilities being excluded from education in 1988 (Deng, 1990). This large number is not only because the population of disabled people was vast but was also because of the lack of trained educators and special schools for educating and accommodating such a considerable number of students. The failure to accomplish a higher enrolment rate challenged both professionals and the government to identify how to provide children with disabilities equal education (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). This problem was solved partly by introducing LRC and the concept of IE, which was imported from Western countries. Then, a 'Golden Key' project was established, which initially integrated blind students into general

classrooms. This project trained 314 'Golden Key'-inclusive educators and administrators and sponsored eight professionals to receive advanced know-how training, thereby formulating more comprehensive and feasible policies for China (Jeffrey, 2011).

Consequently, LRC, a crucial movement for inclusive education in China, was instituted in response to domestic challenges and international trends. LRC aims to offer equal educational opportunities to children with disabilities and to guarantee they can be educated in mainstream schools (Deng and Manset, 2000). From a central government standpoint, as the new special education model, LRC was endorsed as an official policy by the State Council (Ibid).

China offers more than one option for students with disabilities and their families; they can choose special schools, special classes or mainstream schools with the LRC programme (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). By the end of 2018, 332,384 children (264,102 in 2008) with disabilities had been accepted in the LRC program and were studying in mainstream schools, and 271,519 children (153,338 in 2008) with disabilities were being educated in special schools (Lei and Yang, 2020). According to these national statistics, learning in mainstream schools has been the preference for receiving education for children with disabilities in compulsory education in China. In addition, compared with the past, LRC has significantly developed in China, and I present its development divided into three main stages.

The first stage I will call the exploration and pilot period (1986-1993), the second is the rapid improvement period (1993-2014), and the final stage is the transformation and upgrade period (2014-present). During the exploration and pilot period, many initiatives and laws relating to protecting all children's educational rights were enacted, as introduced above: the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China 1986 and the Compulsory Education Law. Meanwhile, the LRC programme started engaging with pilot schools, targeting children with hearing, intellectual, and visual impairments. Between 1986 and 1993, the number of children with disabilities in mainstream schools increased almost fivefold, from 16,216 to 82,175.

Within the rapid improvement period (1993-2014), more national documents about LRC were developed, which specified the measures to be implemented, and many national plans started to emphasise the importance of improving LRC in different areas in China, such as China's National Plan for Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development for the Years 2010–2020'. These documents will be analysed further in Chapter Four. According to the Educational Statistics Yearbook of China (1997-2006), the target groups for LRC were broadened into four categories: children with hearing impairments, intellectual impairments, physical impairments and others. More schools started to follow these national instructions and accept children with different types of impairment; one of the positive results was the number of children with visual impairment studied in mainstream schools in 1994 increased 22.93 times by 2014.

In the transformation and upgrade period (2014-present), there was a significant transition of LRC targets from the enrolment rate of children with ASN to the enrolment rate and quality of education for children with ASN in mainstream schools. The importance of developing qualified teachers and building up resource rooms for IE has been recognised. In addition, compared with the time before 2014, the target groups in LRC have been further expanded; apart from children with hearing impairments, visual impairments, physical impairments, more types of learning difficulties were identified: language difficulties, physical difficulties, psychological difficulties and multiple difficulties (Deng and Zhu, 2016; An, Hu and Horn, 2018).

Between 1986 and now, a considerable amount of effort both in policy and practice has been made to improve educational inclusion, such as the LRC programme, the Golden Key scheme, China's National Plan for Medium- and Long-term Education Reform and Development for the Years 2010–2020 (Xiao, 2007; Zhan, 2010). The presence of LRC in China mainly serves children with disabilities and allows them or their families to choose to be educated in special schools, special classes or LRC programmes. Accepting children with disabilities into regular schools has been recognised as a more cost-effective approach than establishing separate new special schools for the state (Liu and Jiang, 2008).

Despite this acknowledgement of the accomplishments of the Chinese LRC programme, different reflections and judgements have emerged nationally and internationally regarding this new educational model and its implementation. On the one hand, the programme is perceived by some domestic and overseas researchers as having the same meaning and content as 'inclusive education' (Potts, 2000). On the other hand, it is critiqued that the Chinese LRC model is another continuous form of special education because it focuses more on the educational opportunities of children with disabilities rather than the educational equity and quality (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). However, according to recent political and educational orientation in LRC, many more children's different difficulties have been recognised and highlighted. Educational institutions and schools have been preparing and restructuring to accept children with additional needs rather than particular disabilities. Although more children with ASN enrolling in mainstream schools could be seen as the evidence of IE's improvement in China, the enrolment rate of children with disabilities and difficulties in mainstream schools was not the only goal for LRC, and more importantly, high-quality education and equity for children with ASN has now become the highest priority. Equipping resource rooms and developing special education teachers in mainstream schools have become critical trends for more districts in China.

2.3 Current Challenges Facing Inclusive Education

In the years following the Salamanca conference, many countries started to pursue IE at both policy and practical levels. However, the notion and forms of IE have raised important questions about the constitutional practice, evidence of good practice, and assessment methods, which have dominated the practical level. This section will analyse the current challenges and barriers of implementing IE. I will mainly focus on the Chinese perspective as this study explores the current situation with IE in China.

2.3.1 Current Challenges Facing Inclusive Education in the Global Context

In 2020, UNESCO published a new report entitled Towards inclusion in education: Status, trends and challenges, which examined the development of IE since the

Salamanca Statement in 1994 and indicated a series of challenges impeding the development of IE in the global context: the transformation of educational systems; teachers' preparation for IE; and inclusion in community and society.

First, the transformation of educational systems should be included in the policy for addressing barriers and finding more effective ways to engage all learners in IE (UNESCO, 2020; Clark, Dyson and Millward, 2001). In many countries, IE is still recognised as an approach for assisting children with disabilities within mainstream settings; however, the international trend in IE tends to be more about supporting and welcoming diversity amongst all learners rather than those with disabilities alone. Broadening the concept of IE to incorporate diversity in a greater dimension could avoid neglecting to address some invisible exclusions. As "exclusion has many forms and expressions" (UNESCO, 2020, p.26), people could be excluded because of issues within physical, social, psychological, racial and other dimensions.

However, transforming into a new inclusive education system is the most challenging part of promoting IE in different contexts (Clark, Dyson and Millward, 2001). This is true not only because of the obstacles presented by previous inappropriate policies but also because of the difficulties posed by the many expected and unexpected challenges that emerge in the process of implementing policies: for example, a school's facilities and settings not being improved in line with policies strongly supporting IE (Hodkinson, 2010).

Resource rooms have been one of the most prevalent measures in the IE system, and several studies have examined the benefits of resource-room settings in the IE programme as an effort to integrate children with ASN and provide intervention and assistance for them to achieve more both in academic and non-academic aspects (Whinnery et al., 1995; Jenkins and Heinen, 1989; Ziadat, 2014; Kizir, 2020). However, some researchers have questioned whether resource rooms might cause children with ASN to be excluded within mainstream schools because they are separated from the rest of school as a room for children with ASN, in particular, to receive specific instruction (Lindsay, 2007; Dyson et al., 2004).

In addition, within an inclusive educational system, the design of the inclusive curriculum and assessment procedures for all learners need to be improved in many countries (UNESCO, 2020). The concept of IE questions most of a mainstream school's traditional way of organising and arranging teaching activities; therefore, implementing IE means modifying the original curriculum and assessment to provide quality education for children with ASN in mainstream schools. According to UNESCO (2009), changing to an inclusive curriculum is significant for supporting flexible learning and assessment, and inclusive curricula represent the opposite of the high academic and heavily overloaded curriculum.

Second, at the policy-implementation level, teachers' preparation and continuing professional development (CPD) in IE has been considered an area of concern (UNESCO, 2020). Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) conducted a study into in-service teachers' education for inclusion in Cyprus, and they suggested that a more reliable CPD for teachers with international theoretical and practical approaches to inclusion was urgently needed as teachers' conceptualisations of inclusion were problematic due to the insufficiencies of the current in-service teacher training course. Participants in Symeonidou and Phtiaka's study (2009) tended towards demonstrating medical and charitable notions of disability and favoured special schooling for specific groups of children, believing that inclusion only happens with specific prerequisites.

However, the concept of IE has been promoted by authorities internationally as a broadened idea related to education for all and embraces and celebrates diversities. It would confuse educators when they are obliged to apply inclusive concepts without being provided with clear directions (Booth and Ainscow, 1998). Therefore, it is necessary to make a strong, clear statement to allay any doubts educators may have regarding IE. Similarly, Göransson and Nilholm (2014) critically reviewed the lack of a clear or practical definition of inclusion, suggesting that more theoretically informed work is needed in inclusive practice. The main challenges for many countries stem from how educators enact inclusive practices. Thus, it would be crucial to deliver updated conceptualisations and practical instructions in CPD for all teachers in IE, as they are the first point in promoting IE at schools. Without an effective inclusive

educational system and preparation for teachers in inclusion, other relevant facilities and placements, such as the resource room, cannot be fully functional (McBrayer, 2016; Breton and Donaldson, 1991).

Third, the shortage of inclusion in the community and society would negatively affect the implementation of IE (UNESCO, 2020). Social inclusion could significantly impact people's dignity, an impact which could increase or be reduced through individuals' behaviour. Göransson and Nilholm (2014) emphasised that social effects are one of the central factors of the notion of inclusion, but it is sometimes neglected in the development of an inclusive environment for children. Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003) suggested that to increase community support for inclusion, it is essential to combat negative stereotypes about ASN children and provide accurate information about children's developmental potential.

2.3.2 Current Challenges Facing Inclusive Education in China

China has made significant effort and progress in promoting educational inclusion over the last few decades; however, IE in China continues to be a challenge in terms of achieving the goal of providing quality and equitable education for all learners in mainstream settings. According to recent literature, three main challenges are facing IE in China: i) the lack of proper CPD for teachers in IE; ii) an insufficiently inclusive education system; iii) attitudinal problems in the country. These three issues will now be discussed.

The lack of proper CPD for teachers in IE

Because of the lack of appropriate CPD for teachers in IE, teachers are generally not optimistic about the feasibility of IE and not confident about coping with the difficulties of teaching ASN children in a diverse classroom in China (Su, Guo and Wang, 2020; Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004; Deng and Harris, 2008; Qian and Jiang, 2004). Su, Guo and Wang (2020) found that teachers had doubts about IE's benefits and were concerned about disturbances and low effectiveness in the inclusive classroom. One important reason for this was that teachers were not supported by effective CPD in IE. Many Chinese scholars also reported that teachers could experience failures in meeting children's needs because they

were not sufficiently trained in theoretical and practical knowledge of IE, thereby decreasing their confidence and faith in promoting IE (Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2018; Yan and Deng, 2019; Yu, Su and Liu, 2011; Wang and Wang, 2019).

The insufficient inclusive education system

China is a country with a population of 1.3 billion and the most extensive education system globally (Liu, Wu and Chen, 2013; Richardson, 2013). Many professionals, educators, parents and policymakers have made considerable efforts to improve the quality of the country's LRC programme and special education. Nevertheless, against a backdrop of other issues, including population pressure, social pressure, and economic capacity, the idea of developing inclusive education is highly controversial and problematic (Lo, 2011). Taking class size as an example: a typical Chinese primary school class (from Grade one to Grade six) contains between 40 and 75 students, has only one teacher for each subject and few, low-quality learning assistance (Liu and Jiang, 2008). Moreover, Deng et al. (2017) reported that pressures on teachers to perform academic testing and teaching with large classroom sizes prevented them from providing quality education to children with ASN.

Moreover, the teacher has to adopt a whole-class teaching model in each class because of the competitive educational culture and traditional instructional practice, using the same textbook, same teaching strategies, and same assessments (Feng, 2012). These objective conditions prevent teachers from employing individualised teaching methods and curricula to provide the necessary support for those who need it. Indeed, it was relatively effective when teaching information from textbooks to an overcrowded classroom was the expectation (Peng, 2010). The method was also considered a practical way to prepare students for the stiff competition they would encounter for limited college places. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that although the whole-class teaching setting may echo the rigorous and highly competitive Chinese examination system (Li, 2011), it cannot accomplish the provision of inclusive education and the LRC programme that aims to meet all students' special educational needs. Additionally, until today, students' test results have been the standard used by teachers to assess their teaching abilities, especially middle-school entrance exams and college entrance exams (Liu, 2009).

Therefore, there is a dampening effect on teachers' enthusiasm and patience for encouraging children with ASN to engage with and learn in their classes (Deng and Manset, 2000). Moreover, even though some teachers are willing to employ more inclusive teaching methods in the class, most of them are unqualified to do so because there is no related qualification or training required for regular class tutors who might work in the LRC programme or mainstream classrooms in China. According to some western researchers, without special training, teachers lack the knowledge and skills to provide appropriate teaching to students with ASN in a regular class (Ainscow, 2000; Florian, 2014). Therefore, optimising the educational setting and providing training in effective teaching methods for qualified teachers has become an urgent priority for improving inclusive education (Florian, 2014).

In China, the existing educational model and system present some major challenges for individualised teaching practices that cater to diversity and children with ASN in mainstream schools (Deng and Harris, 2008). China has found its own IE system, more straightforward and less systematic than others, with which it has had some progress (Jeffrey, 2011); however, in China, the assessment criterion is still mainly rooted in the medical model of disability, which is slightly different from the updated international trend. China focuses on identifying and remedying deficits rather than recognising and capitalising on students' strengths (Deng, Poon-McBrayer and Farnsworth, 2001). Compared with the Chinese assessment criteria of disabilities, the WHO Disability Assessment Schedule 2.0. (2013) provides a broader scope of criteria to define the special needs of a given population, which relates to human cognition, mobility, self-care, participation, life activities and isolation. In addition, in terms of instrument usage, many instruments are imported from Western countries to China, such as the Draw a Person Test, Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale IV, and so forth. However, some of these tools were misused to detect adaptive behaviours among children, whereas they were designed to determine children's learning 'disabilities' (Worrell and Taber, 2009). This shows that, although the objective of China's inclusive education system is in line with some international and advanced concepts, owing to the shortage of advanced diagnostic measures, experienced professionals and trained psychologists, there

are some problems with the procedures of identifying and diagnosing a child's degree of disability (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004).

Under China's inclusive education system, the LRC programme was supposed to embody the concept of inclusion, but, to a degree, it reflects more a shortage of relevant personnel, limited financial and educational resources and geographic considerations (Deng and Manset, 2000; Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). More seriously, even in schools that had joined the LRC programme, according to researchers' observations, many students with disabilities were still sitting alone and isolated from class activities. In some cases, students with disabilities had registered with schools but remained at home and were excluded from mainstream schooling (Deng and Manset, 2000).

The country's attitudinal problems

When considering the barriers to the development of inclusive education in China, we cannot ignore the attitudinal problems within the country, especially the social attitudes and attitudes of educators and parents towards students with disabilities (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). In terms of social attitudes, it is necessary to underline how the traditional culture, underpinned by Confucian concepts, emphasises expressions of love and charity towards persons with disabilities but mainly in segregated settings. This means that many people support education to children with disabilities with sympathy and love, but some of them still believe that children/ students/ persons with disabilities should be placed in separate, special institutions or schools without educational rights equal to those enjoyed by children without disabilities (Peng, 2011). Educators' attitudes towards children with disabilities, indicated by a 2009 survey in Beijing, remain problematic (Wang, Peng, and Wang, 2011). Although all general school principals had heard of inclusive education and the LRC programme, more than 60 per cent of them were reluctant to accept children with disabilities in their schools. Moreover, about 86 per cent of the general schoolteacher that responded expressed a negative attitude towards accepting children with disabilities in their classes. As for parental attitudes, 30 per cent of the parents that responded refused to send their children with disabilities to mainstream school to be educated within the LRC model. This was because they were afraid

of the potential discrimination their children with disabilities would face and the uncertain quality of the education they would receive (Mu et al., 2015).

In China, the negative attitudes held by society, educators, and parents towards educating children with disabilities in mainstream schools could come from two sources. The first is an underestimation of the learning capabilities of children with disabilities; many people may harbour considerable doubts as to whether children with disabilities can acquire academic knowledge and skills when receiving the education (Yu et al., 2011). The second source is a distrust of the effectiveness of inclusive policies and inclusive practice. As we can see, many policies embrace a strong belief in promoting an LRC educational model and inclusive education for ensuring a good quality of education for every child. However, there is a shortage of empirical effort and financial input in the school setting, which is fundamental and crucial in implementing the relevant regulations (Peng, 2010). Therefore, in such a negative climate, keeping a child with disabilities away from school seems to be a reasonable decisionfor many people.

Some professionals have also suggested several other means to achieve the goal of maximising the number of school-age children who receive education in regular schools and improving the quality of LRC overall (Xiao and Qi, 2009; Zhan, 2010). First, broadening the definition and degree of learning difficulties is beneficial as it provides more children with educational opportunities (Xiao and Qi, 2009). Second, more specific rules and guidelines for LRC settings should be formulated on the basis of practice and research (Yu, 2009). Third, it is essential to cultivate inclusive teaching both in pre-service and in-service training and create an accreditation system for inclusive teacher-training institutions (Zhan, 2010). Fourth, a monitoring system should be established alongside a valid evaluation mechanism to ensure the policy can be implemented in a high-quality fashion across various levels (Xiao and Qi, 2009).

2.4 Teachers' Beliefs, Self-efficacy and Concerns in Inclusive Education

Teachers can play an important role in IE that contributes to students' learning process and achievements. Previous studies suggested that teachers must

understand and believe that they are capable of teaching all learners, and they should trust the ideological basis of IE and acquire the necessary skills and professional development in it (Florian, 2009; Gilor and Katz, 2021).

All teachers, educators and non-teaching support staff need to be properly trained and prepared to assist children in their development and learning. A lack of well-trained teachers could have unfortunate consequences for the quality of learning in IE. This section is divided into two subsections. First, it evaluates the potential factors that influence teachers' belief and self-efficacy in IE and how this will impact inclusive practice; second, it presents research on teachers' concerns around working with ASN children in mainstream settings.

2.4.1 Teachers' Beliefs and Self-efficacy in Inclusive Education

Within the development of IE, educators' positive beliefs and self-efficacy towards IE significantly impact the effectiveness of inclusive practice (Gregory, 2018; Florian, 2009). Some researchers suggested that, in order to provide children with ASN with quality education in an inclusive environment, and educators must believe that children with ASN can learn and achieve their potential and children with ASN belong in their classroom and school (Florian, 2009). Moreover, educators themselves need to have strong self-efficacy for teaching ASN children because educators with higher self-efficacy are more effective in using skills and techniques that make the curriculum accessible to all children (You, Kim and Shin, 2019). Self-efficacy among teachers influences their teaching efficiency and beliefs in the inclusive classroom (Vaz et al., 2015; Weisel and Dror, 2006).

Teachers with a higher level of self-efficacy demonstrated more optimistic attitudes towards inclusion, which have been examined by some early studies (Gans, 1987; Soodak et al., 1998). Gans (1987) demonstrated the connection between teachers' willingness to include children with special needs and the degree to which they believe that they can help with children's different needs. According to Soodak et al. (1998), teachers with low self-efficacy in IE reacted with fear and refused to accept inclusion. More recently, You, Kim and Shin (2019) re-examined the relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and beliefs in IE, and they also found that teachers' high self-efficacy could increase not

only their teaching strategies but also students' positive learning outcomes in IE. Thus, it is essential to understand teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy when exploring their perceptions and implementation in IE.

Weisel and Dror's (2006) research involved 139 teachers from 17 elementary schools in Israel, and they investigated teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards IE and the inclusion of children with ASN. They found that school climate had no unique contribution that might explain the variance in teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, but it was discovered that variables in teachers' backgrounds influenced their attitudes towards inclusion. The study referred to teaching experience, role at school, special education/IE training, and previous experience with children with ASN. These four factors are interrelated when it comes to analysing teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy in IE.

Some previous studies examined how special education teachers could have a more comprehensive understanding of IE, the more optimistic beliefs and higher self-efficacy in IE because they had relevant educational backgrounds or work experience (Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly, 2003; Bhakta and Shit, 2016). Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly (2003) investigated the views of 538 teachers with experience of children with Down syndrome in Australia, and they found that teachers with more knowledge in IE recognised the educational, social, and emotional benefits of inclusion for children both with and without disabilities. Furthermore, these teachers reported positive attitudes towards educating children with ASN in mainstream schools. In addition, Bhakta and Shit (2016) conducted quantitative research on the attitudes of 120 school teachers towards IE and children with SEN in the regular classroom in India and found that gender and the type of school had no impact on teachers' attitudes towards IE, but teachers who had undertaken IE-relevant training or courses helped themselves to become more aware of and hold more favourable attitudes towards IE than teachers who had no educational experience of IE.

For both special education and general education teachers, sustainable CPD in IE is the key factor in them obtaining theoretical and practical training, thereby developing a strong belief in IE and higher self-efficacy in inclusive practice (Weisel and Dror, 2006; Savolanien et al., 2012; You, Kim and Shin, 2019;

Campbell et al., 2003). Weisel and Dror (2006) found that teachers who attended more special education training classes tended to show more positive attitudes towards inclusion. Savolanien et al. (2012) conducted a survey among 319 teachers from South Africa and 882 teachers from Finland about their attitudes and self-efficacy in IE, and they found that teachers' efforts in CPD contributed to their self-efficacy and belief in IE. The study reports that in South Africa, both pre-service and in-service teacher education courses were focused on skills in behaviour management required for diverse groups of children; thus, participants from South Africa showed stronger belief in their ability to manage the different needs of children with ASN in their classrooms than their Finnish counterparts did.

Beliefs about IE among general education teachers are the critical factor in implementing inclusive practice efficaciously (Gregory, 2018); however, several studies have suggested that belief in IE among general education teachers was not optimistic enough and that, compared with special education teachers, their understanding of IE was generally simplistic (Weisel and Dror, 2006; Lubin and Fernal,2021; Yao et al., 2021).

Yao et al. (2021) analysed data from 19 general education teachers in 16 mainstream primary schools in Shanghai, China. Some of their participants commented that "inclusion would be nice, but it cannot be done" (p.439). The concept of IE has been gradually accepted by educators, but some teachers remain concerned about the fulfilment of inclusive practice. Yao et al. (2021) concluded that, although children with ASN could make gradual improvements from one-on-one tutoring and group cooperation, most of their participants expressed less satisfaction and lower expectations regarding ASN children's academic performance. They also argued that the low expectations regarding ASN children's academic performance caused the large difference in educational attainment between children with and without ASN:

> Based on extremely low academic performance, children with developmental disabilities were prone to be called dumb and stupid by classmates; this reduced their interactions and further singled out children with disabilities. (p.439)

In other words, teachers' low expectations of ASN children would influence the learners' success and the realisation of inclusive classrooms (European Agency, 2003). In Yao et al. (2021)'s study, it was also found that the expectations of general education teachers for children with ASN derived from two aspects: social relationships and moral development. The development of social relationships for children with ASN was emphasised as an important outcome of IE (Fox, Farrell and Davis, 2004; Göransson and Nilholm, 2014), and some studies investigated how Chinese teachers tended to have greater expectations for all children's moral development (Yan and Deng, 2019; Xu et al., 2018).

Lubin and Fernal (2021) also researched teachers' perceptions of the conceptualisation of IE. They found that most general education teachers defined inclusion as the physical placement of children with ASN in the mainstream classrooms, but special educators acknowledged that IE is about providing appropriate support to children with ASN in the general education classroom. Nevertheless, inclusion is not only about ASN children's physical placement (UNESCO, 2020). Alongside the long-term goals of IE, inclusion should be considered in a broader context, such as providing support for all children in an inclusive community or society (Göransson and Nilholm, 2014). Lubin and Fernal (2021) suggest that it is necessary for mainstream teachers to update their conceptions of IE, which is more than the physical placement of ASN children in the mainstream classroom.

In summary, teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy regarding IE have been proposed as key factors for successful inclusive education, and teachers might experience more personal self-fulfilment when they find IE has special significance for them (Talmor et al., 2005). Special education teachers have been studied or trained in IE or special education, so they could develop a better understanding of the conceptualisation of IE and more teaching strategies to meet the different needs of ASN children (Gilmore, Cambell and Cuskelly, 2003). However, general education teachers, who teach other academic subjects such as maths and science, may have less training in IE or successful experience with ASN children and face more pressure regarding children's educational attainment and examination results. Thus, general education teachers may be less optimistic

about IE and their self-efficacy in it. However, in general, all teachers involved in teaching ASN children in mainstream settings could face different challenges, and the next section will illustrate teachers' concerns in IE found in previous literature.

2.4.2 Teachers' Concerns Regarding Inclusive Education

Including children with ASN in mainstream classrooms has been found to increase the complexities of the demanding job of being a teacher. Forlin, Hattie and Douglas (1996) concluded that teachers' major concerns about inclusion come from three angles still being mentioned in the present literature: administration, professional competency, and classroom practice.

Administration

The issue of heavy workload is noted as a source of major concern for many teachers (Williams and Gersch, 2004; Talmor, Reiter and Feigin, 2005; Kuyini, Desai and Sharma, 2020; Savolanien et al., 2012; Round, Subban and Sharma, 2016). Williams and Gersch (2004) conducted a survey of two special schools and three mainstream schools in London, and their participants reported that they were stressed because of the heavy workload of working with ASN children, and many teachers reported feeling exhausted and frustrated. Exhausted teachers found themselves to be low intolerance and desire to attend work. Previous studies suggested that headteachers or leaderships should monitor teachers' workloads and stress levels and provide teachers with effective coping strategies to reduce the negative factors at work (Savolanien et al., 2012; Subban and Sharma, 2016).

Many teachers working in mainstream classrooms recognised the difficulty in developing and maintaining a successful collaboration with other teachers and staff members (McLeskey and Waldron, 2002; Stanovich, 1999), and a lack of cooperation between teachers could cause the failure of inclusion in a school (Fritz and Miller, 1995; Weisel and Dror, 2006; Ní_Bhroin and King, 2020; Forlin, Keen and Barrett, 2008). Fritz and Miller (1995) found that cooperation among teachers is considered by teachers themselves as the most important factor in the success of inclusion. Ní Bhroin and King (2020) reached a similar conclusion

after conducting a survey with 83 teachers in the Republic of Ireland and finding that teachers working for inclusion faced the challenges of collaborative practice. When engaging in the practice of individual plans for children with ASN, Ní Bhroin and King (2020) observed the low level of cooperation between teachers, and teachers were reluctant to challenge colleagues or provide critical reflection on practices, which might hinder the effectiveness of individual plans for children with ASN and successful inclusive practice.

As presented in previous studies, an effective and sustainable school-wide collaboration is vital for successful inclusion programmes and supporting IE and the development of inclusive education systems (Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow and Sandhill, 2010). Ainscow (2002) pointed out that shared leadership, active involvement by teachers and students, and commitment to inquiry promote school-wide collaboration. Conversely, the lack of support in follow-up structures for inclusive policy implementation within a favourable school-wide collaboration could be the cause of failing the inclusion (Weisel and Dror, 2006).

Professional competency in inclusive practice

As discussed in Section 2.4.1, teachers with a higher level of self-efficacy tend to be more positive towards IE, whereas previous research also showed that many teachers shared concerns about their professional competency in meeting the needs of children with ASN, and mainstream teachers in particular (Forlin, Keen and Barrett, 2008; Round, Subban and Sharma, 2016; Butakor, Ampadu and Suleiman, 2020). Forlin, Keen and Barrett (2008) conducted research with 228 general education teachers involved in IE in mainstream schools in Western Australia, and the result showed that in-service teachers reported various concerns about their perceived professional competency when coping with inclusivity and students' inability to concentrate and communicate.

Butakor, Ampadu and Suleiman (2020) revealed teachers' frustrations with IE may be due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of how to communicate with ASN children, and teachers expressed worries about their professional competency to embrace diversity in regular classrooms. Teachers' anxiety could stem from insufficient training in managing children's different needs in inclusive classrooms (Sharma, Forlin and Loreman, 2008). It is suggested that teachers'

concerns about professional competency cannot be diminished by more involvement in inclusive practices (Forlin et al., 2008). However, more successful experiences meeting children's needs and sustainable training in IE could help teachers develop a perceived professional competency in the inclusive practice (McLeskey and Waldron, 2002).

Classroom practice

With the large-scale implementation and mobility of inclusive education policies, mainstream classrooms have become more heterogeneous with students with diverse needs (Forlin et al., 2009; You et al., 2019). Several studies investigated inclusive classroom practice and found that teachers might feel demotivated by managing ASN children's difficult behaviours in the mainstream setting, especially within a class with large numbers but without appropriate support and assistance (Talmor, Reiter and Feigin, 2005; Chong, Forlin and Au, 2007; Madill, Gest and Rodkin, 2014).

Talmor, Reiter and Feigin (2005) conducted a study exploring burnout among 700 primary teachers in inclusive practice in Israel, and it was found that teachers faced more disciplinary problems in inclusive classrooms because they received less assistance for children with ASN and little information about them from the educational system. Similarly, in other countries, such as Canada, Australia, and Singapore, teachers were less optimistic about teaching children who have aggressive or disruptive behaviours (Sharma and Sokal, 2015). Teachers expressed greater pressures from dealing with children's aggressive behaviours in class because of the potential threat to other students' safety and learning; moreover, teachers then have less time and attention for teaching and monitoring other students (Forlin et al., 2008). Moreover, Madill, Gest and Rodkin (2014) examined how teachers needed special assistance when interacting with aggressive-disruptive children because some teachers tend to be more aggressive when dealing with children's aggressive behaviours.

Teachers' concerns about classroom practice are also associated with the large class size issues (Sharma, Forlin and Loreman, 2006; Yan and Deng, 2019; Wang, 2016). The large class restricts teachers’ time with individual students and prevents teachers from using individualised curriculum and teaching methods

(Malinen, 2013). In inclusive classrooms, teachers have to be aware of children's diverse needs and be able to meet children's different needs; however, with a large number of students in one class, the goal of inclusion represents a significant challenge for teachers to achieve.

2.5 Summary of Chapter Two

This chapter reviewed the conceptualisation, development and challenges in IE within the global context and China. Through a review of IE in the global context and China, it is clear that the promotion of IE has been a global trend. Although the definition and practical approach of IE might vary from district to district, my point of departure is that I regard IE as representing the need for mainstream schools to undergo a process of reform in all aspects of their educational provision to promote educational inclusion and that IE aims to accommodate all students with individual and educational needs and provide them with appropriate, quality, equitable education within mainstream settings.

Understandings of and attitudes towards IE vary significantly between countries. Internationally, it is generally believed that diversity among learners should be broadly accepted, prompting the need to reform educational support (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Allan, 2003; Douglas, 2019). However, in some countries, such as South Asia and India, IE is still considered a matter of serving children with disabilities or establishing special education settings. I believe that it is worth developing education within a more inclusive setting not only because it helps provide equal educational opportunities for more children but also because it is a fundamental prerequisite for social inclusion. I also agree with the many authors who contend that IE will and should be understood, designed and implemented differently in diverse contexts and countries (Armstrong and Spandagou, 2011; Florian, 2012).

China shares the primary goal of IE with Scotland, which is improving educational inclusion and providing equal educational opportunities for all. However, these two countries embrace different understandings and strategies towards IE due to the different processes of educational transmission and

development in IE. In China, the primary focus of LRC is still on learners with disabilities, and the terms ‘special education’, ‘disabled children’ and ‘special children’ are more frequently used to describe children’s needs (Lei and Yang, 2020). The LRC programme currently provides additional assistance for children with medical diagnosis certificates at mainstream schools. At the aspect of terminology, Scotland has been updating terms to be more inclusive and avoid categorising learners’ different needs, the terms ‘inclusive education’ and ‘additional support needs’ were mainly employed in the content of IE in Scotland (Florian, Black-Hawkins and Rouse, 2017). Moreover, Scotland has been highlighting more importance of school and teachers’ preparation for providing high-quality education for children with ASN at school, rather than identifying or predicting children’s different needs (Florian and Spratt, 2013; Florian, 2015).

Turning the rhetoric of “education for all” into a reality is a long-term journey for many countries for a host of reasons (Warnock, 2005; Göransson and Nilholm, 2014). The challenges emphasised in the literature review mainly include the transformation of education to become more inclusive, the lack of CPD for teachers in IE, the ineffectiveness of inclusive curricula and assessment procedures, and the shortage of inclusion within society and the wider community.

In order to achieve the goal of providing equal educational opportunities for children with disabilities, China has enacted much legislation to support disabled people’s rights for living, studying and working and also promoted programmes to implement these policies. The LRC model remains the main approach to help children with ASN at mainstream schools in China. It places more children with disabilities in regular schools, regular classrooms or special classrooms, facilitated by inclusive teaching methods, and locates resource rooms within regular schools to provide a placement choice for children with special learning difficulties, such as the need for learning in small groups and so on (Potts, 2000). There have already been obvious achievements, such as an increasing number of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools. However, it is undeniable that China still faces many challenges in the field of IE, such as the

insufficiently inclusive education system, negative social and cultural attitudes towards disabilities, and a lack of educational infrastructure and inclusive teacher training.

Furthermore, this chapter has reviewed previous studies, and it found that teachers' belief and self-efficacy had a significant impact on the success of inclusive practice (Weisel and Dror, 2006; Gregory, 2018; Florian, 2009) and that teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy could be influenced by their teaching experience, role at school, special education/IE training, and previous experience with children with ASN (Weisel and Dror, 2006). Teachers' major concerns in inclusive practice were summarised as three clusters: administration, personal professional competency and classroom practice. According to the review of teachers' concerns regarding inclusive practice, support for teachers who are involved in inclusive classrooms needs to be well planned, and proper preparation for teachers should take into account successful inclusive practice.

Generally, the main difficulties of implementing IE relate to the practical challenges. Moreover, as the implementers of inclusive policies, teachers need to receive sufficient support from the educational system. The next chapter will analyse how performing arts could benefit educational inclusion and review previous studies in this field.

Chapter Three: Literature Review on Dance and Music for Educational Inclusion

3.1 Introduction to Chapter Three

As documented in a recent UNESCO (2020) report on global trends in IE, in many countries providing equity and quality education for all children in an inclusive environment has become the priority for policy implementers. However, educators face different challenges on their paths to inclusive practice due to the mismatch between the conceptualisation and reality at both political and practical levels (Forlin et al., 2008; Weisel and Dror, 2006; Florian, 2009; Ní_Bhroin and King, 2020). Some international reports highlight that in order to provide a cost-effective and feasible approach to improving educational inclusion, performing arts could be used as a tool due to its relatively easy access and wider acceptance for increasing children's involvement (UNESCO, 2006; InSEA, 2018).

To find relevant studies for the literature review in this chapter, relevant electronic databases were searched, including the British Education Index, PsychINFO, ERIC, Social Science Citation Index and CNKI. In order to ensure that relevant studies were not missed, the following keywords were searched in abstracts and titles: 'inclusive education and music', 'inclusive education and dance' 'music for inclusion', 'dance for inclusion' 'music and dance for mainstreaming learning', 'music and dance for additional educational needs'. After reading the titles and abstracts, I selected relevant references mostly published since 2000 and read the full papers.

In this chapter, I will first explain how arts have been reported to facilitate inclusion and review how music and dance might benefit from educational inclusion in turn. Next, I will discuss some existing research into using music and dance to assist children with diverse needs, thereby outlining the role music and dance could play in inclusion.

3.2 Arts for Educational Inclusion

This section presents some international reports and studies that values the role of arts in improving the inclusive education system, individual development and social inclusion. Some global organisations support improving the quality of education through arts education, such as the United Nations Education (UN), Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Society for Education Through Art (InSEA).

In 2006, UNESCO published a report named Road Map for Arts Education, which was designed to emphasise and promote a common understanding of the significance of arts education and its key role in improving the inclusion and quality of education across all educational systems (UNESCO, 2006). Although there are some differences regarding the types of art expressions used among distinct cultures, UNESCO still tried to provide a tentative list for arts fields, as below.

> Thus, any list of arts fields must be seen as a pragmatic categorization, ever-evolving and never exclusive. A complete list cannot be attempted here, but a tentative list might include performing arts (dance, drama, music, etc.), literature and poetry, craft, design, digital arts, storytelling, heritage, visual arts and film, media, and photography (p.7).

It can be seen that UNESCO (2006) encouraged employing the benefits of music and dance to enhance inclusion in educational systems since art education is not only limited to bringing arts into school curricula as one of the study subjects but it can also be employed as a supplementary educational tool for reaching students' potential in both academic and non-academic aspects (UNESCO, 2006). In 2016, UNESCO re-emphasised the importance of arts and inclusion for education in the Education 2030 Framework for Action that aims to ensure all children can receive an inclusive and equitable quality education by 2030.

Doug Boughton, the InSEA president, introduced that InSEA has the aim to help people share ideas and projects in addition to promoting dialogue about the contribution art can make to education (Boughton, 2005). As of 2018, InSEA membership included 1000 professional and organisational members in 74

countries, and InSEA members shared methods and practices in art education; collaborated on international projects promoting awareness of cultural diversity; and published reports on research in scholarly journals, such as International Journal of Education through Art (IJEA).

In accordance with the advocacy from international organisations, there is an increasing number of published studies describing the role of arts in creating both a sense of belonging for individuals and an inclusive learning environment (e.g. Welch et al., 2009; Jones, Baker and Day, 2004; Pesek, 2009; Marsh, 2016; Sooful, Surujlal and Dhurup, 2010; Allan, 2014). Marsh (2016) found that art activities could help children with ASN develop their self-esteem and self-respect and provide them with a safe environment. Furthermore, some scholars and educators found that, in multicultural societies, music and dance could serve as a positive medium for transmitting and promoting social and educational inclusion (Joo et al., 2011; Marantz and Marantz, 2015; Joseph, 2016; Hallam, 2010; Karkou and Glasman, 2004). They hold that the arts can be embedded as a way to connect people and the world by teaching and learning about other people's identities, cultures and practices.

In addition, several lines of evidence suggest that social inclusion might be a potential outcome of art festivals, as such activities might break down barriers and thereby build inclusion within communities (Finkel, 2010; Laing and Mair, 2015). An arts festival might deliver the message of accepting diversity, highlight cultural and ethnic diversity and involve minority or marginalised groups. Finkel (2010) advised that arts festivals could have significant outcomes for social inclusion because they facilitate interaction across different groups of people.

3.3 Music and Dance for Educational Inclusion

This section outlines how music and dance activities have been reported to facilitate school inclusion and provide opportunities to bridge gaps between people from diverse backgrounds (e.g. Jones et al., 2004). The UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage proposes

music and dance as the most universal of the performing arts because of their integration across domains, including festive events and traditions:

> Music is perhaps the most universal of the performing arts and is found in every society, most often as an integral part of other performing art forms and other domains of intangible cultural heritage, including rituals, festive events or oral traditions. Dance, though very complex, may be described simply as ordered bodily movements, usually performed to music that can express a sentiment or mood or illustrate a specific event or daily act (UNESCO, 2003, 7th paragraph).

The aim of performing arts education varies. Some educators integrate arts into school classrooms to support other curricula while simultaneously building students' art skills (See and Kokotsaki, 2016; Hudson, 2014). Differently, others claim to focus on performing arts as an academic discipline in itself (Hutwig, 2015; Gaylin, 2016). Moreover, other teachers use arts education to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students to improve their academic and non-academic skills (Band et al., 2011; Twardzicki, 2008; Welch et al., 2020). Based on the findings from this review, dance and music education activities for inclusion will be reviewed separately in the following two subsections.

3.3.1 Dance for Educational Inclusion

Several studies have explored how dance education could provide children with a means for expression, learning, and responding to varied dance forms (Cone, 2015; Zitomer, 2016; Reinders, Bryden and Fletcher, 2019) because it implies an approach to creating learning environments that value diversity and enable students of all abilities to participate together and experience success (Kauffmann, 2006; Ehrich, 2010). Previous studies have found that dance can be effective in reducing isolation and increasing communication skills, thereby promoting social interaction for socially isolated children and those separated from their peers in school (Elliot, 1999; Grubbs and Niemeyer, 2000; Lee et al., 2002; Zitomer, 2017).

Zitomer (2017), who researched improving inclusive education through dance education in Western Canada, and the result reflects on: i) respect for student individuality is one of the core values of inclusive dance education (Kaufmann, 2006), and mutual respect in dance education implies that teachers accept their students as they are and recognise their potential to strengthen their positive qualities (Zitomer, 2017); ii) dance education could be a good way for engaging students in embodied dialogue by establishing relationships between bodies in space, which can produce a connection within groups and with teachers (Anttila, 2007); iii) dance education can potentially enhance self-understanding and contribute to a moral and ethical pedagogy that honours students' lives and enables new ways of viewing human beings (Sansom, 2009); iv) participation in dance education has been reported as an acceptable way to include more children in the educational setting and is especially beneficial to their mental well-being and social skills; furthermore, dance education could enable teachers to understand students' needs in a more effective way (Diamond and Hong, 2010).

Zitomer and Reid (2011) conducted qualitative research to explore the perceptions of six-teen children about dance for inclusion. They designed an integrated dance programme in which participants with and without disabilities engaged together, and invited five children with physical disabilities and eleven children without disabilities to participate together in the dance activities. Through Zitomer and Reid's (2011) observation and interpretive phenomenological analysis of accompanying semi-structured interviews, it was found that within the dance context, children with disabilities were able to learn certain dance elements at different levels, and all children changed their perceptions of their dancing abilities. It showed that dance could provide an appropriate environment to reduce prejudice and undermine children's perceptions of difference through a more inclusive setting.

In terms of embracing diversity through dance activities, Ehrich (2010) also drew upon an ethic of justice, care, and critique along with a construct of

empowerment to describe the story of Morgan Jai-Morincome, a dance teacher at the Radiance Dance Project in Australia. Jai-Morincome's programme enabled dancers to experience individual and collective empowerment in a space where diversity was valued and self-expression was encouraged. It was found that children could achieve individual empowerment through embodied experiences and collective empowerment through engagement in collaborative movement activities.

Overall, the reviewed dance education studies suggest that dance could imply an approach to creating a learning environment that values diversity and enables children of all abilities to participate and experience success together. In addition, bringing dance classes and activities might enable teachers to (a) obtain a more comprehensive understanding of children's needs and (b) build a relationship with them. Thus, it could be valuable to integrate dance into IE for a more accessible and practical inclusive practice. In the subsection that follows, the role of music in promoting educational inclusion will be presented.

3.3.2 Music for Educational Inclusion

As Blakeslee (2019), Executive Director of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), said, through learning music, students can, '… learn openness and respect for the work of others, they learn about self-reflection and collaboration, and more'(p.5). In general, there are two essential pathways for music education for young learners: via generalist music classrooms, which implies school music education for all; and via specialist music schools, such as conservatoires (Hennessy, 2017; Abramo, 2012). In the interests of consistency and bearing in mind the primary school focus of this study, generalist music education will mainly be discussed here, with particular reference to the implementation of music education for inclusion.

Music education in primary schools is designed not just for those who intend to make their careers in music but also for all students who claim full rights to obtain access to music and other forms of education (Garrett and Spano, 2017).

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31 (1990),

> States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
>
> States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity (UN, 1990, Article 31).

The right of all children to music is widely recognised, and everyone should be encouraged to enjoy and access music because of the benefits it offers. Through music learning, students were seen to develop their social skills, increase their self-esteem, maximise their educational progress in music and non-music subjects (Serrano and Espírito-Santo,2017; Sonn and Baker, 2016; Heikkila and Knight, 2012; Welch et al., 2020; Tague, 2016). Heikkila and Knight (2012) examined that music educators could play a valuable role in assisting and engaging children (2-10 years) with developmental dyslexia through the melodic and rhythmic activities in general music classrooms.

Music education activities have been reported not only to facilitate a secure and inclusive learning environment but also to contribute to children's wellbeing (Sze and Yu, 2006; Levinson, 2009). Levinson (2009) explained that children could feel absorbed by multiple types of music not only because of the music's melody, rhythm, lyrics, timbre and different ways of expression but also because the music can extend the vistas of humans' psychological, emotional and spiritual landscapes.

According to Zulauf (1993), the results of three-year experiments by educational authorities in Switzerland showed that children who took more mainstream music classes made more connections with their classmates, thereby promoting

a more inclusive atmosphere in schools. Moreover, Garrett and Spano (2017) examined the inclusive strategies used by music educators in the United States, and they found that music educators helped create a meaningful musical experience in school music classrooms for all students with diverse racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identity backgrounds. This is because music-learning environments have been shown to provide a safe place for students to develop a sense of self-recognition and belonging in the broader community (Garrett and Spano, 2017).

As a source of self-awareness and self-expression, music could enhance social inclusion that would impact educational inclusion (Hallam, 2015; Welch et al., 2014; Welch et al., 2020; Himonides, 2018). Research into music and inclusion has a long history. In 1991, American anthropologist Donald Brown, whose theoretical work was dedicated to studying the existence, characteristics and relevance of the universals of human nature, found that music can reinforce both the power of cooperative behaviour and a sense of hostility towards other groups (Brown, 1991). Moreover, Cross (2001) argued for the role of music in culture:

> Music is uniquely fitted to have played a significant role in facilitating the acquisition and maintenance of the skill of being a member of culture – of interacting socially with others… (p.53)

Music could increase the interaction among people because of its inclusive nature and multiple potential meanings (Ockelford, 2008; Launary, 2015; Clarke, DeNora and Vouskosky, 2015). Also, music 'brings together a huge range of cultures and histories' (Clarke, DeNora and Vouskosky, 2015, p.61), which could have a beneficial impact on creating health and wellbeing for individuals through social inclusion (Launary, 2015).

For each student in a group involved in cooperative music activity, that music activity can mean something different; meanwhile, the collective music activity is co-existence (Hallam, 2015). Thus, music activity could provide students with

a medium for preparing their capacity for social interaction and providing a safe space for them to explore social behaviours. For instance, Welch et al. (2014) found that, in the project named Singing up in England, children who were more involved in singing activities tended to have an increased sense of being socially integrated.

In Scotland, Odena et al. (2016) led a project that investigated the use of music as a tool for integrating newly arrived children in Glasgow. This project involved 29 music education student teachers in 10 state-funded primary schools in Glasgow. It was found that music activities including cooperative musical games, singing, warm-ups and group composition transcended linguistic barriers for the newly arrived students and that music could also assist in creating a positive learning environment for all children. Moreover, Odena et al. (2016) suggested that musical activities and movement were essential factors for primary teachers to consider to enhance inclusion in their classes.

