Advancing Inclusive and Special Education in the Asia-Pacific

Wendi Beamish
Mantak Yuen *Editors*

The Inclusion for Students with Special Educational Needs across the Asia Pacific

The Changing Landscape

Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education
Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

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Advancing Inclusive and Special Education in the Asia-Pacific

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Policies and practices of inclusion in education were adopted in the Asia-Pacific region somewhat later than in the West; and they are still evolving as schools, colleges and universities are coming to grips with the challenge of addressing increasing diversity among students. There is a growing awareness in the region that there is a need for improved channels of communication for academics and researchers to share more effectively their findings in order to influence developments in the field of inclusive and special education.

Many institutions in the region have academic groups working and researching in this field, often in semi-isolation. For example, the following institutions are all separately involved: University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, The Education University of Hong Kong, University of Queensland, University of Monash, University of Canterbury, Beijing Normal University, National Taiwan Normal University, University of Macau, Nangyang Technological University, and the Korean University, and as well as other universities. The academics concerned are eager for an outlet for their publications, and for ongoing communication with other professions in different countries and cities. Equally important, teachers, students on graduate courses, special education practitioners, counsellors, school psychologists, and school principals are eager to obtain information and guidance on meeting student's diverse educational and personal needs. Inclusive education has been described as '…a multifaceted practice that deals with value and belief systems, invites and celebrates diversity and difference arising from family background, social class, gender, language, socio-economic background, cultural origin or ability, with human rights and social justice at its core' (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011, p.1). Inclusion is thus a core part of the notion of 'education for all' agenda; and it is far more than the placement of students with special educational needs in regular classrooms (UNESCO, 2003). That is also the view that will be presented consistently within these books.

Book proposals for this series may be submitted to the Publishing Editor: Melody Zhang E-mail: melodymiao.zhang@springer.com

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Preface

Inclusive education is a complex reform that involves far more than the remodelling of special education provisions and practices. For over two decades, policy makers, education system administrators, school leaders, and teachers around the globe have been grappling with ways to actualise this reform in classrooms. This book offers accounts of how inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN) is being implemented in ten geographical areas throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The various authors have adopted historical, political, systemic, and socio-cultural perspectives to provide insights into the challenges faced within the region as different cultures and settings manage the shift to inclusive schooling.

The book is organised into three parts, each with a distinct focus. Part I contains an introductory chapter which provokes critical thinking about inclusive education within the Asia-Pacific region from multiple standpoints: societal attitudes and cultural beliefs; models of disability and ensuing service provisions; the effects of legislation and policy; and the persistent barriers to inclusion and future directions. Part II presents chapter-length case studies from the Maldives, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea, Japan, British Columbia, New Zealand, and Australia. These case studies consider the inclusion of students with SEN through a context-sensitive examination of guiding legislation, policies, and local research; existing teacher preparation programmes and professional development for practising teachers; valued approaches and practices in schools; current barriers; and recommendations for moving the inclusive education agenda forward. Taken together, these contributions provide a comprehensive picture of how inclusion for students with SEN has developed and is continuing to evolve in education systems across the region. Part III comprises a final reflective chapter which analyses the context-specific information reported in the Part II case studies to produce a cogent synthesis of recurring themes and unique approaches related to implementing inclusion, together with a set of generic recommendations to advance the inclusive schooling of students with SEN in the Asia-Pacific region.

We hope that the experiences, insights, and recommendations shared in this book are of interest to a broad audience of professionals and advocates who strive to

improve the educational options and outcomes for students with SEN. Additionally, the book offers guidance to educational decision makers at national, systems, and school levels as it reveals policy-to-practice gaps and examples of policy slippage. The authors also identify important research-to-practice gaps and thus provide social science researchers with starting points for much-needed investigations.

Finally, we thank our chapter authors for their valued contributions written during the present COVID pandemic.

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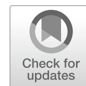
Part I
Introduction

Chapter 1
The Nature of Inclusion in the Asia-Pacific



Dianne Chambers

Abstract This chapter will introduce the concepts and policies of inclusion and inclusive practice from a historical and ideological background across the Asia-Pacific region. Inclusion in its broadest and narrowest forms will be examined within the context of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole. While the region is unique in many ways, it has also been subject to influence from other countries around the world. Inclusive education policy has generally developed in the Asia-Pacific from other international contexts, and although it may be prescriptive, the actualisation of policy is often problematic for schools and educators. Countries within the Asia-Pacific region vary greatly in regard to where they are in the journey towards inclusion, with some having great success with inclusive practice and others struggling against seemingly overwhelming barriers. There are many affordances and barriers that are experienced on this journey, and these will be examined in greater depth.

Historically, ideologies which lead to the acceptance of others have struggled to become mainstream, and some of the reasons for the difficulty in changing attitudes towards inclusion will be examined. Attitudinal change can be very difficult, particularly when it is working against inbuilt cultural stereotypes and norms. Cultural norms within the Asia-Pacific region may include issues of ownership of classroom spaces, infrastructure issues, poverty, and cultural beliefs around those with disability. Strategies to address some of the difficulties in changing attitudes towards those who are marginalised will be examined. The chapter will conclude with discussion of future directions for inclusion in the region.

Keywords Asia-Pacific · Cultural beliefs · Inclusion · Inclusive education · Policy

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Introduction

While this chapter provides a general overview of education and inclusion in the Asia-Pacific region, consideration needs to be given to the incredibly diverse range of countries across the region which range from those with extremely low gross domestic product (GDP) to those with high GDP which are relatively wealthy (OECD, 2020). While GDP is an indicator of a country's overall wealth, it does not mean that this wealth is equally distributed. The emergence of a global health threat (COVID-19), during 2020, has also had an impact on many country's growth. Potential impact on social unrest should also be considered in the context of ongoing efforts in the area of education, among others (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2020; UNICEF, 2020). It is acknowledged that generalisation across the wide range of countries in this region is not possible and individual country contexts will dictate the situation in that country. Specific examples of inclusion processes and policy in selected countries will be provided as examples of practice across the region.

The Asia-Pacific Region

The Asia-Pacific region is a geographic area which comprises of approximately 53 countries incorporating East-Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Oceania region including Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia (Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies [APCSS], 2020; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [UNESCAP], 2018a). The exact number of countries comprising the region varies according to the context and source of information. Some of the countries in the region include those noted by the World Bank (2020) as having lower middle-income economies (i.e. Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, the Philippines), some who have upper middle-income economies (i.e. China, Indonesia, Malaysia), and a few who have high-income economies (i.e. Australia, Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, New Zealand).

The population in this region totals over four billion people across a wide variety of cultures. According to the UNESCAP (2018a), around 690 million people in the Asia-Pacific region identify as having a disability, and many are disadvantaged in the areas of education, employment, and social and community inclusion as a result of their disability. Perceptions of people with disability as being 'less' or having severely limited abilities are common in countries where disability is viewed negatively.

The region boasts great diversity of culture and language, which is often evident between and within countries. Some countries and territories identify as having predominantly Western-style cultures and others as Asian or Eastern-style cultures with the differences between the two demonstrating the breadth of approaches throughout the Asia-Pacific region in areas of religion, freedom of choice, traditional approaches, and education (see Table 1.1; Michelini, 2020). Some countries have a

Table 1.1 Common differences between Eastern and Western culture and education (adapted from Michelini, 2020)

Area	Predominantly Eastern-style	Predominantly Western-style
Religion	Examples include Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Islam	Examples include Christianity, Judaism, Islam
Individual choice vs family considerations	Decisions often made by the family for the person	More flexibility for making individual decisions
Liberal vs conservative approach	More traditional – taboo topics (sex, childbirth, illness), feelings contained (not displayed). Little compromise on customs and traditions	Less based on tradition—more open in conversation, feelings expressed openly
Education	Often passive receivers of information. Required to work hard to achieve. Teacher has the authority. Less interactive	Creativity is given prominence. Individual, interactive approach to learning; critical thinking is encouraged
Education of children with disability	Segregated education—students are often excluded from mainstream classrooms (considered logical)	Inclusion in mainstream education is a right. Strong efforts made to include all students

multicultural population leading to elements of both Western and Eastern approaches being evident in daily life. When discussing educational opportunities for people with disability, this diversity presents both benefits and barriers, which will be explored further later.

Cultural Norms

A focus on collectivism in some countries can have an impact on the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community, both positively (everyone has a role) and negatively (some roles are not available to all). The roles undertaken by each member of the community are often defined based on traditional roles (i.e. wife, mother, labourer, provider), and people who are not able to fulfil these roles may not be valued. Some families and communities believe a child with a disability brings negative stigma and bad omens, and, thus, they keep the child within the home, rather than have them access the community. Landry et al. (2015) describes research undertaken in Sri Lanka that examined mothers' experiences of having a child with a disability. In response to a question about the origin of their child's disability, many mothers reported that the child was disabled as a result of sin committed by the mother, father, or child (often in a past lifetime), with one mother indicating that looking at a person with a disability while she was pregnant was related to her child's disability. Similar descriptions have been provided by mothers in Bangladesh, including their child being possessed by ghosts (Maloni et al., 2010) which accounts for their unusual behaviour.

In China, similarly, many families hide children with a disability, rarely taking them out of the home, to avoid coming into contact with those who may be derisive of the family (Chiu et al., 2013). Chiu et al. (2013) describe stigma that exists in China in regard to the character of the individual (such as having weak morals), the person being punished for poor behaviour in a previous life, and failing to carry out duties to one's ancestors. Specific foods such as mutton and rabbit are seen to have a negative effect on the development of the child and any disability that may be evident. In addition, eating inappropriate foods during pregnancy can be described as a cause for disability, and many cold foods, such as ice cream, cold drinks, and watermelon, and wet-hot foods, such as pineapple, mango, and shrimp which may affect the body's qi (harmony), are avoided for this reason (Teh, 2017). Much of the stigma relating to people with disability have origins in the teachings of Buddhism and Confucianism.

There are many cultural norms regarding education that are apparent within the Asia-Pacific region. These norms may include issues of ownership of classroom spaces, infrastructure issues, and cultural beliefs around those with disability (Landry et al., 2015). These issues may impact significantly on the acceptance of students with disability in mainstream classroom settings in some countries.

Teacher's Authority

Uncertain ownership of curriculum and classroom spaces, along with direct challenges to the teacher's authority, can lead to conflict and resentment in the classroom which is not productive for the teaching and learning in that space (Forlin, 2019). The teacher's presence in, and ownership of, the classroom may be challenged by the employment of additional staff who are often required to support the needs of students with disability, or assist the teacher, within the classroom. In countries where the class sizes can be very large (e.g. India, Bangladesh), the teacher is generally considered the person 'in charge' who holds the knowledge and has high status. To have this authority usurped by an additional person in the classroom is seen as unacceptable or as a reflection that the teacher is not coping with the demands of the classroom, leading to possible loss of the face and shame.

Infrastructure

In some countries, such as Australia and New Zealand, legislation requires that school infrastructure must meet the requirements of all students who attend the school, including students with sensory and physical impairments. Appropriate infrastructure in these countries may consist of lifts and ramps for students who use wheelchairs, tactile paving for students with vision impairment, and sound-field systems for students with hearing impairment. Effective school infrastructure and

design have shown to improve educational outcomes for students and consists of building both infrastructure (Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, 2014), environmental design (New South Wales Government, 2018), and classroom design (Finley & Wiggs, 2016). In countries such as Australia and New Zealand, there has been a move away from teacher-centred classrooms to student-centred classrooms. This approach is less evident in other countries in the Asia-Pacific, many of whom rely on a teacher-centred approach to classroom instruction and, therefore, classroom design which facilitates this approach.

In lower-income countries, there tends to be less emphasis on school infrastructure and more emphasis on accessing an available space, student school attendance, and ensuring teachers are available, although the teachers may have only rudimentary qualifications (if at all). The reduced emphasis on school infrastructure is often due to a lack of funding for education and the internal country infrastructure (i.e. roads, transport; Gurara et al., 2018). As a result, students with disability may have difficulty accessing schooling due to an inability to get to the school (poor transport, long distances), inability for the family to pay for schooling due to other medical costs (poverty), and inability to navigate the school environment itself (Landry et al., 2015). These infrastructure concerns do not take into account the classroom environment or curriculum adaptations that may be required for students to be successful learners (Barrett et al., 2017).

Cultural Beliefs

Cultural beliefs and perceptions around students with disabilities, including the capacity of students to learn, particularly students with an intellectual or cognitive disability, impact on the acceptance and inclusion of students in mainstream classrooms (Munyi, 2012). Often these perceptions arise from misunderstanding of the disability or prior cultural beliefs that the person with a disability is unable to be a productive part of society (or even in some cases that they are evil or possessed), and should not be allocated, sometimes scarce, resources (Maloni et al., 2010). In addition, there is often much less emphasis on individuality in some Asian societies, with a greater focus being placed on conformity with the group, and group wellbeing (Thomas & Thomas, 2002).

Brief History of Disability Services over Time

Historical perception of disability and provision of services in the Asia-Pacific for people with disability has been similar to descriptions of ancient Greek times, where people with disability were seen as being diseased, imperfect, or possessed by demons and babies born with deformities were often left to die (Peterson & Hittie, 2010). People with obvious disability at that time were generally shunned and

rejected by society at large. A few scholars demonstrated an interest in 'curing' the person with a disability, although this interest was not always altruistic. There was often fear associated with people with disability as it was not known why they were 'different' and what could not be explained (even inappropriately) was often rejected (Salend & Garrick Duhaney, 2011).

The middle ages in Europe (approximately fifth to the fifteenth century) were a time of contradiction, as individuals with disability were treated very poorly, with treatments such as trepanning (drilling into the skull to release evil spirits) being commonly used along with rejection from the society, while at the same time people with disability were often the recipients of care provided by the Church (Irvine et al., 2013). During this era, the priest, who may have been the only person in the local area who could read and write, was seen as an authority figure and had great influence on how people with disability were treated, which could vary considerably. Due to the significance of the Church at this time, the period is often known as a time of the 'religious model' of disability (Eyler, 2010). Miles (2000), in his fascinating discussion of disability over the millennium in South Asia, suggests that around the same time, there were a number of ways that people with disability were treated, some of which align with the European experience. For example, he states that there were a number of different responses to disability, ranging from care provided by the women in the family to the development of charitable institutions for people who were poor or disabled and to people with disabilities being provided with tasks in the community appropriate to their ability (i.e. collecting firewood).

Medical Model of Disability

In the nineteenth and twentieth century, throughout both Europe and across Asia, the scientist and doctor became the person who often dictated to parents how their children with disability should be treated. The focus at this time was on physiological factors and impairments, with medical treatment and scientific research being the primary responses to disability (Hogan, 2019). This model of provision is known as the 'medical model.' Around this same time, there was an increase in institutions for people with disability and mental health issues, and parents were often strongly encouraged to place their child in an institution, forget about them, and have other children. In Asia, there was also an increase in aid and organisations (often from Europe or America) that aimed to provide medical support and treatment for people with disabilities, although this was often implemented without consideration of the indigenous peoples' prior history or knowledge and with little integration of cultural aspects (Miles, 2000).