Apart from projects focussed on including migrant children (e.g. Odena et al., 2016), studies are suggesting that music and dance interventions can benefit children with a range of difficulties, such as autism (e.g. Simpson and Keen, 2011), dyslexia (Heikkila and Knight, 2012), Down syndrome (Reinders, Bryden and Fletcher, 2015) and intellectual disabilities (Surujla, 2013).

For example, Surujlal (2013) conducted a phenomenological study evaluating music and dance as learning interventions for primary school children with intellectual disabilities, and it was found that integrating music and dance in formal classroom lessons could contribute not only to learning processes but also the socialisation and communication of learners with intellectual disabilities. The results outlined with appropriately stimulating interventions how learners with intellectual disabilities could use their art-performing abilities to integrate with others (Surujlal, 2013).

Furthermore, Simpson and Keen (2011) reviewed 20 experimental studies between 1995 and 2010 to examine the use of music as an intervention to benefit children with autism in terms of communication, socialisation and

behaviour. They found that all 20 studies show similar results that suggest music interventions could develop communicative behaviours and support IE.

Thus, according to previous research, music and dance have been employed as practical tools to promote IE at the school level, creating an inclusive learning environment and meeting children's different needs. The following section will review some previous studies related to music and dance teachers' potential for promoting IE in practice.

3.4 Potential of Music and Dance Teachers' Role in Improving Inclusive Education

The benefits and possibilities of music and dance in educational inclusion were discussed in section 3.3, and this section aims to highlight the role of music and teachers in IE according to previous studies. Within the IE context, music and dance teacher might have more chance of success when including children with ASN as they are able to bring music and dance activities into the classroom (Surujlai, 2013; Harvey et al., 2016; Skoning, 2008; Dinold and Zitomer, 2015; Patterson, 2003). Moreover, it was suggested that music educators and special educators should collaborate to achieve better inclusion (McCord and Watts, 2006; Hourigan and Hammel, 2021).

Surujlai (2013) examined the contribution made by music and dance teachers to improving learning for children with intellectual disabilities in regular classrooms. The participants were pleased to see the children's improvement in the learning process: "So you can see that they start to concentrate and because they want to do the work… they are more relaxed, and they are working so nicely together with the music" (Surujlai, 2013, p.73). Skoning (2008) addressed the advantages of music for all students with different needs, such as ADHD, emotional and learning difficulties, and she found her student teachers that used dance activities successfully included ASN children in regular classrooms with outstanding results, which brought those student teachers more confidence in teaching ASN children in regular classrooms.

Moreover, McCord and Watts (2006) suggested that all children are more likely to benefit when music educators and special educators work together, and they encouraged all music educators to develop an awareness of engaging ASN children in music learning. Patterson (2003) presented her story, in which she felt unprepared for the first years of being a music teacher in an inclusive setting teaching in a class with children with cerebral palsy, speech and hearing difficulties, emotional disturbances and severe physical disabilities. She found that children with ASN were not able to participate meaningfully in her class until she observed a small group of these ASN children and found they were excited about music and displayed more appropriate social interactions within the musical setting. Thus, Patterson's (2003) successful experience of using music illustrated how to assist ASN children in making progress in non-musical areas and creating an inclusive environment. Moreover, she became more positive and persistent when helping children with ASN through musical activities: "Music educators can help their special needs students get the appropriate related services" (p. 35).

Consistent with Patterson's (2003) position and experience of being a music teacher in terms of inclusion, there is a growing recognition globally that music teacher education should transform its professional discourse in order to address the challenges of IE (Laes and Westerlund, 2018; Figueiredo, Soares and Schambeck, 2015). However, Laes and Westerlund (2018) were concerned that if music education focused more on the intricate musical details, it could miss the wider picture and variability needed to improve IE. Thus, it would be crucial to make music teacher education move beyond inclusiveness and improve teachers' attitudes towards children with ASN, thereby expanding the benefits of music to all children. Garland-Thomson and Bailey (2010) suggest that music teachers should consider children's different needs or disabilities as a sociocultural construct rather than a personal deficit, agreeing that disability may remain invisible until it appears.

School leaders might have more expectations of what music and dance teachers might achieve in improving educational inclusion in schools. Ferm and Christophersen (2017) conducted a case study of inclusive arts education in mainstream primary schools in Sweden and Norway. They found that school leaders encouraged art teachers to be enthusiastic and well-prepared for inclusive arts education, with one music teacher saying, “it’s possible to offer all pupils [the opportunity] to be included in music activities” (p.468). Therefore, previous studies suggest that music and dance teachers could have a more successful experience of including children with ASN.

3.5 Summary of Chapter Three

As reviewed in this chapter, some international organisations, such as UNESCO and InSEA, have recommended using music and dance to increase school and social inclusion in diverse settings. This is because music and dance activities have been reported to offer inclusive spaces with multiple choices and expressions that value diversity and enable children with different needs to participate and have a positive experience together (e.g. Cone, 2015; Levinson, 2009).

In addition, music and dance have been reported to help children develop non-academic areas, building up their confidence and self-efficacy. For example, dance might help children increase communication skills and interaction with others, thereby promoting school and social inclusion (Zitomer, 2017). Moreover, previous empirical studies that examined the effectiveness of music and dance in helping children’s social needs and building school inclusion drew positive conclusions in terms of creating an inclusive atmosphere, increasing social interaction and facilitating learning processes for children with ASN (e.g. Surujlal, 2013; Travers et al.,2014). In the next chapter, I will consider some policy documents relate to IE in the Chinese context.

Chapter Four: Legal and Policy Developments to Promote Educational Inclusion in China from 1986 to 2020

4.1 Introduction to Chapter Four

This chapter will review three key Chinese legal and policy developments aimed at developing special and inclusive education: Learning in Regular Classrooms (Ministry of Education, 1994, 2011), Special Education Promotion Programme (Ministry of Education, 2014, 2017), and Mainstream Schools' Resource Room Construction Guide (Ministry of Education, 2016).

These three initiatives targeting inclusive education were selected because they were the most up-to-date and representative of the development and promotion of educational equality in China since 1994 (Su, Guo and Wang, 2020). Through a critical review of these three policies, I will analyse the current government framework for including children with different needs at mainstream schools and providing quality and equity education for all children. This chapter has five sections following the introduction. In Section 4.2, I will outline the macro level of the law provision towards special and inclusive education, as it is from here that all other policies and initiatives emanate. In subsequent Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, I will consider the three provisions and policies in detail. The final section, 4.6, provides a summary and critical reflection on the reviewed policies and legislations.

4.2 Macro Level Laws Affecting Special and Inclusive Education in China: Constitution Law, Chinese Compulsory Law and Protection of Disabled Persons Law

Before going through the three educational provisions and policies in-depth, I will briefly introduce some relevant policies and laws: The Constitution Law (National People's Congress, 2018), Chinese Compulsory Law (State Council of China, 2006), and Protection of Disabled Persons Law (State Council of China, 2008). The reason for presenting these laws is to introduce the macro level of educational provision towards special education and inclusive education in

China, as these laws are the principal legislation that then dictates the other relevant policies and local legislation in China.

The Constitutional Law of the People's Republic of China (National People's Congress, 2018) is the nation's fundamental law and has supreme legal authority. All Chinese people are obliged to take the Constitution as the basic norm and uphold its dignity. This law stipulates that people have the duty and right to receive education and the state promotes the moral, physical, and intellectual development of children and young people (Article 46, National People's Congress, 2018). Even though the terms "children with disabilities" and "children with difficulties" are not used for educational provision in this law, Article 45 stipulates that society and the government will take care of the working and living conditions of the blind, deaf, and disabled, including their education (National People's Congress, 2018).

China's Compulsory Education Law is the fundamental law (2006) governing education in the country, which essentially marked the development of inclusive education in China. The Compulsory Education Act 2006 is the latest revised version of the Compulsory Education Law, constituting an important moment by mandating and integrating special education into the Chinese legal system. Under Article 6 and Article 19 of this law, the government is responsible for ensuring children with disabilities have equal opportunities to be educated in ordinary schools (State Council of China, 2006). Moreover, Article 57 stipulates punishment for people who refuse to admit the educational rights of disabled school-age children and adolescents in mainstream education (Ibid.). The Compulsory Education Law decrees that mainstream schools should accept school-age children with different disabilities or difficulties who are capable of learning in the mainstream education system.

In 2008, the Protection of Disabled Persons Law made the provision of general and constitutional protection for 'disabled people' and securing educational opportunities for 'children with disabilities' in mainstream education a legal

requirement (State Council of China, 2008). Under Article 25, the educational rights of children with disabilities are enhanced:

> Ordinary educational institutions shall be open to students with disabilities who are able to receive ordinary education and offer them facilitation and help. (State Council of China, 2008, Article 25, own translation)

It can be inferred that the national agenda for children with disabilities refers to both educational access and corresponding educational assistance at schools. Moreover, The Protection of Disabled Persons Law 2009 (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2009) expanded inclusive education to include kindergartens, high schools, vocational schools, universities, and colleges.

The Constitution and the Compulsory Education Law are the main educational provisions that guide the educational agenda in China. Furthermore, the Protection of Disabled Persons Law is the key foundation for developing effective education for children with disabilities and difficulties in China. In summary, these three laws recognise and protect children's educational rights in mainstream schools regardless of their physical and intellectual abilities.

Since the 1980s, as a component of the recognition of human rights in a global context and China's national laws, the subject of equal education for all children has begun to attract more attention in the country (Xu, Cooper, and Sin, 2018; Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004; Deng and Zhu, 2016). However, as more children with ASN study in mainstream schools, schools and teachers face greater challenges in providing proper education for all children. Thus, some relevant regulations and policies were enacted to strengthen legal force for ASN children's educational rights and effectively embody specific initiatives in inclusive educational policies, and the following sections will introduce three specific educational provisions and policies: Learning in Regular Classrooms,

Special Education Promotion Programme, and Mainstream Schools' Resource Room Construction Guide.

4.3 The Development of Learning in Regular Classrooms (LRC) from 1986 to 2019

To improve the quality of IE and special education, some initiatives have been launched at national, provincial and city levels by the central authority and local authorities aimed at addressing specific issues with the implementation of educational inclusion. Two such initiatives are the Learning in Regular Classrooms (LRC) and the Special Education Promotion Programme, which were essential for better implementation and practice of inclusive education in China. The LRC initiative was first proposed in 1986 and has been modified and implemented since then until today with the aim to provide an appropriate education for children with one or more difficulties or disabilities. The Special Education Promotion Programme has been implemented since the 2000s and will be considered in the next sections, 4.4. and 4.5.

LRC is an educational policy adopted by the Chinese government to provide better educational assistance for children with additional needs studying in mainstream schools, and LRC development is influenced by the trend of educational legislation in China. Following LRC's introduction in 1986, its official focus has been on including students with disabilities in mainstream schools. The Compulsory Education Law (1986) was introduced by the National People's Congress, requiring local authorities to establish special schools or special classes for children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, or intellectual disabilities. Thus, in the 1980s, based on national educational law, the types of needs considered were limited to visual, hearing, and intellectual difficulties; this legislation laid the legal foundation for the provision of special and inclusive education in China. Although LRC did not at first directly target inclusive education, which aims to include all children, its subsequent development has been significantly influenced by the global inclusive educational trends of the late 1980s (Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). As Deng and Poon-McBrayer outlined (2004), following consideration of the actual

situation in China, the LRC model was adopted by the Chinese government with some modification of the Western inclusive education model.

In 1994, the Chinese government officially enacted Measures for Implementing Learning in Regular Classrooms for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities (1994). This document was the only policy to specify that LRC regulations should guide mainstream schools to include children with additional needs in practice. This document included targets for LRC, basic instruction, pedagogy, professional training, parental training and management (Ministry of Education, 1994). In 2011, this policy was replaced by Measures for the Administration of Disabled Persons in Learning in Regular Classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2011).

The main goal of Measures for the Administration of Disabled Persons in Learning in Regular Classrooms (2011) was to strengthen the implementation of LRC and ensure equal educational opportunities for all children in China. This policy contains six sections: (a) general principles, (b) target group and student placement, (c) students' status management, (d) teaching methods, (e) teacher education, and (f) structure for supporting and guaranteeing. I will summarise the content of each section in the following six paragraphs.

(a) General principle

First, the general purpose of Measures for the Administration of Disabled Persons in Learning in Regular Classrooms 2011 was to protect the educational rights of people with disabilities. It stipulated that all mainstream schools must enrol school-age children regardless of their abilities and provide proper assistance for their studies at school. Moreover, it stressed that LRC is the guide for special education in China and underlined the need to build a good working mechanism with a scientific support and guarantee system to enhance the quality of LRC development.

(b) Target group and student placement

Second, the policy specified the target group and how placements would be made. The identified target group of children comprised children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, intellectual

impairments, physical disabilities, mental disabilities (including autism), and multiple disabilities. Before school enrolment, children with different learning difficulties should obtain a certificate from a medical institution designated by the local authorities to prove the category and degree of their disability. It was stipulated that this evaluation and certification of children's disabilities were to be done in a completely confidential manner and would only be used to apply for additional support at mainstream schools. Lastly, the specific placements of students would be arranged after consultation with their parents or carers.

(c) Students' status management

Third, the student status management section aimed to confirm whether children with disabilities could complete at least nine years of compulsory education. This was strict to control the dropout rate of students leaving the LRC programme. All children in the LRC programme should have a personal education file that includes details of their family background, disability categories, disability levels, adaptation behaviours, academic performance and individualised education plans.

(d) Teaching methods

The fourth section focused on how to create an inclusive school climate and an inclusive learning environment; these were the main points regarding teaching methods for LRC at mainstream schools. The section stressed the importance of educational resources, financial support, convenient access, individualised education plans, flexible curriculum, teacher-student relationship, resource rooms, and family supports. Devising individualised education plans was one of the key points of the inclusive teaching methods advocated in this policy. In addition to gathering cultural and scientific knowledge, it was also deemed important for children with disabilities to cultivate the ability to adapt to social life and develop their potential. Curriculum and teaching resources can be adjusted according to children's different needs. Furthermore, the policy states that community and parental support are required to create an inclusive environment and improve inclusive education at the school level.

(e) Teacher education

The fifth section focused on the importance of teacher training to ensure each teacher has the basic knowledge and skills needed to provide special education. Training for the LRC programme should be included as part of the normal teacher training programme, and the local education authority should encourage teachers to participate in it.

(f) Structure for support and guaranteeing LRC implementation

The final section regarded establishing a reliable and effective structure to support and guarantee the implementation of the LRC programme. Local health bureaus, disabled persons' federations, civil affairs bureaus, and education bureaus should all coordinate with each other to establish and improve the support and guarantee system for the LRC programme. The local education administrative department could set up an LRC guidance centre and conduct annual assessments of LRC implementation.

Measures for the Administration of Disabled Persons in Learning in Regular Classrooms (2011) provided specific instructions for the implementation of LRC programmes. Seventeen years after the first implementation of LRC in 1994, revising the policy and providing updated instructions was crucial. Thus, while keeping the same objectives as the 1994 policy, which was to provide equal educational opportunities for all children in China, the 2011 policy made some changes to the original. The 1994 policy initially targeted children with visual and hearing impairments, but the 2011 policy expanded this group to include children and adolescents with visual difficulties, hearing difficulties, speech difficulties, and mental difficulties. The 2011 policy was linked to more relevant educational policies, such as the National Long-term Education Reform and Development Plan (2010-2020), which added the promotion of inclusive education as a national target. Hence, IE became part of the national education provision, and it began to attract more attention from the central government and educational authorities. In the 1997 policy, accepting children with disabilities in schools was presented merely as a suggestion; however, the 2011 policy stipulated that mainstream schools must accept all children and provide equal and proper education for children with additional needs. The

establishment of resource rooms was a new proposal in the 2011 policy, which also designated special education teachers as responsible for them.

To some extent, this shows that the 1994 policy achieved a certain degree of success in terms of enrolling more children with disabilities at mainstream schools. With the increasing number of children with ASN enrolling at schools, mainstream schools faced many challenges in providing effective help for these children and embracing diversity and creating a more inclusive learning environment for children with ASN. Thus, the 2011 policy included the establishment of resource rooms and promoted the recruitment of special education teachers to solve practical problems with the LRC programme.

In summary, Measures for the Administration of Disabled Persons in Learning in Regular Classrooms (2011) had two implications for the development of inclusive education in China. First, it is evident that the initial legislation – Measures for Implementing Learning in Regular Classrooms for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities (1994) – had elementary success in terms of including more children in mainstream schools and proved that promoting inclusive education was an essential part of the educational agenda in China. The second implication was that the LRC programme needed to be implemented more effectively in practice. To be more specific, it emphasised that the aim of the LRC programme was to provide equal educational opportunities for all children, rather than merely to enrol children with ASN at mainstream schools. To sum up, through the implementation of LRC, the Chinese government is committed to providing compulsory education on an equal basis for children with disabilities and enrolling more children with disabilities at special or mainstream schools. The following section will introduce the most updated initiative of promoting inclusive education in China, the Special Education Promotion Plan.

4.4 The New Era of Inclusive Education in China --- Special Education Promotion Plan

As more children with ASN have been accepted into mainstream schools because of the implementation of the LRC programme, the Special Education Promotion Plan was initiated in an effort to provide more applicable and high-quality education for children with ASN, and to increase awareness of the need to embrace diversity in educational provision (e.g. Peng, 2012; An, Hu and Horn, 2018). Two phases of the Special Education Promotion Plan have been published at the national level: Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 (Ministry of Education, 2014) and Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020 (Ministry of Education, 2017). These two programmes have the same goal of promoting educational equality for all and increasing the education levels of disabled persons. However, the 2017 Plan is based on the achievements of the 2014 Plan, and it was launched to promote further and more sustainable development in China's inclusive education.

In this section, I will review the two phases of the Special Education Promotion Plan in three subsections. I will start by outlining the overall goal and then analyse the main content in terms of the use of language, current challenges, and educational targets of the two Plans. Next, I will present the developments of the 2017 Plan and the differences between the 2014 Plan and the 2017 Plan. Lastly, I will compare and evaluate the policies regarding Special Education Promotion Plan at the national, provincial and city levels.

4.4.1 The Overall Goal of Special Education Promotion Plan

The overall goal of the two phases of the Special Education Promotion Plan is to promote educational equality and inclusive education in China. It is worth highlighting here that although the title of this policy seems to focus on special education, the language used to describe the main target refers to 'inclusive education' (2014) and an 'LRC programme' (2017).

> Overall goal: Promoting inclusive education comprehensively, enabling every child with a disability to receive education appropriately. (Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016, Ministry of Education, 2014, p.1, own translation)

> Overall goal: … guaranteeing the capability of running special schools, implementing LRC programmes and delivering home tutoring... (Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 1, own translation)

While the term "inclusive education" barely appears in Chinese educational policy, being adopted earlier and discussed more in the Western and American contexts than in China. The Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 contains the first mention in official policy documents in China of the term "inclusive education" as an educational goal. Although the LRC programme was implemented in 1994, the term "inclusive education" was not used in the official documents of that time. In the Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, the term "inclusive education" was replaced by "integrated education"; however, the overall concept and the main ideas contained in the new policy still related to inclusive education:

> Principle 1: … taking the LRC programme as the mainstay, using special schools as the backbone, and employing delivering home tutoring as supplements for promoting integrated education in a comprehensive way. (Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, Ministry of Education (2017), p.2)

The Phase -2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020 refers to "running special schools" separately from "implementing LRC programmes", suggesting that the two terms have different implications and that the updated notion of the LRC programme differs from special education and segregated education.

The term “special education” was mentioned the most in both policies in terms of frequency of usage. The term “inclusive education” was used only twice in the 2014 Plan, and “integrated education” was also mentioned only once in the 2017 Plan. However, the term “LRC” was used frequently, representing the idea of promoting inclusive education in the Chinese context.

4.4.2 Comparing Main Content of the Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 and Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020

The main objective of these two Plans was the same: to promote both special education and inclusive education/integrated education simultaneously. The Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 was enacted in 2014 and is concerned with ensuring equal educational opportunities for children and adolescents with disabilities. A major component of this policy was promoting and developing special education and inclusive education in China. The Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020 was published in 2017 and was enacted to consolidate the achievements of the first promotion programme while further developing the educational levels of disabled persons. These two policies were designed for the same purpose: to promote equity education in China. The main contents of the 2014 policy and 2017 policy are concluded in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4. 1 Comparing the content of Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 with Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020

	Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 (Enacted in January 2014)	Phase -2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020 (Enacted in July 2017)
Terminology	• ‘Inclusive education’ & ‘special education’	• ‘Special education’ & ‘integrated education’
Basic principles	• Developing special education • Guaranteeing educational rights of disabled people • Helping disabled people to be better included in society • Benefiting more disabled people	• Improving inclusive education • Respecting diversity • Supporting special education • Leading and encouraging the whole society to support special education

Challenges	• Overall lack of compulsory education for disabled children and adolescents • Resources and conditions at special schools are limited. • Insufficient numbers of special education teachers and specialists, and the professionalism of special educators needs to be improved.	• Overall lack of compulsory education for disabled children and adolescents in central and western regions, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas • The development of special education in non-compulsory education is lagging behind. • The special education system needs to be improved. • Limited number of special teachers and low salary for special teachers; the professional level of special teachers needs to be improved.
Overall objectives	• Promote inclusive education • Establish a special education system • Provide governmental, financial and social support for special education • Achieve at least 90% enrolment rate among students with visual impairment, hearing impairment, and intellectual impairment in compulsory education by 2016.	• Achieve a 95% enrolment rate among disabled students in compulsory education by 2020, enlarging the scale of special education in non-compulsory education • Enhance the capability to run special education schools, implement LRC in mainstream schools, and deliver home tutoring • Improve teaching quality and the quality of LRC in mainstream schools
Key tasks	• Helping more disabled students to receive compulsory education • Improving special education resources and facilities • Enhancing teaching quality • Establishing teaching assessment system	• Improving the special education system • Enhancing special education guarantee capabilities • Improving the quality of special education

Main measures	• Implementing LRC programme in more mainstream schools • Supporting higher student enrolment in special schools • Delivering home tutoring • Developing special education at the stage of non-compulsory education • Increasing financial support for special education (achieving at least 6000 yuan of average funding per student per academic year within three years) • Enhancing professionalism of special teaching teams • Promoting special education reform in terms of curriculum and teaching materials	• Employing personalised learning Plans: 'one person one Plan' • Increasing the opportunities for disabled students in non-compulsory education • Improving the funding mechanisms for special education • Establishing special education support system and local special education resource centre • Enhancing professionalism of special teaching teams • Promoting special education reform in terms of curriculum and teaching materials
Organisation and implementation	• Making feasible and effective Plans • Establishing organisational leadership • Strengthening supervision and assessment work	• Enhancing organisational leadership • Promoting system reform • Creating an inclusive environment • Strengthening supervision and assessment work

The 2014 and 2017 Plans for promoting special education both indicate some similar challenges in terms of promoting educational inclusion; they also present some comparable objectives for the development of inclusive education. The main challenges shown in both the 2014 and the 2017 Plans are as follows: 1) relatively low overall development level of special education and inclusive education; 2) uneven development of special education and implementation of LRC programmes in different areas of China; 3) relatively poor conditions and resources at special schools and for the LRC programme in mainstream schools; 4) the insufficient number of special education educators and relatively low levels of professionalism in special education and inclusive education.

The main aims of these two Plans were to promote the LRC programme to include more ASN children in mainstream schools, improve the capabilities of special schools to accept more students with different types and levels of

difficulties, and organise the delivery of home tutoring to provide individualised and flexible assistance for ASN children. It is also advised that the scale of special education needs to be expanded to both compulsory and non-compulsory education. The two Plans also stipulated that financial inputs should be increased, and better teaching facilities should be provided both in special and mainstream schools. Moreover, teacher education was considered one of the most essential parts of creating an inclusive learning environment at the school level. Lastly, the policies recommended that inclusive education curriculum reform should be promoted to meet children's different needs.

4.4.3 The Development of Special Education Promotion Plan from 2014 to 2017

The Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020 shared the same purpose of promoting inclusive education and special education as the Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016; however, the 2017 Plan provided more detail and minor modifications to guide further work in this field. The 2017 Plan developed the idea of the 2014 Plan in terms of four main aspects: i) recognising different learning difficulties; ii) establishing an effective special education system; iii) improving the quality of teacher training; and iv) creating an inclusive environment throughout the whole society.

i) Recognising different learning difficulties

In the 2014 policy, three learning difficulties were highlighted: visual impairment, hearing impairment, and intellectual impairment. However, in the 2017 Plan, the catalogue of learning difficulty types was expanded. For example, children with autism were now included:

> Encourage all local authorities to establish a special education department for children and adolescents with autism. (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 2)

Between the first Plan in 2014 and the second in 2017, which focused on the special education promotion programme, the range of learning difficulties broadened. It was recognised that children could have various types of difficulties at different levels, which implied a need for professional evaluation, teaching methods, and assessment.

ii) Establishing an effective special education system

As the government and educational authorities started to underline the significance of recognising and accepting different types of learning difficulties among children in the LRC programmes in mainstream schools, a feasible mechanism and an effective special education system were needed to support children in a practical sense. Therefore, the 2017 policy proposed establishing a professional system to support children with disabilities and learning difficulties. In the 2017 policy, seven measures were advised for improving the professional system for special education and inclusive education, which includes: establishing IE expert committees, sharing and exchanging IE information, building special education resource centres, recruiting IE specialists at mainstream schools, training teachers in IE, strengthening home-school cooperation for IE purpose and encouraging universities to provide professional services for special education and IE in various forms.

The supportive and professional systems set up for special education and inclusive education involved creating expert committees, an effective platform for cooperation and communication, special education resource centres, professional services and support from higher education institutions, home-school cooperation, and professional teacher training.

In addition, some achievements of the 2014 Plan were cited in the 2017 Plan. For example, it was stated that the LRC programme helped more children to mainstream schools. In the 2014 Plan, the aim was to enlarge the scale of the LRC programme to enrol more disabled children into mainstream schools. Hence, while the 2014 Plan focused more on quantity, the 2017 Plan focused more on

improving the quality of the LRC programme. Compared to the 2014 Plan, the 2017 Plan was an attempt to improve the quality and popularity of the LRC programme in practice, and the objectives of this Plan were more precise:

> Establishing resource rooms equipped with special education teachers in some mainstream schools, designing a personalised plan for each child [with additional needs]. Any mainstream school with more than five children with disabilities should start to establish a resource room (Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 3).

After the 2014 Plan was implemented, 492,000 children with disabilities or learning difficulties were enrolled into mainstream schools, a rise of 33.7 per cent compared to the number in 2013 (Ministry of Education, 2017). However, this increase brought practical challenges. Therefore, the 2017 Plan focused on providing children with disabilities with high-quality and effective education in mainstream schools.

iii) Improving the quality of teacher education

Both the 2014 and 2017 Plans state that inclusive education and special education should be included in the teachers' certificate test. The aim was to develop the concept of inclusive education for all teachers in both special schools and mainstream schools. However, the 2014 Plan emphasised establishing a certification system for special teachers and special education teachers and encouraging colleges and universities to open special education courses to train more special teachers. The 2017 Plan focused not only on preparing more special education teachers for inclusive education and LRC in colleges and universities but also on providing regular and multi-level training for all mainstream teachers in schools:

> Improving teacher training, providing 360-hour professional training for special teachers within five years, and some principals and experienced teachers attending training courses in inclusive education and special

> education. (Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 3)

iv) Creating an inclusive environment throughout the whole society

In Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, the idea of creating an inclusive environment throughout society was added in the section that focused on organisation and implementation:

> Mobilizing all sectors of society to help children with disabilities or learning difficulties from different aspects, organising voluntary work, thereby creating a good atmosphere for caring and supporting children in special and inclusive education. (Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 2)

The idea of creating an inclusive environment, not only within the educational system but expanded throughout society, represented an expansion of the scope of the 2014 Plan.

4.4.4 Comparing Special Education Promotion Programmes within National-, Provincial-, and City-level Policies

Chinese Ministry of Education has employed macro-level monitoring in place of direct control (National Centre for Education Development Research, 2008), which allows provinces and cities a certain degree of autonomy to apply their own governmental management policies within the purview of national educational legislation and under regulations established by the central government. To be specific, in line with China's administrative divisions, educational policy is enacted at national, provincial, and city levels. First, the central government develops a piece of legislation; then, provinces have the right to modify it in accordance with their different situations before implementing it. Next, based on the province-level policy, cities and local educational authorities can subdivide and modify legislation according to their

economic, political, social, and cultural situations before policy implementation. For Special Education Promotion Plan 2014-2016 and The Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan 2017-2020, Guangdong province and Shenzhen city enacted their own policies based on the main ideas in the national policy. Further details are provided in Table 4.2.

Table 4. 2 Agencies involved in the Special Education Promotion Programme at the national, provincial (Guangdong), and city levels (Shenzhen)

Administrative Level	Policies	Agencies or authorities involved in policy formulation
National Level	• The Plan for Promoting Special Education (2014-2016) (Enacted in February 2014; word length: 4,179) • The Second Plan for Promoting Special Education (2017-2020) (Enacted in July 2017; word length:8,653)	Ministry of Education, Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Health and Family Planning Commission, and China Disabled Persons' Federation
Provincial Level	• Guangdong Province Special Education Promotion Programme (2014-2016) (Enacted in July 2014; word length: 6,581) • The Second Guangdong Province Special Education Promotion Programme (2018-2020) (Enacted in August 2018; word length: 6,647)	Provincial Department of Education, Provincial Development and Reform Commission, Provincial Department of Civil Affairs, Provincial Department of Finance, Provincial Department of Human Resources and Social Security, Provincial Health and Family Planning Commission, and Provincial Disabled Persons' Federation
City Level	• Shenzhen City Special Education Promotion Programme (2015-2016) (Enacted in April 2015; word length: 4,045) • The Second Shenzhen City Special Education Promotion Programme (2018-2020) (Enacted in August 2018; word length: 6,013)	Shenzhen Education Bureau

As introduced earlier, the national policy stipulated the main goals for the whole country, while the provincial policy focused on adjusting and re-enacting the policy in a more specific and feasible way according to the provincial situation. For example, in measuring how many more disabled children had enrolled in compulsory education, the national document indicated that the districts or cities should take responsibility for collecting data regarding disabled children without access to education; however, the provincial document assigned this task to the local association for the disabled and educational authorities. Based

on the local situation, a provincial policy was drawn up to further clarify relevant responsibilities and duties and make policy implementation more productive and achievable. Therefore, based on the relevant local needs, provincial authorities have the autonomy to modify policies and distribute funding.

Compared with the Guangdong Province Special Education Programme 2017-2020, the Shenzhen Special Education Promotion Programme 2018-2020 contained few modifications to the main measures. First, the task of creating facilities for special education varied between different districts: five districts were required to build standardised special schools, two districts were to re-construct present special schools, and another three districts could choose to build special schools or establish special classrooms or resource rooms in mainstream schools. Second, the financial support provided was double the funding stipulated in the provincial policy:

> Public funds for students involved in inclusive education relevant programmes are five times the amount for ordinary students, and must be more than 6,000 yuan per year for each student. (Guangdong Province Special Education Programme 2017-2020, Guangdong Provincial Government, 2017, p. 2)

> Public funds for students involved in programmes relating to inclusive education are ten times higher than for ordinary students. (Shenzhen Special Education Promotion Programme 2018-2020, Shenzhen Education Bureau, 2018, p. 2)

Moreover, Shenzhen's 2018 policy specified that the financial support included "free uniform" and "reduced accommodation fees" for children with disabilities. Third, in order to develop research into special education, the Shenzhen 2018 policy stipulated that at least one part-time or full-time researcher would be hired at mainstream schools to focus on special education and inclusive education.

To conclude, the city-level policy was more specific and more goal-oriented than policies at other levels. However, its implementation was later than the national policy roll-out. While the Second Special Education Promotion Programme was published in July 2017, the Second Shenzhen City Special Education Promotion Programme was not published until August 2018.

4.5 Resource Rooms in Mainstream Schools

In the late 1990s, a few Chinese cities began to establish resource rooms as a crucial feature of the LRC programme, to enhance instructional quality (Xiao, 2007; Zhan, 2010). Resource rooms are recognised as critical support that promotes the LRC programme in practice; they play an essential role in promoting inclusive education at mainstream schools (Poon-McBrayer, 2016). In this section, the standards of the resource room construction guide will be explored at national, city and school levels. The resource room construction guides from three administrative areas are analysed and compared.

In China, promoting the LRC programme has been a national priority, and many schools and areas have been implementing relevant educational policies. However, with the implementation of the LRC programme at mainstream schools since the 1980s, an increasing number of challenges arose for schools and teachers trying to meet the different educational needs of children with ASN. These challenges prompted the development of policies focusing on constructing and using resource rooms. The regulations for resource rooms might differ slightly from area to area because local authorities have a certain level of autonomy to adjust policies according to the local situation to enable better implementation. Subsection 4.5.1 will introduce policies related to the construction and function of resource rooms at the national, district and city levels. Subsection 4.5.2 will compare the Resource Room Construction Guide at national and city levels (Shenzhen).

4.5.1 Policies Related to Resource Rooms at the National, City and District levels

In this section, three policies will be introduced: the "Special Education for Mainstream Schools" Notice of Resource Room Construction Guide (China's Ministry of Education, 2016); Shenzhen Special Education Resource Room in Mainstream Schools - Construction and management measures (Trial) (Shenzhen Education Bureau; 2017) and Announcement of Special Education Infrastructure in the Futian District (Futian District Education Bureau, 2019). These policies were issued to guide the construction of resource classrooms as part of promoting the LRC programme and inclusive education at mainstream schools and to measure and report the progress of their construction. These policies were passed down from the national to the city level and then to the district level. In terms of this policy, the province adopted the national policy in its original form; thus, there was no separate provincial version. The basic information related to the three selected policies is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4. 3 National-, city-, and district-level policies relating to resource rooms

Administrative levels	Policies	Published date/ Word length	Enacting departments
National	"Special Education for Mainstream Schools" Notice of Resource Room Construction Guide	January 2016/ 2,214 words	The General Office of the Ministry of Education
City	Shenzhen Special Education Resource Room in Mainstream Schools - Construction and management measures (Trial)	July 2017 / 3,712 words	Shenzhen Education Bureau
District	Announcement of Special Education Infrastructure in the Futian District	May 2019 /500 words	Futian District Education Bureau

The full text of each document is translated into Chinese by the researcher, and a part of the document will be presented in both English and Chinese in Appendix Four as an example. In the following Subsection, 4.5.2, I will summarise the contents of these three selected documents and compare the national-level guide with the city-level guide to resource room construction.

4.5.2 Comparison between the Resource Room Construction Guide at the National and City levels

In 2016, the General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the “Special Education for Mainstream Schools" Notice of Resource Room Construction Guide (Ministry of Education, 2016) to serve as the fundamental guide with which different cities or regions should establish resource rooms at mainstream schools. The guide introduces the overall purpose, functions, basic layout, constituent parts, and management of resource rooms at the national level. In 2017, following on from the basic guidance in the national policy, Shenzhen city authorities modified and issued their version of the resource room construction guide: Shenzhen Special Education Resource Room in Mainstream Schools - Construction and management measures (Trial) (Shenzhen Education Bureau, 2017). The main content of each policy document is summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4. 4 Summary of the resource room construction guidelines at national and Shenzhen city levels

	National level	Shenzhen city level
Document name	The General Office of the Ministry of Education issued the "Special Education for General Schools" Notice of Resource Room Construction Guide 2016	Shenzhen Special Education Resource Room in Mainstream Schools - Construction and management measures 2017 (Trial)
Overall purpose	1. Improve disabled students’ learning and social skills 2. Support disabled students through personalised and effective instruction	1. Provide personalised teaching for children and adolescents with special needs and help them to socialise with others 2. Create an inclusive learning environment at schools 3. Make up for the shortcomings of the implementation of the LRC programme
Function	1. Provide support for anyone who has special needs for living and learning, and carrying out training for ordinary teachers, parents, and relevant community workers	1. Being responsible for students with disabilities 2. Carrying out special education consultation, evaluation, and survey 3. Conducting tutoring 4. Conducting life counselling, social adaptability training, and basic rehabilitation training 5. Providing a supportive learning environment 6. Providing door-to-door teaching
Basic layout	1. Learning and training area 2. Assessment area 3. Reception area 4. Located on the ground floor with a quiet environment and friendly access	1. Learning and training area 2. Assessment area 3. Reception area 4. Located on the ground floor with a quiet and safe environment and friendly access 5. Specific equipment including conventional equipment, multimedia equipment, medical rehabilitation equipment, teaching aids, special education-related books, and audio-visual materials

Special education teachers	1. Teachers should have special education, rehabilitation, or other relevant professional background, and all special education teachers should be trained and qualified before being employed.	1. Teachers should have special education, rehabilitation, or other relevant professional background, and all special education teachers should be trained and qualified before being employed. 2. Special education teachers are responsible for supporting children physically, mentally, and academically.
Management	1. Incorporated into the school's unified management 2. Special education guidance centres or special schools should provide guidance and conduct assessment for resource rooms.	Supervised by the Special Education Guidance Centre

These two educational policies for national and city levels presented supportive and positive views on promoting the LRC programme and inclusive education in China, and the key points were presented precisely. The overall purposes of resource rooms were to support children with ASN, create an inclusive learning environment in schools, and provide additional help and training for children with ASN to improve their study and life skills. The layout of resource rooms was regulated and included a learning and training area, an assessment area, and a reception area. Moreover, it was stated that its location was ideally on the ground floor for more convenient access. The special education teachers were required to be highly qualified in special education or inclusive education. Lastly, the management of resource rooms was supervised and assessed by the relevant authorities. In addition, these guides to constructing resource rooms were part of a comprehensive consideration based on policymakers' knowledge and experience: for example, stipulating that "the curtain materials must be fireproof" (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 2), so as to protect children from any potential danger.

These two policies presented similar ideas regarding the construction of resource rooms. However, the city-level document provides more details and assigns responsibilities more precisely to certain people or authorities. For example, learning activities that should take place in resource rooms were specified in greater detail in the city-level policy (Shenzhen Special Education, 2017). The learning activities referred to included specific instruction through personalised tutoring, independent learning, team studying, peer activities, and group activities:

> Team studying: 1-2 teachers give instruction to 3-6 students and carry out teaching activities. Students are devided into homogeneous groups and heterogeneous groups. “Homogeneous groups” are groups of students with similar disability categories, degrees, and ability levels for guidance. This grouping method is more common; heterogeneous groups do not emphasise the degree of disability and ability level, grouped by learning content or age. (Resource Room in Mainstream Schools - Construction and management measures (Trial), Shenzhen Education Bureau, 2017, p. 3)

The city-level guide provides clear instructions for running team studying activities. The recommended number of teachers and students is specified, as is the grouping of students with similar disability categories. Such precise and detailed policymaking is beneficial for local authorities and schools, as it enables them to understand and implement policies, especially when they have no support or have not received teacher training regarding including students with disabilities and different needs.

The national guide was the educational policy enacted at the national level in 2016, and the city-level guide was the same education policy, albeit issued by the local authority in 2017 in a slightly modified form. The most obvious difference was that the local document was more specific and detailed than the national one. This is because the national document functioned more as a provision with a broader view, whereas the local one was adapted to fit the local situation. As local authorities have greater knowledge and information about the situation of a certain city or area, it is more effective for them to modify the general guide according to their actual needs.

At the district level, there was a report reflecting on the practice of resource rooms: Announcement of Special Education Infrastructure in Futian District (2019) (Futian District Education Bureau, 2019). According to the report, the Futian district had started implementing relevant and inclusive educational policies and ensuring the equal educational rights of students with disabilities. Moreover, it reported that there were eight designated LRC-programme pilot

schools in Futian district with resource rooms already being put into use in 2019. The report states that the local education authority followed the policies and regulations at national and city levels by establishing resource rooms for better implement LRC and the Special Education Promotion Programme. Furthermore, the fact that they had built eight resource rooms within two years was considered a positive result. Overall, the resource room policy has been delivered to local areas and implemented in certain schools. Reviewing these policies and reports on resource rooms in mainstream schools proves that there was a transmission from separated special education towards integrated, inclusive education in the Chinese educational context. Furthermore, some measurements in the LRC programme and the Special Education Promotion Programme, such as building resource rooms at mainstream schools, reflected the development of inclusive education in China, and more detailed professional regulations were announced in order to meet new challenges after accepting more children with ASN at mainstream schools.

4.6 Critical Reflection on Reviewed Policy Documents and Summary

Chapter Four contained a comprehensive review of several policy documents related to the LRC programme, special education promotion, and resource room construction. Overall, more children with ASN have been enrolled at mainstream schools (Poon-McBrayer, 2016; Kizir, 2020), and resource rooms have been established to provide teaching facilities and resources for helping children with ASN.

The LRC programme serves as a useful anchor for exploring and understanding the development of inclusive education in China. Since the 1980s, the LRC has been expanded to incorporate more geographical areas and levels of education. Given the development of policies and regulations relating to LRC, it is evident that the LRC has become a pillar for improving educational inclusion in China and has made a certain amount of progress. At first, it was intended to integrate blind, deaf, and disabled children into mainstream classrooms. However, the current target of LRC is to provide better quality, equal education for all children, regardless of their physical or mental condition.

The Special Education Promotion Programme supports replacing segregated special education in China with a more inclusive system. This programme incorporates two plans, each with clear targets for two different periods: one was for 2014-2016, and the other was for 2017-2020. These two policies were enacted to ensure better implementation of LRC and promote inclusive education in China. The main challenges and current goals for enhancing educational inclusion were presented in these two policies, each of which was enacted at national, provincial, and city levels. The Special Education Promotion Programme emphasised the importance of building an inclusive society and creating an inclusive learning environment. Furthermore, greater educational inclusion requires more teacher training and a more effective education system.

The resource room guide helps local schools and teachers to be better able to meet children's different needs in schools. It provides clear information regarding the functions, management, layouts, and purposes of resource rooms and details the qualifications and responsibilities required of special education teachers. As resource rooms are relatively new in many areas, only a few schools have so far been designated as trial locations and received financial input from the government. It seems that the city-level guide offers more precise instructions than the national guide. This might be due to the fact that local authorities have more reliable and up-to-date information about local schools, and they can more feasibly regulate the construction of resource rooms.

The review and analysis of these documents highlight some development in LRC and the process of promoting inclusive education in China. However, the educational policies and documents are still lacking in attributional responsibilities of resource room construction, the use of proper language when describing children with ASN, and assessment and evaluation mechanisms. These three aspects will be discussed in the following section.

First, there is no information concerning the assignment of specific construction responsibilities to specific people or departments and no information about the source of financial support or distribution of funds. The only relevant financial details can be found in the "Special Education for General Schools" Notice of Resource Room Construction Guide 2016 (Ministry of Education, 2016):

> Educational administrations in various places should incorporate the construction of resource classrooms into the overall plan for the development of local special education and establish a long-term mechanism for financial support and guarantee (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 3).

The guide only offers general details about funds, and the lack of precision causes confusion. It is unclear that who is responsible for financial support and how much will be invested in resource rooms. As the construction of resource rooms was new to most LRC-programme pilot schools, it might prove more effective if supporting schools were provided with clear guidance about financing the construction and operation of resource rooms.

Second, the language used in the policies should be modified to become more inclusive (this is further considered in the final chapter). The terms "ordinary", "special education", "disability", and "disabled children" were mainly used in the policies to describe children with ASN and to distinguish between "ordinary" and "special" students. However, some of those terms have been updated in other contexts to minimise the potential to discriminate, label, and exclude.

Third, the assessment and evaluation mechanisms should be explained more specifically. Policy implementation needs to be assessed and evaluated to ascertain whether the pre-designated goals of public policy are actually being achieved (UNESCO, 2020). Nevertheless, the assessment system was mentioned only very briefly in the policy documents with insufficient detail. Furthermore, the current policies contain no specific evaluation and assessment framework, and the responsibilities of certain authorities, leaders, and teachers are not clarified. The outcome of policy implementation not only depends on

government and government-funded organisations but is also determined by the actions and decisions of other stakeholders, such as teachers, in implementing the policies at the school level (Hill, 201).

In China, the central government has stressed the importance of implementing these educational policies in recent years. While local governments can modify some details of national policies to ensure better implementation, all local governments must deliver the main concepts and implement these policies as promptly as possible.

As most of the national policies contain general rather than precise ideas so that they can be adapted to different situations in different areas, local governments are given autonomy to modify some details when enacting provincial or city-level policies. However, some policies formulated by the central government could be misunderstood, misinterpreted, or even not implemented in practice. As former President Jintao Hu (2004, p. 122) put it,

> One of the problems we are often faced with is that there are numerous good ideas, sound policies and good measures at both central and local levels… but they are not put into effect and do not arrive at the expected results.

Therefore, a clear and strict assessment and evaluation system would seem important for better policy implementation (Wang, 2005; Zhou, 2010).

The next chapter discusses the methodology used to research teachers' perspectives of IE and their use of music and dance to improve inclusion in schools.

Chapter Five: Methodology

5.1 Introduction to Chapter Five

This chapter aims to present the rationale for the methodological decisions in this study and discuss my decisions regarding its research design. The rest of this chapter is divided into seven sections. Following the introduction, Section 5.2 examines the interpretive research paradigm and considers the ontological and epistemological position in this study. In Section 5.3, I explain the choice of methodological approach - qualitative study - according to the research aims, consider the combination of qualitative methods (document review, semi-structured interviews and research diaries), and elaborate why these data collection methods would be appropriate for exploring teachers' perspectives in this study. Section 5.4 outlines the sampling procedure, how participants were approached, and introduces the ten participating schools. In Sections 5.5 and 5.6, I discuss the process of conducting a pilot study and several ethical issues, including the researcher's insider-outsider position. Section 5.7 concentrates on the process of data analysis and illustrates how data were analysed systematically, mainly through thematic analysis. Finally, Section 5.8 summarises the key points considered in this chapter.

5.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm is defined as a worldview or a set of assumptions and beliefs that guides researchers to consider and decide what should be known, how research should be performed, and how the research results should be understood and interpreted (Bryman, 2016). Some researchers have classified them into three main groups: namely positivist, interpretivist, and critical paradigms (Bryman, 2016; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). These three paradigms differ in their ontological, epistemological and methodological aspects, which are discussed further in this section. My ontological perspective aligns with the interpretivism paradigm, as shown throughout the research.

First, it is essential to understand the terms ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology relates to the nature of researchers' beliefs about reality

and being (Richards, 2003). Epistemology relates to how researchers know truth and reality, emphasising what researchers consider knowledge (Cooksey and McDonald, 2011). Methodology refers to the research design, methods and procedures adopted for finding out something in an investigation or study (Keeves, 1997). Furthermore, methodological assumptions reflect ontological and epistemological assumptions (Arthur et al., 2012). Before explaining why choosing an interpretivist stance in this study, I will briefly present my understanding of interpretivism.