In many regions throughout the Asia-Pacific, the medical model remains as the approach taken towards people with disability, with the disability seen as an impairment or a negative characteristic that needs to be cured (Kuansong, 2010). In 1980, the World Health Organization (WHO) released the *International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps* which focused on providing

information for professionals to consider the long-term impact of disability and to promote early identification and prevention strategies to address environmental and societal barriers for people with disability. Further iterations of the classification framework have emphasised the functional aspect of disability and illness. The *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF; WHO, 2021a) makes some attempt to bridge the medical model and social model of disability through the inclusion of information about environmental factors and context that impact on disability and health. In order to assess restrictions resulting from an impairment or disability, the WHO (2021b) developed an instrument known as the *World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule* (WHODAS 2.0), which uses responses from people with disability to determine the nature of the disability and impacts on their functioning. These tools have been used in the Asia-Pacific, along with other regions, to determine links between disability and quality of life as well as inform public policy (Federici et al., 2009).

Social Model of Disability

The social model of disability found favour in the 1980s in many Western countries and was a reaction to the stigmatisation and medical nature of approaches to disability, which often failed to address the social impacts on the person (Hogan, 2019). Proponents of the social model of disability (which is a prominent model in some countries in the Asia-Pacific, but not all) state that disability resulted from an impairment as a result of the society not accommodating the needs of the person. The school of thought underpinning the social model of disability is that disability is a social-political construct and as such is imposed on the individual by society (Hogan, 2019). This view separates the impairment from the disability and has implications for including people with disability in society at large.

Rights-Based Model

Further movement in human rights has seen rise of the rights-based model of disability, where people with disability are deemed to have a right to access fundamental freedoms on the same basis as people without disability (Asia Pacific Forum, 2018). While the social model highlighted the social and discrimination barriers for people with disability, the rights-based model attends to the right of each individual to access education, services, and communities, providing guidelines for progress.

Inclusion and Disability

As previously noted, cultural norms and traditional approaches to supporting people with disability across the Asia-Pacific region may have led to the exclusion of many people (Chiu et al., 2013; Landry et al., 2015). This exclusion meant that people with disability found it difficult to access services, if any were available, and were often not welcome in public places. An attitude of pity and revulsion towards people with obvious physical disabilities was not uncommon and may still be evident in some societies.

The UNESCO (2006), in *Guidelines for Inclusion*, describes the movement from exclusion of people with disability in community life (and at times all aspects of care) through the processes of segregation and integration to inclusion of people with disability in all facets of life and community. In order to study the development of inclusion, an examination of how it developed as a concept is important. In broad form, inclusion refers to all people being a part of the community and culture of a country, regardless of their background or ability. This understanding of inclusion refers to diverse individuals who may have been denied opportunities to access society on an equal basis, due to their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, disability, or a combination of these characteristics (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2014; Forlin et al., 2009; Forlin & Chambers, 2017, 2020). Inclusion as a concept is a relatively 'new' way of approaching disability when viewed in a long-term historical context.

In 2015, the United Nations (UN) announced *the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which aimed to build upon the work of the previous Millennium Development Goals and, of particular relevance, also aimed to build inclusive societies and protect human rights (UNICEF, 2020). The journey to fulfil the aims of the Sustainable Development Goals is aspirational, although fraught with challenges. While many of the challenges are not insurmountable, they will require specific effort and determination on the part of individual countries in the Asia-Pacific region to work towards the goals, particularly in regard to resourcing education for all students, including those with disabilities, but also including learners from other marginalised groups. Sustainable Development Goal 4 '. . . aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all', and Section 5 specifically details the necessity to '. . . by 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations' (UNICEF, 2020, para. 5).

Specific to the Asia-Pacific region is the *Incheon Strategy* developed in 2012 (UNESCAP, 2018a) which was to guide *the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022*. It built on *the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) and provided a set of 10 specific development goals, 27 targets, and 62 indicators '. . . to track progress towards improving the quality of life, and the fulfilment of the rights, of the region's 690 million persons with

disabilities, most of whom live in poverty' (UNESCAP, 2018b, p. 3). *The Beijing Declaration*, including the action plan to accelerate the implementation of the Incheon strategy, was further adopted in 2017, midway in the decade of persons with disabilities (UNESCAP, 2018b). The declaration made clear the policy actions that governments and other stakeholders should take in alignment with strategic guidance. *The Incheon Strategy* and *Beijing Declaration* together with the Sustainable Development Goals and the CRPD promote effective development of people with disabilities in all facets of society, including education (UNESCO, 2015).

Special Education

While the focus of this chapter is on inclusive education, it should also be acknowledged that in some Asian-Pacific countries, special education or the provision of education for students with disabilities outside of the mainstream classroom is routinely provided. Mizunoya et al. (2016) noted that approximately 85% of primary-aged students with disability in low-income countries have never attended school; therefore, initial access, even in the form of separate education, may be an initial consideration for these students, and a movement towards further inclusive practice may be more tenable as a result.

Inclusion in Education

In a narrower form, inclusion has become synonymous with the placement and provision of education for students with disability. The historical actions and events which have been described contributed to the emphasis on increasing inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all facets of society, including education (see Fig. 1.1). As with any psychosocial construct, inclusion has a variety of meanings and definitions (Berlach & Chambers, 2011), and it is often viewed through a specific lens particular to individual cultures and societies. Definitions of inclusion vary across countries, along with the understandings that these definitions bring to the practices and procedures employed in schools. According to Florian (2014), inclusive education is seen as an equitable approach to education for all students, including students with disability. The UNICEF (n.d.) describes inclusive education as an effective way to ensure that all students are provided with learning opportunities and that it '... means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded' (para. 5). This definition of inclusive education is not adopted by all countries with varying interpretations found in government and educational documents throughout the Asia-Pacific.

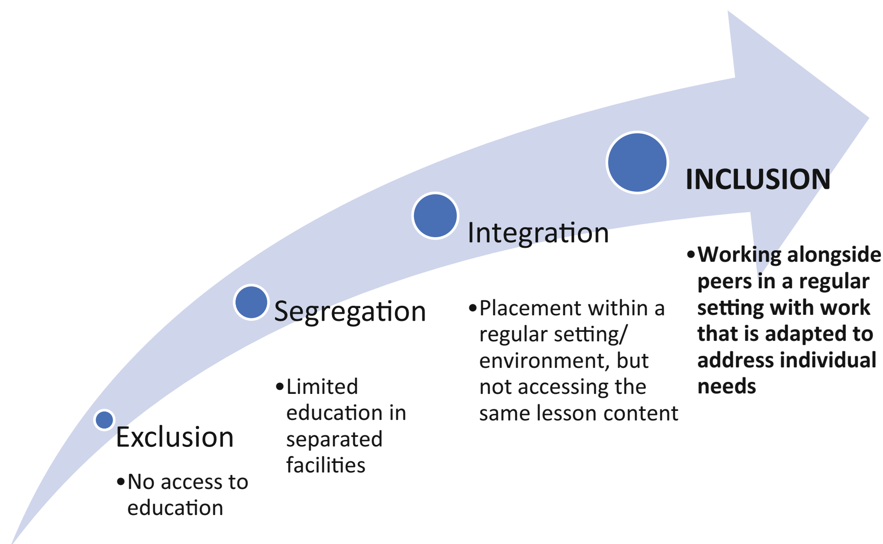

Fig. 1.1 Process of inclusion over time (adapted from UNESCO, 2006, p. 24)

Exclusion

Exclusion of students with disability meant that children remained at home and were not provided with access to schooling or community support. This practice may still be evident in some countries or within specific communities in the Asia-Pacific. It is not until the 1950s that access to education for students with disability was routinely offered in many countries, albeit in settings that were separate from their peers (Sharma & Deppeler, 2005; Sharma et al., 2019). Historically, students with disability in the Asia-Pacific region may have been excluded from education, for a variety of reasons, including perception of inability to learn, poverty which is exacerbated by disability and vice versa, and lack of understanding of impairment and disability. Education when it was provided in these contexts may have been in a segregated context, where the student was not a part of the general education system, but was provided with some educational services in a separate setting (often known as a special school or school for those with a specific disability—i.e., School for the Blind).

Normalisation

In the 1970s, movement away from segregated settings for people with disabilities (including separate educational facilities, institutions, and asylums) began, with strong impetus from the concept of 'normalisation' (ensuring people with disability

had access to as 'normal' a life as possible; Wolfensberger, 1972) and the increasing social justice movement which was intensifying in many Western countries (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2014). The emphasis on social justice, which underpins the rights-based model of education, meant that individual rights and human rights for all became a stronger focus for many countries in the Asia-Pacific, some more rapidly than others (Asia Pacific Forum, 2018).

Access to Education

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO) was released in 1994 and was immediately effective in drawing attention to the schooling needs of students with disability around the world. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific recognise the Salamanca Statement as a pivotal point in the education of students with disability. Inclusive education policy and legislation have been developed by many countries in the Asia-Pacific which relate specifically to the inclusion of students with disability, generally consistent with other international contexts and their responsibilities as signatories of the United Nations Convention and Recommendations. Of particular significance is the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD*;* United Nations, 2006). Article 4 of the CRPD details the obligations of countries who are signatories (and who have ratified the convention) to ensure that the rights of people with disability are provided and maintained. Respect for difference and freedom for all are inherent in the convention, and respect for the dignity of individuals is paramount. Article 24 highlights the need to ensure people with disability have equal opportunity to access education, including lifelong learning opportunities, to ensure they are able to develop to their fullest potential. This article highlights that students with disability should not be excluded from general education systems, but should be provided with an inclusive, quality primary, and secondary education.

Legislation and Policy Development

To address the CRPD and preceding UN documents, some countries, including many in the Asia-Pacific region, responded by developing or consolidating legislation and policy. As there are numerous countries in the Asia-Pacific, a few examples of this legislation will be provided here. In Australia, for example, the *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Australian Government, 2005) articulate the measures that all education providers must meet to accommodate people with disabilities in learning. These standards sit under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Australian Government, 1992), which cover a wide range of areas relating to the elimination of discrimination against people with disability in work,

accommodation, and education and regarding the provision of goods and services. This legislation is rights-based and seeks to promote the rights of people with disability.

Similarly, legislation in India has been enacted to support the country's ratification of the CRPD. *The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016* (RPWD; Ministry of Law and Justice, 2016, Chap. 3, Sections 16 and 17) state that all educational institutions should provide inclusive education to students with disability. For students with disabilities, this provision includes admission to schools without discrimination, accessible facilities, reasonable accommodations, and modifications to support their needs and appropriate transport to access schooling. While the legislation is in place and appropriately incorporates the sense of the CRPD, there are still many students with disability (or who live in poverty) who do not access appropriate education in India, often due to poor teaching training and lack of resources (Bhatnagar & Das, 2013). Singal (2019) discusses the need to ensure that context is considered when addressing education facilities, as inclusive practices cannot '... be implemented in the same manner, in different social, cultural and economic contexts' (p. 836).

In 2009, the Philippines initiated a strategy, *Inclusive Education as A Strategy for Increasing Participation Rate of Children* (DO 72.s), to address the educational needs of the 2.2 million children with disabilities, many who did not have access to education and who lived in rural areas. This strategy guaranteed the right of these students to receive an education in an appropriate educational setting (Republic of the Philippines, Department of Education, 2009). Subsequent to the strategy, a number of legislative documents, including Senate Bill No. 1732, *Inclusive Education for Children and Youth with Special Needs Act* (Congress of the Republic of the Philippines, 2018), have been introduced into the parliament but have yet to be accepted. These bills address the need to support children and youth with disability in accessing inclusive education. Currently, one in seven students in the Philippines has a disability, with access to education being very limited (UNICEF, 2018).

Many students with disability, nevertheless, have never attended school, and a report by Mizunoya et al. (2016) based on data from 15 countries around the world found that disability was more of a barrier to education than any other factor. While many countries in the Asia-Pacific have adopted the terminology of inclusion, some are implementing integrative practices (placement in a classroom), rather than truly inclusive practice, where the child is fully incorporated into the curricular and social environment of the school and classroom. Low-income countries have been reliant on international funding to support education, inclusive education in particular (Carrington et al., 2019; Forlin, 2019; Sharma et al., 2019), and may struggle to continue to do so due to a reduction in funding as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, potentially impacting on progress made to date.

While there are some uncertain times ahead, countries such as India, Cambodia, Australia, New Zealand, Macao, and the Philippines strive to ensure that appropriate knowledge and practices are used to support students within the confines of the education systems. This author has had the privilege of travelling to these countries to provide some guidelines and training for education systems and universities

around inclusive education while always being conscious of the country-specific situation, legislation, training opportunities, and potential constraints on resources and to not impose a particular view or solution. While the training and conversation are always received well, questions from participants often focus on practical ways to include students, given individual circumstances. Where possible, a problem-solving model is suggested which incorporates the available resources and the issue and assists the person to arrive at an appropriate solution while still taking into account the rights of the student with a disability. It is important that teachers and other staff who are in the situation take ownership of any solutions and inclusive practices and make them their own; otherwise, they will not be utilised effectively.

Teacher Training for Inclusive Education in the Asia-Pacific

Countries within the Asia-Pacific region vary greatly in regard to where they are in the journey towards inclusion, with some having great success with inclusive practice and others struggling against seemingly overwhelming barriers. A number of international organisations and researchers draw attention to the barriers which may be experienced by some countries in the Asia-Pacific region in relation to providing appropriate practices to support students in accessing inclusive education (Carrington et al., 2019; Forlin, 2019; UNESCAP, 2018a; UNESCO, 2019).

A major issue across the Asia-Pacific is the challenge faced in providing teachers with the skills needed to implement effective inclusive education. The need for effective preparation of teachers is critical if they are to implement effective and sustainable inclusive education. In low-income countries, though, a lack of suitably trained people to execute inclusive education is particularly prohibitive. In many instances, teacher training institutions do not have teacher educators who themselves have experience or practice in inclusion. This situation compounds the need for countries to implement suitable training programs for teachers such as a program initiated in Vietnam which aimed to embed a train-the-trainer model for teacher educators across the country to support a national core curriculum and pedagogical framework on inclusive education (Forlin & Nguyet, 2010). In the high-income countries across the region, most countries have introduced requirements into their professional standards for qualifying teachers to ensure they meet minimum standards in being able to support learners with disability or special education needs.

Analysis of research from 13 Asia Pacific countries concluded that '. . . a lack of well thought out policy, few resources, and limited understanding of inclusion seemed widespread in the Asia Pacific region' (Sharma et al., 2012, p. 3). The review found further that special education and related service expertise, together with a lack of appropriate teacher education for inclusion, was inhibiting teachers from working inclusively. In summary, the review concluded that:

> The lack of suitably qualified and prepared teachers, poor and/or limited teacher education, somewhat negative attitudes, and an ad hoc approach to preparing or up-skilling teachers was evident in almost every country in the region. Teacher education for inclusion was

> sparse and generally ineffectual with an over reliance on external "experts" who have limited local knowledge and with little evidence of the teacher education being used to help establish localised programs that could be more sustainable. (Sharma et al., 2012, p. 14)

Across all jurisdictions, though, teachers continue to maintain that the training they receive during their pre-service course is insufficient to prepare them for inclusive education, citing that it is tokenistic at best and nonexistent at worse (Forlin, 2019). Even in regions where inclusion has been introduced for many years, teacher education remains insufficient to meet the demands in practice (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012), and ensuring positive attitudes towards inclusive education is vital.