5.2.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm focuses primarily on recognising and narrating the meaning of human experiences and actions (Guba and Lincoln, 1988; Fossey et al., 2002). As a philosophical stance, the interpretivist paradigm underlines (a) relativist ontology, (b) subjectivist epistemology and (c) naturalist methodology (Bryman, 2016), which I will outline next. It entails (a) relativist ontology, in which the world is a human construct (Wellington, 2000) that "can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated" (Cohen et al. 2018, p.15). The interpretivist paradigm entails a relativist ontology in which the world is a human construct (Wellington, 2000) that "can only be understood from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the on-going action being investigated" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.15).

In terms of (b) subjectivist epistemology, knowledge is viewed as a subjective construct, implying that people construct different unique meanings for the world around them (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Adopting a subjectivist epistemology means that the researcher generates the meaning of their data through their thinking and cognitive processing informed by their interactions with participants (Punch, 2013). There is the assumption that the researcher and their subjects are engaged in interactive processes in which they intermingle, dialogue, question, listen, read, write and record research data (Ibid.).

In adopting a (c) naturalist methodology, according to Guba and Lincoln (1988), the researcher utilises data gathered through interviews, discourses, text messages and reflective sessions, with the researcher acting as a participant-observer. With multiple interpretations of experience come multiple realities; there are as many different realities as there are different people (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

To summarise, within the interpretivist paradigm, the research "is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.13). Interpretivists accept multiple meanings and ways of knowing and acknowledge that objective reality can only be represented rather than be captured (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

5.2.2 Rationale of Adopting an Interpretivist Paradigm

In this study, an interpretive paradigm was considered the most applicable philosophical underpinning, and there are two main reasons for this choice. First, as one of the objectives of this study is to explore teachers' consciousness and perspectives regarding educational inclusion, I must acknowledge that there are different existing realities. As Bryman (2016) mentioned, qualitative researchers are allowed to embrace the idea of multiple realities. Moreover, it can be assumed that in the case of this study, the differences in realities stem from the teachers' various familial, educational and vocational backgrounds. The second reason for my choice of ontological perspective derives from my own teaching experience. I delivered dance lessons for children in after-school institutions for three years, and I taught in universities for one year. My teaching strategies were adjusted according to the different age groups of students and diverse work settings. My previous students differed in many aspects, including their ages, educational needs, and aesthetic pursuits. Although I always considered myself a dance teacher, my role and teaching aims were 'multiple' and different from one context to another, from being a teacher for younger children to teaching university students.

I agree with Schwandt's (2015) definition of the paradigm above that it reflects on researchers' values, commitments, outlooks and beliefs within a specific context. As Chilisa and Kawulich (2018) stress, "no one paradigmatic or theoretical framework is 'correct', and it is your choice to determine your paradigmatic view and how that informs your research design to best answer the question under study" (p.52). Thus, the interpretivist paradigm was selected as the best approach to respond to the research questions in this study, which focus on teachers' views of their work practices, backgrounds and relevant education policies.

Furthermore, the characteristics of the interpretivist paradigm are consistent with the characteristics and aims of my study. As Lincoln and Guba (1985), Morgan (2007) and Kivunja and Bawa (2017) suggest, an interpretivist paradigm usually exhibits the characteristics presented in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5. 1 Interpretivist paradigm characteristics shared with this study

Interpretivist paradigm characteristics (Lincoln and Guba,1985; Morgan, 2007 and Kivunja and Bawa,2017)	The characteristics shared with this study
(a)The admission that the social world cannot be understood from the standpoint of an individual	(1) This study is designed as a qualitative study and it includes 34 individuals as participants, which will be detailed in Section 5.3.2 and Section 5.4. All participants' standpoints were collected and analysed.
(b)The belief that realities are multiple and socially constructed	(2) Teachers' perspectives were recognised as the lens through which researchers understand certain phenomena, and it is believed that participants' viewpoints could be influenced by social factors.
(c)The acceptance that there is inevitable interaction between the researcher and his or her research participants	(3) According to my educational background, teaching experience and paradigmatic position in this study, I see myself as an insider-outsider researcher (McNess, Arthur and Crossley, 2015). I conducted field work in Shenzhen; I conducted face-to-face interviews and informal conversations with my participants. I conclude there is an interaction between me and my participants in this study, as we all work in the field of Education.
(d)The belief that knowledge is created by the findings, can be value laden and the values need to be made explicit	(4) Teachers' beliefs about and awareness of inclusive education were explored, and all of their perspectives were valued and analysed.
(e)The belief that causes and effects are mutually interdependent	(5) Teachers' conceptions regarding inclusive education can be influenced by the policies; however, the policymaking is also affected by teachers' actions and conceptions in practice.
(f)The belief that contextual factors need to be taken into consideration in any systematic pursuit of understanding	(6) Apart from teachers' own backgrounds, school facilities, governmental policies and social impact were also considered as potential influences on teachers' perceptions.
(g)The need to understand the individual rather than universal laws	(7) I believe in multiple realities, and I think people's different perspectives are worth exploring.
(h)The acceptance that context is vital for knowledge and knowing	(8) In this study, teachers' awareness and perceptions may be influenced by their different backgrounds and teaching experiences.

From this table, it can be seen that the purpose and philosophical underpinnings of this study relate closely to the characteristics of the interpretivist paradigm. For example, the understanding of multiple realities is rooted in the interpretivist paradigm and, as in this study, different perceptions are valued equally. In addition, within an interpretivist paradigm, contextual factors are considered. In my study, participants' responses are considered and analysed in the context of their educational backgrounds, work experiences and career commitment.

Moreover, it can be seen that adopting an interpretivist paradigm in my study helped with exploring how teachers' backgrounds and experiences might influence the implementation of inclusive policies in practice. It also enabled me to explore the unique personal meanings teachers construct from their own experiences and actions (Richards, 2003). This study was conducted with the understanding that teachers perceive knowledge and form their educational concepts in different ways as they filter them through their beliefs and construct their meanings.

In addition, I recognise that my educational, cultural and teaching background shape my interpretations. Social phenomena are reflected in the participants' viewpoints, attitudes and consciousness, and participants' perspectives are then re-interpreted by the researcher (me) through analysis and interpretation during the research (Bryman, 2016). While my own beliefs and perspectives may not be completely detached from the data analysis, I will attempt to be as systematic as possible: for instance, by using NVivo to support my data analysis processes (e.g. Arthur et al., 2012). This will be explained in detail in Section 5.8.

To sum up, the choice of a philosophical perspective from which to investigate a specific phenomenon should be guided by the requirements of the study, rather than by excluding certain a priori approaches or by adhering to a single particular philosophical outlook. This research adopted the interpretivist paradigm in the belief that social phenomena are subjective and social reality is

context-dependent (Bryman, 2016). However, to avoid the simplistic notions of paradigm, ontological assumptions of the objective social reality were partly maintained for the document review stage of this research (discussed in Chapter Four). The purpose of embracing the interpretive paradigm in this research was to understand and describe human nature; it is believed that values are an integral part of social life. The philosophical assumption here was that there are multiple socially constructed realities; there were no wrong values across all groups, only different ones. In the next section, I outline the research approach embraced in the empirical investigation.

5.3 The Qualitative Study

There has been an increasing number of qualitative research conducted over recent years in the area of educational inclusion (Figueiredo, Soares, and Schambeck, 2015; Gilor and Katz, 2021) and inclusive arts education (Ferm and Christophersen, 2017; Harvey et al., 2016). This section discusses my research methodology: I adopted a qualitative study design to collect data from ten mainstream schools in Shenzhen. In line with my interpretive paradigm, the research design was developed to make decisions about the type of evidence or data required to address the research questions (De Vaus, 2011). In this section, two subsections will discuss first the nature of qualitative research and then set the boundaries of the qualitative study that was the focus of the empirical investigation.

5.3.1 The Rationale of the Qualitative Study

Creswell (2014) divided research approaches into three types: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Those research approaches can be defined as "plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation" (Creswell, 2014, p.3). It is essential to identify a study's research design because it offers information about key features of the study, which can be different depending on whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods is the critical and

appropriate approach. As presented in an earlier section, a qualitative research design was selected to facilitate relevant fieldwork based on my ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions, in line with the study's purpose and research questions. The next three paragraphs will include a brief reflection on some of the characteristics of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods research respectively, followed by the rationale behind embracing a qualitative design for this study.

Qualitative research focuses on exploring, discovering and understanding human beings' experiences, thoughts and ideas (Hiatt, 1986) and consists of a series of interpretive practices as a means to approach multiple socially constructed realities (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research enables detailed descriptions of participants' experiences and opinions, which help researchers to gather more affluent and meaningful data (Richardson, 2012). However, one of the main limitations of qualitative research is the lack of generalisability to the broader population being researched (Harry and Lipsky, 2014).

Quantitative research is defined by Bryman (2016) as research that emphasises quantification in data collection and data analysis. It aims to maximise objectivity and generalisability in its findings. Quantitative research enables building studies that generate generalised results from a larger sample size while often lacking an elaborate understanding of the reasons behind the respondents' answers.

Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative methods in order to strengthen both traditions of enquiry and any non-overlapping weaknesses, thereby potentially enhancing the results (Wheeldon, 2010). It enables the researcher to elucidate complex social situations and to strengthen findings (Harwell, 2014). However, because of the complexity of mixed methods research, many researchers are not able to manage the combination of methods and philosophies, thereby running the risk that the research is not sufficiently embedded (Brannen, 2005).

A qualitative research design was chosen for this study. The study involved an in-depth analysis of non-numerical data to deepen understanding of the studied phenomena. This data included teachers' opinions, gatekeepers' viewpoints, school settings and some key texts (data gathering tools are considered in Subsection 5.3.2 below). Furthermore, there are two reasons for embracing a qualitative approach in this study. First, the characteristics of qualitative research align with the philosophical assumptions underpinning my interpretive paradigm; secondly, a qualitative approach can best answer the research questions. These two reasons are explained in more detail below.

The first reason is that during qualitative research, the enquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on interpretivist/constructivist perspectives (Creswell, 2014), which aligns with this study's interpretivist paradigm. A qualitative approach helps researchers understanding the meanings and significances of human actions and consciousness from the participants' perspectives (Richards, 2003). In this study, it was recognised that people's beliefs are complex and need to be explored in depth for researchers to gain insights. Moreover, beliefs are 'individual' constructs; different people hold different beliefs based on contextual or personal factors. Thus, adopting a qualitative approach for interviews in this study (asking teachers open questions and giving them the freedom to speak about their beliefs and practice) helped me gain insights into those beliefs, which was in accordance with the study's philosophical assumptions.

As the second reason, this study was mainly concerned with educators' attitudes, perspectives and awareness about inclusive education and the employment of music and dance to improve educational inclusion in practice, as well as the reasons behind these ideas; a qualitative approach and methods were more suitable for answering such research questions. Schwandt (2015) defined qualitative research as a process that extends from text-driven data collection to textual analysis, with the aim of understanding the deeper meaning of human actions. In addition, semi-structured interviews were employed as the main data

gathering tool in this study (this method will be explained further in Subsection 5.3.2).

Employing a qualitative approach would help to explore the individual differences of teachers' beliefs, which could be masked using a quantitative approach (Cabaroglu and Roberts, 2000). Furthermore, the complexity involved in managing different philosophical assumptions was why the mixed methods approach was not chosen. It is inevitable that qualitative research has its limitations, such as its lack of generalisability. However, as Darlington and Scott (2002, p. 18) suggested, "if one considers the unit of attention as the phenomenon under investigation, rather than the number of individuals, then the sample is often much larger than it first appears". However, in-depth understanding is the key to the investigation rather than the number of interactions. Moreover, Labaree (2003) points out that no educational research has to be generalisable, as so many contextual variables can influence the findings. To sum up, the qualitative approach and methods seemed the most appropriate choice based on the purpose of this study.

5.3.2 Qualitative Research Design

This inquiry adopted a qualitative approach, including reviewing key policy documents, semi-structured interviews with thirty-four schoolteachers and my own research diary. Similar to some scholars (Phoon, 2015; Munro, 2015; Song, 2018), I combined multiple qualitative data collection methods together to provide a more comprehensive understanding of emerging findings. I reviewed official educational documents for inclusion and collected information directly from the educators through semi-structured and in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in ten primary schools with a total of thirty-four teachers, including music and dance teachers, class tutors, headteachers and special education teachers. During fieldwork, before and after interviews, I was often invited to observe and even participate in teaching activities in the resource room and the arts festival. My reflections on these

were gathered in the diary and informed my conversations with teachers during formal interviews.

Research methods, or data gathering tools, were specific means whereby researchers set about collecting and interpreting data for the study (Arthur et al., 2012; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The research design was influenced by my ontological and epistemological assumptions, the purpose of research, and the research questions that needed to be addressed (Grix, 2010). My relativist ontological position suggested that people's understandings, experiences and perspectives are the properties of social reality that my research questions were designed to explore. I adopted a subjective epistemological approach, which shows I value the process of interacting with people and analysing their diverse viewpoints. In accordance with the interpretive paradigm adopted, the semi-structured interview was developed as the study's main data gathering tool. This was used alongside entries to my researcher diary during fieldwork and the review of key policies outlined in Chapter Four. These tools were used to answer the three Research Questions, as shown in Table 5.2 below.

Table 5. 2 The link between employed research methods and research questions

Research questions	Methods	What could they yield?
1. What is the influence, if any, of the teachers' backgrounds on the perceived possibilities of inclusive education and the employment of music and dance activities for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?	Interviews & Research diary	Interviews discussed how their backgrounds (educational and teaching backgrounds) may have influenced their attitudes to and conceptions of implementing IE and promoting educational inclusion through music and dance in practice. Research diary had a full record for necessary add-on information from participants and other educators who were not formally participants in this study.
2. What are teachers' perspectives on the practical factors hindering and facilitating the development of inclusive education and the employment of music and dance to	Interviews & Research diary	Interviews enabled primary school teachers to report their experiences and opinions. Research diary had a full record for necessary add-on information from participants and other educators.

include children with additional support needs in primary schools in Shenzhen?		
3. What are the similarities and differences between policy goals and teachers' views on practice for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?	Policy review (Chapter Four) Interviews & Research diary	Interviews helped me to access teachers' opinions and practices regarding improving inclusive education through music and dance, which I then contrasted with the policies reviewed in Chapter Four.

The above table outlines how appropriate research methods were selected and combined for addressing three research questions. The following two parts introduce the design of semi-structured interviews and the role of the research diary in the process of both data collection and data analysis.

5.3.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Several researchers (Taylor, 2005; Arthur et al., 2012; Kallio et al., 2016) agree that the interview is one of the most used and useful research tools for qualitative data collection. As Kvale (2008) maintains, "a qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation" (p.xvii). Interviewing is one of the most interesting qualitative research methods, particularly semi-structured interviewing because researchers can talk to participants to investigate their experiences and perspectives within a broader scope (Miles and Gilbert, 2005).

The choice of semi-structured in-depth interviews was justified by the fact that this method is suitable for exploring the more profound ways in which people conceptualise social phenomena. One of the aims of qualitative methodology is to describe a particular aspect of a phenomenon by including viewpoints and perspectives drawn from the real world (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative methods usually generate data in the form of a broadly organised text collected to measure the individual's performance and attitudes (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Furthermore, while semi-structured interviews are conversations with a purpose, the conversation is flexible (Brayman, 2016). Semi-structured interviews are

effective when exploring why and how, which might answer Research Questions 1 and 2. The questions were kept brief, the order of questions was logical (see Table 5.5 in Section 5.5), and a series of prompts were developed (e.g. Miles and Gilbert, 2005). Moreover, in-person interviews were conducted in a quiet location where the participants felt comfortable talking.

Based on the voluntary research participant principle, thirty-four primary school teachers from ten schools were asked to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences and perceptions regarding performing arts being used for educational inclusion. I selected specific participants who were able to contribute to this research topic and were willing to share their experiences of improving educational inclusion through performing arts (Crabtree and Miller, 1992).

In addition to the formal interview, two informal talks (one before and one after the formal interview) also took place with all participants. As discussed earlier, I encountered issues with several participants who were suspicious of my motives, owing to a misunderstanding caused by some of the gatekeepers. To allay their suspicions, I had a relaxed talk with the participants before the formal interviews; the shortest talk lasted for about 15 minutes, and the longest one continued for around two hours. Unsurprisingly, sharing a relaxed conversation before the formal interviews eliminated the participants' suspicions about my research purpose and helped me build a good rapport and level of trust with them. Moreover, in case any participants had forgotten to mention some important points during the audio-recorded interviews, I also talked with the participants after the formal interviews.

During these post-interview conversations, I found it interesting that participants felt more comfortable and tended to talk more after I had turned off the voice recorder. In fact, after turning it off, one participant expressed a totally different viewpoint from what she had said during the interview; more data was collected after turning off the recording device in the form of reflections in my

diary. Therefore, I informed some participants that they would be welcome to add more information after the audio-recording had finished if they so wished. At this stage, the participants were also asked if notes of their extended answers could be taken to be included in this study. They all gave their consent to this. It is worth highlighting that my notes and diaries helped me to record some important content outside the audio recording. At the same time, it ensured that my role as interpreter was not neglected. In order to minimise any potential biases or misunderstandings in my interpretations, all participants were asked to read the transcripts and make any amendments if they believed that the notes did not accurately reflect their beliefs and viewpoints. The semi-structured interviews were built mainly on open-ended questions (see Table 5.2 in Section 5.3.2). The original questions were partly modified after the pilot study, the details of which have been provided in Table 5.5 (Section 5.5).

5.3.2.2 Research Diary

A research diary is considered a type of report and commentary upon events, feelings, thoughts, and experiences during an empirical study (Hewitt, 2017), though some researchers argue that diaries are most effective when combined with other research tools (Crosbie, 2006; Kenten, 2010; Duke, 2012). Diaries are flexible tools and can be used to collect data over extended periods of time, and their strength lies in bolstering weaknesses in interview techniques (e.g. Bolger, Davis and Rafaeli, 2003).

The process of writing research diaries allows more intimate introspection, which can result in collecting information with more detail for research purposes (Bryman, 2016). During my study during the data collection stage in Shenzhen, I had 11 non-recorded conversations with relevant educators and much useful information was collected within the warm-up conversations and after-interview talks with participants that were not audio-recorded; therefore, taking notes and keeping my research diary became essential data collection tools. Thus, the contents of my research diary were more descriptive rather than interpretive (see Appendix Six for a sample of the research diary).

In this study, the main content of my diary was important information obtained from informal talks without any voice recording. Moreover, my diary and notes were written and kept in a locked folder on my laptop. During the process of data analysis, the research diary was organised into one document to be analysed with the 34 interview transcripts (both in paper and in Nvivo).

5.4 Identifying and Accessing the Research Group

In order to meet the purpose of this study, 34 primary school educators were selected. This sampling group consisted of special education teachers, music and dance teachers, headteachers and class tutors. The participants came from ten schools in Shenzhen, seven of which are state-funded schools and three private schools. I intentionally chose both public and private schools in four different districts, as this would help me collect a broader range of more reliable data. This section will introduce how I identified the participants and how I secured access to 10 primary schools in Shenzhen. I will also present some basic information about the ten schools and 34 participants. Pseudonyms are used throughout the text.

5.4.1 Identifying Potential Participants

Sampling effectively was an essential step towards achieving the research aims. As I had a limited period to conduct my research, I could not investigate the entire population; therefore, I needed to limit my investigation to a small sample group (Borg and Gall,1989). There are two main sampling strategies: probability (random) and nonprobability (selective) (Cohen et al., 2013; Merriam, 2002). In this study, the process of choosing the participants was selective, which is the most commonly used method of sampling in qualitative studies (Merriam, 2002). Nonprobability sampling included the benefit of selecting certain groups of teachers who would be able to understand and answer my interview questions.

The criteria for selecting the participating teachers were as follows: mainstream primary school teachers (student teachers were excluded) with at least a basic knowledge or experience of teaching in inclusive classrooms or assisting children with ASN. In effect, they were music teachers, dance teachers, special education teachers, class tutors and headteachers in state and private schools. The initial plan was to conduct interviews with 25 participants in five mainstream schools, with five interviews conducted in each school. However, this plan was changed owing to unexpected circumstances.

First, I had planned to visit five schools initially, but my research was eventually conducted in ten schools. After receiving ethical approval from the University of Glasgow (see Appendix Three), I contacted five schools through their gatekeepers and obtained their permission for my research. However, once I started my investigation in Shenzhen, many educators showed interest in my research, and some planned participants introduced further relevant potential participants to me; therefore, I had more participants than I initially planned. This 'snowballing' process expanded my research scope positively, and it helped me access five more primary schools and involved nine more participants. I stopped fieldwork after visiting ten schools not only because the data collected from thirty-four teachers was enough for analysing and answering the research questions but also these ten schools were fairly representative for different types (private and state schools/ schools with and without resource rooms) of primary schools in Shenzhen. I clarified to the participants that participating in the study was voluntary, and refusing to participate or withdrawing was part of their rights. All participated voluntarily.

Second, I planned to gather a total of about 25 dance teachers, music teachers and headteachers (ideally, ten music teachers, ten dance teachers and five headteachers) to be interviewed in this study, but by the end, I had interviewed 34 participants. As McLeod and Elliott (2011) highlight in their qualitative research report, the exact number of participants cannot be specified before the research is conducted. The first reason for this change was that it was hard to achieve an equal number of participants from each school due to the varying

number of music and dance teachers in different schools. When I started to conduct my interviews in the school, I realised that there was a limited number of special education teachers for children with ASN in Shenzhen. The shortage of special education teachers for children with ASN could be attributed to the fact that inclusive education is a developing idea in Shenzhen (China); only a few LRC assigned schools had the capability to employ special education teachers and to establish resource rooms (see Chapter Two and Four). Therefore, it is common that while schools have no right to reject any child's enrolment as long as they live in nearby neighbourhoods, the school cannot guarantee appropriate teaching resources and special education teachers for children with ASN.

In addition, my interview schedule was sometimes disrupted, and I was forced to make changes. As I was in China for fieldwork around the Chinese Children's Day (1 June), all the schools I visited were preparing various art performances for the festival, and teachers were quite busy organising activities. It is worth mentioning that all the children were encouraged and allowed to participate in the arts festival in most schools (the details of the arts festival will be discussed further in the findings in Section 6.6.2). Therefore, some teachers' schedules were tight and busy, and we sometimes had to change the interview schedule. However, I was lucky to have the chance to witness how arts festivals happen in schools, and the arts festival featured as part of my interview questions.

When I first accessed each school, with the gatekeepers' permission, I met all the music and dance teachers and special education teachers, and talked to them about my research; then, people who were interested in and available for my interviews would be my potential participants. Apart from 34 educators who formally participated in the semi-structured interviews, there were other 11 educators whom I talked to informally without any audio recorded. However, I did record useful information from all conversations I had with these 45 educators in my research diary for future reference in data analysis.

To conclude, in order to answer the research questions and collect different teachers' perspectives, four types of educators were included as participants: music teachers and dance teachers, headteachers, class tutors and special education teachers (these four roles are further outlined in Subsection 5.4.3).

5.4.2 Accessing Participants

After I obtained ethical approval, my family and I contacted some gatekeepers to obtain permission for physical access by sending a plain language statement. Fortunately, the process was quite successful; most of the people I contacted allowed me to access their schools as a researcher. This was a particularly important stage as ensuring children's safety had become a very sensitive issue in Shenzhen primary schools. It was recognised in the city that teachers and schools should be fully responsible for children's safety, sometimes even during after-school activities. At primary schools, in particular, children are not mature enough to protect themselves from potential dangers. Thus, the security procedures for accessing primary schools were very stringent, and people were not allowed access to schools without permission. During my data collection, every school I visited asked me to wait outside until the security administrators had verified my identity. Thus, it was impossible to gain access to any school without contacting the teachers or gatekeepers in advance.

However, certain unforeseen issues arose during the preparations to obtain permission to access schools. One issue related to sampling was that some gatekeepers selected the participants on my behalf; thus, as an 'outsider' to the schools, I knew none of them before I met them in person. Moreover, the information that gatekeepers passed on to the participants was that I was from the local education bureau and was going to investigate at their schools. I understand that the gatekeepers told them this because they wanted the participants to be voluntary and as active as possible. When I met some of the participants, even though I showed them my consent form and information sheet (see Appendix One and Two), they were still unsure about my purpose there. This issue was identified during the pilot study, and I was able to fix it

immediately. I started to establish a good rapport between the participants and myself in several ways. First, a relaxed chat before the formal interview proved to be extremely helpful. Second, I sometimes chose to conduct the interviews outside of the schools, which provided a more comfortable environment for the conversation. Third, I used 'snowball' sampling, whereby some interviews were arranged, and then some participants with whom I had established a level of trust provided me with names of others. The participants I recruited through 'snowballing' fully trusted that my interview had no additional purpose other than research. Another benefit from 'snowballing' was that I enjoyed a greater level of certainty that all of the participants were trustworthy and highly relevant to my research.

5.4.3 Information of Ten Schools and Thirty-four Participants

In the end, I had access to ten mainstream primary schools and 34 participants for data collection. This subsection provides a brief introduction to the schools and participants. I was interested to see whether any differences between teachers' various workplaces would affect their opinions or whether the differences in policies and practices between private and public schools were influential. All the schools I visited had an arts festival at least once a year. There were three private schools and seven state-funded schools studied in this research. Within the ten schools, three state-funded schools had resource rooms, and special education teachers were working there, while the other seven schools (both public and private schools) had no resource room or special education teachers. Basic information about the schools is given in Table 5.3 , and all school and teacher names are pseudonyms.

Table 5. 3 Ten schools' basic background information

School name (pseudonym)	Location	Private or public	The year of establishment	Numbers of students and staff	Number of resources room	Whether has Arts festival and arts activities

The Quay Foreign Language School	Futian District	Public	2005	3100 students/ 210 staffs	1	Yes
The Academy Primary School	Futian District	Public	1989	1800 students/ 100 staffs	0	Yes
The Beautiful International School	Luohu District	Private	2018	1200 students/ 200 staffs	0	Yes
The Strong Primary School	Futian District	Public	2008	1503 students/ 101 staffs	1	Yes
The Colorful Primary School	Futian District	Public	2003	1660 students/ 150 staffs	0	Yes
The Luminous Chinese and English School	Guangming District	Private	2001	1800 students/ 200 staffs	0	Yes
The Forest Primary School	Futian District	Public	1949	1649 students/ 97 staffs	1	Yes
The Bridge School	Baoan District	Private	2005	1098 students/ 57 staffs	0	Yes
The Prosperous Primary School	Futian District	Public	1993	827 students/ 78 staffs	0	Yes
The Lotus Primary School	Futian District	Public	1993	1600 students/ 150 staffs	0	Yes

School 1: The Quay Foreign Language School

The Quay Foreign Language School was a state-funded school with government funds, and it was founded in 2005. This school has a well-rounded educational plan, construction to a high standard, a beautiful school environment and advanced facilities and equipment. The school had 225 faculty members and about 3000 students as of May 2019.

It was one of the eight schools designated as pilot schools for the LRC programme with a resource room in the Futian district; however, there was no information about a resource room or LRC programme on the school's home page. There was one resource room and three special education teachers, and these three special education teachers had relatively mature knowledge and conceptions about inclusive education. More importantly, these three special education teachers shared a strong belief in promoting inclusive education in China, expressing that it could be difficult but absolutely the right thing to promote.

The government funded the construction of a resource room at this school, and there was a reception area, a teaching area and two separate rooms for consultation. The amount of government funding was according to the number of children with medical diagnosis certificates so that only children with the certificate could be offered help and support from the resources room and special education teachers. By May 2019, about 20 children were qualified for being supported in the resource room. In terms of facilities, they had some sports equipment like yoga balls and a large table and a whiteboard for creating a virtual classroom environment in the resource room. I was told some that children were trained to behave better in class through practising in the virtual classroom environment.

Most of the time, children with ASN would spend one hour in the resource room per day, where the content would vary; it could be a music class, dance class, craft class, or even chatting time. A special education teacher told me that music and dance are the most effective way to help children with ASN, but they lacked the relevant skills and invited other teachers from different institutions to come to take the class.

During fieldwork, I was invited to give children one dance lesson and one craft lesson in the resource room. There were eight children altogether; four were children with ASN, and the other four were children without ASN. A special education teacher told me that, several months ago, they had started to try bringing not only children with ASN but also children without ASN. Children with ASN were required to invite one child from their class to come to the resource room and do the extra course together with them. One of the special education teachers said enabling children with ASN to work with children without ASN in an inclusive learning environment was educational inclusion.

School 2: The Academy Primary School

The Academy Primary School was a state-funded school located in the Futian district founded in 1989. The school environment was delightful, with the most beautiful views of all the schools I visited. The school covered an area of around 150,000 square meters, and the green coverage rate exceeded 85 per cent. Moreover, it seemed all the children were involved in the school decorations; there were so many walls displays of children's painting, writing, photos or craftwork.

The school had 38 teaching classes, more than 1800 students and more than 100 faculty members. Its schooling philosophy was to be child-oriented, to respect diversity and individuality, and to develop all teachers and students. The educational concept there was to prioritise students and educate people with love. The school aimed to make every student feel a sense of success, make every teacher feel a sense of achievement, and make every parent feel proud of their children.

School 3: The Beautiful International School

The Beautiful International School was a private boarding school located in Luohu district founded in 2018. The school was equipped with first-class facilities and high-quality, specialised services. It upheld the educational mottos "rooted in China and blossoming for the world" and "the same life with different and wonderful stories". The tuition there was very expensive. For grades 1 to 6, it costs CNY 150,000 to 200,000 per year. It had small-size classes, normally 8-12 students each, with two class tutors: one is a Chinese teacher, and the other is a foreign one.

I interviewed two participants at the school: the vice-principal, Mr Wei, and a dance teacher, Miss Hu. The educational concept at the school followed the American style; their slogan referred to breaking out of the traditional academic method in China, and their educational idea was to support every child in every aspect.

However, although they persisted in customising the educational pursuits for each child and encouraged and accepted children's diversities, they did not accept children with some physical or psychological difficulties. They explained that they needed to ensure the safety of all students and maintain a high-quality teaching environment.

School 4: The Strong Primary School

The Strong Primary School was a state-funded school located in Futian district founded in 2008. It was a five-minute walk away from the Futian district government offices and a three-minute walk away from the Futian district education bureau.

The school was one of the eight schools in the district designated as pilot schools for the LRC programme, including a resource room; however, as with the Quay Language School, there was no information about a resource room or the LRC programme on their web page. Their website included two relevant announcements about inclusive education: the tender announcements of 2019 and 2020 for recruiting special education teachers and purchasing more facilities for the resource room.

Their resource room was the most fully equipped of all the resource rooms I visited for this study. They had massage chairs with treatment functions, a comfortable reading area with many colourful and cosy chairs, a sand-play area, a demo classroom, a calm down corner and a demonstration wall for children's artwork.

Two special education teachers, Ms Chen and Mr Xu worked most of the time in the resources room, sometimes in the regular classroom, assisting children with ASN. They were young teachers; Ms Chen was born in 1994 and Mr Xu in 1996. Because their educational backgrounds related to special education and inclusive education, they had clear, up-to-date conceptions of educational inclusion.

In addition, I was invited to Mr Xiang's and Ms Zhang's music classes for classroom observations, and I had informal conversations with two members of the school leadership team. I found that all the teachers there agreed that music and dance could help to promote educational inclusion in schools. However, the problem was that they were sometimes unable to deal with different problems, and there was no productive cooperation between the special education teachers and music teachers. Furthermore, the gatekeeper also showed positive attitudes towards educational inclusion.

There were many interesting examples of children with additional educational needs at this school. There was a set of quadruplets at this school – two boys and two girls – with the two boys displaying Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms and barely able to concentrate in classes. However, they could focus on singing and drawing (subway and trains). They also put on a singing performance in front of all the students and teachers in the school. Moreover, another boy with ADHD showed a musical gift. He enjoyed being a conductor and sometimes was the conductor for the flag-raising ceremony on Monday mornings. His music teacher, Ms Zhang, told me he could understand everything she taught and quickly learnt everything about music, but he was unable to do the same in other subjects.

School 5: The Colorful Primary School

The Colorful Primary School was a state-funded school located in Futian district and founded in 2003. It had a quiet environment, good teaching facilities and many experienced teachers with a rigorous teaching style.

One week before I visited, the school were doing a national test (guo kao), with the subject content for that year being music and Mandarin. In the music test, every child was required to sing and demonstrate basic musical knowledge, and all the teachers and children worked hard to prepare for this test. I was invited to Ms Li's music class for observation, and I found that almost all the children

were able to sing and read the musical notation, even though they were only in Grade 1.

Ms Qi was working on a music therapy programme at the Colorful Primary School, and she was the music teacher and programme leader. The programme was designed to help children with ASN through music therapy. There was no resource room or any special education teachers, but, the school had a music therapy programme in which music teachers played an important role by providing support for the children with ASN.

School 6: The Luminous Chinese and English School

The Luminous Chinese and English School was a private school located in Guangming district belonging to a for-profit education group. It was a primary school with small classes, and it cooperated with 195 schools in the US, Hongkong and mainland China.

The tuition in this school was more expensive than normal schools: about 20,000 yuan per year. (Tuition is free in state-funded schools.) Most of those children's parents were newly arrived migrants and came for business. Because the school was located in the outskirts of Shenzhen, it was not easy to attract many senior teachers to work there. All my participants were born after 1992, and they explained that they may leave the school after a few years to other schools nearer the city centre.

This school had a sound arts-education environment with various arts festivals every year. The most extensive arts festival in these schools was 'quan min zhan shi ' (All Children's Show); every child would be on stage, and they could choose what they performed. The performances mainly focused on dance, music and drama. All of my participants agreed that music and dance could help with creating an inclusive environment for children at schools, but, without inclusive education training and support from special education teachers, they had

concerns about their abilities and qualifications when faced with different educational issues.

School 7: The Forest Primary School

The Forest Primary School was a state-funded school located in Futian district and founded in 1949, the same year as the establishment of the People's Republic of China. There were 33 classes, about 1600 students and 100 faculty members. It had initially been set up as an educational environment with a specialised focus on improving physical education, arts education and inclusive education.

The school was another pilot school for the LRC programme and also had a resource room and special education teachers. It had done well in creating a more inclusive learning environment, and the headteacher was supportive of inclusion for all children in the school. The school enjoyed a great reputation in terms of implementing inclusive education; as a result, many parents started to purchase homes nearby in order to meet the school's enrolment requirements (school district housing policy) in advance. However, the headteacher wanted to keep their success in inclusion a 'secret'; she never publicised their achievements in inclusion and never accepted any interview requests. She even asked her staff not to discuss any work they were doing for inclusion outside school. This was because she did not want to attract more children with additional educational needs to their school. The school would turn into a 'special school' and other parents might protest about further children with additional educational needs being accepted for enrolment.

Fortunately, Mr Chen agreed to participate, and he talked about both the achievements and shortcomings of educational inclusion at their school. He gave an inclusive education speech at school for the other teachers, saying the more teachers have the idea of inclusive education, the more supportive they will be of the special education teachers' work.

In terms of funding, the government allocated CNY 52,000 per year (minimum national standard is 6,000 yuan per year per student, shown in Chapter Four) for each child with ASN who joined the LRC programme in this school, and the school taught 24 children with ASN who had medical certification and parental approval. However, there were more than 24 children needed additional help, as some parents refused to get medical certificate from hospitals or relevant institutions because they did not want to label or stigmatise their children.

School 8: The Bridge School

The Bridge School was a private school located in the Baoan district. Many students' parents were migrant workers, most of them with more than one child. Parents busy making money would not have enough time to pay attention to each child. However, many parents believed that it was solely the teachers' responsibility to educate their children, and they did not need to educate their children at home.

I interviewed five participants at this school. I found four of them had negative attitudes towards parental education and school administration, but they all emphasised the importance of efficient communication between teachers and parents. They all believed in using music and dance to improve educational inclusion at schools; however, they felt they did not have enough time, space and instruction to implement the relevant policies.

School 9: The Prosperous Primary School

The Prosperous Primary School was a state-funded school located in the Futian district and it was founded in 1993. They had 24 teaching classes, about 1000 students and 55 faculty members.

I was invited to be a judge to select the final programmes for the Children's Festival Closing Ceremony. Every child was encouraged to join the show, and each class prepared three to four performances; judges then selected ten performances for the final presentation. I felt that dance and music activities

were quite popular at this school, the teachers were supportive, and students were passionate about it. The headteacher said, “we have some students who might not perform well academically, but they are quite active in dance and music activities. I am also happy and proud of them”.

School 10: The Lotus Primary School

The Lotus Primary School was a state-funded school located in the Futian district, and it was founded in 1993. I found this to be a very democratic school, and teachers there expressed that they were working in a comfortable environment. Miss Liang and Miss Lin were relatively younger teachers, and they had many new teaching concepts and a positive attitude towards educational inclusion.

I talked to the headteacher, Mr W, who had his own opinion on including all children at schools, said he would not give up any child no matter what kind of learning difficulties they had. He knew a lot about inclusive education and also loved music. He gave many examples of how music can support children’s studies and their lives.

Information on the 34 teachers interviewed

I eventually had 34 participants with different roles in schools: 10 teachers working in private schools and 24 of them in state-funded schools. All of them were Chinese nationals. Their roles are outlined below.

Special education teachers (6/34)

Special education teachers are teachers with certificates in inclusive education or special education. They do not teach any regular subjects, and they are in schools specifically to support children with additional support needs. In Shenzhen, only a few state-funded and LRC designed schools had the authority to employ special education teachers and construct resource rooms (see Section

4.5). In Futian district (there are nine districts in Shenzhen, and Futian district is the administrative centre), by May 2019, eight pilot schools were designated with resources rooms and special education teachers, and there were about 100 schools in that district, including all the state and private schools.

Music and dance teachers (16/34)

Music was compulsory in the main curriculum in the ten schools studied, but dance was not. However, all the schools featured dance activities and dance troupes, and singing with movement is the main content of music courses in Chinese primary schools. Therefore, most music teachers in Shenzhen could teach dance, and most dance teachers could teach music in primary schools. In this study, music teachers and dance teachers were combined because they all taught music and dance. Usually, music and dance teachers teach more classes than class tutors, and the music and dance teachers in this study taught across six classrooms on average.

Class tutors (10/34)

In this study, class tutors refer to teachers who oversee all children in one class. Each teaching class has at least one class tutor, and the class tutor typically also teaches one subject, such as Mandarin or English. Class tutors are an essential bridge in connecting parents and schools, children and parents and children and schools. As explained in the opening chapter, class sizes in China vary, and the average class size of state-funded primary schools is around 56 to 65 (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Headteachers (2/34)

The headteacher is the whole school leader, whose primary responsibility is to manage school affairs and organise educational work. Successful Chinese headteachers are portrayed as masterful leaders with comprehensive expertise in dealing with all issues important to school development, such as school

finance and student development (Cai, 2000; Feng and Li, 2016). In this study, two of my interviewees were headteachers who also taught music.

Based on the information regarding the schools and types of teachers, Table 5.4 outlines the background of each teacher, which will be discussed further when analysing their perceptions in Chapter Six.

Table 5. 4 Basic information on the 34 participating teachers

Participant names (pseudonym)	Years of teaching experience	Current place of employment	Roles in school	Education background
1. Ms Zhao	4 years	The Quay Foreign Language School	special education teacher	Master's degree in special education
2. Ms Qian	4 years	The Quay Foreign Language School	special education teacher & Psychology teacher	Bachelor's degree in special education
3. Ms Sun	8 months	The Quay Foreign Language School	special education teacher	Bachelor's degree in special education
4. Mr Li	23 years	The Academy Primary School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Master's degree in Chinese language and literature
5. Ms Zhou	3 years	The Academy Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Master's degree in performing arts
6. Ms Wu	23 years	The Academy Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree
7. Ms Zheng	15 years	The Academy Primary School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
8. Mr Wang	10 years	The Beautiful International School	Music teacher & Vice-principle	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
9. Ms Feng	8 months	The Beautiful International School	class tutor & Dance teacher	Master's degree in performing arts

10. Mr Chen	7 years	The Forest Primary School	special education teacher & Science teacher	Bachelor's degree in special education
11. Ms Zhu	3.5 years	The Bridge School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature
12. Ms Heng	2.5 years	The Bridge School	class tutor & Math teacher	Bachelor's degree in Mathematics
13. Ms Jiang	4.5 years	The Bridge School	class tutor & English teacher	Bachelor's degree in English language
14. Ms Han	3 years	The Bridge School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature
15. Mr Yang	2 years	The Bridge School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
16. Ms Qin	20 years	The Lotus School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
17. Ms You	5 years	The Lotus School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
18. Ms Xu	5 years	The Lotus School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature
19. Ms He	3o years	The Prosperous Primary School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Bachelor's degree in Chinese language and literature
20. Mr Lu	35 years	The Prosperous Primary School	Principle & Music teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
21. Ms Shi	2o years	The Prosperous Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Postgraduate degree in performing arts
22. Ms Zhang	24 years	The Prosperous Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
23. Ms Kong	2o years	The Prosperous Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
24. Ms Cao	3 years	The Strong Primary School	special education teacher	Bachelor's degree in special education
25. Mr Yan	2 years	The Strong Primary School	special education teacher	Bachelor's degree in special education
26. Mr Hua	3 years	The Strong Primary School	Music teacher & dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
27. Ms Jin	13 years	The Strong Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts

28. Ms Wei	20 years	The Colorful Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
29. Ms Tao	24 years	The Colorful Primary School	class tutor & Mandarin teacher	Bachelor's degree Chinese language and literature
30. Ms Qi	15 years	The Colorful Primary School	Music teacher & Program developer	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
31. Ms Xie	4 years	The Colorful Primary School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
32. Ms Deng	3 years	The Luminous Chinese and English School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
33. Ms Yu	9 years	The Luminous Chinese and English School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts
34. Ms Bo	4 years	The Luminous Chinese and English School	Music teacher & Dance teacher	Bachelor's degree in performing arts

5.5 Piloting Research Methods

Some experts outline how pilots are important for qualitative research and helpful for researchers (e.g. Goodman, Meltzer and Bailey, 1998; Eastman, 2018). A pilot can assist researchers in determining whether there are flaws, limitations or weaknesses in the interview design and enable researchers to make any necessary revisions prior to the implementation of the study. Furthermore, the two participants involved in the pilot were similar to the informants involved in the final interviews of this study.

The pilot study took place in the Strong School (one of the participating schools) with one music and dance teacher and one special education teacher, who did not participate in the main study. In the pilot study, I began with semi-structured interviews with two participants with lengths of 23 minutes and 35 minutes, respectively. I designed my interview questions along with five main themes: teachers' basic teaching background (e.g., Could you please tell me

how long you have been a dance/music teacher? What is your education background? What is your qualification level?); teachers' occupational perspective (e.g., Do you see yourself as a dance/music teacher in 10 years' time?); teachers' awareness and conception of educational inclusion (e.g., What do you think about educational equity and educational inclusion?); teachers' knowledge of inclusive education policy (e.g., As far as you know, what are the general indications or instructions from school administrators and the Minister of Education regarding inclusive education?); and teachers' effects on policy implementation (e.g., What is the learning atmosphere in your dance/music class like?).

Based on the pilot study results, the interview themes and questions were amended for the formal interviews in the main study (see Table 5.5 below). Three aspects were improved. First, the interview questions were amended. After the pilot interviews, I asked these two participants if the interview questions were easily understandable, and they provided feedback on those initial questions. I reflected on the pilot study and the pilot participants' feedback, then created a more suitable version of the questions for the formal interviews.

The second aspect for improvement concerns confidentiality. While the pilot interviews were conducted, the two participants talked about their students using the children's real names. In order to protect the children's privacy and the participants' confidentiality in the following formal interviews, I stated that participants were welcome to mention real stories about their students but suggested they used pseudonyms or referred to 'one child' or 'this student' during the interview.

The third aspect was recognising that engagement with the context was valued. For the first participant in the pilot, I asked her several questions about the school context and the overall situation for primary schools in Shenzhen. However, while interviewing the second participant, who was working in the

same school as the first, I was more familiar with the context. Therefore, I felt I was better able to relate to what the second participant was talking about, and the conversation was easier for me to follow. For this reason, before doing my formal interviews, I had a brief talk with the gatekeepers about school contexts and teachers' backgrounds. This approach helped me create a better rapport with teachers and gave me more confidence to speak to my participants.

Table 5. 5 The interview themes and questions for the pilot study and the formal study

	Pilot study	Main study
Interview themes	● Teachers' basic teaching background ● Teachers' occupational perspective ● Teachers' awareness and conception of educational inclusion ● Teachers' knowledge of inclusive education policy Teachers' effects on policy implementation	● Teachers' basic education backgrounds and teaching experience ● Teachers' opinions of educational inclusion from their own vocational perspectives ● Teachers' knowledge of policies about inclusive education ● Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of inclusive education policies for children with additional education needs in primary schools

Interview questions	1. I'd like to ask you for some basic information, could you please tell me how many years you have been working as a dance/music teachers? What is your education background? What is your qualification level? Do you see yourself as dance/music teacher in 10 years' time? 2. Could you please describe your job responsibilities within this primary school? What motivated you to choose a career as a music/dance teacher? 3. How do you like working as a music/dance teacher? What do you find enjoyable/challenging? 4. Could you please talk about the groups of children that you teach, like their ages, family backgrounds, characters, and any information you think may be useful for this research? 5. What is the learning atmosphere in your dance/music class like? 6. How many educational policies for including children with ASN do you know of? As far as you can say, what general indications or instructions have come from school administrators and the Ministry of Education? 7. What do you think educational inclusion is? 8. In general, how would you describe your interactions with the migrant children? 9. To what extent do you believe music/dance education or activities can improve educational inclusion for children with ASN in primary schools? 10. As far as you know, do children and parents have expectations of creating an inclusive learning environment in primary schools? 11. Are there any examples that you would like to talk about?	1. Could you please tell me how many years you have been working as a dance teacher/music teacher? 2. What is your education background? What is your qualification level? 3. What motivated you to choose a career as a music teacher/dance teacher/head teacher/special education teacher? 4. How do you like working as a primary school teacher? What do you find enjoyable/challenging about teaching at a primary school? 5. Could you please describe your job responsibilities within this primary school? 6. Do you see yourself as a dance teacher/music teacher in 10 years' time? 7. For you, are some forms of achievement more valuable than others? 8. For learners, are some learners' achievements more valued than others? 9. How might teachers ensure children's rights in education by treating them with respect, dignity and listening to their views? 10. What do you think educational inclusion is? 11. Which or any educational policies for including children with ASN do you know of? 12. As far as you can say, what general indications or instructions for improving educational inclusion have come from school administrators and the Ministry of Education? 13. As far as you know, do children and parents have expectations of creating an inclusive learning environment in primary schools? 14. What is the learning atmosphere in your dance/music class like? 15. In general, how would you describe your interactions with children with additional education needs? 16. Could you please talk about the groups of children that you teach, like their ages, family backgrounds, characters, and any information you think may be useful for this research? 17. To what extent do you believe music/dance education or activities can improve educational inclusion for children with ASN in primary schools? 18. Are there any examples that you would like to talk about? And do you have any other thoughts about this issue?