Attitudinal Change

Changing attitudes of teachers and school leaders can be very difficult (Forlin, 2019). Considerable research has been undertaken across the Asia-Pacific regarding the impact of teacher and leader attitudes on inclusive education. Changing attitudes of teachers and school leaders can be exceedingly complicated, though, particularly when this involves working against inbuilt cultural stereotypes and norms, such as those described previously in this chapter (Forlin, 2019; Miles, 2000; Parker, 2001). This difficulty is exacerbated further when the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular classes has not been the norm (Forlin, 2018). To ensure that learners with disabilities are welcomed and accepted in regular schools, it is vital to address any preconceived negative attitudes and expectations about their capabilities.

Successful inclusion requires not only preparing teachers with skills and knowledge but also ensuring that they have appropriate attitudes towards their role in enabling inclusion (Dally et al., 2019; Sharma et al., 2019). In order to build teacher capacity, in-service training is recognised as a key element and must provide teachers with '. . . a positive attitude toward diversity and the acquisition of practical strategies and tools to foster inclusion in the classroom and the school more broadly' (UNESCO, 2019, p. 13). Appropriate conceptualisation and measurement of inclusive practices can aid in recognising areas of need and addressing these effectively (Loreman et al., 2014).

Future Directions

Future directions for inclusive education in the Asia-Pacific region are multifaceted and will require increasing resources and supports for education systems, teachers, parents, and students. Attitudes towards people with disability are improving but still have some way to go to achieve the aims of the rights-based model, which is to

ensure that all people with disability enjoy fundamental human rights, including the right to an education. Along with the change in attitude, teachers need to be provided with appropriate training and material supports to ensure that inclusion, rather than integration or segregation, becomes the norm for students with disability.

In the Asia-Pacific region, there is great scope for collaboration between countries and the sharing of resources and information around practical and culturally sensitive practices for inclusive education. One country's experiences should not be held up as the only way to proceed but can be shared to promote further engagement and conversation around inclusion and the way forward. Progress in inclusive education can move slowly as it requires '. . .change at all levels of society' (UNICEF, n.d., para. 8), but without a push, nothing will move at all.

Advancing inclusive education in the Asia-Pacific will require consideration of the extreme diversity across the region and how this diversity can be harnessed to enhance knowledge and practical strategies to support people with disability, in whatever form is appropriate for the context. It is important that concerted efforts are made at all levels of governance, with strong interagency collaboration providing wraparound supports for people with disability. For countries in the region to develop their own processes and procedures, less reliance on external experts is needed, along with capacity building in the educational sector, so that local cultural considerations play an important role in the provision of services. Although policy is often aligned with international conventions, many countries are still struggling to implement appropriate support structures, through both infrastructure (buildings, transport) and human capital (qualified staff, teacher assistants). In some cases, the divide between urban and rural populations is particularly significant, with students in rural regions missing out on schooling due to the lack of available appropriate placements. Once impetus to achieve schooling for students with disability is in place, individual countries need to also consider how they will measure progress in inclusive education, possibly through the use of progress indicators. While these issues may appear to be overwhelming, with persistence and perseverance, progress has and will continue to be made.

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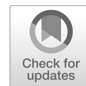
Part II
Inclusive Education in Asia-Pacific Contexts

Chapter 2
The Journey to Inclusive Education: The Story of the Maldives



Ahmed Athif, Loraine McKay, and Wendi Beamish

Abstract In the Maldives, special schools are not part of the schooling system, so all students with special educational needs (SEN) are educated in mainstream schools. The introduction of the inclusive education policy (2013) and the strategic action plan documents (2012–2017) has given momentum to inclusion as a nation-wide education practice. These developments have fostered a shift toward the rights of "every child" and for "all schools" to welcome students with SEN. Currently, every school has at least one teacher with SEN training, and the role of "inclusive ambassadors" has been introduced. Recent structural changes within the Ministry of Education have seen the formation of a new Department of Inclusive Education. This department seeks to promote inclusive education practice across this island nation. In this chapter, the political commitment that has facilitated the movement of inclusive education in the Maldives is examined, together with the legal frameworks that have supported this shift. The relevant research undertaken in this country is then analyzed, and an overview of teacher preparation and support for ongoing professional development for school staff in relation to including and educating students with SEN is provided. Some unique features and models of service delivery in the inclusive education system are presented, as well as a case study illustrating how co-teaching is being practiced at a school. The chapter concludes with reflections on the remaining challenges and future direction for inclusive education in the Maldives, together with a summary statement.

Keywords Inclusion inclusive education · Inclusive practice · Maldives · Policies

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Introduction

Maldives, an archipelago in the Indian Ocean, comprises approximately 1200 coral islands on the equator, clustered in 20 administrative atolls. The population of the Maldives (2020) is estimated at 557,426 people who are geographically dispersed across 194 islands. Maldives is popular for its natural beauty and tourism, using the slogan *the sunny side of life*. Fishing and agriculture also contribute to the nation's economy. Maldivians follow Islam as their religion, and they speak one language, which makes the island nation unique. Maldives is among the developing countries and the highest per capita income in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries.

The public education system in the Maldives involves 14 years of free and compulsory education, regulated by the Ministry of Education (MoE). The majority of the 213 public schools offer classes from lower kindergarten (4 years of age) to Grade 10 (15 years of age). Some schools offer higher secondary teaching to Grade 12 (A level). Students complete international examinations at the end of Grades 10 and 12, but the local language *Dhivehi* and *Religious Studies* are assessed locally in the same grades. There are no special schools in the Maldives education system, so students with special educational needs (SEN) are included in all public schools. Each public school is staffed by at least one teacher dedicated to educating students with SEN.

Currently, the ideal of inclusive education in the Maldives would see all students with SEN, including those students with complex disabilities and learning profiles, placed in public and private schools. However, the reality is that at this time, students with the most complex and severe disabilities are still not attending school, largely due to poor community awareness about the rights of every child to receive an education.

Public and private schools are regulated by the MoE, with students in these schools following the same curriculum framework and sitting the same exam at the end of Grades 10 and 12. There are three types of schools in the private sector: community schools, international schools, and public-private partnership schools. Private education systems have played a crucial role in education across the Maldives prior to the expansion of public schools in 2001. Community leaders in various island communities initiated education by establishing schools for its students. Some families migrated to these islands so that their children could access education.

In the Beginning

Education for students with disabilities in public schools commenced in the early 1980s with a model of *integration.* Prior to this, parents and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) played a vital role in educating student with SEN. Initially, students with hearing, visual, and physical impairment attended public schools.

Later, students with a broader range of disabilities such as intellectual disability and autism were included, as the concept of inclusive education emerged.

Education for students with SEN began in the capital city Malé, and these services were gradually expanded to atolls. Currently, the focus of education is for *every child in all the schools*—that is, all students have the right to feel included and have access to a quality education. Islam is given significance in contemporary education but has always contributed to the Maldives' history of prioritizing education. Well before schools were formalized, community leaders on selected islands played a crucial role in education. These leaders taught the students of the community free of charge, as families could not afford to pay fees due to their low economic status. Programs focused on literacy, numeracy, and religious studies with lessons from the Holy Quran. Education at this time enabled some students with visual impairment to take up roles as prayer leaders at mosques, while students with hearing and physical impairment were given increased opportunity to learn vocational skills.

Moving Forward

In 2015, revision to the national curriculum framework (NCF) included changes that fostered inclusive education. First, the overarching vision of the national curriculum, "every child is prepared for life" (NIE, 2015, p. 8), ensures a focus on the education of all students, including those with SEN. Second, the four shared values of the NCF relating to self, family, and local and global communities encourage the building of global citizenship (Booth & Ainscow, 2011). Finally, recognizing the need to address individual differences in effective pedagogy enables teachers to accommodate the specific educational needs of students with SEN.