The adjustments made following the pilot study helped me to conduct the interviews in a better way. Firstly, it helped me to modify the language in the research questions and make them easier to understand and clearer. Secondly, because I had the chance to practice and familiarise myself with the process of interviews during the pilot, I was more confident when talking with participants during the official interviews and better able to create a comfortable atmosphere in which people could talk freely. In addition, as an interviewer, I

was quite flexible when asking people questions. For example, I did not go through all the questions in the same order for each participant, but I adjusted the order according to their responses. Occasionally, I improvised and slightly altered a question to enable the conversation to go deeper. Even though sometimes the question order was different, the interview structure was clear enough for me to go through every aspect of my interview questions.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

In this study, the potential ethical issues were carefully considered throughout the whole research process (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In the ethical guidance from the British Educational Research Association (BERA), Hammersley and Traianou (2012) suggested five main ethical principles, including minimising harm, respecting autonomy, protecting privacy, offering reciprocity and treating people equitably (pp. 2-3). These five ethical principles were carefully considered throughout this research as follows:

a) Minimising harm

This research was conducted in a low-risk context, and the potential for harm was minimal. The plain language statement that included introducing myself and this study was provided in advance. The formal interviews and informal talks were managed in primary schools with educators, and all the participants were adults. Moreover, they were notified that they had the right to stop the interview or withdraw anytime they wished.

b) Naming all schools and participants with pseudonyms

First, all the names of places, schools, and teachers were replaced with pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Moreover, the information from the ten schools and 34 participants was all anonymised, and all participants read and signed the consent form before taking part in the audio-recorded interviews. It was made clear that their work and life would not be affected by this research.

c) Protecting privacy

All the data was stored in a locked file on my laptop and was always handled confidentially. All the personal data will be destroyed when this research is complete. Raw data was shared only between myself and my two supervisors.

d) Offering reciprocity

All participants were promised to be offered 60 yuan (approximately seven pounds) or an alternative incentive which is the souvenir I brought from Glasgow. The hourly pay for primary teachers in Shenzhen is about 50-70 yuan (Zeng, Zhang and Zhou, 2018), and my interview was scheduled to last around 45 minutes; therefore, I chose 60 yuan as an incentive for participants. However, all participants chose the souvenir as the incentive for participating in my research. I prepared gifts and reciprocity for my participants to meet the cultural expectation and show respect to my participants, as in other recent doctoral investigations that involved Chinese participants (Wang, 2020; Song, 2018).

Aside from the incentives, I was invited to be the judge of the Children's Day show at the Prosperous Primary School as a reciprocal gesture for their support of my research. In addition, I was also invited to give one dance class and one craft class in the resource room at the Quay Foreign Language School, because after they recognized my educational background relates to both dance and inclusive education, they expressed significant interest and desire for asking me to be involved in their class activities.

e) Treating people equitably

In this study, the participant group included educators from different schools with a variety of teaching experiences. As a researcher, I treated each of my participants equitably and respectfully, regardless of their backgrounds. Some of my participants were worried about whether the information they provided would be 'useful' or not because they worried, perhaps, that they were not

experienced enough. I told them they could talk about everything relevant and express their feelings openly, and no answers could be useless or wrong.

In this regard, the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research developed and updated by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) proved helpful as a guiding document. In line with the guidance, I first drafted a brief literature review of the ethical considerations in qualitative research. Then, after reading the ethical guidelines of the University of Glasgow, I applied for ethical approval to the College Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects of the University of Glasgow (see Appendix Three for the Ethical Approval letter). After obtaining official approval for the study's ethical approach, I started approaching primary schools in Shenzhen, sending the various gatekeepers my ethics form by email and WeChat. I explained that I was a Chinese researcher studying for a PhD in Education at the University of Glasgow. My study included an empirical phase consisting of interviews with primary school educators. Furthermore, I attached a detailed description of my research with the email and WeChat messages.

In this study, contacting gatekeepers was the first practical step to approaching participants. Most importantly, it was necessary and more efficient to contact with gatekeepers at the very beginning; once they approved, I could begin to approach participants more easily. Fortunately, I had less difficulties with this step, and all the gatekeepers I contacted were supportive and interested in my study.

Approaching gatekeepers helped me to access schools and approach participants successfully. Security measures were stringent in Shenzhen primary schools to ensure the children's safety. It could have been impossible if I had walked into the schools without permission. However, at the pilot stage, I did have some issues that might have been caused by employing gatekeepers to access schools. I felt that the two participants in the pilot did not trust me and even may have been suspicious about the purpose of my research. This was

because the gatekeeper had introduced me as a researcher from the local Education Department, asking them to cooperate with my study. I understood that, by explaining my presence that day, the gatekeepers had wanted to attract the participants' attention to working with me, but, it also put some pressure on the participants.

This issue was solved when I started to conduct my formal interviews. Before the participants signed their consent forms, I used three steps to build rapport with them: a) asking gatekeepers to clarify my role as a PhD researcher from the University of Glasgow; b) a warm-up talk with every participant to explain the purpose of my research; and c) explaining that participants have rights to decide whether they participate in this study and to terminate the interviews any time they wished. This series of clarifications for participants about myself and my research before conducting interviews helped me build rapport and prepare participants in a more voluntary way.

To conclude, my relationship with the participants in this study developed into a state of mutual trust based on consistent application of the ethical research practices outlined in my framework and assurances that the participants would not come to any harm as a result of participating in this study. In addition, all participants were voluntary and pseudonymous, and all data were kept safe.

5.6.1 The Role of the Researcher: The insider-outsider Position

The notions of insider and outsider have drawn the attention of educational researchers for decades (Merton, 1972; Arthur, 2010; Hellawell, 2006; McNess et al., 2015). Arthur (2010) points out that for researchers, identity can shift depending on the context and situation, switching between the roles of insider or outsider in response to the different values and dimensions within a given context. Moreover, multiple cultural, linguistic, social, educational and economic dimensions reflect the shifting positioning that occurs during qualitative research (Milligan, 2016).

Merton (1972) claimed that when doing research, to some extent, both insiders and outsiders are capable of exploring and revealing certain truths, and perspectives from outsiders and insiders are valuable, intellectually and practically. There are always two sides – the insider and the outsider – and the advantages and disadvantages of each perspective will be argued in this section. In this study, due to the research context and purpose, I positioned myself as an insider-outsider researcher. This position will be discussed further as follows.

5.6.1.1 The Insider Researcher

In this study, although I did not belong to the ten primary schools being researched, I had educational experience and recent experience of teaching performing arts in China. Thus, I positioned myself as an 'insider' in terms of the ethnic, cultural, educational and vocational dimensions.

Merton (1972) claimed that insider research involves investigating the researcher's workplaces or organisations, and he defined insider researchers as researchers who acquire intimate information or knowledge of a specific community and its members. However, Hellawell (2006) argued that the community is a wider concept than an organisation, and it is unnecessary for an insider researcher to be a member of a community to possess intimate knowledge of it.

In Bonner and Tolhurst's (2002) view, there are three main advantages of being an insider researcher in qualitative research: (a) the ability to understand the culture being studied more comprehensively; (b) the ability to alter the flow of social interaction naturally; and (c) an intrinsic intimacy that encourages participants to tell their stories and enables the researcher to judge and reflect on the data. Moreover, compared with outsider researchers, it saves time and makes it easier to approach both the people and knowledge being studied (Smyth and Holian, 2008).

However, there are also some issues associated with being an insider in qualitative research. For insider researchers, their prior knowledge and familiarity without reflection or critical thought can lead to false assumptions in the research process, which could be considered as potential bias (Hewitt-Taylor, 2002; Unluer, 2012). Therefore, to conduct credible insider research, the researcher must constitute an explicit consciousness of the potential effects of perceived bias on the processes of conducting research. In addition, it is essential to respect the ethical issues, and the role of an insider researcher should be considered at each stage of the research (Smyth and Holian, 2008).

In this study, the insider researcher is defined in alignment with Hellawell's position; I recognise myself as a half-insider researcher because I was studying in the Chinese education system for more than ten years, and I had experience teaching dance in China. Thus, I had opportunities to better understand Chinese teachers' perspectives and approach participants more easily. Moreover, to overcome the problems related to being an insider during the data collection in Shenzhen, I reduced the potential for bias in two ways: (a) clarifying my research purposes and my background before conducting interviews with informants; (b) informing participants that all data would be anonymous and there would be no effect on their careers, and (c) explaining before the formal interviews that there were no expectations and would be no judgement of their answers. In addition, being an 'insider' in this study benefited me in that I could better understand the context and participants, and my Chinese identity made it easier for my Chinese participants to understand and trust me.

5.6.1.2 The Outsider Researcher

Hellawell (2016) presented one of the definitions of outsider research where the researcher is unfamiliar with the knowledge of the setting and people involved in the research. In terms of the advantages of being an outsider, Simmel (1950) argued that working as an outsider can grant the researcher relatively objective perceptions and judgement. Moreover, outsider researchers tend to be more critical and able to observe without making subjective assumptions. However, the disadvantage is, as an outsider, the researcher could ask questions about

something that seems to be an unquestionable norm to the group participating in this study (Schuetz, 1971).

In this study, apart from the advantages and disadvantages above, being viewed and positioning myself as an 'outsider' could lead to different situations. The disadvantage of being an 'outsider' for this study would be a lack of enough rapport and trust. In my pilot study, I was viewed as a pure 'outsider' by participants because I was introduced by the gatekeepers as someone working for the Department of Education rather than a PhD researcher from the University of Glasgow. In the pilot study, the two participants were very cautious during the interview, and I could feel that they were trying to say something that they thought I was expecting. However, they did not realise that the only thing I expected was they would talk about anything relevant to my research with no ulterior motive. Thus, they were too cautious with some of their answers to provide enough information. After the pilot study, I decided to explain my background and research purpose to my participants fully, and they started to build a rapport with me and share more information. Thus, it can be seen that working as an 'outsider' might cause some disengagement between the researcher and participants, thereby negatively influencing the richness and authenticity of participants' responses.

On the other hand, some participants could talk in a more comfortable and freer way when they recognised me as an 'outsider'. For instance, one male participant was not satisfied with his working environment, including his colleagues and leaders. After he fully understood my research purpose and data privacy in my study, he pointed out many educational issues. While the talk after the formal interviews took place without voice recordings, he expressed that he appreciated the chance and felt better after talking to me about something he could not normally mention to his colleagues or leadership. I reflected on my own position when conducting an interview with this teacher as an 'outsider'; it benefited our interview because he felt free to talk and I obtained richer information for my study.

5.6.1.3 An Insider-outsider Perspective

In this study, I positioned myself as neither entirely inside nor fully outside; I considered myself as both an insider and outsider researcher. This is a significant point when reflecting on my own position in this study.

While there are a variety of definitions and notions regarding insider-researchers, Breen (2007) stated that generally, insider-researchers choose to study a group they belong to, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group within the context of the study. Some scholars believe that it is ideal for the researcher to be both an insider and an outsider when conducting a study (Hellawell, 2006; Hammersley, 1993). It is believed that the validity of research findings can be strengthened by combining involvement and estrangement properly (Martin, 1993).

Hellawell (2006) posited that there is more than one continuum of elements regarding defining insiders or outsiders. It was necessary to clarify the elements of being an insider and an outsider in terms of the different dimensions in this study. My reflection on my positioning in conducting research in Shenzhen was that I was an 'insider' through cultural, racial and educational similarities. Moreover, I positioned myself as an 'outsider' on an institutional and vocational level. As an insider, I shared the participants' cultural context, educational background, and teaching experiences. It can be said that I am an insider in terms of the cultural dimension, educational dimension and the dimension of the subject (with those participants who were dance/music teachers). At the same time, I was also an outsider to the extent that I was interviewing special education teachers, class tutors, and headteachers. I was not familiar with the working routines of a regular teacher in primary schools in Shenzhen.

Here, rather than relying on the researcher's assumptions about research design and data collection, participant-driven data was prioritised so that the outcomes would be both more realistic and trustworthy (Packard, 2008). For instance, besides voice-recording interviews, notetaking was another significant way to

collect data in this study, and informants checked all the notes. This method helped me to avoid some subjective perspectives and potential misunderstandings.

Therefore, in order to make my research credible, I kept clarifying and reflecting on my own role throughout the study. I positioned myself as an 'insider-outsider' researcher to balance the relationship between myself and my research.

5.7 Data Analysis

Data analysis is described as the process by which a phenomenon is broken down into constituent parts to be understood in a better way (Thorne, 2000). There are different analytical methods within qualitative research such as interpretative phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The interpretative phenomenological analysis is more appropriate for personal lived experience and psychological research (Smith and Osborn, 2015) and thus not practical for this study's aim and purpose. Thematic analysis was employed in this study, because it helps to summarise the data, and distil clear meanings from the data that illustrate identified underlying ideas (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In line with the research design, there were three main data sets for analysis: 1) educational documents relating to performing arts education and inclusive education both in the global context and in China specifically; 2) the 34 transcripts from semi-structured interviews regarding teachers' understandings of using performing arts education to improve educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen; and 3) my researcher diary with regular reflections on fieldwork experience and formal and informal conversations with 45 teachers in total (including 34 formal participants). Hence, I chose to interpret the data in two phases. Firstly, analysis was carried out through a critical review of the official educational documents. The second phase consisted of transcribing the audio recordings from the 34 interviews and organising my notes and research

diary. In the following two subsections, I will outline a hybrid inductive and deductive approach for thematic analysis, and specifically, the process of interview data analysis.

5.7.1 Thematic Analysis with a Hybrid of Inductive and Deductive Approach

Thematic analysis is a process of coding data to extract themes that the researcher recognises as important and relevant to the subject under study (Bryman, 2012). It is worth mentioning that there are two major ways (or approaches) for conducting thematic analysis: the inductive approach and the deductive approach. An inductive approach is a data-driven thematic analysis in which the process of extracting themes is not bound to a pre-existing theoretical framework or even to the researcher's interest in the topic under study. In other words, these themes extracted from an inductive approach might bear no relationship to the theories that constitute the theoretical or conceptual framework of one's research (Patton, 1990). On the other hand, a deductive approach is a theory-driven analysis in which a pre-existing theoretical framework, or coding frame, guides how themes are extracted. When a deductive coding approach is followed, data are reduced into those that fit certain categories (or coding frames) that other theories have previously identified (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

For the process of data analysis, the development of coding and themes was both inductive and deductive, within the preference of the data-driven deductive approach. Moreover, the deductive thematic analysis was utilised for the document review, and interview transcripts were analysed in a thematic way, inductively. This study followed the six-phase process outlined in Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis in qualitative research: 1) for researchers to immerse themselves in the data through repeated reading; 2) to generate initial and meaningful codes; 3) to search for/generate themes and sub-themes; 4) to review themes and sub-themes; 5) to define and name themes; 6) to produce the report.

This study chose a hybrid of inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches as a frame for data analysis. NVivo was employed as the software package for processing the data (Bazeley, 2007). In this study, I imported all interview transcripts and research diaries into the Nvivo software, then organised, reorganised and developed codes, at last, categorised them into relevant themes. A snapshot of a sample of themes and sub-themes coded and contained within NVivo showing the software working sequence is shown in Appendix Five.

5.7.2 Interview Data Analysis

Interview data analysis consisted of processing and analysing the 368 doubled-spaced pages from 34 interview transcripts (from recordings of around 850 minutes). The most extended interview was 55 minutes, and the shortest one was about 20 minutes. In line with this study's research design, an inductive approach to thematic analysis was chosen for the interview transcript analysis.

In applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines to the original data from the complete audio-taped interviews, these interviews were conducted and transcribed in Chinese first. To minimise the possibility of misunderstanding, the coding was also done in Chinese. However, all of the emerging themes were translated into English, after which all of the utterances related to the emerging themes were also translated into English. This approach helped me to focus on answering the research questions in this study and avoid overlooking potentially important issues.

The coding was processed through two phases. The first phase was the manual coding, whereby the 34 Chinese transcripts were carefully read in a paper format twice then analysed according to the aforementioned research questions and related themes. This process was mainly data-driven. The decision to employ a data-driven coding process was made to tease out what was happening merely by reading the 34 interview transcripts in this study. I cross-checked and

compared for similarities and differences after the initial list of themes were generated, then reviewed and modified accordingly until all data was integrated into one summary list to include all information.In order to make the qualitative analysis more accurate, reliable and transparent, NVivo was used from the second phase of data analysis.

In the second phase, the transcripts were analysed with the help of NVivo, which assisted me in identifying the common patterns and persistent themes in the participants' answers (Richard, 2006; Arthur et al., 2012). All the transcripts were uploaded onto NVivo, and some preliminary categories and sub-categories were put on the system. Then, all the transcripts were carefully coded in NVivo again. This process was more concept-driven because some categories and sub-categories had emerged from the manual coding; however, all the repeated important codes or categories that had newly emerged from NVivo were recorded and reformatted.

This data-driven and concept-driven analysis involved approaching the interview transcript data with an open mind, and it was constructed through a close reading of the text. Although this analysis process started with no hypothesis about how to interpret and present the gathered data, there was an assumption that data would be present concerning teachers' perceptions of inclusive education and of using music and dance as the tools to improve educational inclusion, and also concerning how their biographical information might influence their perspectives.

As noted in Section 1.4, I have an art education background and experience teaching art in China for several years, which prepared me for identifying and analysing the relevant topics generated from the data in this study. However, to avoid making potential bias in the process of data interpretation, I phoned two participants back, with their permission, to check the validity of my understanding of their ideas and words. Moreover, for the purpose of being 'objective', peers' feedback and supervisors' feedback on my categories were

considered in the process of constructing final categories and sub-categories. Furthermore, I was open to any new ideas in the data and any new topics I might have ignored or had not considered before data analysis.

To summarise, there were main six steps for coding qualitative data, including interview transcripts and research diaries, both manually and by NVivo: (a) developing codes manually and adopting those codes in NVivo to produce initial codes; (b) testing the reliability of the initial codes by adopting them into theoretical frameworks and checking with supervisors; (c) summarising and identifying initial themes and subthemes; (d) connecting codes and identifying themes; (e) excerpting existing codes and themes from within the original transcripts; (f) rethinking potential new codes and themes; and (g) validating and legitimating the coded themes (Muir-Cochrane and Fereday, 2010). This approach helped me focus on answering the research questions in this study and avoid overlooking potentially important issues.

5.8 Summary of Chapter Five

The research methodology is the philosophy that guides the logic of scientific enquiry; it explains how to explore, understand, and explain complex and multiple realities (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). In this chapter, I have presented the rationale and procedures of the methodology employed in this study. This chapter began with an introductory section followed by the research questions. The interpretive paradigm was presented, followed by the outline of the qualitative approach. Then, the process and results of participant selection were presented. I explained why it was applicable and how the research method (semi-structured interviews and research diaries) was developed to collect data. Then, the piloting study was discussed, and some changes were mentioned in the research design following the pilot study. Next, ethical issues were considered and addressed, and the researcher's insider-outsider position was explained in terms of building more reliable, more trustworthy research outcomes. Finally, the chapter explained the thematic analysis using both deductive and inductive approaches adopted in this study. The next chapter will present the main findings.

Chapter Six: Findings from the Analysis of Interviews

6.1 Introduction to Chapter Six

I conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews from the end of April 2019 to the beginning of June 2019 in Shenzhen. These interviews helped me investigate my participants' points of view and uncover factors that potentially influenced their attitudes towards inclusion and might thus have affected inclusive practice at the school level. This chapter presents the findings from interviews conducted with 34 mainstream primary school teachers in Shenzhen. The teachers (N=34) were specialist music and dance teachers (N=18), class tutors (N=10), special education teachers (N=6) and headteachers (N=2). Interviewees worked across four private and six state-funded schools, and each school's information was presented in Subsection 5.4.3. Some direct quotations taken from these 34 interview transcripts are presented; as outlined in Subsection 5.8.1 on methodology, thematic analysis and theme coding were employed as analytical methods in this study (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

From conducting thematic analysis on the 34 interview transcripts and research diary, seven themes and 16 sub-themes emerged from the initial 56 codes. These seven themes related to teachers' perceptions of promoting IE and creating an inclusive learning environment through music and dance in schools: teachers' perceptions of improving educational inclusion through music and dance; teachers' theoretical knowledge of inclusive education policy; inclusive education in practice at school level; teachers' valuing of achievement; teachers' commitment to careers; expectations of creating an inclusive learning environment; and teachers' consciousness of children's backgrounds. The number of quotations under each sub-theme and the share of participants who expressed a view is outlined in Table 6.1. Details regarding the number of sub-themes within each theme are also presented in Table 6.1. The thematic analysis aimed to move beyond simply describing participants' responses to identifying and examining the underlying ideas and assumptions based on those responses.

Table 6. 1 List of themes from interviewee responses and number of quotations for each theme and sub-theme

Theme (in bold) and sub-theme (in italic)	Number of quotations in sub-theme	Number of interviewees (and % out of 34)
1. Teachers' perceptions of improving educational inclusion through music and dance		
• Teachers' perceptions of promoting inclusive education	62	34 (100%)
• Teachers' recognition of benefits of music and dance for children	45	34 (100%)
• Teachers' thoughts on music and dance for educational inclusion	36	34 (100%)
2. Expectations of creating an inclusive learning environment		
• Teachers' perceptions of carers' expectations regarding the inclusive learning environment	36	28 (82%)
• Teachers' perceptions of children's expectations regarding the inclusive learning environment	20	14 (41%)
3. Teachers' values and expectations regarding achievement		
• Teachers' values and expectations regarding achievement	39	27 (80%)
• Teachers' values and expectations regarding the achievement of children with additional support needs	43	29 (85%)
• Teachers' values and expectations regarding their own achievement	39	26 (76%)
4. Teachers' commitment to their careers		
• Teachers' career satisfaction	22	19 (56%)
• Teachers' roles and responsibilities at school	35	29 (85%)
5. Inclusive education in practice at the school level		
• Challenges for teachers to create an inclusive learning environment	84	32 (95%)
• The present inclusive learning environment	49	22 (65%)
• Teachers' actions/educational strategy for creating an inclusive learning environment	87	29 (85%)
• Teachers' perceptions of their capability to meet children's needs	28	18 (53%)
6. Teachers' theoretical knowledge of inclusive education policy	34	27 (80%)
7. Teachers' consciousness of children's background		
• Children's family background	21	16 (47%)
• Children with additional support needs	135	33 (97%)

In brief, the perceived possibilities of music and dance for educational inclusion were positively reflected in teachers' perceptions of the idea of IE and the use of music and dance to promote it. Moreover, teachers' values and expectations

regarding children's achievement and career commitment influenced their attitudes towards children with ASN and inclusive policies. The inclusive practice, teachers' theoretical knowledge and teachers' consciousness of children's different needs were included as the practical factors of implementing IE.

All the participants acknowledged that all children have the right to study at mainstream schools. They were aware of the national educational legislation that stipulates that schools must accept children regardless of their different backgrounds and abilities. In addition, all my participants agreed with the idea of using music and dance classes or activities to promote IE at primary schools effectively.

However, the participants offered several distinct responses regarding their abilities to create an inclusive learning environment for children with ASN. Some more experienced teachers were more confident about being able to meet children's different needs. Moreover, it was interesting to find that although these experienced teachers had little or no conceptual or theoretical knowledge of IE, they instinctively believed that all children should be treated and valued equally regardless of their physical, intellectual or mental differences or family backgrounds. Furthermore, every music and dance teacher interviewed in this study was confident about including all children in their classes; they explained that music and dance could provide an inclusive learning environment where children can express themselves and achieve different goals but with the same sense of accomplishment as other children. In contrast, some less experienced teachers doubted about their abilities to provide proper assistance to children with ASN. With the exception of the special education teachers, all teachers seemed to take very little responsibility for meeting the specific needs of children with ASN. Some teachers were even reluctant to receive the relevant information about IE because they thought that all inclusive work was the responsibility of special education teachers.

In the following seven sections, I will present the findings following the seven themes in Table 6.1, and sub-themes will be presented separately in subsections. In the ninth and final section, I will draw a summary of the Key Findings. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter.

6.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Improving Educational Inclusion through Music and Dance

In this study, all of the interviewed teachers expressed their views on using music and dance to improve educational inclusion at the school level, and all held positive attitudes regarding this approach. Through a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts in this study, it was found that these teachers' work experience and working roles had no apparent influence on their attitudes and perceptions of improving educational inclusion through music and dance.

This theme includes three sub-themes. The first sub-theme is teachers' perceptions of promoting IE at mainstream schools, which involved an exploration of teachers' perceptions of IE and their thoughts about promoting it. Regarding this point, the participants had different views, with not all of the teachers supporting the idea of teaching children with ASN at mainstream schools. The second sub-theme is teachers' recognition of the benefits of music and dance for children, which refers to the potential for music and dance to benefit children in many different respects. The third sub-theme is teachers' thoughts on music and dance for educational inclusion, which relates to the use of music and dance as an effective way of including more children at school. Moreover, some teachers provided examples of how music and dance could be beneficial, specifically for children with ASN. These three sub-themes will be discussed further in this section.

6.2.1 Teachers' Perceptions on Promoting Inclusive Education in Mainstream Schools

As discussed above, there was a commonly held view that education could be more inclusive through music and dance. All participants stated that they were willing to help and include all children, especially children with ASN. However, among the 34 teachers, there were some different opinions regarding promoting IE in mainstream schools. There were mainly three views expressed. While most of the teachers believed that children with ASN should be educated in mainstream schools, some thought that children with ASN should study in both mainstream schools and special schools or classrooms at the same time. A smaller minority of participants believed that children with ASN should be taught separately in special schools, especially with severe conditions.

All participants affirmed that education should be inclusive and that their work was to support and help all children equally. As Mr Li asserted, 'Education needs inclusion, with no prejudice or bias. As a teacher, when we are teaching children, we have to be inclusive'. Similarly, Ms Bo expressed her opinion of inclusive education:

> I think it is a broad idea, very broad. But, as a teacher of music and dance, my understanding is that all different children should be included in education, no matter how different their backgrounds are; we help them learn something, and we help them be confident. (Mr Bo, The Academy Primary School, p.3)

As educators, all my interviewees believed that education should be inclusive and equitable for every child.

Most of the interviewees were supportive of including children with ASN at mainstream schools. Ms Zhao, a special education teacher with four-year work experience, worked in the resource room in a state-funded school, and she believed that children with ASN should study in mainstream schools and work

with other children to develop their social skills and confidence. When asked for her opinion about including children with ASN at mainstream schools, she answered, 'this is real inclusion. If our children [children with ASN] are able to learn or do something with other children, there must be a good result in the end'. Ms Zhao also described some additional courses or activities provided in resource rooms for children with ASN:

> We've started asking our children [children with ASN] to invite one child from their class to come with them, and they do something together. For example, we have a paper-cutting class, where children [children with ASN] and the invited child will finish a piece of work together. That is where the teamwork happens; that works very well. I can say that our children [children with ASN] have become more and more confident. (Ms Zhao, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.2)

Mr Yan, who was also working as a special education teacher in another state-funded school, also expressed a positive view of including children with ASN at mainstream schools:

> I think these children [children with ASN] should be included in mainstream schools, and I do think we can make it work. As long as we are together, the school, teachers and parents should work together to do it. The school is not only teaching knowledge; it is more important to develop children's social skills. These children will be independent members of society one day, and studying in mainstream schools can help them be ready for this. (Mr Yan, The Strong Primary School, p.4)

Mr Yan believed that schools' educational goals were to teach children knowledge and help them be independent and better members of society. He advocated including children with ASN in mainstream schools as a good way of achieving educational goals.

Some teachers thought children with ASN should study at both mainstream schools and special schools or classrooms simultaneously. Ms Wei, who worked 20 years as a music and dance teacher in a state-funded school, argued,

> I mean, inclusive education for me, [pause] because I know that the Shenzhen Education Bureau is actively promoting inclusive education. But for me, I am still watching the process and its outcome. I know this is a good thing, and I know this [promoting inclusive education] is the right thing to do. But due to some limitations, I still feel the best way is for children with ASN to study at mainstream schools for half of the day and go to special schools for the other half of the day. (Ms Wei, The Colorful Primary School, p.2)

Ms Wei noted that the present political orientation in Shenzhen was to implement and promote inclusive education, and she believed that music and dance could be an effective way of helping to implement inclusive education at primary schools. However, she still had concerns about the challenges involved in accepting all children with different needs at mainstream schools. She felt that the educational resources were not sufficient to support all children at this point. Therefore, she felt that the process could involve gradual steps. At first, it might be better for children to spend half of the day in mainstream schools and half in special schools. Ms Xu shared a similar view:

> I feel it could be good in both ways. In the special school, they [children with ASN] can obtain more targeted, scientific and child-friendly education, because the schools and teachers there are more professional and patient; they know what those children need, and I think children could be slowly assisted in special schools. Meanwhile, studying at the mainstream schools can help them to be better included not only at schools but also in society. (Ms Xu, The Lotus School, p.4)

Ms Xu concluded that children with ASN need to learn to adapt to society one day and studying in mainstream schools could be the significant first step for preparing for the future. Ms Xu expressed that he respects the

decisions of children and their parents about whether to go to special or mainstream schools. According to official policy, schools must accept all children if they live in the school district; schools cannot refuse to enrol a child based on any type of difficulty he or she has. However, parents and children have the right to decide what type of school to attend. They can choose special schools, mainstream schools or "in-between". Many schools and teachers are quite flexible and respectful of the carers' decisions.

A minority of teachers in this study believed that children with ASN, especially with severe conditions, should be taught separately in special schools. For instance, Ms Qin was an experienced music and dance teacher, who had worked for 20 years in a state-funded school, and she did not think that educational inclusion can be implemented entirely:

> We can be inclusive, but not all the time. I mean, if some children are way too special so that they can't integrate into the group with other children, they can affect the whole class badly. In this case, I assume this kind of child may not be able to study in our school. And if their conditions are too serious, the school will not accept it. (Ms Qin, The Lotus School, p.3)

Although Ms Qin mentioned that children with severe health or learning difficulties may not be included properly at mainstream schools, her attitude towards children with ASN in her school was positive and inclusive. She said:

> We always have these children [children with ASN] at school. I believe they have the same equal rights to education as others, and me and my colleagues have been telling other children to be more inclusive and tolerant towards those children. (Ms Qin, The Lotus School, p.3)

Ms Qin was willing to support children with ASN currently at her school but was less willing to accept children with more severe ASN at schools in the future.

One reason behind her reasoning was related to class size; she was the music and dance teacher for eight classes, and there were about 50 children per class. She said,

> I am not teaching 10 or 20 students. I am dealing with about 50 children in one class. I have my teaching target and I have to reach it. If those children [with ASN] interrupt me in the class, I can't make it. (Ms Qin, The Lotus School, p.4)

To sum up, with regard to the inclusion of children with different educational needs at mainstream schools, teachers in this study expressed various opinions. All agreed that education should be inclusive, and most were positive about accepting children with ASN at mainstream schools. However, some teachers believed that children with ASN should study in special schools for more professional instruction. Moreover, some teachers suggested that children with ASN could be educated partly at mainstream schools and partly at special schools.

6.2.2 Teachers' Recognition of the Benefits of Music and Dance for Children

Although music and dance were not taught as main subjects in primary schools in Shenzhen, all of the interviewed teachers agreed that music and dance could benefit children in many respects. For example, participants considered it could enhance children's social skills, create a more inclusive learning environment at school, help children to express their feelings more freely, and maintain children's physical and mental wellbeing. However, music and dance teachers were more confident and comfortable talking about their experiences of including children in their classes. Special education teachers were able to recognise some professional strategies for promoting educational inclusion through music and dance, but they were less familiar with specific strategies for integrating music and dance into IE.

Some participants believed that music and dance are more naturally inclusive subjects for children. As Mr Yang said, 'The end of language is music', meaning that music is the best way to express feelings when children cannot find a proper verbal way of communicating with others. Mr Yang also argued that music could be a favourable medium for improving children's social skills because children can make friends and establish friendships by playing music together. Mr Yang said that in his music classes, he valued children's personalisation and diversification, and he always encouraged children to try out different things and be different in a good way. He summarised his approach as follows: 'There is no right or wrong, as long as you can make sense yourself'.

Some teachers believed that music and dance could help children maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. As Ms Cao said, 'I feel like music and dance can also help children control their emotions and improve their physical coordination and development'. Ms Shi, a music teacher and the leader of a music therapy programme in her school, said:

> I am pretty sure music can be helpful for maintaining children's mental wellbeing. I think music has the greatest impact on people's emotions; it is the most direct way to express emotions or vent emotions and feelings. It does help maintain good mental health. (Ms. Shi, The Prosperous Primary School, p.3)

Ms Shi was a teacher with enough knowledge about the effectiveness of using music to meet children's different needs, and she had 20 years of work experience as a primary school teacher. Hence, she was pretty positive about promoting music as a tool for enhancing inclusive education at school.

Some teachers agreed that music and dance could help children develop interests or hobbies and, therefore, build their confidence and self-esteem. Ms Feng was a young music and dance teacher in a private school with a bachelor's degree and master's degree in Dance Education, who had conducted

postgraduate research exploring effective music therapy. Thus, she was sure about the benefit of music and dance:

> I wish my students could find their own happiness and joy through dance and music. I think that if they can keep dance or music as a hobby for life, that will be brilliant. This also helps children to be confident. (Ms Feng, the Beautiful International School, p.2)

Ms Heng was teaching maths in a private school for around three years, and she had the same expectation that children would benefit from music and dance:

> I feel many children are interested in learning music and dance. That's good, because you know, having an interest in learning things can prevent them from becoming emotionally numb or hopeless. (Ms Heng, The Bridge School, p.2)

Teachers who taught in different subjects agreed that music and dance could help children develop interests or hobbies for their life journey, thereby helping children grow up healthily with positive attitudes towards life.

Some class tutors who taught in other subjects, rather than music and dance, also found that music and dance could be helpful with studying other academic subjects effectively. For example, Ms Jiang, a class tutor and English teacher said:

> I play many English songs in my class. It works very well, and the children like it. I do think it is really helpful; adding music and dance in my class helps the children to become more interested in English, and when they are happy and interested, they can learn with fun. It's so effective. (Ms Jiang, The Bridge School, p.4)

Ms Jiang was interested in music and dance because she learned dancing for years when she was young. Thus, she was aware of the benefits of music and

dance for children from her own experience, and she was more capable of employing music and dance to motivate children's learning. Moreover, Ms Xu was a Mandarin teacher and class tutor in a state-funded school with limited ability and knowledge of providing music and dance skills for children; however, she still organised regular singing and dancing activities for the children in her class. Ms Xu testified that it could be easy to create an inclusive learning environment by involving children in music and dance activities, and she encouraged everyone to experience, perform and express themselves in different ways. Ms Xu said children could express themselves freely through music and dance and be naturally involved and included in an inclusive atmosphere.

Some teachers remarked that music and dance could be useful tools in creating a more inclusive learning environment at schools. In Ms Qi's music classes, she encouraged children to form small bands. Every child had a different role in the band, and the children worked together to perform.

> Some children are good at playing instruments. I will let them play the piano, the violin, or other instruments. However, we do have some children who are not good at playing instruments. I give them some other work, like shaking the sand hammer or being the orchestra's conductor. I mean, everyone plays a part, and everyone can be included in this kind of music and dance activity (Ms Qi, The Colorful Primary School, p.5).

Ms Qi had practical experience of using music to bring different children together. She believed that in music, everyone could participate in various ways, as children can choose to play instruments, dance, sing, conduct, and so on. Ms Zhao, a special education teacher, also pointed that according to her theoretical knowledge, music and dance could be helpful in meeting children's diverse needs and creating a more inclusive environment at school. However, Ms Zhao was not confident of using music and dance as tools in inclusive practice as she had never been trained in this field, so she encouraged some parents of children with ASN to seek help from professional institutions that provide specific

intervention for children with ASN, especially through music and dance, for instance, the music therapy.

In summary, most teachers in this study considered music and dance beneficial for children as they help to 1) maintain physical and mental wellbeing, 2) develop interests and confidence, 3) study effectively for other subjects, and 4) work with peers in an inclusive environment.

6.2.3 Teachers' Thoughts on Music and Dance for Educational Inclusion

In this study, all 34 interviewees believed that music and dance could be used to improve educational inclusion at mainstream schools. Seven music and dance teachers provided detailed examples of how music and dance enhanced educational inclusion at their schools.

Both the experienced and less experienced teachers shared the same positive attitudes towards incorporating music and dance activities in school for better educational inclusion. Mr Chen studied in special education for four years and then worked as a special education teacher for seven years, previously working in a special school before moving to a mainstream one. Mr Chen strongly believed in promoting IE and insisted that making education more inclusive was currently an educational trend in China. When asked about the benefits of music and dance for children with additional support needs, he gave an example:

> We have a child with autism in our class. He is a good hip-hop dancer, and he can play the piano. It is perfect for doing these things he is interested in, and he will also be invited to perform by teachers and other children. He was accepted better by other children because of this (Ms Chen, The Forest Primary School, p.3).

Mr Chen had no doubt that music and dance could be useful for including more children in mainstream schools.

Five less experienced teachers – Ms Sun, Ms Feng, Mr Xu, Mr Yang and Ms Cao – also had positive attitudes towards using music and dance to improve educational inclusion. Ms Sun, who had eight months' experience working as a special education teacher, said, 'Sure. In my class [resources room], I use music to calm children down, and it works, so I think we can adopt it more frequently in our classes'. Similarly, Ms Feng, a dance teacher and class tutor for eight months, said:

> My thoughts have already changed. Now, I think dance is for all people and dance is an inclusive thing, which is different from before. In the past, I thought the dance was only for professional dancers. Now, I don't expect my children to dance perfectly; instead, I encourage them to move their bodies to express their feelings. I want them to be able to enjoy dancing and make it a lifelong interest that they can keep for their whole lives (Ms Feng, The Beautiful International School, p.4).

Like Ms Feng, most music and dance teachers recognised music and dance as performing arts for all children. In their classes, they welcomed children's opinions and performances.

Furthermore, as a music teacher and vice-principal, Mr Wang explained,

> Our children, every single one, can participate in my music class. Every child has their thoughts, and they all have the chance to express themselves and show themselves (Mr Wang, The Beautiful International School, p.2).

He insisted that, as a teacher, the most important thing for him was to help children discover and achieve their potential.

In this study, all 14 music and dance teachers claimed that, in their classes, children were encouraged to express their feelings freely and learn how to include, and feel being included through their learning journey at school.

In addition to music and dance classes, arts festivals and arts activities were recognised as another important aspect of using music and dance to improve educational inclusion at primary schools. The most common art activity is the Children's Day Arts Festival (celebrated on 1 June in China). Mr Wang was the vice principal and music teacher in a private school who had been a music and dance teacher for ten years (and vice-principal for one year):

> We have the Children's Day Arts Festival, which every child participates in. We have this kind of platform for including all children through music and dance activities (Mr Wang, The Beautiful International School, p.2).

Mr Wang valued the importance of holding arts festivals at school, and he had been trying to provide more opportunities and organise more different types of activities to foster children's participation in arts festivals. Through the conversation, he was proud of being the leader of a school that devoted a great deal of attention to arts festivals to create an inclusive learning environment at school. Ms Qian was a four-year special education teacher with a degree in special education and IE, and she gave the following example:

> During the Children's Day Arts Festival, all of our children are involved, and we have different activities for each age group. Like, for Grade One, we organised a choir performance this year. Everyone will be there to sing two songs together. It is impossible to say that any child is excluded from this art activity (Ms Qian, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.3).

Like most primary schools in China, these ten schools in this study hold a Children's Day Arts Festival on 1 June every year. All of the participants agreed that this offers all children great opportunities to become involved in performing arts during this festival, thereby building confidence in the children and creating an inclusive school environment.

Although all children were encouraged and allowed to join in any activity during the Children's Day Arts Festival, only those children who are more capable in the arts are selected to perform in the festival's opening and closing ceremonies. As Ms Qian noted:

> Our children with additional support needs can join in with the arts festival without any doubt, but for the closing ceremony, most of our children can't be there to perform. But they will still be there and watch the whole show. They will be there to cheer on their friends. In this way, they can still feel they are together and in the same team (Ms Qian, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.4).

According to Ms Qian, the Children's Day Arts Festival provides good opportunities for all children to participate in dance and music performances together; however, not all children had the chance to perform in the opening or closing ceremonies.

As mentioned earlier, a Children's Day Arts Festival was held in all of the primary schools in this study; however, some schools developed arts activities to create a more inclusive learning environment. For example, at The Luminous Chinese and English School, Quan yuan zhan shi ('The All-Children's Show') had been a tradition for more than three years, held once a year in addition to the Children's Day Arts Festival. Ms Deng, who worked at the Luminous Chinese and English School, explained:

> There is an event in our school called the Quan yuan zhan shi [‘The All-Children’s Show’], where every child is on the stage, no matter whether they’ve learned how to dance or not; everyone will have their own showtime. For the group dance, the formation always changes; everyone has the chance to perform at the front. There was a boy with autism at the show last year. When his mum saw him standing in the front row of the formation, she was very happy because she felt her son was being treated equally, and this also made the boy feel included (Ms Deng, The Luminous Chinese and English School, p.5).

The Luminous Chinese and English School was a private school with a good reputation. The three participants from this school all noted that one of the best things about their school was its provision of a well-rounded education. Their school valued children’s artistic development and provided an inclusive platform for every child to participate in arts activities. Moreover, in line with the school’s inclusive ethos, these three teachers agreed about promoting IE and using music and dance as tools to improve IE at school. As Ms Yu said,

> Sometimes, I feel under great pressure because there are so many arts festivals going on. It is a big challenge for me to prepare children for the performance. I have some students who might not be good at dancing for some reason, but for us, we don’t give up on anyone. So we would choreograph those children separately. I make it possible for everyone to appear on the stage in front of all the people (Ms Yu, The Luminous Chinese and English School, p.3).

To sum up, in this study, there was a common view amongst the 34 participants that music and dance can improve educational inclusion. Although these teachers had different educational backgrounds and teaching experiences, they all agreed that music and dance could create a more inclusive learning environment.

6.3 Expectations Regarding Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

When discussing children's and parents' expectations, teachers tended to talk more about the parents' perspectives. Ten participants suggested that the children did not really appear to have much of an attitude regarding either inclusion or exclusion and that they integrated easily into the environment.

One interesting finding is that, although Shenzhen is a city with a large number of migrants, all the teachers answered that migrant children could be appropriately included at school. They gave two main reasons for this. Firstly, as Shenzhen is a migrant city, many of its children barely know where they are originally from. Secondly, as Ms Deng noted, 'Children don't care if they or others are local or not'.

Moreover, participants pointed out that most children today are more tolerant and mature. Therefore, children without ASN could behave very inclusively and helpfully towards children with ASN, and children with ASN could feel more comfortable dealing with and accepting their differences with others. In this regard, as Mr Yang explained:

> Most children do not discriminate against special children, and I think that children today have more compassion than in our time. Discrimination against disabled people or students was more serious when I was young (Mr Yang, The Bridge School, p.4).

In the following two subsections, I will present the teachers' perceptions of parental expectations of an inclusive learning environment (Subsection 6.3.1) and their perceptions of the children's expectations regarding being included at school (Subsection 6.3.2).

6.3.1 Teachers' Perceptions of Parental Expectations Regarding an Inclusive Learning Environment

In this study, 32 out of the 34 participants talked about parental expectations regarding schools' learning environment for children, and 2 of these 32 respondents expressed that parents might have few expectations or much interest in the schools' inclusive environment. One of these respondents, Mr Yang, had worked in a private school as a music and dance teacher for two years:

> No, they don't have expectations of an inclusive learning environment. They are busy working, so they do not have time to consider their children's education. When these parents send their children to school, they only want to ensure their safety (Mr Yang, The Bridge School, p.3).

However, commenting on the same question, the other 30 participants agreed that parents expected schools to create an equal and inclusive learning environment for their children. Ms Qian, who was the special education teacher and regularly contacted parents of children with ASN, told me that she could feel parents' expectations particularly acutely:

> That's for sure [parents have high expectations of an inclusive learning environment for children with ASN]. Many parents of children with ASN are looking to provide their children with extra classes and interventions. And they expect that I can do it one-to-one, but I don't have time, and I can't do it at all. But parents expect an inclusive learning environment at school, and after these two years of effort, some of their expectations have been achieved (Ms Qian, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.2).

Ms Zhao was Ms Qian's colleague, and she held the same opinion: 'Yes, they have very high expectations. They hope their children can be included the same as others. I hope we can get there [an effective inclusive practice]'. Similarly, Ms Qin was a music and dance teacher with 20 years of work experience in a state-

funded school, who stated, ‘Of course, they hope their children [with ASN] can be educated in a more equal, inclusive and friendly environment’.

Many parents of children with ASN expected to see their kids being able to participate in the arts festival like the others because this was one of the most intuitive indications that their children are being included at school. Ms Jin said:

> Sure. Parents of special children definitely want equal opportunities and treatment for their children. They want their children to be the same as others. For example, some parents expect that we provide children with opportunities to perform at the arts festival and things like this. They do have expectations, even more than the others (Ms Jin, The Strong Primary School, p.3).

Ms Bo provided more specific examples of parents’ high expectations of an inclusive learning environment:

> Parents of children with ASN are happy to see their children perform on the stage. For example, at the Quan yuan zhan shi [‘The All Children’s Show’], every child has the chance to perform. When parents see their children on the stage, whether their children are good at dancing or not, the parents are happy because they feel that their children are being treated equally, and children can feel the same way (Ms Bo, The Luminous School, p.2).

Observing children’s interaction in the classroom and their participation in school activities was the direct means by which parents and teachers could evaluate the outcomes of promoting inclusive education at schools. Parents of children with ASN chose to send their children to be educated at mainstream schools because they expected their children to have equal interaction and participation as other children at the schools. As for parents, many teachers talked about them having high expectations of an inclusive environment for their

children, arguing that this is because most parents care greatly about whether their children were included at school.

6.3.2 Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Children's Expectations of being Included

Around two-thirds of respondents argued that children barely pay attention to either inclusion or exclusion because they cannot really feel it. However, six teachers, including Mr Chen, Mr Yang and Ms Wu, disagreed with this view and did believe that children could feel whether or not they were being included. They observed that children with ASN have high expectations of being included at school.

Many of the teachers noted that children could barely detect any differences amongst their peers, and several teachers noted the adaptability of children to different environments. For instance, Mr Yan said:

> I think, for other children, they simply don't know; they can't realise that this kid is very special. They can see he [a child with ADHD] can't sit still quietly, but they will still play with him (Mr Yan, The Strong Primary School, p.2).

Some teachers thought that children were generally not aware of being different. As Ms Xie argued, 'I don't think they are able to realise that they have some learning difficulties. Children with autism barely talk, so I don't think they can feel they are different to others'. Similarly, Ms Yu added, 'I don't think they can feel it; they don't feel that they are different from others. I think maybe they don't mind if they can't be integrated at all, because they can play alone, whatever they want'.

However, some teachers believed that children with ASN had high expectations of an inclusive learning environment. As Mr Chen asserted, 'Children with ASN

have high expectations of being included; they can feel it, but some children have no way to express themselves, like children with autism.' Likewise, Mr Yang said, 'Maybe they don't know how to express themselves, but they do have expectations'. Moreover, Ms Wu believed that being included was very important in children's minds: 'What children want most is for teachers to treat them equally and fairly; this is what children most expect'.

All in all, most of the teachers argued that the children in their schools were barely aware of differences among individuals. They also felt that children had become more inclusive towards each other than children were in the past.

6.4 Teachers' Values and Expectations Regarding 'Achievement'

The word 'achievement' here refers to two aspects: achievement in life and study or work. Moreover, in this study, interviewees were asked about their expectations regarding achievement for themselves and achievement for students (see interview schedule in Table 5.5). Participants were asked about what they expected themselves and their students to be. For teachers, the achievement was related to their career, life, and teaching goals. In terms of teachers' expectations for their children, they recounted which types of children's achievements they felt were more or less valuable.

Twenty-nine of the participants expressed their opinions and values regarding student achievement, with 27 of the 29 believing that children could achieve different levels according to their abilities and interests and that their accomplishments should not be compared. Ms Shi, Ms Feng and Ms Heng argued that some children could achieve better results than others. Ms Shi and Ms Heng had different work experiences and educational backgrounds (see Table 5.4), the details of which will be discussed in the following Subsection 6.4.1. In the next two subsections, I will present the teachers' values and expectations regarding achievements for themselves and their students.

6.4.1 Teachers' Values and Expectations Regarding Children's Achievement

During the interviews, 20 out of the 34 teachers stated that all children might have different levels of achievement, which could not be compared. Some of them placed more value on children's non-academic progress, Mr Li, Ms Feng, Ms Qian and Ms Qin reported that they cared much more about children's moral development than their academic performance. In addition, moral education was valued more highly than academic performance for the children. The third concept mentioned by many teachers in this regard was that they wished for children to grow up in a good physical and mental condition.

Ms Zhao was a special education teacher with four years of work experience, which specifically helped children with ASN at school, and she thought that each child had their progress and achievement which should not be compared with others:

> Our children don't need to be compared with anyone else. They should compare themselves with themselves, compared to yesterday and the day before yesterday; in this case, I see their improvement as an achievement (Ms Zhao, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.4).

Ms Zhao believed that children's improvement is an achievement in itself; therefore, she measured children's achievement by their personal progress rather than by their abilities. Similarly, Ms Zheng was a class tutor and Mandarin teacher with 15-year work experience, who stated,

> For me, all the children are the same. They are equal to me. I feel like the most important thing is working hard or making an effort. As long as they work hard, I am happy about any progress they make (Ms Zheng, The Academy Primary School, p.3).

Ms Zheng appeared to pay more attention to children's moral development. As a class tutor, she suggested that educating children is all about educating human beings:

> It is not only about academic performance; children's moral performance is significant too. For me, if I do not teach them to have good behaviour and good moral performance, no matter how much knowledge they learnt from school, I would say this is an educational failure (Ms Zhang, The Prosperous Primary School, p.2).

Ms Zhang is a teacher who values children's progress and emphasises the importance of good moral development. Similarly, as a music and dance teacher, Ms Xie believed that children's happiness and character were more important than their achievements:

> As a music teacher, I have been telling my students in my class, 'you can just open your mouth and sing happily'. I don't expect them to be artists or musicians; I hope they can be happy expressing themselves (Ms Xie, The Colorful Primary School, p.3).

Ms Feng felt similarly to Ms Xie, remarking, 'I don't expect them to be super successful. I want to help them be humble, responsible and caring people'.

In contrast, Ms Shi and Ms Heng were the only two participants who said they expected good academic achievement from the children. Ms Shi said, 'Some children can learn fast so that they could achieve more.' Ms Heng added, 'I think for some children, academic achievement is the achievement … I hope the class I am teaching now can obtain good academic results'.

Above all, most of the participants valued any type or level of improvement, moral development or happiness among the children. Only a few teachers

believed that academic achievement was the only good scale for measuring children's progress.

6.4.2 Teachers' Values and Expectations Regarding the Achievement of Children with Additional Support Needs

In terms of expectations regarding the achievement of children with ASN, the respondents' answers mainly focused on two points. The first was that any progress made by children with ASN should be valued, and the teachers did not expect them to achieve the same academic standard as the other children. The second point was that the teachers expected children with ASN to properly cooperate with teachers when conducting educational interactive activities.

Mr Chen had experience in helping children with severe physical and mental conditions. Thus, his expectations for children with ASN were that they became more independent and better able to look after themselves:

> I feel like the work I am doing is to reduce the burden for the whole of society. These children can make themselves capable of managing their basic living needs, and it will save much work if they can take care of themselves. As an expert said, first and foremost, we have to educate children to be independent people or people that can be easily taken care of by others (Mr Chen, The Forest Primary School, p.4).

Ms Sun was also a special education teacher with less experience (eight-month work experience); she said that she hoped that children with ASN could become better integrated: 'I hope they can slowly integrate into the group and even into society in the future. I hope they can learn how to get along with other people'. Thus, Ms Sun, a special education teacher in the resources room, expected children with ASN to become independent members of society in the future.

Ms Qi was the music and dance teacher in a state-funded school; she expected children with ASN to become more cooperative and well-behaved in class. Referring to a boy in her class, she said:

> I just hope that he can sit there and not affect other children. Everyone is different; there is a boy with emotional problems in my class; the only expectation I have for him is that he doesn't suddenly hit someone or throw something at others in the class (Ms Qi, The Colorful Primary School, p.4).

Ms Zhang had similar expectations: 'As long as they can be there without messing up the class, I will appreciate it if they can be in the class quietly'. Some ordinary teachers in mainstream schools had to accept and include children with ASN in their classes. However, due to the lack of professional strategies for inclusive education and the need to achieve teaching targets, their only expectations were that children with ASN should stop disrupting classes or disturbing the other students.

To sum up, different teachers had various expectations of children with ASN. The special education teachers expected these children to be included at school and in society in the future. They emphasised the value of being independent. However, some mainstream teachers expected that children with ASN would not interrupt classes. Some teachers understood that it was essential to personalise educational goals for children with ASN and to help children with ASN to achieve greater success.

6.4.3 Teachers' Values and Expectations Regarding Their Own Achievement

When it came to discussing expectations of their progress, 11 out of 34 teachers connected their achievements with those of their students, mentioning such goals as helping children make progress or establishing a good rapport with the children. Six out of the 34 teachers' expectations of themselves related to

career progress or receiving recognition in the form of awards for teaching excellence.

Ms Feng was a young teacher who had only worked in the private school for eight months at that time, but she was involved in an inclusive project helping people who have senile dementia during her postgraduate studies; as a result, she had picked up some relevant concepts and knowledge about using dance to make inclusion happen. She believed that her achievements could be measured by how well she could educate children to become good citizens in society: 'I think the most valuable achievement in my mind is to contribute to the community'. In Ms Feng's view, her contribution to society was to teach children to be good citizens and human beings.

Mr Li had 23 years of work experience as a class and Mandarin teacher in a state-funded school, and he viewed his own achievements in terms of how well he taught his students to be good learners:

> If my students can listen to my instructions and do it and even retain them, I feel this is my achievement. At least what I said or what I did has made them change. When they have made progress, I feel a great sense of accomplishment (Mr Li, The Academy Primary School, p.4).

Mr Li explained that when he had just started his job 20 years ago, his motivation was to make a living because he was from a disadvantaged background and came to Shenzhen to find an appointment for a better life. Mr Yang also had expectations about his achievement:

> The first thing is my professional competence; I expect my abilities to be improved, like singing, playing the instruments, and dancing. I also want my teaching skills to get better (Mr Yang, The Bridge School, p.3).

He talked about his expectations in terms of money as well:

> Another expectation is superficial: money. We need money as long as we are alive; nothing can be done without money. Therefore, achievement in this area is also very important. If I got a promotion, my salary would also rise. I see this as another expectation for myself (Mr Yang, The Bridge School, p.4).

When talking about personal achievement, Mr Yang stressed that he wanted to make more money and achieve better social status. It was interesting to find that when talking about their expectations regarding their own achievements, all of the male teachers mentioned money. In contrast, none of the female teachers spoke about it. In this study, many teachers expected themselves to be good teachers to help children reach their potential, and some teachers also mentioned their expectations in terms of their career path, salary, and social status.

6.5 Teachers' Commitment to Their Careers

Of the 34 educators who participated in this interview, 30 indicated that they would be working as a teacher for the rest of their lives; the other four were unsure. The main reason for the four teachers' uncertainty was the heavy workload; these four teachers were Ms Heng, Ms Shi, Mr Yang and Ms Cao. For instance, Ms Heng remarked that she was not sure about whether she would be teaching children in the future because she thought that being a teacher was too tiring, given the heavy workload. In the next two subsections, I will analyse participants' career satisfaction and their functional roles and responsibilities.

6.5.1 Teachers' Career Satisfaction

Most of the participants were satisfied with their jobs. One of the most commonly cited reasons for their satisfaction with being a teacher concerned

their vocational motivation. In other words, most thought that they were doing what they enjoyed.

Discussing their reasons for choosing to be special education teachers for children with ASN, Ms Zhao believed it is meaningful; Ms Qian stated, 'I really want to do something for this group'. Ms Yun was influenced by her mother: 'I chose this because my mum suggested it, as she thinks I am very patient. After I started, I felt that I quite liked it and liked the children. I won't leave them.' Mr Chen was motivated by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake:

> I graduated from high school in 2008, the same year as the 2008 Sichuan earthquake (measuring 8.0). I saw on the news how many children had been left disabled because of that natural disaster. So, when I applied to go to university, I applied for a major called Physical Education for Disabled People. That's me. I started there, and I am still doing it. (Mr Chen, The Forest Primary School, p.2)

It seems that the special education teachers were mainly determined to do their jobs because they had faith that inclusive education was the right thing to accomplish, and they were devoted to helping children with additional support needs.

As for the music and dance teachers, almost all of them stated that they had music or dance learning backgrounds and they liked children. For example, Ms Wei stated, 'I started to learn to dance when I was young, and I like children and teaching'. Moreover, most of the dance and music teachers felt that their job was enjoyable and easy, and they were comfortable teaching children with different educational needs.

Some participants had different vocational motivations because of their different family backgrounds. Mr Li, a class tutor and Mandarin teacher for 23 years, recounted:

> When I chose to be a teacher 23 years ago, it was only about making a living. I was born in the countryside, my family was so poor; so, I had to come to the city and find a job. After starting to be a teacher, I felt I was quite suitable for it and I found a good sense of belonging as a teacher. So, teaching is my lifelong job (Mr Li, The Academy Primary School, p.2).

Ms You, a young teacher, chose to teach as her career because many of her family members were also teachers. While she was affected by family factors at first, she immensely enjoyed doing her work once she had started, and she liked being with children.

Ms Shi had worked for 20 years as the music and dance teacher in a state-funded school, and Ms Heng worked for a private school as the class tutor and maths teacher for two and half years. These two participants had distinct backgrounds, but looking through their interview transcripts, it was found that both of them were dissatisfied with their current working situation because of the heavy and stressful workload. Ms Heng was a young teacher who had graduated from college around three years earlier, and she was the maths teacher and class tutor at the same time. She was a little unhappy about her school administration; in fact, all the teachers from the Bridge School expressed their dissatisfaction about their school leadership to different extents. Ms Heng considered changing her job, and she had less sense of satisfaction from her work because she thought she did not have enough experience and felt tired of being on call at any time for children and their parents. Ms Shi also mentioned the heavy workload. She was the music and dance teacher who also led the school chorus. She was ambitious to teach the children in the chorus to win more competitions and rewards, but that made her too busy to balance her work and life happily.

6.5.2 Teachers' Roles and Responsibilities

Among the 34 participants, only three special education teachers had only one role at their schools. However, while one special education teacher, Ms Sun, said that her official role at school was as a special education teacher, in fact, she was often asked to do unrelated work, such as taking meeting minutes for the principal; a task that has nothing to do with inclusive education. She complained,

> When there is something no one else is available to do, I will be the person to do it. Because they don't understand what I am doing here, they think I have nothing to do; so when they need people, I will be their first choice, because, in their minds, I am free all the time (Ms Sun, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.2).

Other special education teachers expressed similar complaints. One concern for them was their heavy workload, while another aspect was that their work was not understood by their colleagues; instead, they were regarded as people who were free all the time at their schools.

In this study, all class tutors performed two roles: being in charge of a class and teaching at least one subject. The role of class tutors is to form a bridge between schools and students, between parents and schools, and even between students and parents. Some of them felt under tremendous pressure because of the enormous responsibility they had to their students. Ms Han was a class tutor and Mandarin teacher who had worked in a private school for three years, and she commented, 'As a class tutor, we have more things to do, and we take on more responsibility than other teachers.' However, some of the class tutors were more positive about their roles, as was the case with Ms Tao, who had been a class tutor and Mandarin teacher for 24 years and said:

> I am pretty satisfied with my job. As I said, I see this as my interest or hobby. I am happy every single day to do it. I really like it, because this

> is something that I am interested in (Ms Tao, The Colourful Primary School).

In this study, almost all experienced teachers enjoyed their job more than less experienced teachers.

6.6 Teachers' Theoretical Knowledge of Inclusive Education Policy

The section refers to how much information or theoretical knowledge the teachers possessed regarding inclusive education policies at school, regional, provincial, and national levels. Twenty-seven out of the 34 participants mentioned relevant and specific policy guidances during the interviews, such as financial support from the government for children with ASN. Moreover, all 34 participants were aware of the policy that all children should be accepted into schools once they meet the requirements of the district enrolment policy.

Some teachers mentioned that the government offered financial support for children with ASN at mainstream schools. Ms Cao, working in a state-funded school, said, 'No rejects, as long as they live nearby. If they apply for our school, they can enrol. In addition, if they have a [medical] certificate to show that they need additional support, we will provide them with special assistance and some financial support as well'. Financial support was also mentioned by Ms Deng, who worked in a private school: 'Children with additional support needs are financially supported by the Education Bureau; specifically, primary students can receive 3,500 yuan per year, and secondary students can receive 4,500 yuan per year'. Ms Yu was Ms Deng's colleague, and she also mentioned the same policy regarding financial support for children with additional support needs at schools.

In addition to the financial support policy, several other policies were frequently mentioned: 'Phase-1 Special Education Promotion Plan (Shenzhen)', 'Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan (Shenzhen)', 'Phase-1 Special Education

Promotion Plan (China)', and 'Phase-2 Special Education Promotion Plan (China)'. Ms Sun said:

> I would say that the Special Education Enhancement Programme is one, and it is slightly different in Shenzhen and at the national level. We haven't had any guidance or regulations from the school. We have some activities to exchange ideas. For example, there is a special education guidance centre in the Futian district, where we have a meeting regularly with all the teachers for inclusive education. However, only one person is working on inclusive education in the Education Bureau, and he guides all of us (The Quay Foreign Language School, p.3).

As Ms Sun was a special education teacher and had specialised in special and inclusive education at university, it would be expected for her to have more policy information than other types of teachers. Ms Cao, who had a similar background to Ms Sun, talked about the same policy documents and had some of them on her phone. Ms Cao was generous enough to share those documents with me, informing me that some of those documents were not easy to find because not all are posted online.

However, apart from the special education teachers, whose specific roles and responsibilities focused on helping children with ASN at mainstream schools, most of the participants were not able to provide comprehensive and clear information on particular policies. Comments from these participants included: 'generally speaking, there isn't one; no policy for inclusive education' (Ms Jiang); 'No inclusive policy' (Ms Kong); 'I don't know about this' (Ms Zhou); 'There must be some policies, but I don't know' (Ms Tao); and 'I've never heard of any [inclusive policy]' (Ms Qi).

Furthermore, some teachers considered inclusive education policies irrelevant to them, as they thought that special education teachers or psychologists should take on all of the responsibility for inclusive teaching and learning. As Ms Jin said, 'In terms of inclusive policies, you should ask special education teachers; I

am only a music and dance teacher. I don't know too much about it, and normally, those documents and policies wouldn't be sent to each teacher in the schools'.

To sum up, all participants realised that, by law, every child should be included in mainstream schools. The Special Education Enhancement Programmes (at both the regional and national levels) were mentioned frequently. Moreover, the existence of financial support for children with ASN was noted by five teachers. However, in general, the teachers lacked theoretical knowledge regarding inclusive education policies in this study. There seem to be two main reasons for this lack of information about inclusive education policies. Firstly, there is insufficient policy transmission from authorities to schools or teachers – this category will be discussed in the following section. Secondly, some teachers seemed reluctant to obtain information about inclusive policies because they did not think it was their responsibility.

6.7 Inclusive Education in Practice at the School Level

As per my review of inclusive education policies and regulations in Chapter Four, some important inclusive policies have been delivered and implemented in local schools in recent years, such as the LRC programme and Special Education Promotion Programmes. This theme refers to inclusive practices at the school level, reporting how schoolteachers have understood and implemented these policies. It includes four sub-themes: challenges for teachers to create an inclusive learning environment; the present inclusive learning environment; teachers' actions to create an inclusive learning environment; and teachers' perceptions of their ability to meet children's needs.

All the participants had a general idea that inclusive education meant recognising the responsibility of schools to include all children. However, when the concept or policy was adopted in practice, teachers realised that they faced certain challenges when attempting to meet children's diverse behavioural and learning needs. Similarly, while many teachers believed that educating children

with and without ASN together in an inclusive learning environment could benefit all children, they found it challenging for them to accomplish inclusive educational goals because of the lack of professional support and instruction. This point will be discussed in detail in Subsection 6.7.1.

Besides mentioning such challenges and difficulties during the interview, some teachers also spoke of their positive experiences of including all children using certain teaching strategies in the class. It is worth mentioning that all of the dance and music teachers in this study expressed their confidence that they were able to meet children's different needs in their classes. This point will be presented in detail in Subsection 6.7.3.

6.7.1 Challenges for Teachers to Create an Inclusive Learning Environment

Building an inclusive classroom and learning environment means implementing practices that enable all children to have the opportunity to be included in the general education classroom. During the interviews, 32 out of my 34 participants reported facing a variety of challenges when implementing inclusive policies in practice. The main challenges the teachers faced when trying to create an inclusive learning environment were i) unsatisfactory policy transmission; ii) lack of teacher training on inclusive education; iii) ineffective administration (leadership); iv) lack of parental support.

i. Unsatisfactory policy transmission

Whilst a small minority of the interviewees (5 out of 34), mentioned that policy transmission and implementation were effective at their schools, the majority (29/34) agreed with the statement that inclusive policy documents were never delivered effectively to all teachers at their schools and that most of the time, these policy documents were only read by a few people. However, it was necessary to note that all interviewees understood that it is illegal not to allow children with additional needs to enrol in mainstream schools. For example, Ms Qin said, 'I do not know of any relevant policies, but the only thing I know is the

[mainstream] school must accept those children [with additional support needs], no refusals; I think this is also from the policies' (Ms Qin). In this study, all 34 participants had some level of awareness that it was both the educational trend and legal policy to include all children (regardless of their cognitive or academic level) in mainstream schools in China.

None of the special education teachers participating in this study was satisfied with policy transmission at sthe chool level. In this regard, Mr Chen said:

> We actually have many policies related to inclusive education, but those documents were only transmitted to the school [the administrative level]; they don't really send those documents to each teacher. I am the special education teacher in this school. For some relevant policy documents, if I want to get them, I must go to find someone who has them; if I don't go, I gain nothing … So; I would say that lousy policy transmission prevents the good implementation of inclusive policies at school (Mr Chen, The Forest Primary School, p.3).

Similar to Mr Chen's view expressed above, other special education teachers complained or expressed concerns about poor policy transmission at the school level. In addition, all the special education teachers indicated that the inclusive policy documents were supposed to be delivered to every teacher at school, rather than the special education teachers alone. This is because it is necessary for other staff members to understand the importance and basic concepts of inclusive education; moreover, these documents could reduce misunderstandings about work among special education teachers and other staff members.

In both private and state-funded schools, most music and dance teachers spoke of similar issues relating to the lack of effective policy transmission at the school level. Ms Deng had been a dance and music teacher for three years in a private school (The Luminous Chinese and English School). She explained, 'I don't know too much about policies because those documents were only sent to the administrative people. The red title [very important] policy documents were

barely shared in our group chat'. Moreover, most dance and music teachers had limited knowledge regarding inclusive policy, not only because of insufficient policy transmission but also because some of them felt they were not responsible for acknowledging inclusive policies. For instance, Ms Jin, who had been a dance and music teacher in a state-funded school (The Strong Primary School) for 13 years, stated that policy documents were not distributed to every teacher at her school: 'I am only a music and dance teacher here. I don't know too much about the policies. I suppose you may find useful information from special education teachers'. Compared with special education teachers, many music and dance teachers saw transmitting inclusive policies and delivering inclusive teaching concepts to each school staff member as less important.

In this study, class tutors took charge of a whole class, and their roles in schools involve communicating information between schools and children (and parents) and forming a bridge between them. Thus, normally, important information and policies were passed to class tutors in the first place. Moreover, some teachers only taught music and dance, maths and Mandarin without being a class tutor, and they advised me to ask other class tutors when I was asking them for something relevant to educational policies. However, Ms Han, a class tutor in a private school (The Bridge School), stated, 'They don't really transmit documents to us. If there are some policies relevant to performing arts education, the music and dance teachers will probably receive it'. Based on the class tutors' responses in this study, their workload was heavier than that of the others, because they take charge of everything in class and they also teach at least one subject. Thus, they might neglect diverse types of educational policy, especially documents not highlighted by their school's leadership.

On the other hand, five of the teachers believed that the policies were well transmitted at their schools. As Ms Xie commented, 'In our school, policies can be implemented well. Our administrative level is doing their jobs in the right way. As teachers, we actively respond to them and cooperate with them. We put the policies into practice' (The Colorful Primary School, p.4).

Some teachers acknowledged some inclusive policies and explained what they had received. Mr Li said:

> We have policies to support children financially and they are implemented very well. For example, for children in poverty, we relieve them of educational costs, [by providing things] like free uniforms (The Academy Primary School, p.4).

Ms Wei also knew of some inclusive policies relating to financial support, assigned psychologists, and resource rooms:

> I know about those policies because I have been trying to keep my eyes on inclusive education policies. As I am quite interested in this area, I touched upon it when I was doing my master's. I also studied something relevant (The Colorful Primary School, p.3).

These five teachers commented that the policy transmission related to administrative work and teachers' personal interests.

One interesting example of effective policy transmission was provided by Ms Bo, who had been a music and dance teacher in a private school (The Luminous Chinese and English School) for four years. She mentioned that Shenzhen had been doing well in transmitting educational policies, citing the example of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for National Education Development issued by the Ministry of Education in 2007. This plan targeted the establishment of continuous development in China's education system. However, the five-year plan did not officially outline any inclusive or special education guidelines.

To summarise, in this study, most of the teachers reported inclusive policy transmission as being relatively poor at the school level. While the special education teachers possessed more information regarding inclusive policy, they

all complained about the ineffective communication of policies to mainstream school teachers, which resulted in their lack of understanding and made special education teachers' work more difficult in schools. Most of the music and dance teachers lacked information about inclusive policies. Although it was more likely that class tutors read and understood inclusive policies, some of them did not have as much information as they should.

ii. Lack of teacher training on inclusive education

There were some negative comments made about teacher training regarding inclusive education, which focused on two aspects: a) training on the concept of IE for general teachers (class tutors and music and dance teachers in this study); and b) training in inclusive pedagogy for special education teachers and general teachers.

Some special education teachers complained that the lack of general teacher training on IE had been hindering inclusive practices in schools. Apart from the special education teachers, most participants had limited knowledge of basic inclusive policies and inclusive pedagogy. Ms Zhao noted that one of the challenges for her to promote IE at school was the lack of training in it for general teachers:

> In the beginning, the class tutor thought I was making trouble for him, and he didn't want me to get involved. But because the child's parents persisted in asking us to do an intervention for their child, the class tutor had to accept it. The class tutor had a bad attitude towards me, and he barely talked to me at that time (Ms Zhao, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.3).

Similarly, Ms Cao explained that one difficulty she faced when trying to carry out inclusive work at schools was that other (general) teachers could not understand the nature of her job:

> Sometimes I do feel hopeless because other teachers have no clue what I have been doing in this school; they think I am doing nothing here. Some of them think I have little to do here because I do not teach a 'real' course. I think they have those thoughts because they haven't been told about the importance and complexity of inclusive work (Ms Cao, The Strong Primary School, p.4).

Here, the importance of generalising teacher training on IE has been emphasised again, and other teachers held the same opinion. For instance, Ms Xie, a music and dance teacher for four years in a state-funded school (The Colourful Primary School), commented, 'We don't have any teacher training on inclusive education'. In fact, in the Colourful Primary School, there were no special education teachers or resources rooms to support children with ASN, which means that general teachers must cope with the various challenges of meeting children's different needs. In this case, the lack of proper training for general teachers on inclusive education could fail to create an inclusive learning environment for children.

However, in this study, all special education teachers advocated providing more guidance and training regarding inclusive pedagogy and inclusive practice. When asked about the challenges of implementing inclusive education in practice, Mr Yan answered:

> There is a child in my class; he doesn't listen to me at all, no matter how long I teach him, no matter how much effort I put in, he doesn't learn anything. At this moment, I do feel upset; I keep asking myself what is wrong with me. I can't lose my temper with children, so I have to keep it all inside; no one can really help me, I have to figure it out by myself (The Strong Primary School, p.4).

Mr Yan was not confident in his professional ability to help children with ASN, and he believed that professional inclusive teacher training was urgently needed. Ms Sun, a special education teacher in the Quay Foreign Language

School, had similar concerns regarding professional teacher training programmes:

> We don't have specific guidelines or regulations for inclusive practices at school. There is a special [inclusive] education guidance centre in the Futian district, but only one expert [leader] there. Sometimes he will provide suggestions to us. But most of the time, we [special education teachers in the Futian district] will be together only to communicate and discuss issues we face. I think we need more training on inclusive pedagogy. Sometimes I am really confused (The Quay Foreign Language School, p.4).

To sum up, two types of teacher training were deemed to be urgently needed: one to provide basic information regarding inclusive education for general teachers. At the same time, the other is professional training in inclusive practices and pedagogy for special education teachers. According to the participants, some areas had started to organise teacher training and had produced good results in terms of developing a better understanding of IE among a more significant number of general teachers. However, more teacher training of IE was still expected.

iii. Ineffective administration (leadership)

Some interviewees suggested that the administrators and leadership needed to be more effective and supportive. As Mr Chen, who worked in a state-funded school, said:

> To be honest, I think this could be simpler and easier; we can organise all teachers together to study the inclusive policies, and I did ask them to do it. However, it was rejected because the leadership thought that should only be me, because I am the one who takes responsibility for the whole thing (The Forest Primary School, p.3).

Similarly, Ms Cao, also a special education teacher in a state-funded school, told me that she received all the policy documents related to IE because she was the only formal special education teacher in her school. However, the administrative staff in Ms Cao's school never sent those documents to other teachers because they wanted to avoid increasing their workloads. Ms Cao believed that it would be much better if all teachers could read through these policies, then her work could be understood and supported better by others.

Similarly, Mr Yang, a music and dance teacher in a private school (The Bridge School), had a negative point to make about the work of the administrators:

> We [administration leaderships and teachers] were supposed to cooperate with each other and be tolerant of each other. They were not. I am under a great pressure, because teachers have so many responsibilities. The leadership does nothing in the office every day, like parasites, but they get more paid than us (The Bridge School, p.5).

Leadership and administration departments can have a significant influence on teachers' attitudes to their work. In this study, it was found that effective administration can help create a more inclusive learning environment in schools.

iv. Lack of parental support

As analysed previously in Subsction 6.3.1, some respondents talked about what their student's parents expected from their children's and teachers' work. Two teachers thought parents did not pay enough attention to their children's performance at schools or have high expectations, but 30 teachers reported that the message they received from parents was that parents expected a welcoming and inclusive environment for their children in schools. However, some teachers felt frustrated because their inclusive work was not supported by parents. Two main situations were highlighted: the first regarding the lack of understanding among parents of children without ASN, and the second the poor coordination by schools with parents of children with ASN.

Ms Cao mentioned receiving some complaints from parents of children without ASN, as it was perceived that some children with ASN had affected the other children at school. As she explained, 'Those ordinary parents may feel that inclusive education will affect their children's school lives. So, sometimes, it is likely there will be joint proposals to ask aggressive children to leave the school'. It emerged that many parents of children without ASN lacked basic information regarding IE and were less conscious of the benefits of their children studying in an inclusive learning environment. Moreover, they often believed that children with ASN should be educated separately outside mainstream schools, especially when they thought their children were negatively affected by children with ASN at school.

Moreover, some parents of children with ASN were reluctant to accept that their children needed additional support, and they would refuse to allow their children to undergo a medical diagnosis. However, at the present stage of IE in China, medical diagnosis certification is the fundamental way by which schools can apply for extra financial and resource support from the educational authority. As Ms Xu told me:

> There is a boy in my class, and he has shown particularly obvious symptoms of autism. I asked his parents for more information, but their attitude was that their kid was okay, and they wouldn't take the test and get the medical diagnosis certification. As a teacher with a background in psychology, I can actually see that he needs help, but his parents won't admit it. So, we have to stop talking about this boy's problem, otherwise, it seems as though I am labelling the child on purpose, and it will turn bad (The Lotus School, p.4).

Essentially, the situation was that if parents refused to consider that their children need additional support, the school could not apply for financial support for children with ASN from the government, and teachers can no longer make specific interventions for those children. After discussing this with some

participants, I realised that there were two potential explanations for why parents of children with ASN do not admit that their children need additional support. The first was that they were unaware of their children's situation, so they thought their children could be fine without any additional support from the school and family. The second was that parents do not wish teachers to over-emphasise inclusive education and label their children.

6.7.2 Present Inclusive Learning Environment

This sub-theme reflects the daily inclusive practice in mainstream schools. As China has been promoting IE for a few decades now, some teachers have witnessed progress and improvements in this regard. However, the teachers had different experiences of including children with ASN in their classes with other children. In this study, some shared their teaching strategies for engaging all children in mainstream education and recounted their experiences. When asked about the present inclusive learning environment, there were two voices from primary school teachers in this study, which I will outline as two parts separately in the following pages: (i) positive comments on current inclusive practice and (ii) negative comments on present inclusive practice.

i.Positive comments about present inclusive practice

There were five main types of positive comments made by the participants regarding the present inclusive learning environment in mainstream schools. These related to peer support, the positive influence of art festivals, concepts of inclusiveness among teachers and leadership, improvements in educational provision, and parental support.

Positive comments from teachers

Firstly, some teachers commented that their students' attitudes towards classmates with ASN were now more inclusive. As Ms Xie explained:

> Actually, other students are very smart, and they understand very well. They don't see people's differences as differences. They know some children are different and will take care of children with ASN. We have a quite inclusive learning environment; literally, we don't even need to tell them what to do, and they know what to do; they protect and help children with ASN spontaneously (The Colorful Primary School, p.4).

Ms Xie described the children in her class as being tolerant of any of the behaviours of children with ASN. Moreover, the children without ASN knew that they should protect and respect children with ASN without their teachers needing to tell them. She supposed that it might be due to the fact that the society had become more inclusive than before, and their family and school education had taught all children to respect everyone they meet. Another positive comment was made by Ms Deng, who found no obvious signs that children without ASN were biased in their treatment of classmates with ASN. She suggested that this tolerance and inclusion might partly result from the culture of Shenzhen, where everyone is included and welcomed.

Secondly, arts festivals were also viewed as good opportunities for developing an inclusive environment in schools. All the ten studied primary schools had at least one arts festival a year. All ten schools held an arts festival to celebrate Children's Day (1 June), mainly focusing on music and dance performance. Ms He noted:

> Children like music and dance. Like with the Children's Day Arts Festival this time, they can choose to participate in whatever they like. If you like music, you can go singing; if you want to dance, you go dancing; everyone is offered an opportunity, and everyone is included (The Prosperous Primary School, p.4).

In addition, the Quan ming zhan shi ('The All-Children Show') was another featured arts festival in Ms Yu's school:

> This festival provides an opportunity for every child to present; sometimes, they think some children are not good enough to present, then I would say that now we are a team and everyone will participate; no one will be left behind. In some specific situations, I could design several easier roles or actions for children with ASN, so at least they get a chance to get involved. My point is that everyone will have something to present, and we are doing it together (The Luminous Chinese and English School, p.5).

Ms Yu's school was famous for valuing artistic activities and providing a well-rounded education. She was very determined to encourage all children to participate in the arts festival monthly because she was confident that this would help the inclusion of children with ASN and also establish a more inclusive learning environment in the school. Ms Yu added, 'In order to provide more opportunities for children, we created as many roles as we could; for example, in last year's Quan ming zhan shi festival, we had about 40 participants for that show'. At first, she explained that 40 participants might be too many for a show; however, she found it valuable and helped make inclusion possible at her school.

Thirdly, positive teachers and effective leadership were viewed as important factors for actively creating an inclusive learning environment. Ms Xie worked in the Colourful Primary School, noting that her school's climate and structure were inclusive: 'I think our school is quite tolerant and inclusive. The headteacher, teachers and children are inclusive. There is no great pressure, which makes everyone more tolerant, and not that harsh'(The Colorful Primary School, p.3). Similarly, Ms Qin stated:

> We always accept and include children with difficulties; for example, we have children with Down's syndrome. They are like angels without wings. As teachers, we are more patient with them, and we teach our other children in that class to take care of them as well. We have some children like that, and we will have more in the future (The Lotus School, p.4).

Ms Qin worked in the Lotus School, and I had the opportunity to have a short informal talk with the school's headteacher, Mr W. Mr W talked about his idea of constantly updating his skills and knowledge, and he was one of the few people I met who could clearly explain the concept of IE. He said that he would never give up on any child, no matter what kind of learning difficulties they had. He knew a lot about inclusive education and he loved music; he even sang a war song from the Chinese People's Army Volunteers as he recounted that when he was young, people's mental and spiritual support came from music. Moreover, Mr W told me a short story about how he was determined to promote IE in his school:

> There was a boy who was in Grade Six; he had severe autism, which had a bad influence on the other children. Thus, many parents came to me and asked me to suspend this boy from the school. My answer was no, because, as I said, I will never give up on any child in my school. I solved this problem by advising this boy's mum to accompany him at school, which helped a lot. So far, it has been a year, and this boy behaves very well now. I am so pleased about this (The Lotus School, p.6).

Mr W, as the headteacher, was positive and confident about promoting IE, and he spread his inclusive ideas through his actions. As a leader, Mr W worked to actively create an inclusive environment at his school. It can be seen that in the Lotus School, the leadership had a good influence on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and inclusive practice.

Fourthly, due to the improved education levels, an increasing number of children with ASN had been accepted into mainstream schools. Indeed, some of the experienced teachers pointed out that more children with ASN had started to study at mainstream schools compared with before. In my discussions with a few of the teachers who felt this way, participants agreed that one of the most important reasons for accepting more children with ASN into mainstream schools

was that education was becoming more inclusive and tolerant compared with the past. As Ms Wei recounted: 'When I was a kid, I didn't see so many children with ASN at school, but now I am a teacher, and I teach six classes of children, I have found about 30 children with some different difficulties, and about 15 children had medical diagnosis certifications'.

Ms Wu, who felt the same way as Ms Wei, wondered whether 'we are having more children with difficulties because of their unhealthy diet or genetic disease. There were really few of them when I was a kid'. I suggested to Ms Wu that another reason for the increased number of children with ASN at mainstream schools was that the educational environment has become more inclusive and tolerant. Twenty or thirty years ago in China, most children with a physical or mental disease barely had any chance of being educated as other children were; some could go to special schools, but it was almost impossible for them to go to mainstream schools. After considering this for a while, Ms Wu agreed with me.

Fifthly, parents are allowed to provide support for their children with ASN in class, and they could accompany their children in the classroom to assist them and supervise their study and behaviour. Many primary schools have no resource rooms but a number of children with ASN. Without the help and support of special education teachers, it could be challenging for schools and teachers to meet children's different needs, especially where some children might cause severe disruption to classes or attack other children. Thus, many schools allow parents of children with ASN to accompany their children. To some extent, parents in such cases are performing the role of special education teachers. In this regard, Ms Xu said:

> Some parents in our school ask to accompany their children to school. We are happy to accept this because, firstly, they can be there to supervise their children during classes, and, secondly, they don't affect teachers and other children (Ms Xu, The Lotus School, p.3).

When I questioned whether other children might find it strange to have parents in the class, she answered, ‘Not at all. They are quite tolerant; they won’t find it strange because they can understand. It is not as difficult as you think’. A few examples of carers or parents accompanying children with ASN at mainstream schools. This could represent an appropriate solution when there are no available resource rooms or special education teachers. However, it is less feasible to apply this strategy as a sustainable solution for developing inclusive education because the number of children with ASN will rise and more professional assistance will be required.

Positive comments from my observations

Apart from these comments from participants, I gained my understanding of their inclusive practice during my fieldwork in these schools. In this study, I visited three resource rooms because only four out of ten participating schools had resource rooms, and one was under construction. The three resource rooms I visited were all located on the ground floor for better access for all people and equipped with standard facilities, as shown in Illustration 6.1 below.

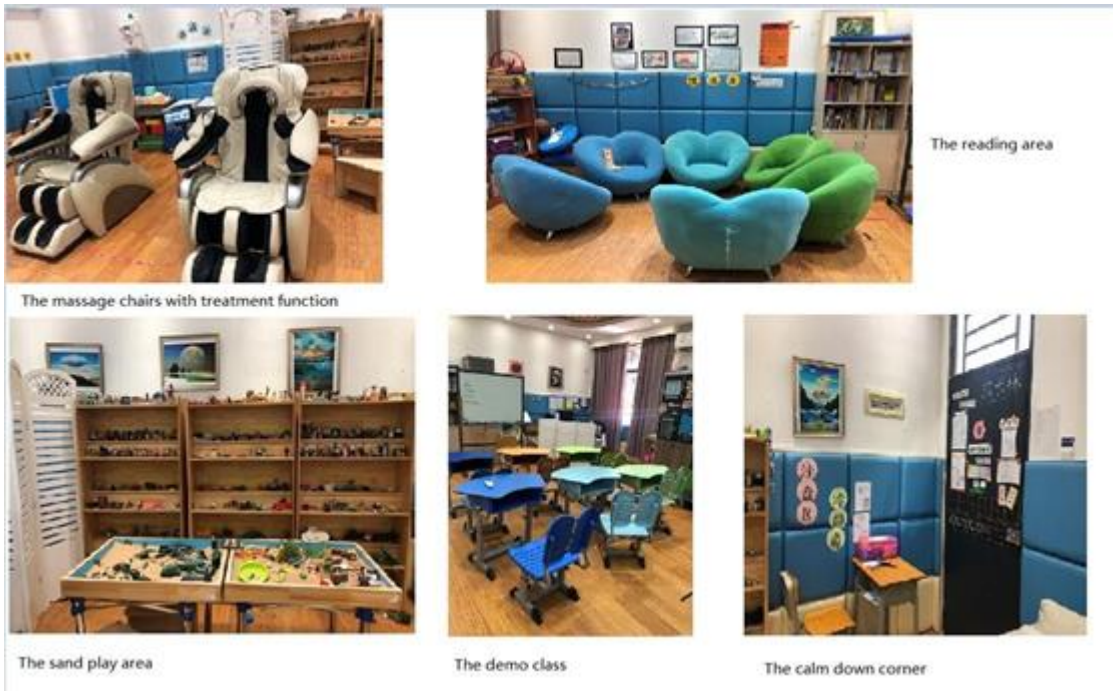

Illustration 6. 1 The facilities of resource room in one of the schools

There were massage chairs, reading corners, a sand play area, a small-size classroom and a calm down corner. In addition, some children's (with ASN) artwork and their IEPs were displayed on the wall for recording their learning progress and improvement. As introduced by special education teachers, children with ASN in the LRC programme are free to access the resource room and ask for help at any time during school. The resource room can provide flexible and fixed assistance for children with ASN. Every ASN child had their individualised education plan (IEP) made by special education teachers, and they had fixed regular intervention classes in the resource room. For flexibility, special education teachers could be ASN children's individual assistants in mainstream class if necessary, and special education teachers could also provide an extra or replacement class for ASN children in the demo class in the resource rooms. Special education teachers had the daily record of every child's (with ASN) school performance and provide relevant information for class tutors and parents. As analysed, parents of ASN children expressed their satisfaction with their children's improvements in study and in life, and they trusted special education teachers because of their children's improvement and the special education teachers' professionalism (see Section 6.4).

The resource rooms and special education teachers provided inclusive advice for children with ASN, general education teachers, and even the school leadership. As Ms Qian expressed, because the resource rooms and teachers exist, more ASN children gained confidence and improved attainment in the mainstream schools, more general education teachers understood children's behaviours more comprehensively. More parents of children with ASN were relieved about their children's quality of life and satisfied about their children's progress in mainstream schools.

I was invited to give a dance lesson (see Illustration 6.2 below) and a craft lesson (see Illustration 6.3 below) in the resource room for eight children, four of whom had ASN and half children without ASN. By participating in the resource room classes, I found that the ASN children felt more comfortable in the company of their peers, and children without ASN performed as responsible and caring peers

to support the ASN children. At the Quay Foreign Language School, children with ASN had three to four classes per week in resource rooms. Ms Sun explained that a designated student would voluntarily attend the class in a resource room with an ASN child every week; the designated child would also be the ASN child's classmate.

Illustration 6. 2 The 'rainbow bear' I made with children in the resource room

Illustration 6. 3 I was teaching the dance class for children in the resource room

ii. Negative comments about the present inclusive learning environment

The negative comments on the present inclusive learning environment mainly regarded two aspects. Firstly, some teachers preferred children with ASN to study in special schools because they believe that these children's different needs cannot be met within mainstream schools. Secondly, teachers felt incapable of including all children given the large class sizes.

Some teachers thought certain children with ASN should be studying in special schools rather than mainstream schools. Ms Qin acknowledged that the state-funded school she worked in had to accept children with whatever difficulties they had and pointed out that she had been working hard to help children with ASN. However, she also stated:

> We have been accepting children with ASN, which is what we are supposed to do. But, I think maybe it could be more useful for some children to go to special schools because that will help them more. But, many parents can't face admitting that their children's intelligence is not normal like others, and they insist on sending their children to us (The Lotus School, p.4).

There were no special education teachers or resource rooms in Ms Qin's school, and some teachers there felt incapable of meeting all of the children's needs adequately.

Owing to the large class sizes, several teachers were not confident that they could include all children or pay equal attention to every child. Most of the ten studied schools had between 40 and 50 children per class. Ms Tao, who taught a class of 50 students, declared:

> It is impossible to get everyone involved in a class of 50 students; no matter how you try, you can't do it. Our class is only for 40 minutes, and children are easily distracted by many things. Most of the time,

> they have unintentional attention rather than intentional intention; their concentration spans are relatively short; so it is unrealistic for each child to participate in the classroom. The only thing I can do is try as hard as I can to attract their attention and make them learn as much as possible from the class (The Colorful Primary School, p.4).

In China, large class sizes are very common. Most of the time, there is only one teacher for a large number of students. Teaching children with ASN in a large-sized class could be challenging for many teachers without extra assistance and support.

6.7.3 Teachers' Actions to Create an Inclusive Learning Environment

As IE develops in China, more teachers are becoming experienced in responding to children's different cognitive and behavioural difficulties in class. In this study, some teachers recounted what they had done to engage all children in their classes and their practical experiences. This sub-theme refers to different teachers' inclusive actions in the classroom, with teachers talking about the steps they took to make them feel confident enough to cope with children's different needs. Different types of teachers described the teaching methods they implemented to include children in practice, including music and dance teachers, special education teachers and class tutors. In the following three sub-sections, I will present different teachers' actions to create an inclusive learning environment through their teaching practice: i) actions by special education teachers to create an inclusive learning environment; ii) actions by music and dance teachers to create an inclusive learning environment; and iii) actions by class tutors and headteachers to create an inclusive learning environment.

i. Actions by special education teachers to create an inclusive learning environment

The six special education teachers I interviewed were the main sources of help for children with ASN at the mainstream schools. They were more qualified and appeared better able to understand children's difficulties and meet children's

needs. Ms Zhao, speaking about how to create an inclusive learning environment for all children, proposed that music is a particularly good medium for inclusive education:

> We use music as a tool. For example, if I want to establish a relationship with a little boy, I will sing to him and add some movement [dance] to it. These actions can make him notice me and get him excited. Last semester, we had a music teacher; her way was to do music-making within teams, with children free to create things. So, cooperation, rotation, creation and communication could all happen (Ms Zhao, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.4).

Ms Qian talked about how to create an inclusive learning environment with teachers. An interesting point she mentioned was that special education teachers could represent both an advantage and a drawback at the same time:

> We are here as special education teachers. It can be very helpful for meeting children's needs because of our specialised skills, but, because we are here, other general teachers have an excuse for refusing to get involved in promoting inclusive education because they think they are not skilled in this area as we are (Ms Qian, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.5).