Further, inclusivity is one of the eight educational principles embedded in the NCF. The curriculum aims to be "non-discriminatory and to ensure that all students can learn and achieve. It ensures that the learning needs of all students are met, and the individual needs related to aptitudes and talents are addressed" (NIE, 2015, p. 10). Moreover, underpinning the NCF are eight key competencies: practicing Islam, understanding and managing self, thinking critically and creatively, relating to people, making meaning, living a healthy life, using sustainable practices, and using technology and the media. These competencies necessitate a holistic view of teaching and learning and are supported by effective pedagogical dimensions that align with principles of inclusive education. Pedagogical dimensions include creating a positive learning environment that recognizes individual differences, not as a deficit, but as a starting point for learning. In addition, reflective practices are fostered as a way of ensuring that teaching is meaningful, connected, and responsive to individual student needs.

The Legal Framework and Guiding Documents

The Maldives has a strong record of protecting the rights of its citizens, with the Constitution declaring 54 fundamental rights and freedoms, including the right of every person "to an education without discrimination of any kind" (Constitution of the Maldives, 2008, Article 36). In addition, the Constitution provides special protection for the disadvantaged, which includes persons with disabilities. By early 2010, the earlier *Salamanca Statement*, together the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD), was ratified by the government. These global social policies then drove local legislation and policies related to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring the right to education for all children with a disability.

First, the *Disability Act* (Act No. 08/2010) stipulated that persons with a disability should be afforded equal opportunity and effective participation and inclusion in Maldivian society. The Act not only provided a monthly allowance to people with a disability but also gave access to necessary devices such as state-funded hearing aids and wheelchairs. Moreover, Article 20 stated that "persons with disabilities must be provided the opportunity to receive education and training within the education system without any discrimination" and that the "government must provide appropriate opportunities, facilities and equipment for persons with disabilities to attain primary and secondary education on an equal basis."

Second, the related *National Disability Policy* was developed by the Ministry of Gender Family and Social Services and implemented in 2015. This policy (a) assigned prominent roles to the Ministries for Health and Education, (b) signaled the establishment of an early intervention system with mandates to various government sectors, and (c) initiated the formation of the national registry of persons with disabilities. Although adequate budget to implement the Disability Act and National Disability Policy has been provided, specialized services such as speech therapy and occupational therapy for persons with disabilities are very rare in the country, and community concerns remain about the provision of early intervention programs. On the other hand, the education sector has shown notable progress. In the last 10 years, the number of schools providing education for students with SEN has advanced from 15 to 213, and the number of students with SEN attending school has increased from 750 to 4200.

Third, under the direction MoE, the *Inclusive Education Policy* (02/2013) has been developed. This pivotal document declares that students with SEN should be given equal educational opportunities regardless of their disability or condition. Part 3 of the policy ensures that this student group is catered for through adaptation of learning systems and modification of pedagogies, that schools with students with SEN are provided with annual funding per student (USD $162.00) to support IEP implementation, and that special education teachers (hereafter referred to as SEN teachers) are given an additional allowance (USD $6.50 per working day).

Recently, a team of researchers from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Australia, under the leadership of Professor Suzanne Carrington, was

commissioned by MoE to identify the gaps in the inclusive education system of the Maldives and to recommend ways of strengthening systemic provisions. Initially, the QUT team used UNESCO's guiding framework (2017) to analyze the Maldives' inclusive education system and identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps. Recommendations to improve the system were reported in four areas: concepts, policy statements, structures and systems, and practices. Key recommendations included (a) revising terminology to better align with current language on the topic of student diversity and inclusive education, (b) adopting co-teaching and whole school approach as the model of practice, (c) establishing clusters of schools where similar inclusive practices are being implemented, and (d) developing an external mechanism for parents and students to lodge concerns as a component of accountability processes for principals.

Next, consultations and focus group meetings were held in the capital Malé and in atolls to inform recommendations for advancing inclusive education in the Maldives and to identify the training needs of relevant staff within the education system. Community consultation resulted in the development of two new plans: strategic plan for inclusive education (2020–2025) and the inclusive education capacity needs plan. The strategic plan outlines goals and actions in seven areas: whole of government commitment for inclusive education, demonstration of inclusive cultures by schools and MoE, whole school approach for inclusive education, a focus on inclusive pedagogy, training leaders for implementation of inclusive education, teachers and professional capacity building, and the sharing of success stories across the school system. The capacity development plan identifies short- and long-term training for school leaders and teachers as well as other professionals involved in the delivery of inclusive education. Finally, the QUT team provided targeted training in inclusive education and practices relevant to the local context to MoE staff, school principals, lead teachers, and parents from various regions of the Maldives. See reports by Carrington et al. (2019) for more details on research activities, policy analyses, and recommended plans.

Review of Research Undertaken in the Maldives

Research is an emerging field in the Maldives. Similar to other developing countries, research in the area of inclusion is limited (Forlin, 2013). In total, eight research papers were located that reported on inclusive education in this country, and importantly, the findings from each study have influenced the direction that inclusion has taken in the Maldives. The available literature can be grouped under four broad themes: leadership factors, teacher perception and practices, challenges associated with inclusive education, and future direction for inclusive education.

Globally, leadership factors are identified as crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education (Ainscow, 2020; DeMatthews et al., 2019). A study by Athif (2016), conducted in two Maldivian schools providing positive examples of inclusive education, identified the actions of the school management team in

effective inclusive education programs. Positive perceptions and a clearly communicated vision for inclusive education, exemplary role models within the leadership team, and the provision of resources, such as time for professional learning, were seen to contribute to improved access and participation for students with SEN. Moreover, partnerships with families, paraprofessionals, and a whole school approach were seen to create a positive inclusive school culture. Similarly, in a study conducted by Shareefa (2016), 60% of the 153 teachers interviewed also perceived their school principals as proactive and committed in the effort of implementing inclusive education, and 80% of teachers agreed that inclusive education was clearly evident in the vision and mission statements of their respective schools.

Teachers' beliefs inform classroom practice and play an important role in inclusive education. How teachers perceive their own capacity (self-efficacy) is likely to play a role in the practices they employ to meet the needs of all learners (Loreman et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2019). Shareefa, Mat Zin, et al. (2019a) research related to Maldivian teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction indicated a lack of a clear definition of what differentiation is and what it involves. Their study revealed around 45% of the 368 classroom teachers and 32 SEN teachers surveyed associated differentiation with a variety of instructional practices. This research revealed that while time and resourcing were highly ranked concerns about implementing differentiated instruction, teachers' own knowledge and level of support from SEN teachers were also identified as concerns. Athif (2016) recognized the role school leadership played in supporting teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and knowledge to respond to students with SEN and the need for such training in the Maldives. To advance the quality of inclusive education in the Maldives, both Athif (2016) and Shareefa, Moosa, et al. (2019b) recommended that more specialized training was required to build the capacity of teachers and to maintain the positive beliefs related to inclusion. These recommendations were also confirmed by Nishan (2018) in a study of 125 randomly selected regular classroom teachers. Moreover, findings from Nishan's larger quantitative study complement Naseer's (2013) single-school case study which identified that large classes, lack of resources, and lack of time contributed to the barriers of providing an inclusive education for students with SEN in the Maldives.

Despite quite significant changes in the Maldives over the last 20 years, a number of challenges associated with inclusive education still exist, particularly at a systemic level. Currently, the Maldives does not have an Education Act, and Di Biase and Maniku (2020) identified this missing element, together with the management of the rapidly expanding education system, to be major issues associated with maintaining the quality of education provided in schools. Additionally, these researchers called for a system-wide and consistent identification process based on the individual needs of the child. Further, lack of facilities available in many schools and lack of awareness among parents and mainstream teachers have also identified as barriers to the implementation of inclusive education (Shareefa, 2016). Despite the slow progression of a legal framework and other operational issues, inclusive education has become an important and integral part of the school system in Maldives, with a

shift in systemic focus "from selected schools to all the schools and every child" (Di Biase & Maniku, 2020, p. 21).