In addition, Ms Qian also stated that general teachers need encouragement and appropriate guidance and training for them to promote inclusive education for all:

> Some general teachers came to me and told me they were not skilled enough to cope with children's issues sometimes. I recognise these words as having two meanings. The first is that they think this role should be done by professional people, which is right, indeed; but you've got to do what you can because we are doing inclusive education; they are my students and yours. This shows the lack of a good inclusive concept. Another meaning is that other teachers need

> our encouragement. They need our support; they need us to teach them some inclusive pedagogy, or we can discuss issues together. This is my understanding (Ms Qian, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.6).

She also suggested that teachers who lack a good understanding of inclusive education can be helped by schools ensuring all teachers are trained in inclusive education. She stressed that, first and foremost, children with ASN are children, just the same as other children. She added, 'Recently, we are having more teacher training for inclusive education; so, I think other teachers could learn something from it.' She suggested that it is necessary to train other teachers to know what inclusive education is and to know that by law, it is part of China's education:

> I always tell them, think about this, the country has an inclusive policy, which is compulsory; so, it is something that every teacher has to accomplish and implement. You may not be confident about your ability to help children, but as long as you have the concept, you will be able to support children (Ms Qian, The Quay Foreign Language School, p.6).

Some special education teachers were able to use music and dance as tools for conducting educational interventions for children with ASN. Moreover, besides taking action to include children, special education teachers also need to create an inclusive environment among the general teachers by communicating and consulting with them.

ii. Actions by music and dance teachers to create an inclusive learning environment

Based on analysis of the interview transcripts, almost all the 18 dance and music teachers were found to be confident in their abilities to include children in their classes. Besides using actual teaching methods, they also advocated treating

children with ASN equally and not paying extra attention to them as a beneficial strategy for creating an inclusive learning environment.

Ms Wu, a music and dance teacher for 24 years, knew less about the notion of inclusive education but had a strong belief in treating all children equally. Her view of including children with ASN was to treat them equally and not pay extra attention to them:

> I suppose that not paying extra attention to them is the way to ensure equal educational rights. The more you pay attention to them, the more they feel they are special; treating each child equally is the right thing to do. When they make a mistake, I will criticise them. When they behave, I will give them a thumbs-up. When they scream, I will ask them why they are screaming. (Ms Wu, The Academy Primary School, p.4)

She also talked about how her idea of inclusivity was generated from her previous experience. She recounted that when she was younger, she tended to pay more attention to children with additional needs until she found that it was not helpful but hurting the children. She said, 'I realised that the only way to help them was to treat them like I do the others. So, I think these children often need you to treat them equally; if you pay extra attention to them, they will feel that they are different and special. I want to make them feel they are free to be themselves'.

In Ms Wu's opinion, not paying extra attention to children with ASN was an effective way to ensure equal educational rights for them. Therefore, she treated all of the children in her class the same way. Ms Wu recounted an experience with a boy with ASN in her class, explaining that the boy had eventually managed to become more integrated. In the beginning, the boy would suddenly begin to cry for no specific reason. Ms Wu's response was to allow him to cry but ask him for a reason afterwards. Ms Wu described the impact of this

treatment: ‘He is more integrated now. He doesn’t feel special. He is not crying or screaming in my class anymore. For me, he is just like all the other children’.

Ms Wu mentioned that, in her music class, children were free to express their feelings in different ways. Ms Wu justified her teaching methods:

> I want to make them feel they are free to be themselves … For example, some children like street dance, some want to be a rock star, and some just want to enjoy music and dance. I would say, ‘No problem. You can do whatever you want. Just be yourself (Ms Wu, The Academy Primary School, p.4).

When asked questions about the theoretical concept of IE, after reflecting for a time and having no clear idea, Ms Wu responded: ‘Thank you for asking me. I have never thought about it before. But I do think I need to consider it further in the future’. She valued the promotion of IE and believed that treating all children equally was essential for all educators. Thanks to her rich teaching experience, she had developed her own ways of helping children with ASN be included in schools.

Ms Wei also had a specific experience of coping with children with ADHD in her class. She learned about the difficulties of children with ADHD from her friend who was studying psychology. Her friend explained that children with ADHD are not being naughty on purpose but cannot control themselves well. As a music teacher, Ms Wei had developed strategies to include all children in her class:

> I added some musical instrument learning in class. I asked him [child with ADHD] to move with the instrument, so he had a motivation and reason to move. I also asked him to be the conductor. My purpose was to give him a chance to move, as I thought he would be more comfortable with it. Another thing is to form groups in class. There were children in my class. I divided them into nine groups to do music-making or to learn songs with the organ. Each child has creativity, and

> they can contribute to their teams (Ms Wei, The Colorful Primary School, p.5).

Ms Wei grouped children with different roles together in her class. She helped all the children position themselves within the groups according to their abilities and interests, thereby creating an inclusive environment in her music class.

In this study, teachers were found to be more capable of including children by using pedagogies involving music or dance. Moreover, these teachers' conceptions were found to be more inclusive. When talking about children with ASN, they believed that all children were equal in their minds.

iii. Actions by class tutors and headteachers to create an inclusive learning environment

Compared with the teachers of other subjects, class tutors typically spend more time with children in their class and have more of a connection with them and their parents.

Mr Wang, the headteacher in a private school and a music teacher in schools for many years, said:

> We have the art festival at school, and all children are involved. Every child is on the stage to do the show. It helps children be included better because they perform together and have to work together and perform together. We don't select children to do the show, and children can choose the things they like to perform (Mr Wang, The Beautiful International School, p.4).

Mr Wang, with a music education background and a leadership position, integrated music activities as a tool for improving children's educational achievement and social skills.

Ms Xu, a class tutor in a state-funded school, stated that she had helped her students to prepare for and participate in arts festivals many times. She said that she had learned a lot since becoming a class tutor. She could now teach children to sing, dance, draw, and so on. She considered performing arts to be an effective way of building an inclusive classroom environment. When recalling experiences of including children through music and dance activities, she gave the example of a girl:

> There is a girl in my class who is known for being naughty in school. Many teachers know her. She gets angry easily, and she was not very pleasant with her classmates. Once, she even fought with six boys. However, we found that she has good potential in the performing arts, and that she has a good artist sense. She likes singing and giving speeches. Thus, we have been training her on what she is good at. She represented the school in a singing competition, and she won. As for her academic performance, we think that as long as she can keep up, there is not too much more we can demand (Ms Xu, The Lotus School, p.5).

It was challenging for Ms Xu to integrate this girl into her class in the beginning. However, Ms Xu was able to help her be included by exploring this girl's potential in other areas, thereby building this girl's confidence and showing others this girl's advantages and strong points. When it was found that this girl was very good at the performing arts, Ms Xu encouraged her to develop this aspect. Ms Xu said that this girl is now getting on well with others, and she has made more friends at school.

Class tutors and headteachers have more autonomy in terms of making decisions on how to help children with ASN. Some in the study had a music and dance

education background, which they could use to help children, and they found that music and dance were effective in creating a more inclusive learning environment and including all children in the music and dance class. Headteachers' attitudes towards IE could determine or influence the atmosphere around schools regarding including children with ASN. If headteachers were positive and active in the implementation of IE, teachers and students without ASN in this school would be more supportive. By contrast, if the headteacher had limited knowledge of IE or had fewer concerns about the issue of providing equal education for all children, it would be more difficult for the rest of the school to be inclusive.

To sum up, in this study, different types of teachers had various distinct ways to create an inclusive environment. When participants introduced their methods for creating inclusive environments, the thing they first mentioned was treating children with ASN in an equal way. Music and dance teachers felt better able to meet children's needs, and they could use their music and dance pedagogy to involve children. Special education teachers had more theoretical knowledge and professional expertise when creating an inclusive environment, but they acknowledged that inclusive education is about all students and teachers. Thus, apart from meeting children's different needs, special education teachers also made efforts to help other general teachers to understand the concept of inclusive education. Class tutors are the people who manage the whole class, and they have the most connection with the children and the children's careers. Ninety per cent of class tutors in this study had rich work experience, and they advised that the way teachers treat children with ASN will influence the way other children treat children with ASN. Class tutors explained that their inclusive behaviours and ideas were influenced by school leadership and at the same time would influence other children's inclusive actions. The following subsection will analyse teachers' perceptions of their abilities in terms of meeting children's different needs in the actual class.

6.7.4 Teachers' Perceptions of Their Abilities to Meet Children's Needs

This sub-theme refers to teachers' perceptions of their ability to meet children's additional needs. Sixteen of the 34 participants asserted that they were capable of including children with ASN properly in their classes, with the remaining 18 participants not confident of being able to meet children's needs. Some teachers felt more confident about creating an inclusive learning environment and had the experience of using teaching strategies to help children with ASN successfully. However, some teachers were negative about their ability to meet children's different needs; on the one hand, they thought they were not capable of helping children in a professional or effective way, while on the other hand, they felt they were not responsible for learning how to include children with ASN in schools. In the following two subsections, I will consider both teachers who felt confident and those who did not feel confident enough about their abilities to meet the needs of children with ASN.

i. Teachers who felt confident about their abilities to meet the needs of children with ASN

Nine of the 16 participants who were more confident about their ability to meet the needs of children with ASN were music and dance teachers, four were special education teachers, and the other three were class tutors.

Mr Hua, a music and dance teacher in a state-funded school, spoke of an experience with a boy with slight difficulties in his class: 'The boy has slight ADHD symptoms; sometimes, he can get very excited and can't sit down properly in the class, but I can handle this, I can help him'. There were about 40 students in Mr Hua's class, which is comparatively small in China. Mr Hua explained that, for him, it was not overly complex to include one boy with slight ADHD symptoms in this 'small' class.

Ms Qi was not only a music and dance teacher but also a programme developer at her school for 15 years. She had been exploring the effectiveness of using

music to include children. She said, ‘I help children through music. I wouldn’t call it music therapy; it is more about providing additional support through music’. Ms Qi had expertise in music therapy, and she was working on a music therapy programme in 2019. She had a clear conception of how to use music to help children and a strong belief in the power of music in education.

Mr Li, a class tutor, also spoke positively about his ability to help children with additional needs:

> For some children with learning difficulties, I will help. I used the word “help”, which is important. They could have a moment of going blank; it is useless to yell at them. You should stand by their side, and you will find out what they need for support. I also create an inclusive environment in my class. I teach other children to be more tolerant, to treat [the pupils with ASN] nicely (Mr Li, The Academy Primary School, p.4).

Mr Li was an experienced teacher who realised the importance of promoting inclusive education. He could also recognise children’s different needs and their levels of need. He emphasised the word “help” because he understood that all children could have different needs and therefore viewed their needs as a normal part of the education process.

Ms Zhao, a special education teacher, had conducted intervention work with an autistic child in a resource room for one year. Having witnessed positive results from this work, she felt confident about being able to meet the needs of children with ASN. She said, ‘After my intervention, [the autistic child I was working with] started to make friends in class. He can play with classmates now and learn more things as well’. Ms Zhao had studied special education when she was at university and had worked at a children’s rehabilitation institution for four years.

In summary, some teachers were confident about their abilities to meet children's different needs. Some of them had backgrounds in inclusive education, some of them had experience working at rehabilitation institutions, and some of them were inclusive in their teaching practice as a result of their extensive experience working in primary education.

ii. Teachers who felt unable to meet the needs of children with ASN

Some participants expressed concerns about their ability to help children with ASN properly, and there were mainly two reasons for their concerns. Firstly, they were concerned about their teaching abilities and, secondly, about poor social inclusion and limited educational resources.

Mr Wang spoke about being able to accept children with simpler additional support needs, but not all children with ASN:

> I don't think we can educate [children with ASN] in an appropriate way, and at present, most state-funded schools in Shenzhen have no way of educating them. However, we have a child with ADHD in Grade Six who is still there because he doesn't disrupt classes. He plays the piano very well. His problem is he can only concentrate on something for ten minutes. But he is fine, we can accept that (Mr Wang, The Beautiful International School, p.3).

As Mr Wang suggested, this is the everyday challenge for all schools that accept children with ASN. Even though children with ASN are enrolled in mainstream schools, some of them were not receiving a proper education to help them achieve their potential because of the lack of experienced teachers and related teaching resources. However, the schools could accept children with mild symptoms which they could control. In Mr Wang's school, if some children had difficulties that teachers could not manage, those children would be expelled.

Ms Feng was Mr Wang's colleague, teaching dance at the Beautiful International School for eight months, and she had the experience of a child being expelled from the school. Tuition fees at that school were relatively high for China (about 150,000 yuan, or GBP16,667 pounds, for each student); therefore, the children at this school were from wealthy or powerful families. Ms Feng's class only included eight students, and such a small class size is quite rare in China. She stated that their children were different because they might be from the wealthiest and most respectable families in Shenzhen, and these children could be the sole heirs to their family business. Thus, Ms Feng believed that the children's safety was the most significant priority for her and the whole school. Ms Feng expelled one 'misbehaving' child one month before the interview. As she explained:

> I won't say it was a right or wrong thing to do. His situation was pretty serious. Once he showed his middle finger to [a classmate] and said, 'son of a bitch'. He couldn't get along with his classmates and even threatened the safety of the other children. When I reported him to the headteacher, she asked me, 'What if he were your child? Would you expel him?' I answered by saying something like, 'I am also the mother of another seven children in my class. Should I keep him and sacrifice my other seven children?' If there is any problem or anything wrong happens to them, we are not able to compensate them (Ms Feng, The Beautiful International School, p.5).

Ms Feng told me this story during an informal chat, and I made a note in my research diary and included it in Ms Feng's final interview transcripts, with her agreement. In the beginning, she insisted on expelling this child and thought that was the only way to protect other children's physical safety. However, after we discussed my topic and some information on IE, she recalled this story, opening with 'I won't say it was a right or wrong thing to do', and her attitude turned to 'there might be another solution, but at that time, that was the only thing I can do'.

In addition, Mr Yang held a relatively negative attitude towards helping children with ASN at mainstream schools. While acknowledging that his school was supposed to accept all children, he noted that it lacked the effective strategies required to help all children to be fully included. Ms Shi asserted that her inability to help children with ASN was related to her heavy workload: 'To be honest, I don't have enough energy to pay close attention to each student. I teach music for eight classes. I think the class tutor might be able to understand and meet children's needs, but I couldn't'. Ms Sun thought that the lack of proper training support posed difficulties: 'We have been trying to meet children's different needs, but we don't have a leader or expert to help us. We have to explore by ourselves. Inclusive education is not so developed now, so we have to rely on ourselves, which I feel is hard sometimes.' Mr Jiang complained about the large class size: 'The pressure on the teacher is very high. We have to admit that we ignore some children's additional needs and don't spend enough time helping them. But the reality is that there are almost 60 students in the class, so we can't keep our eyes on everyone'.

To sum up, in terms of inclusive practices, three main aspects emerged from the interviews. The first regarded the challenges teachers faced in their endeavours to create an inclusive learning environment. The main challenges were unsatisfactory policy transmission, a lack of teacher training in inclusive education, and ineffective administrators or leadership. The second aspect regarded different types of teachers' actions to include children and promote inclusive education at schools. The third aspect mentioned in the interviews regarded the teachers' perceptions of their abilities to meet the needs of children with ASN. In this regard, it was found that while 16 of the participants were relatively confident about being able to include all children in their practice, 18 teachers were less confident.

6.8 Teachers' Awareness of Children's Backgrounds

The last theme relates to teachers' awareness of children's family backgrounds and the different types of difficulties children face. As I mentioned in my literature review in Chapter Two, having all children in mainstream classrooms is the first step to promoting inclusive education. The next essential step is to realise and accept children's diversity to be able to meet children's different needs and help them be included in mainstream schools. Teachers play an important role in the second step of creating an inclusive learning environment by welcoming all children, regardless of their gender, intellectual, social, linguistic or physical characteristics. In this section, teachers' awareness of children's backgrounds and the different types of children's needs are highlighted and analysed. This section will analyse two sub-themes: teachers' awareness of children's family backgrounds and teachers' awareness of children with ASN.

6.8.1 Teachers' Awareness of Children's Family Backgrounds

From analysing the interview transcripts, it was found that all the teachers knew some basic information about their students' family backgrounds, especially when the children had ASN. Sometimes, teachers were able to understand children's actions and school performance by knowing about their family background. However, all of the teachers stressed that they treated children equally, regardless of their backgrounds.

Some teachers believed that children's school performance was influenced by their family background to some extent. In this study, the term 'family background' is used to refer to living conditions, parents' occupations, family composition, and parents' education. All of the participants noted that Shenzhen is an inclusive city with a great number of migrants. Therefore, whether they were migrants or locals was never an issue among the children and teachers at the schools.

Building bridges between the schools and children's families seemed to be the responsibility of class tutors. Ms Zheng thought that it was important to be aware of children's family backgrounds to be able to help children with different needs. She said, 'There are 50 children in my class. But in reality, I think I am dealing with 50 families. I have to know about their families so that I can understand children's behaviours at school and know where I should start to help them'. Like Ms Zheng, all of the class tutors interviewed emphasised the importance of knowing children's families and the significance of communicating with children's parents.

In addition, the special education teachers participating in this study expressed their eagerness to obtain more information about the family backgrounds of children with ASN. They also hoped to maintain frequent contact with parents of children with ASN. As the role of special education teachers in schools is specifically to provide proper assistance for children with ASN, these special education teachers should know most about the home situations and living conditions of the children with ASN.

Mr Chen said that he had a great deal of information about each child's family background with ASN at his school: 'There is a child who has severe intellectual difficulties. His grandmother used to pick him up from school every day until she passed away, and his mother has a mental illness'. Some parents of children with ASN take the initiative to communicate with special education teachers so that they can follow their children's performance or condition at school. This attitude stems from the parent's trust in and reliance on the special education teachers' work.

Unlike class tutors and special education teachers, the other teachers had less of a sense of actively making sure they knew more about children's family backgrounds. Some music and dance teachers believed that delivering messages to children was the class tutor's work. As Ms Kong stated, 'Usually, most parents prefer to talk with class tutors, and class tutors have more detailed information

about the children'. In this study, most music and dance teachers taught more than five classes and over 200 children. Even though they viewed it as important to understand the children's various family backgrounds, they had fewer opportunities to communicate with each parent in order to obtain such information.

As for the teachers who worked in private schools assumed that most of their children were from wealthy families, as the high tuition fees limited access to children from low-income families. Mr Wang, working in a private school, noted:

> These parents have a high social status or are very wealthy because it is impossible for children from ordinary families to study here. We have some well-educated parents and some parents who only have money. Some parents with money but who aren't well-educated are difficult to communicate with because they think that as long as they pay the tuition fees, all educational responsibilities belong to the teachers and the schools; they don't have time to educate their children because they are busy making more money (The Beautiful International School, p.2).

In China, most private schools charge high tuition fees. From Grade One to Grade Six of primary school, the tuition fees are normally the equivalent of GBP10,000-15,000 (public primary schools are free in China). Small class sizes are one of the main features of private schools in China. Therefore, given the few students in each class and their wealthy families, it is much easier for teachers at private schools to know about children's family backgrounds.

Some state-funded schools studied in this research were located in relatively low-income areas. In this case, the teachers understood that their students' parents were stressed by their working and living conditions. As Ms He remarked, 'These parents are under a lot of work pressure, they are not very settled. Maybe, as these parents' minds are not peaceful, they might transmit bad emotions to their children, then the children will feel insecure and behave

impetuously'. In line with Ms He's observation, some of the other participants suggested that the parents' physical behaviour and mental states might unconsciously impact their children.

In this study, it was recognised by all of the participants that children could be influenced by diverse family-related issues, including their family backgrounds and their parents' education. If children's parents or carers preferred to communicate and cooperate more with teachers about children's learning and development, children's needs were better observed. In addition, all the teachers in this study sought to build cooperation and a good relationship with parents, so that they could provide more appropriate help for the children when they needed it. Some parents might ignore the importance of home education, considering all children's education should be teachers' work. However, it is essential for some parents to learn more about how to educate children better, so parental education is also valued.

6.8.2 Teachers' Awareness of Children' Different Needs

This sub-theme relates to teachers' awareness of children's additional needs and diversity. The terms participants used to talk about children's needs are summarised in Table 6.2. It can be seen that some teachers were able to talk about children's needs in a professional and detailed way, but, some teachers appeared to hold relatively ambiguous conceptions of children's needs. Table 6.2 summarises how the participants described children's additional support needs, including 30 types of responses. The five most frequently used descriptions were 'special children'' (19 out of 34), 'children with Autism' (15/34), 'children with intellectual disabilities' (10/34), "children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)" (9/34), and 'aggressive children' (5/34).

Table 6. 2 Participants' descriptions of children with ASN

Name	Description of Children with Additional Support Needs

(pseudonym)	
1. Ms Zhao	Disabled children; Children with ADHD; Children with Autism; Special children
2. Ms Qian	Our children; Children with Autism; Special children
3. Ms Sun	Our children
4. Mr Li	Children with intellectual disabilities; Children with social skills problems; Children with learning difficulties; Children with slow brain response; Dyslexic children; Children with physical problems
5. Ms Zhou	Children with intellectual disability; Children with behavioural disorders; Children with brain disorders; Special children
6. Ms Wu	Depression in children; Children with Autism; Special children
7. Ms Zheng	Children with hearing loss; Children with concentration problems; Children with Autism; Special children
8. Mr Wang	Depression in children; Mania in children; Children with concentration problems; Special children; Children with Autism
9. Ms Feng	Mania in children; Children with mental illness
10. Mr Chen	Children with executive function issues; Disabled children; Children with Autism; Mentally handicapped children; Hemiplegia in children; Special children
11. Ms Zhu	Children with poor psychological endurance; Children with ADHD; Children with intellectual disabilities; Children with physical problems; Children with Autism
12. Ms Heng	Children with Autism; Children with behavioural disorders; Mania in children; Children with learning difficulties; Children with Intellectual disability; Children with executive function issues; Children with school anxiety
13. Ms Jiang	Children with writing difficulties (dyslexia); Children with poor personal hygiene
14. Ms Han	Children with Intellectual disabilities; Children with learning difficulties
15. Mr Yang	Special children
16. Ms Qin	Mania in children; Children with ADHD (she believed that group was not included in special children); Children with Intellectual disability; Children with Down Syndrome (“angels walking without wings”); Children with disruptive behaviour in the classroom; Excluded children; Special children
17. Ms You	Children with brain disorders
18. Ms Xu	Children with behavioural disorders; Children with Autism; Children with intellectual disabilities; Special children; Children with school anxiety
19. Ms He	Special children
20. Mr Lu	Children with social skills problems
21. Ms Shi	Children in low-income families; Special children
22. Ms Zhang	Special children; Children with different difficulties and problems
23. Ms Kong	Special children
24. Ms Cao	Aggressive children; Children with dyslexia; Children with Autism; Special children Children with Autism; Children with ADHD; Children with concentration problems
25. Mr Yan	Children with Autism; Children with ADHD; Children with concentration problems
26. Mr Hua	Children with ADHD; Children with emotional disorders

27. Ms Jin	Children with Autism; Aggressive children; Special children
28. Ms Wei	Children with low self-esteem; Highly sensitive children; Children with intellectual disabilities; Children with ADHD; Children with social skills problems; Aggressive children; Special children
29. Ms Tao	Bipolar disorder in children; Children with Autism
30. Ms Qi	Children with intellectual disabilities; Dyslexic children; Children with hearing loss; Children with ADHD; Aggressive children; Children with concentration problems; Children with epilepsy; Children with emotional disorders
31. Ms Xie	Children with intellectual disabilities; Aggressive children; Children with Autism; Children with ADHD
32. Ms Deng	Children with Autism; Out-of-control children; Special children
33. Ms Yu	Children (including children with ASN and without ASN)
34. Ms Bo	Children with ADHD

In terms of how they acknowledged and described children's additional support needs, there seem to be two groups in the sample of teachers involved in this study. One group consists of teachers who had relatively limited knowledge of children's needs, while the other consists of teachers who were more able to realise and describe a range of different children's needs. These two groups are discussed below.

i. Teachers who had limited knowledge of children's needs

This group of participants are mainly music and dance teachers and class tutors, even some experienced teachers with belief in inclusive educational concepts, who, when teaching children, did not describe the children's different needs precisely. They repeatedly used certain terms to describe children's needs, and the way they categorised children's needs was comparatively vague. The three most frequently used terms by this group were 'special children', 'ADHD children', and 'aggressive children'.

While talking about children with ADHD, the only thing they mentioned was that these are 'children who cannot sit down as well as others in the class'. It is possible that they were aware that one characteristic behaviour of children with ADHD is difficulty staying quiet; therefore, when they saw children who were constantly moving, they labelled them as 'children with ADHD'. In addition, I

believe that they used the term ‘ADHD’ more often because it is a comparatively familiar term rather than because they were familiar with the comprehensive definition of ADHD. However, the difficulties faced by children with ADHD extend beyond these teachers’ descriptions and will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

When the teachers used the term ‘special children’, it appeared to represent the children’s potential negatively. Furthermore, as ‘special children’ is a very general term, it is important for teachers to know more details about children’s specific needs. In IE, it might be better to consider children’s needs rather than their ‘labels’.

The term ‘aggressive children’ seems to focus more on children’s behaviour and is, to some extent, not clear enough. Therefore, when talking about children’s behaviour, it is necessary to think further about its causes. This will be discussed in detail in Section 7.3.

ii. Teachers who were better able to realise and describe a range of children’s needs

It seems that the teachers who had a better understanding of IE tended to avoid labelling children according to categories of additional needs. Most of the special education teachers described children with additional support needs as ‘our children’, ‘they’ and, simply, ‘children’. As Ms Qian, a special education teacher, noted: ‘I think our special children, first of all, they are children’.

However, it is surprising to notice that, in the sample of participants involved in this study, whether teachers had knowledge of IE did not seem to determine whether they had inclusive practices when teaching children. For example, Mr Yang, who worked in The Bridge School, only used one term (‘special children’) to describe the children's additional support needs. This is because he possessed limited knowledge regarding IE. Nevertheless, his teaching tended to be inclusive, and he was determined to use music to include children more:

> As teachers, we need to discover children's natural strengths rather than fill them up with our stuff. I think inclusion is about respect; I respect different personalities, and I respect diversity. I tell my students to change their mindsets from 'why am I different?' to 'yes, I am different, and it is right to be different'. I think this is a kind of inclusion. Using music, we pursue diversity, individuality, and difference because performing arts are a personalised and inclusive thing. In my music class, I encourage children to express their different feelings and ideas; I would never say anyone is wrong. I always try to encourage their differences and accept diversity. In other words, there is no standard answer, as long as you have a reason behind it. (Mr Yang, The Bridge School, p.5)

Regarding teaching children from different backgrounds, he mentioned an ancient Chinese teaching concept from Confucius, 'yin cai shi jiao' (personalised teaching) and 'you jiao wu lei' (equal education). Mr Yang said his educational concept was influenced by Confucius a great deal, so he added, 'As long as you are my student, no matter where you were born, no matter whether you are rich or poor, I would like to teach you as you have the desire to learn'.

To sum up, it is insightful to explore how the teachers used language to describe children with ASN. While most teachers referred to 'special children', a few called them 'our children' during the interviews. Based on the frequency of the terms used by the participants, their main perceptions centred on the learning difficulties of autism, ADHD, and intellectual disabilities.

6.9 Summary of Chapter Six

This study showed a generally positive attitude towards using music and dance to make education more inclusive. All participants agreed that taking part in artistic activities is beneficial for all children, especially those with ASN. Furthermore, all of the participants in this study were aware that every mainstream school must accept all children regardless of their cognitive and physical difficulties.

In general, the music and dance teachers were more confident about being able to include children in their classes. These teachers believed that music and dance could provide an inclusive atmosphere for children, and it was easier for these teachers to create different roles for children and engage them in class. Moreover, some of the experienced teachers felt they were more capable of meeting children's different needs at school. Even though they might have a less clear concept of what constitutes inclusive education, their teaching was nevertheless rather inclusive in practice. These experienced teachers valued educational equality and insisted on treating all children the same. However, some special education teachers were not quite so satisfied with the present state of IE as they expected more support from other teachers and more professional training from the authorities. Additionally, some subject teachers felt that the inclusive work should be carried out by special education teachers rather than by all teachers. However, as some teachers in this study highlighted, making inclusion happen requires all students and teachers.

A minority of teachers were not entirely convinced of the importance of implementing IE. This sentiment could be due to the lack of a satisfactory teacher education programme on IE and a lack of sufficient educational resources to support children with ASN at mainstream schools. However, all of the special education teachers, principals, and music and dance teachers in this study supported the idea of implementing inclusive policies and including all children equally in schools.

A major theme that emerged was that inclusive policy implementation needs to be more effective. Indeed, many teachers complained about poor policy transmission. The promotion of IE in China is a relatively new area of policy. As it is the educators who implement this policy, it is essential for all teachers to learn about and appreciate the necessity and importance of achieving educational inclusion. This will be further considered in the next two chapters.

Chapter Seven: Discussion

7.1 Introduction to Chapter Seven

This chapter integrates and synthesises the interpretive analysis from Chapter Six and explores connections between Key Findings and the scholarly and policy literature reviewed in Chapters Two to Four. I will highlight six Key Findings of my empirical study, having arrived at these Key Findings after the second analysis of identified categories and sub-categories and a further review of the most recent literature (e.g. UNESCO, 2020; Su, Guo and Wang, 2020; Yao et al., 2021). Thus, this chapter discusses six Key Findings from the investigation into teachers' perceptions, involvement, and expectations in IE. Section 7.2 illustrates how participants' background appears to have little influence on their beliefs regarding how IE might be improved through music and dance. Section 7.3 presents how the teachers' backgrounds seem to have influenced their personal beliefs in the significance of promoting IE and their self-efficacy in IE practice. Section 7.4 discusses how the lack of CPD, collaboration within school, and resources might hinder school inclusion. The key importance of parental support of IE practices as outlined in Section 7.5. Section 7.6 highlights examples of good inclusive climates and LRC practices. Section 7.7 reveals the gap between statutory policy and the realities of school implementation. Finally, Section 7.8 summarises the main contents and primary arguments of this chapter.

7.2 Key Finding One --- How teachers' performing arts beliefs were unaffected by their backgrounds: 'dance and music activities facilitate educational inclusion and benefit children's development'

The Key Finding One suggests that all teachers participating in this study agreed on the effectiveness of using music and dance to improve educational inclusion at school, regardless of their different backgrounds and experiences. This section starts with defining 'teachers' background' in this study, then discusses the result that all participants agreed music and dance activities could benefit school inclusion. Next, it focuses on evaluating teachers' opinions of how music and dance improved school inclusion and helped children's development, based on their teaching experience.

Teachers' background: work experience, educational background, and career commitment

The 34 teachers participating in this study had different educational backgrounds; they were from different gender groups, age groups and cultural backgrounds, and they also had diverse expertise and work experiences. For example, the one with the longest work experience had been a teacher for 35 years, and the one with the least experience had only worked eight months. In this study, teachers' work experience was associated with their ages; therefore, the age difference was merged with the factor of different work experiences. Shenzhen is a migrant city, and most citizens are inner immigrants. In this study, although all teachers were Chinese nationals, only one teacher was local in Shenzhen. However, the only teacher from Shenzhen did not express any different opinions overall; therefore, cultural difference was not discussed as one of the factors involving teachers' backgrounds.

Furthermore, the gender factor did not appear relevant to the distinct differences between teachers' perceptions and their attitudes towards implementing IE. This result was similar to that of Bhakta and Shit's study (2016) in India, which also found that gender difference did not play any role in schoolteachers' attitudes towards IE. Therefore, in this section, teachers' backgrounds were defined in terms of work experience, educational background, and career commitment. Career commitment was defined as Hall (1971) indicated: the power of teachers' motivation over their roles and attitudes towards their work.

All participants valued 'music and dance for school inclusion'

All participants with different backgrounds valued the role of music and dance for inclusion at the school level. As analysed in Subsections 6.2.2 and 6.2.3, participants described the benefit of music and dance for children's learning and school inclusion.

Mr Yang, a music and dance teacher, described ‘the end of language is music’ (Subsection 6.2.2), which means music can help children express their feelings freely. Ms Feng found that dance is for everyone, and she wished dance could bring every child happiness and joy, which would benefit their mental wellness. As mentioned in Subsection 6.6.2, I had an informal talk with Mr W, he was the headteacher in the Lotus School and was keen to keep updating his educational concepts. Mr W valued inclusive education and music education, he sang a song for me and explained how music supports people mentally and spiritually. By the present finding that teachers had relatively positive attitudes towards art education, previous studies have demonstrated art teachers’ and school leaders’ positive attitudes towards music and dance in inclusion (Welch et al., 2014; Ferm and Christophersen, 2017; Thomson and Bailey, 2010; Patterson, 2003).

Moreover, the significance of using music and dance for inclusion was highlighted by special education teachers and general education teachers, and they provided several successful examples of children who benefited from music and dance activities. Ms Cao was a special education teacher, and she recalled that ‘music and dance can also help children control their emotions and improve their physical coordination and development’ (Subsection 6.2.2). Another special education teacher, Mr Chen, believed in music and dance for inclusion because he had a successful experience of helping a child with autism become included at mainstream school (Subsection 6.2.3). This child with autism was a good hip-hop dancer and could play the piano well; Mr Chen encouraged him to perform in front of teachers and other children, which helped the other children to appreciate his talents. Mr Chen recalled that the child had many friends at school because many children invited him to perform with them and establish friendships.

In addition, Ms Heng was a general education teacher who was both the class tutor and math teacher, and she found that many children displayed a greater interest in learning music and dance. She also believed that music and dance could involve more children in the same activity, thereby increasing peer interaction and enhancing school inclusion (Subsection 6.2.2).

Teachers' views on how music and dance could benefit children and school inclusion

Given the findings in the previous literature, it is not surprising that music and dance can benefit children from many aspects, including their personal development, learning experience and wellbeings (Serrano and Espírito-Santo, 2017; Tague, 2016; Hallam, 2010; Surujlai, 2013; Levinson, 2009; Zulauf, 1993; Welch et al., 2020) and also help to improve educational inclusion (Abramo, 2012; Harvey et al., 2016; Reinders, Bryden and Fletcher, 2019; Simpson and Keen, 2011; Sonn and Baker, 2016; Zitomer, 2016; Welch et al., 2014). Specifically, teachers who participated in this study believed that music and dance could help children with 1) maintaining physical and mental wellbeing, 2) developing interests and confidence, 3) improving their learning experience, and 4) working with peers in an inclusive environment. These benefits of music and dance for children will be further discussed next.

Although there was no further investigation into experimental music and dance activities nor any specific pedagogy on music and dance classes, all teachers provided answers according to their work experience with children. Teachers who had music therapy expertise – such as Ms Shi, the music teacher and the leader of the music therapy programme in her school – held stronger beliefs than other teachers did about the awareness of maintaining ASN children's mental wellbeing through music. The result from this study was similar to what Serrano and Espírito-Santo (2017) reported in their investigation with children who studied music and dance and children who were non-practitioners: children's attention ability and mindfulness skills are strengthened by dance and music training.

Many participants in this study mentioned enhancing children's confidence through music and dance, and they claimed that children are able to build their interests and confidence at the same time. Mr Chen and Ms Deng shared their experiences with children with autism being better included through music and

dance. They explained that by rehearsing with peers and performing as groups, ASN children could find their value and develop confidence, also enhancing their sense of belonging in the class (Subsection 6.2.3). Likewise, in terms of developing children's confidence through music, Tague (2016) also conducted a study into how children's confidence and skills might be improved through an improvisational drumming curriculum, and the results showed that participants' self-assessment of their confidence improved after taking drumming classes twice weekly for fourteen weeks.

Aside from building an individual's confidence, teachers participating in this study also indicated that music and dance could create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all children, and children could feel included and work with peers more easily in music and dance classes. This finding was also in line with previous research. As Levinson (2009) analysed, music can create an inclusive learning environment and embrace diversity because it includes multiple ways for people to express and demonstrate themselves through different melodies, rhythms and lyrics. Music can extend the breadth of humans' psychological, emotional and spiritual landscapes (Ibid.). According to previous studies (Zulauf, 1993; Laing and Mair, 2015; Hallam and Prince,2000; Zitomer and Reid, 2011), children who engaged with more music activities made more connection with their peers, and schools with more music and dance activities could perform better in creating an inclusive sphere in schools. In this study, Ms Qi came up with the same idea, recalling that she helped children form small bands and work together for music-making, thereby creating an inclusive learning atmosphere for all. Ms Qi's perspective links to the same point of view found in results from previous research: music and dance can stimulate learning, modify children's classroom behaviour for the better and establish an emotional connection with others (Sze and Yu; 2004, Skoning,2008; Sooful, Surujlal and Dhurup, 2010; Surujlal, 2013; Zulauf, 1993).

Some participants also talked about using music, dance or drama education to improve children's academic performance in English, Mandarin and other subjects. For instance, Ms Jiang was an English teacher who motivated children's

learning in her class by playing English songs with movements, and she stated that integrating music into English classes helped children be active and concentrate more. As reviewed in Chapter Three, Hallam (2010) presented that children who were given certain types of music instruction showed improvement in their reading comprehension and mathematical ability. Hallam (2010) found that children who received piano and singing instruction tend to have higher maths scores than children who have no music training. However, these results should be considered with caution as it is difficult to infer causality.

Regular music and dance classes and Children's Day Art Festivals were promoted by all the ten schools I visited, and participants expressed that children could build self-confidence by being involved in such activities. Prior studies have noted the importance of arts festivals for breaking down barriers and accepting diversities because they could facilitate interaction across different people (Finkel, 2010; Laing and Mair, 2015). Also, this study found that music and dance teachers had more experience of helping children to engage with peers in music and dance activities in class, and other teachers felt it was important to encourage all children to participate in arts activities and art festivals to provide them with more opportunities to build better self-confidence.

As discussed above, the same result was found in previous research, wherein teachers recognised that music and dance could be helpful for children from various perspectives. Thus far, even though there were no standard educational policies and strategies for using music and dance to achieve educational inclusion in China, all my participants agreed and realised the effectiveness of music and dance education for children's development in many different aspects. Moreover, many global organisations advocate improving the quality of education through arts education (UNESCO, 2006; InSEA, 2018), and there were some successful programmes using arts education to create a more inclusive environment in schools (Zitomer and Dinold, 2011; Marsh, 2016; Levinson, 2009; Odena et al., 2016). Therefore, in future policymaking and pedagogy trials for IE at mainstream schools in China, music and dance are worth consideration as

essential parts – this will be discussed further in the Implications section in Chapter Eight.

To sum up, all participants in this study shared specific common characteristics, and they believed music and dance are effectively beneficial for children's development and school inclusion. In analysing the interview transcripts and diary notes, no data was found supporting that teachers' backgrounds influenced their beliefs of employing music and dance as tool for promoting inclusion at school. However, teachers' backgrounds did seem to influence their beliefs regarding IE and their self-efficacy in inclusive practice, as discussed in the following section.

7.3 Key Finding Two --- How teachers' backgrounds influenced their views on inclusive education and self-Efficacy in inclusive practices

Key Finding Two found that these teachers' backgrounds in terms of educational background, work experience, and career commitment influenced the reported IE beliefs in terms of teachers' conceptualisation of IE and self-efficacy in inclusive practices . According to the interview transcripts with 34 participants, there is some evidence shown in Section 6.2, 6.3 and 6.5 to suggest that: i) teachers with a stronger belief in IE had higher self-efficacy; ii) teachers with more theoretical knowledge embraced IE more readily and felt more comfortable with inclusive practices; iii) teachers with a more positive experience with ASN children showed more optimistic attitudes towards the concept of IE and IE implementation; iv) teachers who had intrinsic career commitment to education or IE tend to support the idea of educating all children equally.

This result is in agreement with You, Kim and Shin's (2019) findings in Korea, which showed there was a relationship between teachers' belief in IE and their self-efficacy in inclusive practice, in that teachers with higher self-efficacy also held a stronger belief in IE than others with lower self-efficacy and uncertain attitudes towards IE. Connecting the necessary information from participants in

Section 6.4 with the analysis in Section 6.2, it was found that teachers' belief and self-efficacy in IE were influenced by their educational background, work experience and career commitment. I will divide this section into three parts according to these three factors within teachers' backgrounds.

Educational Background

First, teachers' educational backgrounds appear to have influenced their beliefs in IE and self-efficacy in inclusive practice. Six special education teachers had educational backgrounds in IE or special education as their major during a bachelor's degree at least, and all of them had strong beliefs in improving IE. Professionalism and knowledge in IE appeared to have helped teachers become more confident in coping with children's different needs and valuing their diversity. This result aligns with the study conducted by Gilmore, Campbell and Cuskelly's (2003), in which they researched teachers' views of children with intellectual disabilities in Australia. They found that teachers with enough knowledge should have a relatively positive attitude towards IE.

Based on the reported present situation of a lack of in-service teacher training in IE, teachers' knowledge of IE was mainly from their educational experiences in universities or colleges. All interviewed special education teachers insisted that IE is the legal, educational policy in China. From the special education teachers' views, accepting children with ASN into mainstream schools is the provision that should be implemented by all schools and all educators without hesitation. They thought the current challenge should be how to effectively include ASN children at mainstream schools rather than arguing about decisions to accept ASN children into mainstream settings.

Moreover, six special education teachers in this study reported higher self-efficacy in inclusive practice, which was also a finding in previous studies, in which theoretical and practical training in IE helped special education teachers develop higher self-efficacy (e.g. Weisel and Dror, 2006; Savolanien et al., 2012; You, Kim and Shin, 2019; Lubin and Fernal, 2021). For example, apart from

providing additional support for ASN children in regular classrooms and resource rooms, special education teacher Ms Qian also guided general education teachers to be more responsible and effective in inclusive practice, thereby enhancing the inclusion of all children and teachers.

However, some general education teachers with less knowledge of IE tended to be uncertain about the sustainability of including children in mainstream schools. Ms Wei understood the necessity of school inclusion as the educational policy, but she stated, 'I am still watching the process and waiting for its outcome' (Subsection 6.2.1). Similar to what Gregory (2018) and Florian (2009; 2015) have suggested, Ms Qian (Subsection n 6.6.3) advised that all teachers need to believe that as inclusive teachers, they can manage to teach all students equally. However, in this study, some general education teachers thought they had no attributional responsibilities for promoting IE; they also doubted their abilities to help children with ASN because of the lack of knowledge and teacher training in IE. Mr Wang, Mr Yang, Ms Shi and Ms Jiang expressed their concerns about their abilities in meeting children's different needs (Subsection 6.6.4). Because of their lower reported self-efficacy in teaching ASN children in mainstream classrooms, they were undetermined about the validity of including ASN children in mainstream schools. This finding is similar to You, Kim and Shin's (2019) study, in which they found that when teachers are uncertain about the positive outcome and impact of IE, their self-efficacy regarding IE tends to be low.

Some general education teachers who were not trained or educated as inclusive educators felt less confident even anxious about meeting children's needs in mainstream classrooms, especially for children with aggressive behaviours. Forlin, Keen and Barrett (2008) also explain teachers' concerns in western Australia, and they found that teachers' anxiety over their competency in mainstream class was twofold. First, teachers doubted their preparation and pre-service training. Second, teachers felt IE was detrimental to other children without ASN because they had to pay more attention to ASN children in the class.

Compared with Forlin, Keen and Barrett's (2008) results, participants in this study had more uncertainty about their roles in IE. As Ms Qian indicated, some general education teachers lacked awareness that IE is necessary for all children and teachers. Because most general education teachers had no relevant educational background or teacher training in IE. The controversies continued over the benefits of inclusive education and their competence in meeting children's needs. This result suggests that some general education teachers did not promote IE, potentially reducing inclusion opportunities for children and themselves.

It is interesting to note that, in general, music and dance teachers reported higher self-efficacy of including children than other general education teachers in this study. As some researchers discovered previously (Surujlai, 2013, McCord and Watts, 2006; and Harvey et al., 2016), music and dance teachers in this study expressed that music classrooms could better include children because of the nature of classroom music activities is inclusive. Ms Wu had been teaching music and dance for 23 years, and she encouraged diverse types of expression in her class, and she celebrated all children's different expressions about the music and praised every child at the end of her class. Ms Wu believed that music and dance could provide children with better freedom and possibilities to participate in the class. Previous research aligns with Ms Wu's idea and teaching strategy. For instance, Harvey et al. (2016) conducted research related to music, dance, and inclusion, and they concluded that music and dance could be a suitable medium for students' self-expression and self-reflection, thereby enhancing the level of inclusion and creativity throughout the learning process.

By contrast, some general education teachers acknowledged the importance of involving children in music and dance activities, but they felt less capable of using music and dance to support children's school activities without the knowledge and teaching approaches employed in music and dance. For example, Ms Zhao was a special education teacher who understood that music therapy effectively improves children's behaviours, but she felt not sufficiently trained in

this area. Therefore, Ms Zhao always advised parents of children with ASN to find a professional institution that provides music therapy to provide specialised help for their children (see Subsection 6.2.2).

Work experience

Second, teachers with more positive IE experiences had a stronger belief in IE and displayed higher self-efficacy in inclusive practice. By contrast, teachers with comparatively negative experiences with ASN children tended to be more resistant to include children with ASN within mainstream schools fully. This result is consistent with Yeo et al. (2016), who found that teachers were 'willing to support inclusion when they have opportunities to experience success' (p.79).

Moreover, it was interesting to find that some experienced teachers had no teacher education or training on IE, but they still recognised the importance of treating every child equally. The term 'inclusive education' was new to Ms Wei and Mr Li, and they had more than twenty years' work experience as primary teachers; however, they shared a strong belief and greater confidence in educational inclusion. Ms Wei shared her experience of grouping children in her music class to help an ADHD child better engage (Subsection 6.6.3). Mr Li was confident about creating an inclusive climate in his class, and he understood that every child might need additional help in different moments (Subsection 6.6.4). These examples reflect Tschannen-Moran, Hoy and Hoy (1998)'s study, which also found that teachers' self-efficacy is linked to classroom practice in IE. According to some experienced teachers (Ms Wei, Mr Li, Ms Wu, etc.), the better way to achieve education equity is to treat ASN children with no bias and difference in the class. Thus, it was found that teachers with more positive work experience in handling children with ASN could recognise children's different needs better and had more confidence in meeting children's needs.

Career Commitment

Third, the study found that teachers who had intrinsic career commitment to education or IE were more positive towards the idea of educating all children

equally. In this study, most special education teachers were motivated by their intrinsic belief in special education and IE, and they were hoping to help more children with ASN and improve the quality of IE in China (see Section 6.5).

As Yan and Deng (2019) indicated, Chinese special teachers' motivation was influenced by many political, historical, socio-economic and cultural factors; this is also relevant information in this study. For example, one of the special education teachers, Mr Chen, witnessed the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, and he saw lots of children were physically disabled because of this natural disaster; therefore, he decided to devote himself to special education (see Subsection 6.5.1). Like Mr Chen, other special education teachers could become frustrated when external factors hindered their work outcomes (see Subsection 6.6.1); however, their attitudes and beliefs towards IE never changed because they had more substantial intrinsic career commitments to promoting IE and educational equality in China (see Subsection n 6.5).

The present study also uncovered teachers' expectations of children with ASN children. Generally, participants had lower expectations of ASN children's academic skills, which follows results from Yao et al. (2021)' investigation of teachers' perceptions of ASN children in Shanghai, China. When discussing their expectations for ASN children, teachers barely mentioned academic skills. General education teachers had lower expectations of children's learning outcomes or even the learning process. Ms Qi said she only wished ASN children would not affect other children and not disturb the class (Subsection 6.4.2). Mr Li also mentioned he hoped that ASN children could follow his instructions and the class rules (Subsection 6.4.3). However, Mr Chen and other special education teachers wanted to help ASN children become more independent and integrated into school and society.

Similar to Yao et al. (2021), this study found that most teachers valued children's moral development and well-being more than academic performance (Subsection 6.4.1), as moral development is a crucial student evaluation aspect

for Chinese teachers. For ASN children, most participants believed that any child's improvement is an achievement. General education teachers expected more ASN children to be cooperative and well-behaved without any disturbance in class. In contrast, special education teachers had more hopes that ASN children were as included as others in school and society.

The above finding shows that teachers' self-efficacy in IE and their beliefs regarding IE were affected by their backgrounds. In general, teachers with an educational background in IE or successful experiences of meeting children's needs or more substantial career commitments to IE or education held relatively stronger beliefs and displayed higher self-efficacy in IE. It was found that most music and dance teachers showed higher self-efficacy than other general education teachers because they tend to have more successful experiences of including children in their class (see Subsection 6.6.2 and 6.6.3).

Given the lack of systematic teacher education in IE for pre-service and in-service teachers in China (Yao et al., 2021), it would appear that teachers' backgrounds had a significant impact on their beliefs about IE and their self-efficacy in their daily inclusive practice. Some of my participants suggested that teachers with limited capability to recognise and cope with children's needs should be supported through professional development or resources, thereby enhancing their confidence and belief in IE (Subsection 6.6.3). Similarly, the importance of preparing and equipping teachers to manage diversity in the inclusive classroom was emphasised in previous research (e.g. Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000; Forlin, Keen and Barrett, 2008; Deng and Zhu, 2007; Round, Subban, and Sharma, 2016). According to my participants, in Shenzhen, inclusive education has not been adopted as an important part of general education teachers' pre-service training; therefore, it is also crucial to organise more in-service teacher training and provide more opportunities for general education teachers to experience more in inclusive classrooms (the study's educational implications will be considered in the final chapter). The following Section 7.4 will further discuss the insufficient teacher training (CPD) for IE and the lack of educational resources hindering school inclusion found in this study.

7.4 Key Finding Three --- Barriers to the development of inclusive education at school: the lack of continuing professional development for teachers and insufficient educational resources

The third Key Finding focuses on existing barriers for participants to create a more inclusive learning environment and meet children's different needs. Participating teachers indicated the factors that most damaged the ability to improve school inclusion: i) the lack of CPD in IE; ii) insufficient educational resources for supporting ASN children's needs.

i) The lack of CPD for teachers in IE

In the study, an urgent need was found for more available, effective, and continuous teacher education in IE to better implement inclusive policies in Shenzhen. This finding further supports the idea that has been reviewed in Subsection 2.3.2, that Chinese scholars also found that many teachers are not well-prepared to work with children with ASN in the mainstream classroom in China, which can lead to teachers developing low self-efficacy and increase pressures on them (e.g. Deng and Poon-McBrayer,2004; Wang and Wang, 2019; Xu, Cooper and Sin, 2018; Yan and Deng, 2019). Thus, the importance of CPD should not be omitted, as previous research has indicated the importance of building up a functional and reliable national CPD programme for IE because teachers' initial education was not sufficient enough in equipping them with inclusive perspectives (Florian, 2014; Symeonidou and Phtiaka,2009; Deng and Poon- McBrayer,2004; Ní Bhroin and King, 2020; You, Kim and Shin, 2019). However, after examining the interview transcripts, it is clear there was a great shortage of CPD for mainstream teachers in these ten schools in Shenzhen. Two types of CPD for IE were emphasised: inclusive training for general education teachers and professional training for special education teachers.

CPD for general education teachers in IE

First, teacher training for general education teachers is required to equip them with the confidence, knowledge, and skills to support children with ASN, thereby

preparing them to teach in diverse classrooms (Yeo et al., 2016). In this research, even though all teachers agreed that all children have equal educational rights to enrol in local mainstream schools, more than half of teachers had no clear concept of IE because they had never been trained in it. Several special education teachers (Ms Zhao, Ms Qian, Ms Sun, Ms Cao, Mr Yan and Mr Chen) expressed that, because general education teachers lack teacher training in IE, it was sometimes challenging for them to collaborate closely with them general education teachers. Ms Cao pointed out that some general education teachers had no clue about her job and role at school, which created difficulties for her when identifying children's needs and children's development in the first place in class. Ms Wu expressed her ideas and strategies for including all children in her music class, but she first heard of the term 'inclusive education' while being interviewed for this study; she said that if she knew more about IE earlier, she could have done better in terms of meeting children's needs in her class (see Subsection 6.6.1).

Furthermore, according to some general education teachers' descriptions, most children with or without ASN had no apparent awareness of detecting differences amongst their peers. The teachers thought that ASN children were hardly aware of the difference between themselves and others. For instance, Ms Xie was a music and dance teacher for four years in a state-funded school, and she argued that children with ASN might not realise that they had learning difficulties or were different from others. However, the special education teacher Mr Chen proposed a different view, and he thought although they might not express it verbally, children with ASN had high expectations of being included because they could feel a sense of exclusion. Due to his educational background and work experience in inclusive education, Mr Chen was more aware of children's needs, feelings and expectations about being included. Compared with Mr Chen, Ms Xie had no pre-service training or in-service CPD in IE, and she demonstrated less awareness of children's needs and paid less attention to IE.

Many general education teachers also expressed their stresses of dealing with ASN children's disturbing behaviours in class because they had no instruction and training experience about it. The difficulties of dealing with children's disruptive and aggressive behaviours made Ms Feng stressed. Some teachers mentioned this issue as a worrying factor in their efforts to maintain a safe and inclusive learning environment. Given the review from previous studies, teachers expressed great concern about coping with children's inappropriate behaviours and disciplinary problems in the inclusive classroom in Canada, Australia, Isreal and Singapore (Sharma and Sokal, 2015; Talmor, Reiter and Feigin, 2005). Similar to other studies, this study examined that teachers sometimes failed to manage children's problematic behaviours (e.g., aggression and disruptive behaviours) or individualise instructions for all learners in one large class. Some researchers also reported the same issue about managing children's disruptive behaviours (Chong, Forlin and Au, 2007; Madill, Gest and Rodkin, 2014). Without proper teacher education on dealing with children's inappropriate behaviours, teachers might feel frustrated emotionally, and children could become demotivated.

As outlined in Chapter Six, when asked about the different types of children's needs, the five terms most frequently mentioned by participants were 'special children', 'ADHD', 'autism', 'aggressive children' and 'intellectual disabilities' (Subsection 6.8.2). However, most teachers could only define these terms in a relatively vague way. For example, some teachers recognised children with ADHD simply because they were difficult to keep quiet, while extremely quiet children would be labelled with 'autism'. However, according to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness were the main symptoms for children with ADHD. Other characteristics related to ADHD include little or no sense of danger, being forgetful or losing things, appearing unable to listen or follow instructions, etc. (Rucklidge and Tannock, 2002; Klingberg et al., 2005). Moreover, the term 'aggressive children' corresponds with the behaviours of children with autism and children with ADHD (APA, 2013).

In brief, because there has been no proper CPD at both private and state-funded schools, general education teachers are hardly able to recognise children's different needs. They tended to label ASN children as ‘special children’, as distinguished from ‘ordinary children’. According to my participants, current teacher training for general education teachers covering basic information or the concept of IE was short, thereby posing some challenges to collaboration amongst all teachers and success of meeting ASN children’s needs. Nevertheless, in order to help with ASN children’s learning processes and cope with children’s behaviours difficulties in class, general education teachers need to be more conscious and knowledgeable about identifying children’s needs and adjusting teaching strategies.

CPD for special education teachers in IE

Second, teacher education for professional development in IE should be more available and reliable. In this study, six special education teachers were all young with less work experience and worked for state-funded schools, this is because only state-funded schools are supported to establish resource rooms and recruit special education teachers (see Table 5.3 and Table 5.4). Most state-funded mainstream schools only started to recruit special education teachers less than five years ago; being a special education teacher was a comparatively new career path in education.

These special education teachers introduced how they studied in special education or IE at university for three to four years so that they had enough IE theoretical knowledge. However, in the actual workplace, they encountered many practical challenges for which they needed advice from authorised, reliable and professional experts in this area. Ms Zhao told me they had an instruction centre (with no full-time director) in each district in Shenzhen, but there were only one or two meetings per year.

Special education teachers were faced with many new challenges from children, general education teachers, parents and leaderships every day at schools, and it

could be frustrating and inefficient for them to work at mainstream schools without the CPD for their professional skills. Therefore, they expected reliable instruction from experts and timely communication with other special education teachers for better inclusive practice at mainstream schools.

ii) Insufficient educational resources

The results of this study indicated that insufficient educational resources hindered the effective provision of inclusive practice, which was attributed to the large-size class and the scarcity of resource rooms and special education teachers in LRC. In the state and most private schools, the large class sizes and the lack of special education teachers and inclusive educational experts are still realistic challenges for inclusion, as found in this study. In the past 20 years, some researchers re-examined the matter and found that sufficient educational resources could lead to teachers gaining a positive attitude towards inclusion (Graham, 2015; Price, 2018; Chiner and Cardona, 2013). Moreover, initial results from Goldan et al. (2018) show that smaller class sizes in inclusive classes positively affect students' well-being in school. However, in the Chinese context, large-size classes are still dominant, and it is difficult to change this due to the massive population (Yu et al., 2011).

Within the ten primary schools, I visited, only one private school, the Beautiful International School, had small class sizes, with about 8 to 10 children per class. The average class size was about 45 children for the other nine schools. The large class size was a challenge for most teachers I interviewed. Teachers felt it was difficult to pay equal attention to over 45 children within a 45-minute class. This result ressonates with Wang's (2016) study in Shanghai, and she found that large class sizes hindered teachers' communication with pupils and also advocated it was essential to listen to children's voices to foster better daily inclusive practices.

As reflected in the policies reviewed in Chapter Four, special education teachers are recruited to work in resource rooms and provide appropriate instruction and

intervention for children with ASN in the LRC programme at state-funded schools, which means only state-funded mainstream schools with resource rooms will have special education teachers working there. But, according to Ms Cao, the situation is that although some schools lack a resource room or special education teachers, many mainstream schools still accept ASN children (see Subsection 6.7). It is worthy to note that all three private schools in this study had no inclusive educational resources, neither resource rooms nor special education teachers, which resulted in more severe difficulties in meeting ASN children's needs.

Children with a medical diagnosis certificate could choose a nearby resource room in a different school for assistance if there were no resource room in their schools. However, this is not practical because physical distance and collaboration between schools are not easily negotiated. This means that while some mainstream schools accept ASN children's enrolment, it is questionable whether they are including ASN children with sufficient preparation. In addition, even for mainstream schools with resource rooms, special education teachers were expecting more teaching resources and more professional training in inclusive education. Mr Chen worked in a LRC designated state school, and he mentioned they had a construction problem (leaky roof) in the resource room, but no one responded to the repairment request for a long time.

As teachers' perceptions (see Chapter Six) and some policy documents (see Chapter Four) showed, resource rooms are crucial for the implementation of the LRC programme, providing professional assistance for children with ASN and promoting inclusive education. In terms of improving children's learning, social skills and inclusion, the benefits of the resource room setting are also highlighted in previous studies (e.g. Whinnery et al., 1995; Ziadat, 2014; Kizir, 2020). However, in Shenzhen, the number of resource rooms and special education teachers does not correspond to the number of children with ASN and the help children need, and general teachers feel less responsible for children's additional needs. Take Futian District as an example. By 2019, there were only eight resource rooms across 53 state-funded schools and 22 private schools

(Futian District Education Bureau, 2019). This issue was also found in Deng and Guan's study (2015) in Beijing, which outlined the relatively slow implementation and development of LRC in China. By 2015, the total number of LRC students was 5227, but there were only 212 resource rooms and 67 full-time special education teachers in Beijing.

To sum up, some present barriers to IE development in Shenzhen were revealed in this section. First, the lack of available and reliable CPD for general education teachers and special education teachers resulted in teachers' frustration at failing to meet children's different needs in inclusive classrooms. Second, poor collaboration in the school demotivated teachers in their communication with children, other teachers and leadership, thereby precluding school inclusion. Third, teachers found that the large class size increased the difficulty of including ASN children within mainstream settings. In terms of the educational resources of LRC, compared with the number of actual ASN children enrolled in mainstream schools, there was a significant scarcity of resource rooms and special education teachers. Apart from schools' efforts on IE implementation, participants also indicated that parents play a significant role in IE practice and the development of children with ASN.

7.5 Key Finding Four --- Limited parental support and the lack of school collaboration hindered the improvement of inclusive education

Another two obstacles to improving educational inclusion are identified in this section from teachers' experiences and perspectives. These two hindering factors are related to communication issues, i) limited parental support and ii) the lack of school collaboration.

i) Limited parental support hindered the improvement of inclusive education
Participants expressed their expectation of parental involvement in IE practice, as previous studies highlighted that parental involvement and support are an important strategy for effective inclusive practice and positively help children's emotional, academic, and social development (Paseka and Schwab, 2020; Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2013). However, teachers indicated that the lack of parental

support results in a negative effect on IE practice. This limited parental support was explained as follows: a) parents of ASN children rejected to provide medical diagnosis certificate and had limited knowledge of children's needs; b) parents of children without ASN were not supportive of accepting ASN children at mainstream school; c) parents might ignore the importance of family education.

Parents' expectations were considered by 32 out of 34 participants, and 30 teachers believed that parents were expecting their children to be treated in an equal way in school. The interviewed teachers stated that parents of ASN children expected that their children would be involved and accepted in school, but some parents of children without ASN considered that including children with ASN might negatively influence other children's school life (see Subsection 6.3.1). Ms Cao explained that she heard some complaints and concerns from parents of children without ASN because they worried that their children's study and physical safety would be affected, even threatened, by children presenting aggressive behaviours. Thus, some parents suggested to teachers that children with ASN should be educated in special schools separately rather than in mainstream schools.

Teachers also considered that some parents of children with ASN had received higher education and a better understanding of social inclusion supported the idea of IE because they could acknowledge the IE benefits for all children so that these parents could be more understanding, graceful, and supportive of IE practice. This study's result was similar to Gasteiger-Klicpera et al.'s (2013) comment that parents of children with ASN in the LRC programme felt positive and happy about choosing to send their children to mainstream schools. Teachers put forward that parents of children with ASN in the LRC programme trusted special education teachers and schools to assist their children in study and life, and these parents paid more attention to their children's needs and their children's improvements in their study and life (see Subsection 6.2.1).

However, every special education teacher and some general education teachers mentioned that some children with ASN were still not included in the LRC programme because their parents were unaware of their needs or refused to permit a medical diagnosis (see Subsection 6.2.1). In China, a medical diagnosis certificate is still a requirement to be accepted into the LRC programme. The government and educational authorities distribute inclusive educational resources according to the number of children with medical diagnosis certification at each school. Special education teachers explained that parents were reluctant to undergo a medical diagnosis because they hoped their children would not be labelled. However, teachers could not provide assistance or intervention for children with ASN without medical diagnosis certification.

Moreover, some parents overlooked the importance of family education and did not follow teachers' instructions positively. Some teachers also mentioned that some parents relied more on school education, thereby neglecting the importance of family education. Children's education could be affected by many factors, and to some extent, the importance of family education matches the value of school education. Thus, teachers advised that parents need to closely educate children at home and stay connected with schools' instructions. Another result is similar to what Paseka and Schwab (2020) found in their study in Germany, and participants believed that children's school performance is closely correlated to the family education, and in the context of IE, parents with higher educational levels or social status tend to have more update educational concept and positive attitudes towards the inclusion for ASN children in mainstream schools.

A possible explanation for this Key Finding Five might be that many parents of both children with and without ASN had limited knowledge of IE and little awareness of the importance of family education, which results in hindering schools' work and children's development. Teachers interviewed in this study expected more communication with and support from parents. Nevertheless, participants also reported some positive IE development that will be detailed in following Section 7.6.

ii) Poor school-wide collaboration

An effective and sustainable school-wide collaboration is vital for successful inclusion programmes and supporting IE (Ainscow, 2002; 2020; Ainscow and Sandhill, 2010). However, from the interpretive analysis in this study, some teachers assumed that it was too challenging for them to manage their work within a poor school-wide collaboration, and the poor collaboration happened between teachers and teachers, between teachers and children, between teachers and parents and between teachers and leaderships (see Subsection 6.6.1).

Teachers responded that they barely had time to communicate with children after class because of the heavy workload. Among the 34 participants, most of them had at least two working roles at their schools. All class tutors were also teaching another subject in at least two classes; all music and dance teachers had to teach at least four classes and organise art activities throughout the whole academic year. Most of the special education teachers were also the psychology tutors for the entire school. For some special education teachers, the situation was even worse. As Ms Cao recalled, she was stressed because most of her colleagues knew less about her work and believed she was always available because there was no real inclusive work to do; as a result, she was constantly asked to help with something irrelevant to her actual work. Ms Cao had the experience of recording minutes for meetings (unrelated to inclusive education) and even helping with cleaning work (see Subsection 6.6.1).

All special education teachers had a strong commitment to helping children with ASN, and they acknowledged that they had a massive amount of inclusive work to do. But because of the low-efficiency work management and poor collaboration within school, special education teachers had limited energy and time to communicate with ASN children, which remains more issues of recognising and meeting ASN children’s needs. As Williams and Gersch (2004)

described, teachers felt their heavy workload was a source of intense stress, and they did not have time to spend with individual pupils.

The lack of peer collaboration and communication among teachers also hindered the development of inclusive practice. As mentioned in the last paragraph, special education teachers' work was not identified and acknowledged by other general education teachers, which resulted in obstruction for promoting inclusion within mainstream schools. Most of the general education teachers, including music and dance teachers and class tutors, had less awareness of inclusive education. Even one of the headteachers (Mr Lu) I interviewed did not have a clear concept of promoting inclusive education.

Ms Qian, a special education teacher in a state-funded school, answered that some of her colleagues were unwilling to learn about inclusive education because they thought only special education teachers should do inclusive work. However, most of Ms Qian's work was related to collaboration with general education teachers: for example, planning IEP for children with ASN. Although children with ASN were partly educated in resource rooms, Ms Qian still needed to know about their performance in mainstream classrooms with general education teachers.

More critically, inclusive education targets all learners and teachers, and sustainable school-wide collaboration are essential for all teachers and children. The importance of information sharing among teachers was emphasised by previous studies, which have been reviewed in Section 2.4, which indicated that the limited cooperation between teachers would slow the development of IE (Ní Bhroin and King, 2020; Forlin, Keen and Barrett, 2008). The development of communicative competencies among teachers reflects the inclusive practice of involving all staff and students, thereby supporting better school collaboration.

Teachers' dissatisfaction with leadership and administration negatively affected the collaboration in the school. During the fieldwork, participants who worked

for the same school might hold different views regarding the effectiveness of their school leadership, administration or collaboration; however, The Bridge School (a private school) was the only school that all five teachers participated all had the same negative attitudes towards school leadership.

Mr Yang was a music and dance teacher at The Bridge School, committed to his career as a teacher, but he said that he would definitely leave the current working place because the administration and leadership was a 'disaster' in his opinion. Additionally, Ms Heng and Ms Yang were the only two teachers who displayed a lower commitment to their teaching careers when answering interview questions about their future career plans (Section 6.5), and they were both from The Bridge School. Ms Heng was too tired of dealing with all types of issues in a school environment with poor collaboration. Mr Yang explained further that their leadership was not very organised, and when he tried to communicate with the administrative staff, it ended in unhelpful arguments (Subsection 6.6.1). While interviewing teachers from The Bridge School, I felt they showed relatively passive attitudes towards meeting children's needs. For example, Mr Yang stated that he agreed that educating children equally was crucial but was doubtful about its accomplishment.

In short, a poor collaboration within the school was reported as a factor that hindered inclusion (Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow and Sandhill, 2010). Some participating schools had insufficient collaboration within the school, which negatively influenced inclusion. The results of poor collaboration included teachers with limited space and time (because of their heavy workload) to communicate with children to understand their real needs; the lack of peer collaboration and communication on teachers resulted in misunderstanding and non-cooperation with inclusive work at school, and the demotivational effect of poor collaboration between leadership and teachers.

7.6 Key Finding Five --- Positive, Inclusive Practices: the inclusive climate and the LRC programme

Regardless of the obstacles outlined in the previous Key Findings Three and Four, the fifth Key Finding is that participants reported positive, inclusive practice, including a better inclusive climate amongst more teachers and children within the school setting and the achievement of the LRC programme. With the implementation of mainstreaming children with ASN, some teachers have witnessed progress and improvements in inclusive education in Shenzhen. Based on the current situation and their experiences, participants indicated that inclusion has improved mainly because of the more inclusive climate and the implementation of the LRC programme.

Thus, this section will discuss the teachers' descriptions of positive, inclusive practice from two aspects: the inclusive climate and the successful part of LRC implementation. In this case, inclusive climate includes social and school inclusion, the sense of belonging for children with ASN, children without ASN's understanding and acceptance of diversity, and inclusive leadership. Special education teachers mentioned good LRC practices mainly focused on better policy orientation in IE and intervention work for ASN children (in both resource rooms and regular classrooms).

i) The Inclusive Climate

Consistent with the literature (Deng and Manset, 2000; Deng et al., 2017), participants expressed how the educational environment has become more and more inclusive in recent years, and more educators and students have had the experience of working or studying with children with ASN. Moreover, the different needs of more children are being noticed more often by educators and acknowledged and inclusively understood by others; for example, the additional needs of autistic children were newly considered in the LRC programme, when it had only focused on children with hearing, visual and physical disabilities before. In terms of enhancing inclusion, some researchers emphasised the importance of

an inclusive climate at school and the whole of society (Weisel and Dror, 2006); Hornby, 2014).

Furthermore, Hornby (2014) broadens this concept by saying that social and educational environment factors can influence children's development and ability to function in an inclusive setting. Some experienced teachers felt that it is now more common to see children with ASN studying in mainstream schools. One of the most crucial reasons was that children with ASN are legally allowed to study in mainstream schools with equal opportunities since the LRC implementation (Subsection 4.4.3).

It is evident within the ten schools I visited that the schools' inclusive climates influenced teachers' and children's perspectives, including ASN children. Some participants (Ms Xu, Ms Deng, Ms Wu) indicated that their school culture celebrates diversity and that teachers and children might find it easier to accept others' differences. Moreover, it was believed that children with ASN were more confident in communicating and expressing themselves when studying in a more inclusive learning environment (Ms Xu, Ms Qian, Ms Sun, Ms Zhao, Mr Chen, etc.), and creating an inclusive learning environment is a vital support for the implementation of inclusion at school level. As Symeonidou and Phtiaka (2009) emphasised, positive local and national experiences and teachers' pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and skills regarding IE are significant factors when establishing the foundation for better IE development.

In addition, some teachers talked about children without ASN having more awareness of and accepting diversities. Ms Wei found her students very tolerant, unexpectedly, and she was surprised that even as very young children could understand diversity without any bias. Ms Wei speculated that maybe because of the development of the internet and social media, children could obtain a wide range of information, which might help them develop a better understanding of the rest of the world.

There are some potential reasons why more children without ASN have been embracing diversities at mainstream schools. First, I assume that Ms Wei's inclusive practice might have influenced her students. I observed that Ms Wei was a patient and inclusive teacher, and in her class, she encouraged children to express themselves freely, treating all the children in the same way. Mr Li explained he was confident about creating an inclusive learning environment by teaching other children to be more tolerant and treat children with ASN nicely and equally. Mr Li indicated that every child would have a 'learning difficulty moment', and his teaching strategy was finding out what children need for support rather than yelling or blaming them; he thought that to 'yell at them was useless' (Subsection 6.6.4). Thus, I think teachers' inclusive concepts and practices also influenced children to be more inclusive and tolerant.

Second, with the implementation of the LRC programme, more children without ASN had a chance to interact with children with ASN, which helped them to understand diversity better. As Lee and Kim (2012) found in their study, children without ASN can learn to take responsibility for their peers' needs and develop an understanding of diversity by interacting with ASN children in inclusive educational settings, and children with and without ASN can learn from each other and respect diversity. Early childhood is a good time to develop an accurate understanding and positive beliefs about diversity and difference before strong stereotypes created about other people's differences (Ibid.). Last, as Ms Wei analysed, better social inclusion and inclusive publicity in social media help children gain a sense of embracing diversity.

Ms Xu shared her experience of helping an ASN child create a sense become more included at school. A girl with ASN in Ms Xu's class, who barely talked with any classmate, presented issues with her academic performance because she was always lagging as she never paid enough attention in class. Ms Xu encouraged this girl to participate in some art activities that she was interested in as the representative of her class, and this helped this girl build a sense of belonging and confidence. Ms Xu successfully helped her student gain a sense of belonging and self-confidence in school; this girl's behaviour improved a lot, and

she also started to make friends. This also accords with previous research, which converges to emphasise that a sense of belonging is related to positive academic and inclusive outcomes (Bond et al., 2007; Prince and Hadwin, 2013; Furrer and Skinner, 2003). As Furrer and Skinner (2003) pointed in their research, 'feelings of belonging may have an energetic function, awakening enthusiasm, interest and willingness to participate in academic activities' (p.158). Ms Xu said the same that with her help, the girl in her class also improved her academic skills and had more involvement in class and after class with teachers and peers.

As discussed in the previous section, some experienced teachers had limited updated IE information, but their inner educational concepts and strategies were already inclusive. These inclusive teachers shared a typical character trait: they embraced difference and accepted diversities in their class. For instance, Ms Wu shared her opinion of children’s different needs, and she thought all the children were the same and equal for her. She was able to pay attention to all her children within a 45-minute music class. She gave positive comments on all children's performance, encouraging them to be what they wanted to be. When discussing teachers' expectations of children's achievement, Ms Wu responded that all children's different achievements and improvements are valuable. The headteacher in her school influenced Ms Xu. She recalled a time about 15 years ago when she observed the headteacher's demonstration class and was impressed by how the headteacher cared about each child. The headteacher in Ms Xu's school disseminated the notion of inclusive teaching by being a role model for other teachers. This finding was endorsed by what Chiner and Cardona (2013) and King (2014) found in their studies that teachers who feel sufficiently supported by inclusive leadership and peers work with far more positive attitudes towards promoting educational inclusion.

Moreover, this study also found that teachers’ collaborations and interactions with peers with more knowledge or experience of IE can foster good inclusion and better inclusive practice, which supports previous research (Jackson and Bruegmann, 2009; Butler et al., 2004). Ms Xu’s teaching concepts were deeply affected by the leadership’s inclusive practice and ideas. It was suggested the

same from previous studies, that school leaders would embed reflection on beliefs and values in the schoolteachers' thoughts and practices and that inclusive leadership plays the pivotal role in creating collaborative cultures and inclusive environment at school (Whinnery et al., 1995; Ní Bhroin and King, 2020). However, the inclusive school climate was investigated with tools related to inclusion for both teachers and children, disparate from Weisel and Dror's (2006) study.

ii) Learning in the Regular Classroom Programme

The good LRC practice mentioned by six special education teachers mainly focused on better policy orientation and the intervention work for ASN children (in both resource rooms and regular classrooms). The LRC is an idiosyncratic inclusive education approach in China, referring to government support and compulsory schooling for children with disabilities in neighbourhood mainstream schools (Deng and Manset, 2000). The Confucian philosophy on education is rooted in LRC (Ye and Piao, 1995; Piao, 1992), which emphasises that everyone has equal access to education. In line with global awareness and trends for inclusive education, China established the LRC in the late 1980s as the new form of trying to provide equal education for all. Over the past three decades, the LRC has contributed to the particular achievement of children with ASN in terms of school attendance and the progress in improving quality education for children with ASN in an inclusive environment.

The implementation of LRC and the amendment and enactment of laws and regulations related to inclusive education have become an essential educational mission in China. One of the most favourable improvements is that more ASN children have been accepted into education. By 2019, 794,600 ASN children were receiving education in schools, a figure which had almost doubled within ten years. The figures for 'disabled' students (direct translation from the original source) in education and the LRC programme are shown in Figure 7.1 below.

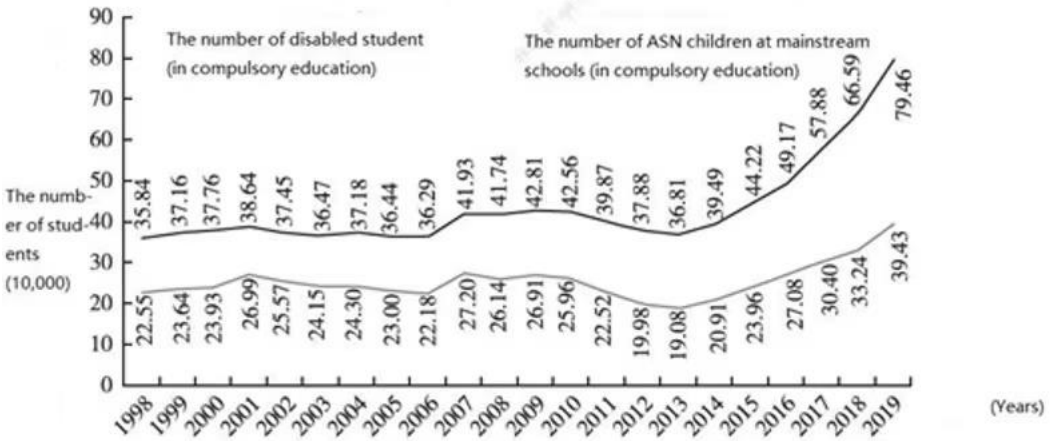

Figure 7. 1 The numbers of ‘disabled’ students in compulsory education and the LRC programme between 1998 and 2019 (adapted from Peng and Kang, 2020, p. 23)

According to these figures, the numbers of both ASN children in compulsory education (upper line) and the LRC programme (lower line) increased. Moreover, because of the implementation of LRC, more ASN children were studying at mainstream schools rather than separate special schools. Since 2014, the figure of ASN children in the LRC programme had increased significantly because the policy orientation was more detailed and determined. There was a slogan for LRC in 2014: ‘access, stay and learn’. Accepting children in neighbourhood mainstream schools regardless of their backgrounds and abilities was regulated in educational provision. The government emphasised the importance of a secure and supportive system of LRC and the quality of ASN children’s learning. Thus, because of the initiation and development of LRC, more students have access to mainstream schools, and their learning process is better valued. During the interview, all educators acknowledged the principle of ‘no rejection’ of children with ASN, and some experienced teachers expressed that they observed more children with ASN are studying at mainstream schools now compared to the past.

It was discussed in Section 7.5 that the limited number of resource rooms did not match the number of children with ASN in Shenzhen. However, the intended function of the resource room was affirmed by participants in this study. As a previous study by Poon-McBrayer (2017) found, resource rooms and special education teachers are highlighted as critical educational resources for inclusive practice in LRC. These inclusive education resources have been assisting students with ASN, general education teachers, and parents of students with ASN in an inclusive setting with a certain amount of progress (Deng et al., 2017).

Subsection 6.6.2 discussed my experience as a researcher visiting three resource rooms in state-funded primary schools. These three resource rooms were accessible-friendly and well-equipped. Children with ASN in the LRC program were allowed to enter resource rooms anytime when they needed assistance. Special education teachers who worked in resource rooms would provide individual education plans for each child with ASN in the LRC program. In addition, special education teachers could be in a regular class to assist ASN children if needed. Apart from providing service for children with ASN in the LRC program, all teachers and parents could seek IE advice from special education teachers in resource rooms.

Although some previous studies questioned whether the resource room could represent the potential for exclusion of ASN children at mainstream schools (Lindsay, 2007; Dyson et al., 2004), participants explained the model of helping ASN children in the resource room helped to eliminate the potential exclusion of ASN children. However, there was no evidence from participants or through my fieldwork about the existence of resource room might cause some children's exclusion in mainstream schools. By contrast, participants expressed that the resource room was helpful for providing assistance for teachers and including children with ASN better.

7.7 Key Finding Six --- The gap between statutory policy and school realities in inclusive education

Through reviewing the literature in Chapter Four, it seems apparent that there are three limitations among present IE policies. First, the financial distribution would need to be further clarified. Second, the use of language in the policy may need to be more inclusive; for example, 'special' and 'ordinary' could negatively label and categorise children. Third, the assessment and evaluation mechanisms would need to be specified to reflect the statutory policy goals better and assist policymakers in enacting further regulations aimed at more effective implementation. The documents reviewed in Chapter Four shared the same goal: providing equal educational opportunities for all children and promoting IE in China.

Nevertheless, participants' experiences evidenced a relatively poor policy implementation regarding policy transmission and practice. Key Funding Six focused on the gap between inclusive policy goals and reported school practice. This finding emerged both from the analysis of interviews and my research diary. Thus, the following subsections will consider two aspects: i) unsatisfactory policy transmission; ii) ineffective evaluating system for inclusive practice.

i) Unsatisfactory policy transmission

In Subsection 6.6.1, I discussed how 29 out of 34 participants were not satisfied with policy transmission. Six special education teachers claimed that some policy documents failed to be delivered to all teachers in the first place. IE is a relatively new concept in Shenzhen, the same as most parts of China, and even some experienced teachers are not familiar with it. As Ms Qian suggested, as a special education teacher, she hoped that people might understand that promoting educational inclusion in the national provision needs everyone to make more efforts. Thus, it would seem vital to deliver an important national provision to all teachers. Spreading information on the new educational trend may help more parents and general education teachers understand special education teachers' work in mainstream schools.

In the Special Education Promotion Plan 2015-2020, one of the main objectives of promoting inclusion was creating an inclusive environment throughout the whole of society. Teachers can play significant roles in this progress, and they seem to be the major factor in promoting successful inclusion because they are one of the most essential policy implementers (Forlin Keen and Barrett, 2008; Florian, 2009). Moreover, teachers' roles as intermediaries between the educational authorities, policy, school leadership, and students mean they are responsible for promoting, implementing and sharing inclusion in the classrooms.

All of my participants realised that schools could not reject students because of their abilities. However, of the 34 teachers participating in this study, only five confirmed that they had read the relevant policy documents about IE.

ii) Uneffective evaluating system for inclusive practice

In terms of IE's assessment and evaluation system, both the LRC programme and the Special Education Promotion Plan highlighted the objective of establishing a supportive special education system. By reviewing a series of IE relevant policy documents in Chapter Four, the significance of scientific support and evaluating system in IE may need to be re-emphasised in policy, especially in practice.

In terms of policy, China started to adopt specific measures to include children with ASN in mainstream schools, such as constructing resource rooms, building guidance centres and training special education teachers (Ministry of Education, 2014; 2017). The result of creating resource rooms was reported, and until 2019, eight resource rooms had been in use in the Futian district in Shenzhen. However, in the document, the evaluation of the use of resource rooms for children with ASN was not highlighted sufficiently, and the follow-up survey about children's learning experience at resource rooms was vacant.

A supportive special education system would seem crucial in implementing current IE policies. In the Special Education for Generic Schools Notice of Resource Room Construction Guide 2016, the 'management' section indicates: 'Special education guidance centres or special schools should provide guidance and conduct assessment for resource rooms' (Ministry of Education, 2016, p.3). Without these guidance centres, which were supposed to provide professional skills and advice for special education teachers, some special education teachers could feel 'lost' and 'lonely' in their jobs. According to special education teacher Ms Sun, there was no leader in her local special education guidance centre. Ms Sun had an IE educational background but less work experience. She expressed that she felt frustrated sometimes because no one could provide help; she solved all her problems independently. Other special education teachers faced the same challenges, but there were no experienced special education teachers to offer guidance since their role was new in mainstream schools.

As mentioned in Chapter Five, only a few state-funded LRC designated schools were qualified for building resource rooms and hiring special education teachers. The school with the resource room I visited had only one full-time special education teacher, and I was told that most of the schools do too. In Ms Cao’s and Ms Sun's schools, they needed to provide for about 15 to 20 children with ASN (with a diagnosed certificate); therefore, they had to hire part-time teachers with special-education or IE backgrounds from other agencies and authorities. However, Ms Cao and Ms Sun still expected better support and assessment of the IE system to help them deal with practical issues.

7.8 Summary of Chapter Seven

This chapter outlined six Key Findings (KFs) developed after the second analysis of identified categories and sub-categories and a further literature review. In short, regardless of teachers' different attitudes towards IE, (KF1) they all agreed that music and dance could be a significant and effective approach for educational inclusion. (KF2) Some teachers held different views about the sustainable development of IE at present and in the future, which seemed to be affected by their backgrounds, including their educational backgrounds, work

experiences, and career commitments. In terms of inclusive practice, both positive and negative voices were heard. In general, teachers who felt more confident about handling children's different needs were more in favour of promoting school inclusion and vice versa. Moreover, music and dance teachers and teachers with successful experiences with ASN children were more comfortable and confident about getting children involved in their classes, and they provided actual examples of creating inclusive learning environments at school. Even though special education teachers had the most knowledge and professionalism on IE, they sometimes felt demotivated because their work was supported less by other general education teachers and even administrative leadership.

As reviewed in Chapter Four, IE has been included in educational provision in China, but, (KF 6) there is still a gap between policies and policy implementation. (KF3 & KF4) The lack of CPD, collaboration in schools, parental support and education resources were mentioned as factors that hindering the implementation of inclusive policies. However, according to participants' work experiences, (KF 5) there was some progress in creating more inclusive schools because of a better inclusive climate at the school and the society and some good practices within the LRC programme. Implications for policy and practice will be considered in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction to Chapter Eight

This study investigated primary school teachers' perceptions and responses to IE and the implementation of music and dance activities to create an inclusive learning environment within mainstream schools in Shenzhen. I chose to study this topic because there was an urgent need for a greater focus on better inclusive practice in China (Yang and Deng, 2019; Hu, 2018). Since China started to set up the LRC programme in the 1990s, the enrolment rate of ASN children has increased at mainstream schools, but the quality of education that ASN children received remained a concern (Su, Guo and Wang, 2020; Deng and Poon-McBrayer, 2004). Driven by personal motivation and academic interests (see Chapter One), I conducted a qualitative inquiry in ten primary schools in Shenzhen to explore teachers' perspectives on the current status of inclusive practice and the role of music and dance in educational inclusion.

The current research and theories into IE were reviewed in Chapter Two by examining the development, definition, practice, and challenges in IE globally and in the Chinese context and considering teachers' beliefs, self-efficacy, and concerns in IE. Chapter Two outlined how promoting IE has become a global goal, and many countries have achieved some progress. International studies also report that teachers from different countries are still facing various challenges to successful inclusive practice (e.g. Florian, 2009; You, Kim and Shin, 2019). Some recent studies showed how music and dance are being used as practical tools for creating a better inclusive learning environment for all across a number of countries (e.g. Welch et al., 2020).

In Chapter Three, I introduced current research investigating the effectiveness of music and dance in including children with Additional Support Needs (ASN). Before examining the possibility of employing music and dance as part of China's inclusive approaches, I reviewed relevant research into music and dance as tools for educational inclusion, social inclusion, and overall personal development.

Chapter Four reviewed three key policy documents related to inclusive education in China, which were enacted to promote the Learning in Regular Classroom (LRC) programme, achieve educational equity, and provide equal access and educational opportunities for children with ASN. These policy documents were about the LRC programme, the Special Education Promotion Plan and the guides for mainstream-school resource rooms.

Chapter Five discussed methodological considerations, introduced the research design and explained how sampling, ethics, and trustworthiness were addressed. In addition, I outlined a systematic data collection and analysis process, including research diaries, thirty-four interviews and thematic data analysis.

The research findings and interpretations were discussed in Chapter Six based on the analysis of thirty-four interview transcripts and research diary. It presented seven parts according to the main seven emerging themes and sixteen sub-themes. It discovered teachers' perceptions, expectations, and experiences in terms of IE theory, IE implementation, and the use of music and dance to improve IE at schools.

Then, in Chapter Seven, I further discussed six Key Findings developed after a re-analysis of the themes and sub-themes related to existing literature and policy documents reviewed in Chapters Three and Four. In this final chapter, I will first briefly summarise the main findings and argument of this research in order to answer the research questions. Then, this chapter will present my reflection on the study's limitations and discuss the study's original contribution to the field of inclusive education. I will then articulate some recommendations for future studies and researchers focussing on IE topics and suggestions for policy and practice in IE in China. This chapter will end with concluding remarks and personal reflections on the study.

8.2 Summary of the Main Findings and Discussions

This study has identified perspectives from thirty-four teachers on IE and using music and dance to promote inclusive practice in ten mainstream primary schools in urban Shenzhen. There were eighteen music and dance teachers, ten general education teachers, six special education teachers and two headteachers participating in the study. Rich and contextual data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a research diary. Throughout the research process, careful consideration was necessary to ensure that the representation of and insights into the schooling process was gained reflectively and ethically. In the following section, I will present the main findings and discussions in response to the three Research Questions outlined in Chapter One. The answers to the research questions are summarised in Table 8.1 below:

Table 8. 1 Main answers to research question

Research questions	Main points	Main answers
1.What is the influence, if any, of the teachers' backgrounds on the perceived possibilities of inclusive education and the employment of music and dance activities for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?	For IE	Teachers' educational background, work experience and career commitment influenced their belief in IE
	For the role of music and dance in IE	Teachers' background unaffected their belief in the role of music and dance for IE
2.What are teachers' perspectives on the practical factors hindering and facilitating the development of inclusive education and the use of music and dance to include children with additional support needs in primary schools in Shenzhen?	Hindering factors	• Poor school collaboration • Lack of parental support • Limited educational resources • Lack of CPD
	Facilitating factors	• The better inclusive climate at both society and school • Arts activities
3.What are the similarities and differences between policy goals and teachers' views on practice for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?	Similarities	• More children with ASN being accepted in mainstream schools
	Differences	• Poor policy transmission • Ineffective guaranteeing and evaluating mechanism • Function of resource rooms and special education teachers

Research Question One: What is the influence, if any, of the teachers' backgrounds on the perceived possibilities of inclusive education and the

employment of music and dance activities for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?

Research Question One focuses on how teachers' backgrounds might have influenced the perceived possibilities of promoting inclusive education and using music and dance to improve educational inclusion. Work experience, educational background and career commitment were considered the relevant aspects of teachers' backgrounds for the study. The study found that teachers' backgrounds did not affect their beliefs about the role of music and dance to promote IE but did influence their perceived self-efficacy in inclusive practice.

All participants agreed that music and dance could include more children and create a more inclusive learning environment at school. Teachers presented four benefits of music and dance for children at schools, and these findings were connected with benefits identified in previous research on arts and inclusion: maintaining physical and mental wellbeing (Serrano and Espírito-Santo,2017); developing interests and confidence (Tague, 2016); improving the learning experience (Surujlal, 2013); and working with peers in an inclusive environment (Levinson, 2009). Although the 34 participants had different educational backgrounds, work experiences and career commitments, they all recognised that music and dance could be an effective tool for school inclusion and IE development for all children.

In terms of perceived possibilities of IE implementation, teachers' backgrounds not only influenced their beliefs in IE but also in their self-efficacy in inclusive practice. It was found that there was a relationship between teachers' beliefs and their self-efficacy in IE. In general, three types of teachers showed stronger beliefs in IE: teachers with an educational background related to IE; teachers with more perceived successful experience in meeting children's needs; and teachers with deeper intrinsic career motivation. By contrast, teachers who knew less or had experienced less about IE were more concerned about the possibilities of improving IE. This study also revealed that special education

teachers and music and dance teachers had higher self-efficacy in inclusive practice than other teachers.

Research Question Two: What are teachers' perspectives on the practical factors hindering and facilitating the development of inclusive education and the employment of music and dance to include children with additional support needs in primary schools in Shenzhen?

Research Question Two focuses on teachers' perspectives on the factors hindering and facilitating IE and the use of music and dance to foster inclusion. The research has shown that, for teachers, the inclusive school climate and arts activities could facilitate IE. In contrast, poor collaboration within the school, limited parental support, scarce educational resources and lack of CPD were identified by participants as the factors that hindered IE's development.

Participants indicated that the social and school environment has been more inclusive in recent years, with previous researchers agreeing that the inclusive climate is essential for school and society (Weisel and Dror, 2006; Hornby, 2014). Compared with the past, teachers found that more children with ASN had started to study in mainstream schools, and children without ASN were more open-minded towards diverse children. Participants also mentioned that ASN children could find a sense of belonging when they were accepted, respected, and supported by others at school (see Section 7.5). More importantly, all participants recognised that music and dance activities could facilitate inclusion at school. Although music and dance teachers had more knowledge of music and dance education, all teachers encouraged children to participate in arts activities to engage with group work and build confidence. All ten schools I visited had a Children's Day Arts Festival, which was mainly a music and dance stage show. Participants supported this type of arts activity because it offered opportunities for all children to participate and created a more inclusive learning environment at school.

As previously indicated, four hindering factors were highlighted most often by participants: poor collaboration in school, lack of parental support, limited educational resources, and lack of CPD for both generic and special education teachers. Poor school collaboration was recognised by participants as one of the factors to cause heavier workloads for teachers and ineffective administrative leadership. Teachers had multiple roles at schools and taught several different classes; as a result they barely had time for communicating with children to explore children's real needs for study and in life. In addition, the heavy workload and ineffective administrative work and leadership negatively influenced teachers' work satisfaction. General education teachers, in particular, were hardly able to spend time and pay attention to IE because of their heavy workloads.