While it is difficult to develop sophisticated policy approaches to address complex equity issues in education (Forlin, 2013), it is important for developing countries such as the Maldives to respond to their local context by adopting an inclusive approach that meets their country's unique needs and demands. Hence, further research in the field of inclusion is essential to strengthen the inclusive education system in this country.

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development

Teacher training has been an integral component of the education system of the Maldives since 1988. Qualification expectations and guidelines are compliant with, and overseen by, the Maldives Qualification Authority. The entry level of teacher education is a 2-year Diploma of Teaching. This qualification prepares teachers for either primary or secondary teaching. Further qualifications at Bachelor of Education and Master's level are increasingly leading to specializations in areas such as inclusive education. The Disability Act (08/2010) and MoE's Inclusive Education Policy (02/2013) mandate adequate and quality teachers as an important component of an inclusive education system. However, despite the efforts to train sufficient teachers and make the necessary changes in teacher education, approximately 20% of teachers remain untrained in this country's education system (Di Biase & Maniku, 2020). Moreover, the number of teachers who have been specifically prepared to work within an inclusive education framework remains relatively low. Nishan (2018) proposed that stronger partnerships between policy-makers and higher education institutions are required to prepare teachers with strong skill sets for implementing inclusive education in the Maldives.

Currently, MoE prescribes that the school academic calendar has 3 dedicated days per annum (a total of 15 hours) of professional development activities for practicing teachers and school staff. The strategic professional development platform has evolved over the past 25 years and can be viewed across three major phases.

Phase 1: Professional Development for In-Service Teachers

Inclusive education programs commenced in the capital Malé, when volunteer teachers from countries such as Japan, Australia, and the UK were used to train Maldivian teachers in their local context through short in-house training programs. These programs typically were unstructured, varied from school to school, and were accompanied by little documentation of the processes and content undertaken. A more structured, 1-month intensive training program was then put in place within selected Maldivian schools, for teachers working with students with SEN. Designed

by the professional team at MoE and implemented by key professionals available within the Maldives at that time, a more strategic in-service program emerged. This program focused on training staff at key schools where plans were in place for SEN *support units* to be established. These units sought to provide immediate assistance to families and build readiness skills in their children on commencing school. Priority was given to the islands with the highest number of students with SEN, as identified from the 2007–2010 mapping of school enrolments, and collated through community and school cooperation.

Initially, approximately 30 participants, typically comprising two teachers from each identified school, were given a 1-month period of training in Malé. The training program focused on combining presented theory with practical observations related to characteristics and learning needs of students with SEN at specialized schools. These schools included those for students with hearing impairment, vision impairment, autism spectrum disorders, and intellectual impairment. Participants also gained practical experience by teaching students from one of these particular groups in the final week of training and then applying their knowledge and skills to undertake project work on SEN program implementation at their respective schools within 3 months of completing training. Nilholm (2020) notes that the combined theory-and-practice model is recognized for its role in strengthening research-based practices and transformative teaching in schools.

Subsequently, these participants and their schools were given further 2 years of professional support. Twice a year, the facilitator of the training program and professionals at MoE provided mentorship and coaching to support the SEN teachers, mainstream teachers, and parents to strengthen the establishment of inclusive education programs in these schools. At the same time, this process allowed MoE to recognize "best practices" of inclusive education occurring within Maldivian schools and to identify if further training and coaching were required following the 2-year cycle. The ongoing nature of this support, together with the time and opportunity to reflect on the effectiveness of programs and practices, was identified as the strengths of this targeted professional development (Walton et al., 2019). These arrangements, moreover, not only helped to consolidate sound programs and practices but also supported a whole school approach, which is deemed necessary for the success of inclusive education (DeMatthews et al., 2019).

Drawing on the observations and feedback from the 2-year projects, several short-term workshops and professional development training for mainstream teachers were undertaken. This training was based on the needs of schools and included key areas such as teaching strategies for students with autism, learning disabilities, and dealing with severe behavior problems. Neighboring schools also benefited from visits by facilitators who conducted further training programs related to inclusive education and supported the development of intervention plans for students with complex needs. Walton et al. (2019) recognized that collegiality and collaboration developed through shared practices are important outcomes for the advancement of inclusive education.

Short-term training programs continue to be available for teachers. While initial training is determined by MoE, these programs are generally determined by the

needs of the schools and the teachers identified through MoE's 2-year planning and revision cycle. Sometimes, schools utilize experienced lead teachers and SEN teachers to conduct school-based professional development programs, but expertise in schools is still limited, and the demands on the time of these teachers are quite high (Nishan, 2018; Shareefa, Moosa, et al., 2019b).

Phase 2: Pre-service Teacher Training

The beginning of pre-service training with a focus on students with SEN was by means of a Certificate III in Special Education offered through the National Institute of Education (NIE) in 2010. The impetus for the introduction of this formalized certificate course was linked with requirements around salary increment and/or job promotion, since the initial 1-month pre-service training program did not entitle teachers to any benefits. The Certificate III in Special Education, in addition to a general teaching diploma, was the initial minimum requirement for SEN teachers.

Since 2015, rapid expansion in teacher training programs has occurred in this country. Currently, teacher training programs are available up to Masters' level and offered in English medium. Rapid expansion of teacher training programs within this short period was the result of the political commitment given to inclusive education and to the introduction of SEN teacher roles created in each school (MoE, 2019). Despite teacher education programs being offered up to Masters' level, the practical implementation of inclusive education is still developing in some schools. Therefore, the application of theory into practice and positive examples of inclusive education may not always be witnessed during the in-school professional placement experiences of pre-service teachers. The inclusive education practices in the schools needs further support to provide quality examples to pre-service teachers so they are better prepared to respond to the needs of the many students with mild-to-moderate SEN who are in the mainstream classes (MoE, 2019). Currently, pre-service teachers in the Maldives are graduating with minimal practical experience related to the implementing inclusive practices, which is a major disadvantage in terms of providing quality education for all students.

Phase 3: Inclusive Education as a Separate Discipline in the Teacher Training Programs

As the drive for inclusive education has increased in the Maldives and a greater emphasis has been placed on all schools to adopt an inclusive philosophy, the need for experienced teachers to act in leading roles has increased. While compulsory modules form part of pre-service teacher education programs, a separate discipline program is available for those teachers who wish to specialize and become SEN

teachers. The gradual rollout of specialized teachers within each school to support classroom teachers in responding to the needs of all students will help to overcome the ongoing challenges still being experienced in this country. Narratives from education systems globally confirm that the processes of change related to inclusive education always takes time and requires strong leadership, teacher capacity building, and resourcing, as well as positive community involvement (Ainscow, 2020).

Ongoing Challenges in Teacher Professional Development

While the inclusive education system in the Maldives is evolving, a range of challenges need to be addressed. First, an inclusive culture in schools, based on the beliefs of teachers that all students should be educated in mainstream schools, will take time to develop and embed. Second, the capacity of teachers and the quality of role models required to support emerging teachers are in the process of being cultivated and should emerge concurrently with school culture. Third, access to resources at a practical level is required not only in classrooms to develop hands-on relevant learning activities but also at the theoretical level for pre-service teachers to access books, peer-reviewed articles, and other reference materials when completing their studies. Finally, while the research culture of the Maldives is emerging, time and other resources such as financial scholarships and bursaries need to be made available so that school leaders, teachers, and those advising at MoE level can continue to undertake and lead quality research projects to progress inclusive education for all students across the system.