Participants stressed the importance of parental support for inclusive practice. However, some issues were evident, such as parents of children with ASN refusing to provide medical certification, which is required for children with ASN to be admitted into the LRC programme. Participants reported that schools and teachers could not, therefore, provide proper intervention and assistance for ASN children who were not on the LRC programme. Furthermore, some parents of children without ASN failed to recognise that their children could benefit from studying alongside children with ASN in an inclusive environment, so they would complain about accepting children with ASN into mainstream schools as they viewed it as negatively influencing their children's school life.

Current resources failed to fully meet the needs of educating children with ASN in mainstream schools. The national provision is that all mainstream schools must accept all children who live in the nearby communities, regardless of their physical and psychological differences. However, the number of resource rooms and special education teachers fell far short of the standard required to meet all children's needs. Another issue was the large class sizes: this created added challenges for a single teacher to meet the needs of 50 to 60 or even more children within a 45-minute class.

Reflecting on these ten schools I visited, some teachers might fail to implement LRC properly and meet children's needs in class without effective CPD. The concept of IE was new for most of the general education teachers in the study, which might hinder their daily classroom practice and make special education teachers' workload heavier. Special education teachers needed CPD to learn more effective inclusive teaching approaches and communicate with experts or other special education teachers. The special education teacher's position is new in mainstream schools, and they had no clear work guidance or instruction for support. Although special education teachers who participated in this study generally had stronger career motivation and a stronger dedication to meeting the Additional Support Needs of children, they still looked for more systematic training for supporting their work for inclusive practice.

Research Question Three: What are the similarities and differences between policy goals and teachers' views on practice for educational inclusion in primary schools in Shenzhen?

Research Question Three focuses on the similarities and differences between policy goals related to inclusive education and teachers' daily practices. In China, the LRC implementation aims to create a more inclusive climate through understanding children with ASN and teachers' and leaders' efforts to create a sense of belonging for all children. An increasing number of children with ASN have been accepted at mainstream schools, and the resource rooms and special education teachers could provide various types of support for them.

However, the findings illustrated that policy transmission, and the evaluating system in IE was not always effective (see Section 7.6). Although the importance of informing and involving all teachers in IE was emphasised in the relevant policies (see Chapter Four), my participants, even the special education teachers who have recognised the main force for promoting IE and LRC at mainstream schools, were unsure about the specific measures in policies and

uncertain about the process of policy transmission at school. Participants revealed that IE-related policies were not significantly highlighted for all teachers, and the teachers were not as well-informed as was needed.

The lack of an effective assessment and evaluation mechanism in IE was shared by all special education teachers. Although the importance of special education guidance centres and the function of resource rooms were indicated by policy (see Section 4.5), in-service special education teachers were unsatisfied with the outcomes. Some participants announced that they were not supported in the current mechanism, and they were eager for a more regular and adequate supporting and evaluating approach in IE.

8.3 Original Contributions

The data generated by this study and, in particular, how it was combined and discussed based on recent relevant literature provides an important contribution to inclusive education knowledge in China. The fieldwork findings regarding inclusive education (IE) and the role of music and dance within IE provide a fresh understanding of teachers' views in ten mainstream primary schools (both state-funded and private) in Shenzhen. This research has made the following contributions to the knowledge and practice about IE and the potential of using music and dance to improve educational inclusion in China.

The outcome of this study regarding IE and inclusive practice provide updated information and understanding of the perspectives of mainstream school teachers in Chinese primary schools. As the implementation of LRC, all participants across ten schools and regardless of school type acknowledged that current educational policies in China emphasise equal educational opportunities and access for all children, regardless of background, physical or learning differences. Moreover, it was reported by participants (and reflected in policy) that more children with ASN have been registered in mainstream schools and some schools have a relatively better inclusive learning environment. More and more teachers and children without ASN are being able to embrace diversity.

In terms of using music and dance for educational inclusion, all participating teachers believed music and dance could be an effective tool for improving inclusion because music and dance can bring many benefits for children. Some special education teachers and music teachers provided successful examples of music and dance activities helping children with ASN learn in mainstream schools. However, at the time of writing, the association of inclusion with music and dance in primary schools has not been directly investigated in China. Thus, this research provides updated and novel knowledge into potential inclusive strategies in China.

The importance of teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy towards IE were highlighted in this study. Teachers' belief and self-efficacy in IE were influenced by their work experiences, educational backgrounds and career commitments. Teachers with degrees in special education, more successful experiences of meeting children's needs, or a strong career commitment to IE, held relatively positive attitudes towards IE and demonstrated higher self-efficacy in inclusive practice. Although some teachers were uncertain about the feasibility of promoting IE, and some reported low self-efficacy in meeting children's different needs, all participants demonstrated an awareness of treating existing children with ASN equally at mainstream schools. Music and dance teachers had less knowledge of IE; however, they reported higher self-efficacy in including children in their class than other general education teachers.

Other original outcomes of this study referred to the challenges of inclusive practice in China. Having well-intentioned IE policies was no guarantee of enhanced IE practice. Specific challenges for IE were found, including poor collaboration within school, lack of parental support, limited educational resources, and lack of CPD. These findings contribute to existing international and Chinese research on IE, offering an in-depth understanding of teachers' challenges in teaching children with ASN in Shenzhen, particularly as there is a research gap on inclusive performing arts education in China.

8.4 Implications and Recommendations for Policy, Practice and Research

The outcomes regarding LRC revealed that although there was an increasing number of children with ASN being accepted in mainstream schools, teachers generally felt the implementation of LRC should be improved to enable inclusion better. Analyses of fieldwork data illustrated the teachers' challenges at work. As a result, some implications for policy, practice and future research have come to light and are considered in the following three subsections.

8.4.1 Implications for Policy

Within the present policies concerning IE in China, the IE terminology was made up of three terms: special education (te shu jiao yu), inclusive education (quan na jiao yu) and integrated education (ronghe jiaoyu). Nevertheless, the terminology used most often was still 'special education' and 'inclusive education' was mentioned only in a small number of sentences. The term 'inclusive education' could be comparatively new to many educators, and sometimes it takes time for teachers to understand new educational concepts. However, the words used in policies could determine the main concept being delivered to implementers. Thus, reconsidering the language used in policies about IE and LRC is needed. In Chinese, the first word of quan na jiao yu (inclusive education) points to the notion of 'all', which could better transmit the idea of including all teachers and all learners in education. Based on these considerations, I would suggest that future policies use 'quan na jiao yu' (inclusive education) in the text to remind educators and learners that inclusive education focuses on all rather than only certain groups.

The LRC programme, including building more resource rooms in schools, has been recognised as the primary measure for promoting IE in China. When describing the target groups in current LRC policy documents, these words appear children with visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech impairment, intellectual impairment, physical disabilities, mental disabilities

and multiple disabilities. It can be seen that ASN children are still being labelled with ‘impairment’ and ‘disabilities’. Global trends and systems elsewhere, including the Scottish context, prefer to employ ‘softer’ language to describe children with ASN, such as ‘support needs’ or ‘difficulties’. The use of language in policy text can always reflect and influence policymakers and implementers’ perceptions. Therefore, in order to reduce (or avoid) categorising and negatively labelling children with ASN within mainstream settings, the use of language and terminology in policies about children’s needs could be reconsidered in an attempt to find a more inclusive way.

Furthermore, the current supporting and evaluating system for LRC and IE would need to be improved. Although the policies emphasise the significance of supporting schools and teachers in LRC, the realities reported by the teachers in this study were diverse and did not always follow the policy intentions. In Shenzhen, the guidance centre for IE would need to be more effectively managing special education teachers’ workloads and more efficiently evaluating the progress or difficulties of children with ASN in mainstream schools. The responsibilities of the IE guidance centre in each area or city and its LRC director could be clarified and better communicated to all teachers within each area or city.

8.4.2 Implications for Practice

Another implication concerns the placement of children with ASN in the LRC programme. Thus far, only children with medical certificates from designated institutions are accepted in the LRC programme to receive additional financial and educational support in the resource rooms. A few teachers that participated in this study indicated that all children could have additional support needs at different moments. In contrast, some special education teachers told how some children with ASN had no access to the resource room because their parents refused to have the certificate done. In this situation, the use of resource rooms could be more flexible. For example, all children would benefit from being

allowed to enter the resource room or approach special education teachers for additional support when they encounter difficulties in learning or their lives.

Additionally, this study showed how Continuous Professional Development for teachers on developing more inclusive schools is crucial, but, there was a great shortage of CPD for in-service teachers. Currently, all teachers teach children with ASN in the mainstream class, and teachers would need to be well-prepared for providing high-quality education for children with ASN rather than just letting them physically ‘be there’. Without effective CPD in IE for teachers, general education teachers might not feel obligated to support inclusion or may not know the basic strategies of meeting children’s different needs in the class. Lack of knowledge regarding IE means that teachers may fail to communicate and cooperate with special education teachers in assisting children with ASN at mainstream schools. Thus, providing CPD for general education teachers to acknowledge different types of children's learning needs could help them understand and treat children's behaviours more reasonably, thereby eliminating the response of simply categorising or labelling ASN children. The same shortage of CPD applies to special education teachers. Although they all had a relevant degree in IE or special education, they were still facing practical challenges, for example with ASN children’s teaching plans, other teachers’ misunderstandings, and lack of parental support. It would be significant for mainstream schoolteachers to prepare and learn how to provide higher-quality education for children with ASN. Thus, CPD for special education teachers’ professional training in solving practical problems and informing inclusive policy documents would also be urgently needed to achieve the LRC programme goals fully.

One of the outcomes of this study suggests that music and dance could be considered part of the teaching approach for LRC practice recommendations. In this study, although music and dance teachers reported that they were more capable of including children by engaging them in music and dance classes, they had less information and knowledge of IE. Special education teachers recognised the benefit of music and dance for ASN children, but they were not trained in this area. Given results in other relevant studies (e.g., Dinold and Zitomer, 2015;

McCord and Watts, 2006), it would be reasonable to advocate integrating music and dance or other arts in the CPD design of IE courses. As shown in this study and previous research, music and dance activities can be a practical tool for teachers and children in creating an inclusive environment. Using music and dance as the medium for including more children does not require teachers to have professional training in music or dance, because the nature of music and dance is inclusive for a variety of expressions and children's diverse needs. General education teachers could participate in music and dance activities with children, even if they are not qualified with a degree for teaching music and dance. In terms of the materials in the repertoire for inclusive practice, experts from educational authorities could provide a series of music and dance materials for schools, and experienced music and dance teachers and special education teachers at the school level could discuss and select particular repertoires for their school use according to the school culture, situation and preferences. In short, apart from providing an effective CPD for teachers in IE, adding music and dance as an inclusive approach to including children could be considered to implement the LRC programme fully. In addition, music and dance teachers might organise more music and dance events that include all children as after-school activities, which could bridge the connection between children with ASN and those without, helping children with ASN develop an increased sense of belonging. Thus, the role of music and dance could be enhanced to improve school inclusion as an effective approach.

8.4.3 Implications for Future Research

Based on my experience, I would reach out to researchers interested in the development of IE in China with some suggestions. First, it could be very helpful to obtain sufficient information about LRC-designated schools in the studied area before conducting fieldwork. Before starting to conduct my empirical work, it had been about three years since I last lived in China, and I did not know a lot about the actual situation of IE in Shenzhen. As I had previously read from published sources, I did not find the relevant information about LRC-designated schools and resource rooms in Shenzhen. Even now, it is rare to find updated information online about resource rooms; my participants informed me that

many documents and information would not be published. Therefore, obtaining as much updated, practical information as possible would be helpful for preparing for a period of fieldwork.

Second, with a comprehensive ethical consideration, involving children with ASN in the research would not be difficult to achieve in China. Before flying back to China for fieldwork, I was greatly concerned about the ethical issues and feasibilities of being allowed to engage with ASN children because, to my knowledge, I knew that children's safety is the priority for all primary schools in China. Thus, I decided to engage only with teachers in order to protect vulnerable children. When I started to visit schools, it was confirmed that primary teachers cared most for children's physical and mental safety at school. However, after talking with gatekeepers and participants, especially the special education teachers, they were highly helpful and supportive of my study. Special education teachers were invited to give two lessons for children with ASN in the resource room. I was also invited by music and dance teachers to participate in three music classes with children. After I explained the purpose of my study, its intention and ethical considerations, all my participants showed great interest in it and were very supportive. Given the teachers' commitment to IE, data collection from children should not be discarded by future researchers investigating IE in China.

8.5 Limitations of the Study and Suggestion for Further Research

Several limitations of this research should be acknowledged. The current study suggests that inclusive practice and music and dance should be closely connected to explore a better approach to IE and LRC in China. This conclusion was derived after visiting ten schools and interviewing thirty-four primary teachers.

From a methodological perspective, this amount of fieldwork can be considered adequate for a qualitative study. However, claims of generalisation beyond the participating schools could not be made because of the relatively small scale of

the investigation. Therefore, further studies could consider applying a quantitative or mixed-method research design to look into IE in a broader context or different areas in China, which could be conducted to provide more generalisable knowledge. Moreover, another methodological limitation was considered in relation to the validation of coding processes. Although I had peers and supervisors review those emerged categories and sub-categories, some transcripts and initial codes should also have been reviewed to establish the validity of my interim analysis and prevent potential bias of data interpretation. I will take the objective and independent reviews of an expert/peer group as an essential part of enhancing the validation of my future research.

Another limitation of the study was that it was conducted in an urban city, Shenzhen, one of the most prosperous cities in China. The educational resources might be more plentiful, and the educational concepts might be more advanced in Shenzhen than in other less developed cities. Thus, Shenzhen is not representative of most towns and cities in China. If further research was required to investigate a more general picture of IE in China, urban cities and rural areas should both be taken into consideration.

There are also four additional suggestions for future study in the area of IE in China or other countries that face similar challenges. First, a further study could consider an investigation of both teachers and children's voices in IE and the role of music and dance for IE, comparing the differences and similarities between perceptions of teachers and children in order to explore potential methods for improving IE.

Second, as promoting IE has been part of the national provision in China, different areas need to be studied further, especially the rural areas. It would be valuable to compare the different developments of IE in urban and rural areas, respectively, and more attention should be paid to the state of education in some disadvantaged areas.

Third, it is important to investigate IE in higher education in China and examine how higher education supports learners with ASN to achieve their potential to be included in society and the workplace. As many participants indicated, they hoped that children with ASN could be included in broader society and live as independent individuals in the future. Finally, as my participants highlighted the crucial role of parents in children's development, it would be valuable for further research to involve parents and children and investigate their insights in IE practice.

8.6 Final Reflections

This thesis presents a qualitative research study I conducted with a group of primary school teachers in Shenzhen concerning their perspectives and experience of current schooling in teaching children with ASN. It provided an in-depth description and interpretation of teachers' views of IE and the potential effectiveness of music and dance for school inclusion. The relevance of teachers' voices in informing the development of inclusive practice was stressed. Moreover, the research makes important contributions to the knowledge of IE and LRC in China and draws up essential implications for future policy, practice, and research.

As a researcher, the PhD study has equipped me with insightful knowledge and skills to work systematically and critically. I have also learnt the importance of locating any research within the existing literature. This helped me look at the broader picture and realise how my study might help confirm or extend existing knowledge. The qualitative method provided me with invaluable skills and insights into people's perceptions and the multiple realities in real life.

This inquiry started with my instinctive belief in IE and my educational and work experience in performing arts. I have always believed that arts could bring everyone hope, freedom and equality; during fieldwork, I witnessed how Chinese teachers have been promoting educational equity with strong determination. Although there are still many challenges facing IE in China, it was touching and

exciting for me to find that so many Chinese educators are working hard to improve the provision with a strong belief in IE and a determination to provide equal and better-quality education for children with ASN at mainstream schools. I believe the arts could open a new door for inclusive practice in China. I understand it may be a long journey, which builds on all the effort educators and researchers have made to date. I hope my research could inspire those who intend to contribute to the development of IE in China and beyond. In the coming years, I hope to continue exploring the use of music and dance to improve educational inclusion.

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Appendix One: Covering letter and information sheet for participants

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Plain Language Statement

Study title: Teachers' perspectives on improving educational inclusion through the performing arts: A qualitative study of primary schools in Shenzhen
Name of Researcher: Yinshu Zhu

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

What the project will involve
The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions and responses to the implementation of performing arts education to include migrant students in primary schools in Shenzhen. I hope to find out more information about the relationship between teachers' perceptions and professional background and the implementation of educational inclusion in Shenzhen.

You are being asked to take part because you have relevant experience in teaching performing arts courses in primary schools in Shenzhen, and your perceptions could reflect on the efficiency of policy-implementation. I would arrange you to participate in a face-to-face interview around 45 minutes, and this interview will be audio-recorded for further transcripts and analysis.

Being part of the research project, you will be provided souvenirs (like badges, pens, mugs and key rings) as an incentive, and free tea and cakes will be provided during the interview. Taking part in this project is entirely voluntary. Should you decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

Keeping information confidential*

All raw data will be stored in a locked cabinet or in a locked file on my computer and will be dealt with confidentially. It will only be seen by me and my supervisors. Neither you nor your personal information will be identified by name in any publication arising from the project. You may be referred to by a pseudonym. All the personal data will be eliminated by the end of this research project and all the research data will be kept for ten years. Please be aware that sometimes confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee.

*Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases, the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

The results of this project

I will present my findings in the thesis I am writing for the degree of Ph.D. of Education. I may also present these at a conference and use the information to write journal articles. I will provide a copy of my thesis for you if you wish.

Reviewed of the study

This study has been reviewed and agreed upon by the College Research Ethics Committee, University of Glasgow.

Contact for further Information

If you have any questions concerning the project you can contact me, Miss Zhu (y.zhu.4@research.gla.ac.uk). Should you have any complaint to pursue, you may contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston,
email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

_____End of Plain Language Statement_____

Appendix Two: Consent form

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Teachers' perspectives on improving educational inclusion through the performing arts: A qualitative study of primary schools in Shenzhen

Name of Researcher: Yinshu Zhu
Principal Supervisor: Dr Oscar Odena
Second supervisor: Dr Ines Alves

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to all my interviews with the research are being audio-recorded.

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by a pseudonym.

I acknowledge that there will be no effect on my employment arising from my participation or non-participation in this research.

- All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.
- The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times
- The personal data will be destroyed once the project is complete and the research data will be retained for 10 years.
- The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant …… Signature ……..

Date ……

Name of Researcher ……
Signature ……..

Date ……

Appendix Three: Ethical approval

29 April 2019

Dear Yinshu Zhu

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Teachers' perspectives on improving educational inclusion through the performing arts: A qualitative study of primary schools in Shenzhen.

Application No: 400180186

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 20/04/2019
- Project end date: 20/04/2025
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the College Ethics Review Feedback document that has been sent to you as the Collated Comments Document in the online system.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The Request for Amendments to an Approved Application form should be used:
  https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

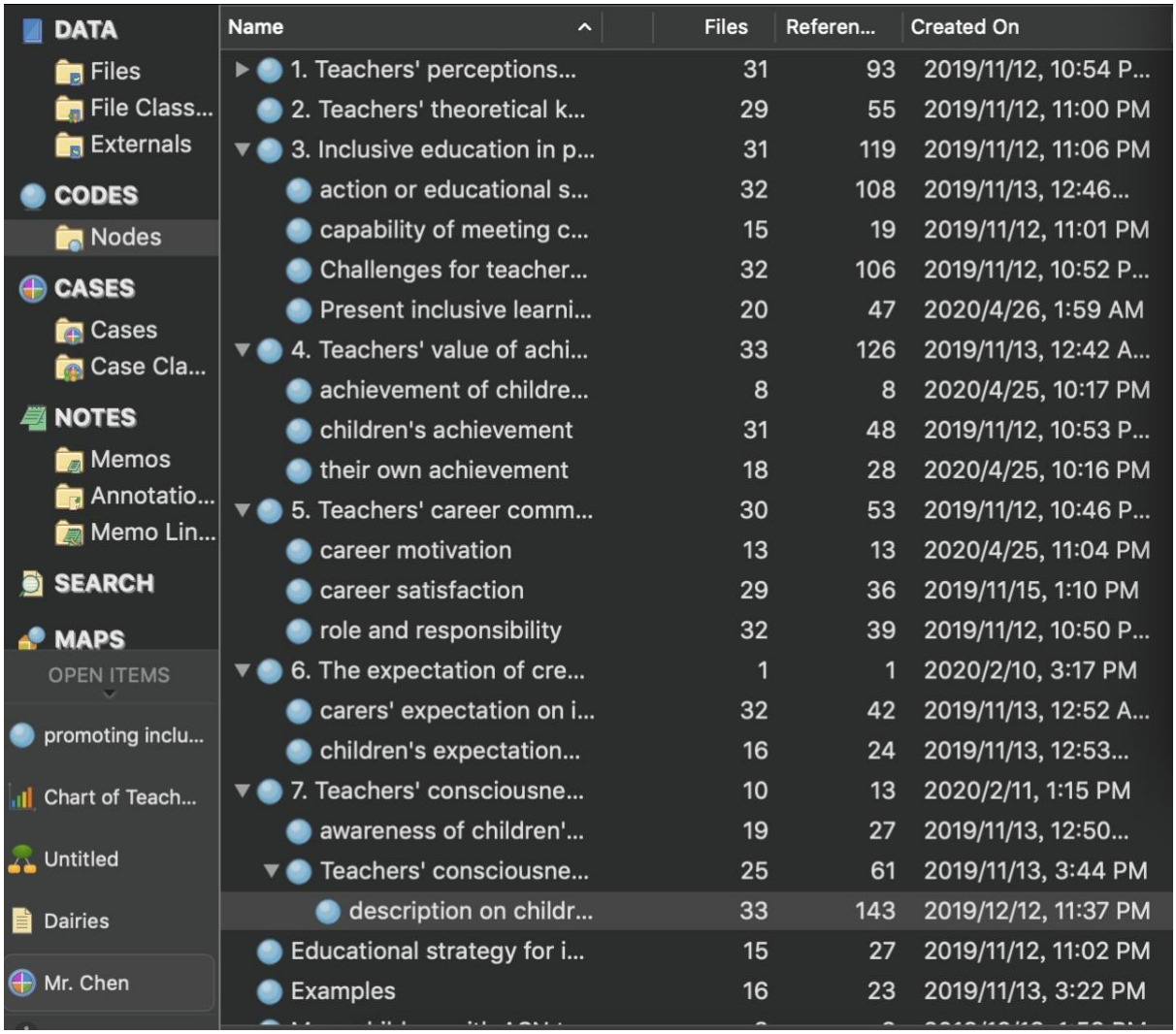
Appendix Four: The Second Special Education Promotion Program (2017-2020) (Example for policy document translation)

第二期特殊教育提升计划 （2017—2020 年） 总体要求 （一）基本原则 1．坚持统筹推进，普特结合。以普通学校随班就读为主体、以特殊教育学校为骨干、以送教上门和远程教育为补充，全面推进融合教育。普通学校和特殊教育学校责任共担、资源共享、相互支撑。 2．坚持尊重差异，多元发展。尊重残疾学生的个体差异，注重潜能开发和缺陷补偿，提高特殊教育的针对性。促进残疾学生的个性化发展，为他们适应社会、融入社会奠定坚实基础。 3．坚持普惠加特惠，特教特办。普惠性教育政策和工程项目要加大支持特殊教育的力度。根据特殊教育实际，专门制定特殊的政策措施，给予残疾学生特别扶助和优先保障。 4．坚持政府主导，各方参与。落实各级政府及相关部门发展特殊教育的责任，加强省一级对特殊教育的统筹。充分发挥社会力量的作用，学校、家庭和社会相互配合。 （二）总体目标 到 2020 年，各级各类特殊教育普及水平全面提高，残疾儿童少	Second Special Education Promotion Program (2017-2020) General requirements (1) Basic principles 1. Persist in coordinating and promoting the integrated education. Taking ordinary schools as the mainstay, with special education schools as the backbone, supplemented by home delivery and distance education, we will comprehensively promote integrated education. Common schools and special education schools share responsibilities, share resources, and support each other. 2. Adhere to respect for differences and diversified development. Respect the individual differences of disabled students, pay attention to potential development and defect compensation, and improve the relevance of special education. Promote the personalized development of students with disabilities and lay a solid foundation for them to adapt to and integrate into society. 3. Adhere to Pratt and Whitney special, special education special. Inclusive education policies and engineering projects should increase support for special education. According to the actual situation of special education, special policy measures are specially formulated to give special assistance and priority protection to students with disabilities. 4. Adhere to government leadership, all parties involved. Implement the responsibilities of governments at all levels and relevant departments for the development of special education, and strengthen the coordination of special education at the provincial level. Give full play to the role of social forces, schools, families and society cooperate with each other. (2) Overall goal By 2020, the popularity of special education at all levels will be comprehensively improved, and the enrolment rate of disabled children and adolescents in compulsory education will reach more than 95%. The scale of special

年义务教育入学率达到 95%以上，非义务教育阶段特殊教育规模显著扩大。特殊教育学校、普通学校随班就读和送教上门的运行保障能力全面增强。教育质量全面提升，建立一支数量充足、结构合理、素质优良、富有爱心的特教教师队伍，特殊教育学校国家课程教材体系基本建成，普通学校随班就读质量整体提高。 （三）重点任务 1．完善特殊教育体系。全面普及残疾儿童少年义务教育，提高巩固水平，解决实名登记的未入学适龄残疾儿童少年就学问题。加大力度发展残疾儿童学前教育，加快发展以职业教育为主的残疾人高中阶段教育，稳步发展残疾人高等教育。 2．增强特殊教育保障能力。统筹财政教育支出，倾斜支持特殊教育。加强无障碍设施建设。全面改善特殊教育办学条件。全面加强随班就读支持保障体系建设。健全特殊教育教师编制动态调整机制和待遇保障机制。提高残疾学生资助水平，实行家庭经济困难的残疾学生从义务教育到高中阶段教育的 12 年免费教育。 3．提高特殊教育质量。促进医教结合，建立多部门合作机制，加强专业人员的配备与合作，提高残疾学生评估鉴定、入学安	education in non-compulsory education will be significantly expanded. The ability of special education schools and ordinary schools to enrol in classes and send home to school has been comprehensively enhanced. The quality of education has been comprehensively improved, and a team of special education teachers with sufficient quantity, reasonable structure, excellent quality, and love has been established. The national curriculum textbook system for special education schools has basically been established, and the quality of regular school enrolment has generally improved. (3) Key tasks 1. Improve the special education system. Comprehensively popularize compulsory education for children and adolescents with disabilities, improve the level of consolidation, and solve the problem of school attendance for children and adolescents with school-age and disability who are registered under real names. Step up efforts to develop pre-school education for children with disabilities, accelerate the development of high school education for disabled people based on vocational education, and steadily develop higher education for disabled people. 2. Enhance special education guarantee capabilities. Coordinate fiscal expenditures on education and favor special education. Strengthen the construction of barrier-free facilities. Comprehensively improve the conditions for running special education. Comprehensively strengthen the support for the construction of the guarantee system for attending classes. Improve the dynamic adjustment mechanism and treatment guarantee mechanism for special education teachers. Raise the level of financial assistance for students with disabilities, and implement 12-year free education from compulsory education to high school education for disabled students with financial difficulties. 3. Improve the quality of special education. Promote the combination of medicine and education, establish a multi-departmental cooperation mechanism, strengthen the allocation and cooperation of professionals, and improve the effectiveness of assessment and identification, admission placement, education and teaching, and

置、教育教学、康复训练的有效性。加强特殊教育教师培养培训，提高专业化水平。增强特殊教育教科研能力，加强特殊教育学校教材和教学资源建设，推进课程教学改革。	rehabilitation training for students with disabilities. Strengthen the training of special education teachers to improve the level of specialization. Strengthen the teaching and scientific research capabilities of special education, strengthen the construction of teaching materials and teaching resources in special education schools, and promote the reform of curriculum teaching.

Appendix Five: A snapshot of themes and subthemes using Nvivo



Appendix Six: A sample interview transcript of one participant

Savanna : Ms.W, how many years have you been a music teacher ?
Ms. W : It has been 23 years since the beginning of 1997 .

Savanna : I was in your music class today. If you don't talk, I thought you was just graduated. After you started class, I found that you are quite experienced. I was wondering how you can teach children that well just after graduation. What is your educational background?
Ms. W : I have never been high school . I was a middle school teacher student. The middle school I attend was a conservatory of music, and this school belonged to the normal school. We have all the subjects I was studying in music, the department of music was different that time. In 1997, I got the offer with the first grade in my county, and only top students who were the best in academic performance had opportunities to study there. So, basically, all of the students there were good at study and could learn stuff very well and fast, we all had good learning capacity. We were different from those students who are studying in normal schools now. Nowadays, the curriculum setting in Normal schools is very specific and focusing on only one subject. We had lots of different subjects to learn at that time, so I think that (our) teacher education wss actually more suitable for primary school education. In fact, through my teaching experience, and I also witnessed many new graduates who just started working, the way they teach children. I think the education I had was better for being a teacher in primary schools. We must learn everything at that time. My bachelor's degree was part-time and was completed while I was working, and I did online courses while working.

Savanna : Is it necessary to do a test the teacher's certificate ?
Ms. W : I didn’t need to take the test at the time . I got it with my graduation.

Savanna : In addition to the teacher qualification certificate , do you have other professional certificates ?
Ms. W : Beijing Dance Academy training certificate , chorus commander certificate , Chinese dance test certificate .

Savanna : Then you also taught dance ?
Ms. W : Yes , I used to be a dance teacher as well .

Savanna : What do you currently teach at this school ?
Ms. W : I teach music classes, I am in charge of the Beijing Opera Troupe and the presiding group, also leading the recital group, the choir is basically involved, and there are many arts groups in the school.

Savanna: What was your original intention to be a teacher?
Wu : There was no intention at the very beginning, like, at that time, I was 19 years old and I was a child , certainly I didn't want to be a teacher , I felt so the outside world was so good, I thought it could be quite good to work in a company through watching some TV programs, or to be a politician, or officer, or actress... I was thinking about those every day. But, perfornaly, I've been always feeling good to spend time with children, I always like children, I was just disdained or not willing to be a teacher . In fact, I started to enjoy to be a teacher since being a teacher for long time. Actually, precipitation is needed to be a teacher. The more and longer you do for being a teacher, and the more they like students . Especially after the birth of a child, the mentality is completely different from that of the little girl . You will be willing to be a teacher and will not think about it anymore . I feel that what I am doing makes a lot of sense. I used to think that it is most meaningful to stand on the stage. It is most meaningful to win the prize. I feel that others are looking at me. I am very proud of it. Now I am not. Now I feel that no matter how successful I am, if I don't bring the students well, then Not my success. I am now a student standing on the stage, they get applause, they feel very meaningful when they win.

Savanna : So your sense of accomplishment comes from the growth of students and their progress.
Ms. W : Right .

Savanna : Are you satisfied with the job now ?
Ms. W : I really like it very much .

Savanna : Do you think it's challenging ?

Wu : Actually there is pressure , to not challenging , in fact, was little challenging , and now (as a teacher) 20 years , on what books are very familiar with the , in fact, it is a little challenging , if given You have a job that you haven't touched . Now I basically have contact with the work I have assigned , so I don't feel which job is challenging , but the pressure is there . There was no pressure in the Mainland before , but it is still stressful to come to Shenzhen .

Savanna : Where were you before ?
Ms. W : Northeast , Liaoning Province .

Savanna : Are you from Liaoning or ?
Ms. W : Jinzhou, Liaoning .

Savanna : What do you think is your main job responsibilities now ?
Ms. W : Teaching and educating people, teaching and educating people can not be separated, it is together, it is impossible to teach is to teach, and to educate people is to educate people. For example, in today's students moving around, some people will collide. Some people will let each other open, that is, every little point is unintentionally raised by you. You can tell him whether you can politely let go when you do this next time, that is, in peacetime. For example, 'the sea', he is two class hours. You are listening to the first class today. What you see, I have created every class. After the creation, he will have performances. When performing, there will be evaluations. Actually, there are The time is the student's evaluation of the students. The evaluation of the student's time is also an education for oneself. He is discovering the advantages and disadvantages of others. The requirement I give them is that when you give evaluations to other groups, you must say the advantages of other groups. What they deserve to improve the space, and ' sea ' song he has a lot of educational value, for example, now human, these are second class of things . I think that music education must be silent. It can be done quietly than any other subject. He is not what I am telling you, just like when I am singing a warm home, he is in the process of singing. I like his family who loves his mom and dad. When he does some exercises, he can comfort him, such as singing Schubert's 'sleep, sleep, my dear baby', I will let them bring a little doll at home, he will Will love to care for the younger

brother and younger brother , love the child, do not need to tell him that you want to care for who and who, how, you want to love the mother, he will touch the hair (doll) he has that feeling.

Savanna : Do you think you will continue to do the job in 10 years ?
Ms. W : Of course , if I am retired by the time , I can still teach , and I can do something else . Certainly willing to do it.

Savanna : Then you think that in terms of achievement, which one do you think is more valuable ?
Ms. W : For an individual , if I am a music teacher and can be recognized by others , I can speak in the music session . This is my achievement , but I have not done it yet . As a teacher's greatest achievement , others can hear your voice , you have your own ideas , let others know you , I think this is my greatest achievement . Your achievement for students is of course my students are not necessarily awarded , but my students have improved over the past six years. He does not hate music. He knows at least what music is. He knows many musicians. He I know that this is a three-shot, four-beat. He knows what music can bring to him. He can comfort his heart. He knows what songs he can sing when he is sad to solve his emotions. I think this is my achievement.

Savanna : So are they high or low for students ?
Wu : regardless of the level in the music classroom , but on the status of China's current education point of view , your extracurricular achievements are the high and low points , because some societies , has blocked the threshold of your ordinary kids come in , because of the need game , the game is Faced with being eliminated , as long as it is a group involved in the competition , he will definitely choose the best child . This is unfair to other children , but in the current utilitarian competition , the teacher must do this . This is also the problem we face , saying that all students can choose the club they like , but it is really the game. At the time , can I make a person with depression or no foundation at all , if there is no prize , if you set a prize, you will see those who board the dance by the master . Good children can go to the highest stage . Of course, he accepted different levels of education ah , sometimes he would invite

experts to direct him , to teach him , other children are not these , so his achievement had been older than some of the other children , other children without these Resources.

Savanna : It 's like some children , ADHD, autism , can they participate in a choir or something like that?
Ms. W : If you are not utilitarian, you can participate in it. You can do it without a prize. In general this school is to give the opportunity , the school flag-raising ceremony is attended every class , like that every child has the opportunity this .

Savanna : Are you raising your flag to sing ?
Wu : class as a unit , the class teacher they want to , want to show what you what , not necessarily sing . Collective .
Savanna : Do you think that children who need extra help , how can they ensure their educational rights as a teacher ?
Ms. W : Don't pay extra attention to him is to ensure his rights . The more you pay attention to him , the more you feel that you are very special , treat each child equally , he makes mistakes , and you criticize , he shows you well. I also praise , I will not let him think that he is special , he screams, I will ask him why he screams , he will cry, I will say , then you must cry for a while . I'm not going to comfort him , he was a long time he now integrated into , he felt nothing special, he will not get up , though he called on other classes , but I do not call the base class , I will praise him for his good work . In my heart, he is an ordinary child. When I don't understand, I will be especially pitiful for such children. I will pay attention to these children, but I find that I am hurting him. I feel that if I am really good to him, what is it like for others? The class has a special child. He should belong to the mentally handicapped, playing the accordion, he only has one finger. But he knows "More than a few meters." Then the team leader did not check him at the time of the inspection, I asked him why you did not check him. He said that he would not. I said that you have to check him. If he plays the game today, he will play the game, and tomorrow he will play '哆来咪发嗦', there will be two more sounds, you will give him a star because he Progress has been made. Because I didn't take care of the previous classes, I don't know if the team leader

didn't check him and didn't care for him . Later, I reported to a group and a group that when everyone progressed to several sections, I realized that I didn't check him . I treated him equally . These children often need you to treat him equally . If you care too much about him , he will feel that I am special . He will feel that I should be like this .

Savanna : So how do you understand the inclusiveness and equality of education ?
Ms. W : Thank you for your question and let me have a lot of thoughts. What we lack most now is thinking. I think what I just said is equality of education, treating every child equally, no one is special. I have to see all the children in my eyes, there are students in my eyes, no students who make mistakes, but you have to tell him where you are wrong.

Savanna : policy , as you know , Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province or school , what advice is to help all the children into the local environment go ?
Ms. W : The policy is now to narrow the gap between the school and the school , facing the whole, and treating each student equally for the entire student .

Savanna : What do you think of his implementation ?
Wu : treatment must be different for each area , if remote area of Shenzhen and certainly immeasurably , relatively speaking, Shenzhen higher education certainly , if you say that several key school, he surpasses our school again Higher. There is still no absolute equality, because the students are different. In some schools, he is a famous school. His student source and the quality of his parents are high. Treating such a student directly has already happened. Even some students who are not teachers will come. When students come to ask you, his methods will change. They should not be used as children. The source of students like our students is not so good. Some of them are students next to them. His family quality is not very good. His parents may not know what music is. For these students, you can’t talk to him at the beginning. Speaking of some high-level things, you have to teach him a little bit about the relationship with the students. Second, there is a relationship with the teachers. The teachers in the key schools are definitely better, but now they are gradually shrinking, but there are still differences.

Savanna : What do you think of the expectations of parents and their children in terms of the hope that schools or teachers will create an inclusive learning environment in the school?
Ms. W : What students hope most is that teachers treat them equally and fairly . This is what students expect most.

Savanna : that parents are aware or concerned about , the student will not be integrated into the school this thing right ?
Ms. W : Of course , parents only hope that the teacher is only good for my own children . Parents don't want to treat each child equally , they want you to be better for my child . But as a teacher, it is fair and just.

Savanna : What kind of good do you think is good for children ?
Ms. W : Every parent is different. Now parents are asking for a very high demand . Now parents will ask you , unlike you used to call or lick his child , he will say that the teacher thank you , I will go home to discipline. But now it won't, because it is true that the teacher's qualifications are not good now. Now the quality of the parents is different. Some parents may have a very high quality. He has a kind of distrust. He does not trust the teacher to teach better than me. He does not trust. The teacher can treat my child like this. But the communication between parents and teachers is to let them come to the class and let them trust the teacher. There are some things that cause the parents to distrust the teacher. If the parents trust you, even if you don’t care about his children, To say that if he does not trust you, even if you praise his children, he will not think that you are true. Mainly trust.

Savanna : What do you think of the educational atmosphere in the music class ?
Ms. W : Okay . To be improved, sometimes I think they playing playing crazy up , is still to be admitted , admitted their 'mad', they are still very fond of music .

Savanna : Can every child be involved ?
Ms. W : Yes , let them be themselves. Some kids will be street dancers and want to be rock singers. I will say that you will sing your rock style. Some of him don't

like to move at all. If you let him go, he will sit there. If you don't like to move, I will let him sit as a young literary artist. You will sit there, and you will be immersed in yourself .

Savanna : Did the children with the extra educational needs I mentioned earlier have encountered in your educational experience ?
Ms. W : Every class will have , I don’t know why it is so much now . Is it eating, or is the gene changing? Why didn't we have it when we were young? It was really rare when we were young, and now it is getting more and more. If you are a doctor, you should study why.

Savanna : Then do you interact with these kids privately ?
Ms. W : Too little , because I am teaching too many classes now . If I am a class teacher, I will definitely .

Savanna : So how many classes do you teach now ?
Ms. W : 6 classes.

Savanna: So, are you more than ten lessons a week ?
Ms. W : Yes , because there are rehearsals, early classes and evening classes, there are quite a lot of classes. Last time I had a special child , a single-parent child , when we sang a warm home , he kept groaning , and then we finished singing, I saw how he was still squatting , I saw him crying , crying very badly. I asked him why he cried . He said : Teacher, I don't want to sing this song . My mother left this morning. My mother said that he will never come back. I don't know if his mother went out to work or how Mom and Dad are. Later he told me that his mother was not at home and that Dad took him alone. He is always the earliest one from the whole school. I sat there at 7:30 , and he was alone there. Every time he was his grandfather, a grandfather of a very large age sent him. So he sang that song very sad. Later, I gave him the call. I said that you can call me if you have something. You can call me when you want your mother, or you want to go there. You call me and I will take you to play . But he never called me, maybe because I am not his class teacher. At that moment I was very distressed by him. But I didn't follow up, I just gave him a phone number. Didn't do anything for him.

Savanna : What do you think music and dance education , can help these children to integrate them into the community to go , not rejected it ?
Ms. W : Certainly , this is what the music itself can bring to him. It is not brought by the teacher . I want the teacher to bring him . It is a method that requires a teacher . It requires a teacher to lead him . Some teachers will let children hate music lessons. . He likes to sing very much , but he doesn't like music lessons . Some kids like dancing , but he doesn't like dance teachers . This is a ubiquitous phenomenon . The music itself is beautiful, the music will definitely smooth the children, the concert brings an emotional link to everyone , and the teacher blocks the link or connects it . I think the teacher is very important, some teachers just put It broke down. If we mechanically went to teach the contents of the book, we came in to sing this song, and after singing, the students would not like music.

Savanna : Is there a training for teachers now ? Not just the things in the textbook , will you teach everyone to pay attention to each child and to accommodate each child ?
Ms. W : This , I believe everyone knows, and this training is a must. I didn’t know how to do it before I did the training. I learned Dalcroze and learned Kodak. Orff
I only learned a fur at first, I think it is very fun to have children involved, just want to enrich my class, I don't want to go to the child's soul to comfort. The more you teach at the back, it's all trivial, you will find that I am very important. I will tell my children that music lessons are more important than words. I think music is really important, but no one understands this important. It is really important for the development of a child's life. Teachers must accept such education, teachers must approve me to accommodate them. Because not every teacher can do it every child.

Savanna : In your education, have you met with a bias?
Ms. W : This has not happened yet . The child you just said, the child with autism and depression, has encountered it , but he has not encountered it before . They tend to be slow to accept this , for example, I just say the mentally retarded is , maybe he liked, but he was slow to accept . I just said that the child with autism, the child who screamed, he is very smart and very smart, but his

cleverness is reflected in his logic or mathematics , and he is also very quick to learn the music tone . I didn't see how he learned. Sometimes I didn't listen to me when I taught, but he would play at the end. He learned very quickly.

Appendix Seven: A sample of reseacher's diary

Date: 17/05/2019
Location: Yiqiang Primary School
[Yiqiang Primary School is located in Futian district and it is a public school. It was founded in 2008. The school is 5-minute walking away to the Futian district government, and 3-minute walking away to the Futian district Education Bureau. I had 4 participants here and they are Mr. Xu, Miss Chen, Mr. Xiang and Mrs. Zhang. Miss Chen and Mr. Xu are assistant teachers, Miss Zhang and Mr. Xiang are music teachers].
Subject: Music class participation
The size of class: 32 children, 1 music teacher (Mr.Xi)
The length of this music: 45 mins
The grade: 6
Classroom facilities (normal classroom): project, pc (only for teacher), stereo….
The topic of this music class: The prelude, interlude and postlude of songs
The content of this music class:
He taught children to distinguish the difference among prelude, interlude and postlude in a piece of song. Moreover, he explained the differences by giving two example songs; they are Chinese Folk music, 'Ode to the Yellow River' and 'Sing a Song for Our Party'.
First, it came up with music appreciation. He played the prelude of 'Ode to the yellow river' and asked children to think about what they can feel when they were listening to this prelude. Several children were picked to answer this question by volunteering. Then, he concluded children's answers and explained the function of prelude in songs. He also sang the song and gave the demonstration. Afterward, he used the same way to explain the interlude and postlude. Second, he introduced the background of the singer, lyricist and composer, also he talked about the background of the composition for this song. For the purpose of demonstration and analysis the songs, he played the each piece of music about 6-8 times, sometimes, children are required to follow to sing whey he played the music. At the end, he draw conclusion by asking children questions about what they discussed in the class.
(This is the teacher-centred method, and children are free to talk and ask questions. Children are able to read the spectrogram and sing songs. He was

passionate, active and professional in the class. Children were encouraged to participate in and get involved in class. Children had abilities for identification of spectrogram and they can sing a song straightaway with a spectrogram. At the end of this class, children were able to sing these two songs).

He was standing at the stage all the time, and he had a teaching notes for reminding himself.

I was invited to attend a music class which was led by Mr. Xiang. I was sitting in the back of classroom with another 2 teachers who are also from this school, and each of us hold an assessment form for valuing the qualification of this class. There were some standards as follow:

The textbook <Music (numbered musical notation)> (recyclable):

Guangdong Education Publication Press publishes the music textbook, and the Education Bureau reviewed and approved it in 2013. There are 11 lessons for one term, they are:

Lesson 1. Hands in hands (We need to be connected with each other in this world)

Lesson 2, Descendants of the dragon

Lesson 3, Music appreciation --- Yellow River Cantata

Learning how to play the clarionet

Lesson 4, Dance and music

Irish tap dance music

Lesson 5, Chorus in two different styles

Lesson 6, Chinese folk songs in all ages

Lesson 7, The orchestral music --- The violin and cymbals

Lesson 8, Sing a song and love a song

Lesson 9, Today's topic

Lesson 10, The musician --- Schubert

Lesson 11, --- The Perking Opera < The little Buffalo Cowboy>

Resource room

5 areas: reading area, calm corner, assessing area, gaming area, sandplay area

Two teachers --- One internal employee and one external employee

For the first time I visited the resource room, there were no teacher. The internal teacher was out of school for a very important meeting, and the external teacher was in class. The gatekeeper phoned them, then the external

teacher came and the gatekeeper left. I saw the external teacher was kind of anxious and seemed to have something to worry about, so I asked him are you ok? He told me he was looking after a boy in the class and the class hadn't finished, he was worried about the boy. Therefore, I told him I can wait so he back to the class and came back to me in 25 mins. I can feel he came before the class finished was because he got the phone call from the gatekeeper, but he was still thinking about the boy he was helping with in the class. I can feel he is responsible to those children he helps.

When me and the gatekeeper waiting outside of the resource room, we had a short conversation. I introduced my research to her, and she was so interested in. She told me she has knowledge about inclusive education, and she talked about her experience in Canada for school visits. She said, in Canada, the primary school they went has nice inclusive environment for children, and teachers do everything for helping children to approach their potentials. She saw a child in the classroom was so naughty and emotional, he couldn't sit in quietly, then the teacher gave him enough time to play and relax until he calmed down. The gatekeeper said this impressed her and she felt so touched.