Implementing Inclusion in Maldivian Schools

Inclusive education in the Maldives has some unique features. To begin with, the public education system provides services for students with formalized diagnosis of disability as well as students who are informally recognized with SEN in mainstream public schools. Next, each school assigns a lead teacher, at least one teacher, and a committee to ensure that every student with SEN has access to a sound educational program. Further, a whole school approach and co-teaching have been adopted as the model of practice for each school to follow. Finally, a system of *hub schools* and *school clusters* have been established to support the expansion of inclusive education throughout this island nation.

Policy is in place to ensure that students with SEN from 4 years of age can access a tailored education program and be included at mainstream schools. Each school is staffed by at least one teacher dedicated to educating students with SEN. Locally, this teacher is not known as the SEN teacher as happens in many parts of the world. Instead, each school gives a local name to its inclusive education program (e.g., dream, hope, rainbow, jewel). Hence, the SEN teacher is referred to by the program

name, such as "dream teacher." Moreover, each school assigns a lead teacher (known locally as the inclusion ambassador) to oversee the administration of the inclusive education program throughout the school. Further, a committee is formed in every school to decide who requires an individual education plan (IEP) and the type of program to be offered in conjunction with the IEP. This committee comprises the principal, inclusive ambassador, SEN teacher, mainstream teacher, and school counselor (in larger schools), and as such, the committee is well placed to make needs-based, contextualized decisions regarding the educational experiences appropriate for a particular student with SEN.

According to their profile, students at any point in time have access to one of five targeted programs aligned to the national curriculum: home school program, readiness program, early inclusion program, special education program, and mainstream program. For students with severe or multiple disabilities, attending school is difficult, so a home-school program is offered to support the family and provide parents with strategies to manage, interact, and engage the student in developmental and functional activities. A readiness program is provided to those students who attend school but who need to develop more skills before learning alongside peers in a mainstream class. These students typically spend shorter periods at school and are provided with one-on-one teaching experiences with the SEN teacher within a support unit. While an early inclusion program is offered to young students (foundational stage), special education and mainstream programs are offered to the students with mild-to-moderate disabilities. Therefore, regardless of the diversity of learning needs and diagnosis, all students with SEN in this country receive an educational program.

The model of inclusive education service delivery in schools is focused on a whole school approach and co-teaching within mainstream settings. From its inception in the 1980s, this model has allowed students with SEN to interact with same-age peers on a regular basis at school. Despite challenges, the community has accepted this nationwide approach as the recommended option for educating students with SEN. Co-teaching arrangements within a whole school approach are a strength of the Maldives education system, and maintaining this process was recommended by Carrington et al. (2019) in their review of the public education system.

When the inclusive education program expanded from Malé into the atolls, two key challenges needed to be addressed. Building human resource capacity was the first priority as the system needed teachers and other professionals to support not only schools and students but also parents. In addition, establishing a decentralized sustainable system within the atolls was an integral part of the expansion plan. Considering the geographic makeup of the Maldives, it was very challenging to send professionals from the capital city to remote islands as transport is difficult and costly. A solution to this difficulty was the emergence of "hub school" and "school clusters."

During the expansion of the inclusive education program to the atolls, the team at MoE became increasingly aware that some city schools were creating an inclusive school culture that valued the contribution of all students and that the leadership

team together with teachers and parents were actively promoting inclusion in that setting. These schools became known as "hubs" and were requested to work with the MoE team to foster the inclusion of all students in government schools across the country. Hub schools were established in the four cities within the Maldives (viz., Malé, Addu, Fuvahmulah, and Kulhudhuffushi). Currently, there are six hub schools in the specialized domains of hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical impairment, autism, and vocational education. Importantly, mutual trust has grown between schools and staff at MoE, and this has allowed human resources to be shared so that the unique challenge of implementing inclusion across the atolls can be addressed.

Following the expansion of the inclusive education program to several atolls, MoE identified that staff at larger schools started to provide professional support to the nearby smaller schools. Subsequently, training, administrative assistance, and other resources were provided to these schools to sustain these types of support. This arrangement resulted in the emergence of the "cluster schools" concept. In almost all atolls, at least one or two clusters with a lead school now exist. School clusters support one another in teacher exchange, in-service training, and the sharing of resources and best practices. In this way, hub schools have become centers of expertise and specialization in educating particular groups of students with SEN, whereas school clusters have become decentralized systems to support the implementation of inclusive education.

Case Study: Co-teaching in a Hub School

Many schools in the Maldives use co-teaching in their heterogeneous, mainstream classrooms. A case study of one school located in Malé is presented here. As a hub school with a focus on autism, the school is comparatively large and caters for over 2000 students. However, the inclusive education program in this school only started very recently. The school has a policy that requires at least one student with an IEP to be included in every classroom, with lower grades typically having three or four students with IEPs in each class. Co-teaching at the school is implemented by a team, lead teacher, SEN teacher, and mainstream teachers, together with the support of the school community.

When a student suspected of experiencing autism enrolls at this school, the process undertaken is the same as that in any other public school in the country. Initially, the student is enrolled in a mainstream class along with same-age peers. Next, pertinent information about the student is gathered from the parent, and any relevant documents are collected. Typically, the student will then be observed in the mainstream class, support unit, and one-on-one sessions for a 2-week period. The lead teacher coordinates this observation phase with the help from the SEN teacher who is dedicated to look after the student. Vital information about the skills and various domains for learning such as attention, gross and fine motor skills, cognition, and self-help skills are collected. In addition to the developmental domains being

checked, screening for comorbid conditions is carried out by three teachers using disability checklists and a locally developed functional checklist known locally as the rating scale. In this school, a student suspected of experiencing autism spectrum disorder will be screened using social, communication, and behavior domains to alleviate labeling. Finally, the collected information is presented to the committee chaired by the principal to decide (a) whether the student needs an IEP or (b) what would be the ideal program for the student based on the data collected over the 2-week observational period.

When the committee decides on the program for the student, the lead teacher, the mainstream teacher, and the SEN teacher commence planning for co-teaching in weekly coordination meetings. Based on the IEP, collective decisions are made in relation to crucial areas of the curriculum and targeted skills for development. The mainstream and SEN teachers reach agreement about who takes the lead in the areas planned for the student and who implements the IEP programs. Finally, the lead teacher (inclusive ambassador) explains the roles of each teacher and orients them for basic components of co-teaching and how best it could be carried out with respect to a particular student.

During the weekly coordination meetings, the mainstream and SEN teachers plan for co-teaching, commonly using either one teacher, one assist, or teaming approaches (see Friend et al., 2010). While the mainstream teacher plans curriculum-related elements, the SEN teacher focuses on how to differentiate these elements and how targeted IEP goals can be implemented alongside the weekly curriculum content. They also discuss who will be leading the class on the 5-day schedule and how the other team member will support in the classroom. The coordination meeting ends with preparation of relevant teaching aids and finding relevant resources for the week's teaching. In the co-teaching model at this school, teachers plan together, prepare for teaching together, and ultimately implement instruction together as a team. In this school, there was minimal resistance on the part of teachers to work in this way.

On a routine teaching day, the class begins with a floor time session, which is a common time for all the students to interact with the teacher and the rest of the class. Then, the mainstream class teacher introduces the lesson for the day by means of an activity and story or by showing something that engages the students, while the co-teachers (in this case, the dream teacher) provide support to an individual or a group of students. Lessons are planned and activities are made according to the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework (Rose & Meyer, 2000). During the main activity of the lesson, both teachers help the class, while those students who can manage on their own are allowed to work independently. Adequate time is given at the end of the lesson for students to share their work with the class. Pull-out sessions are used not only to focus on improving the skills related to a student's IEP but also to provide academic support for an individual student who might be weaker in a particular curriculum area. At the end of the day, teachers both give feedback to the class on their performance during the day and reinforce them as a group for effort and quality of work.

Co-teaching in this manner has some benefits and challenges. Lead teachers frequently notice a strengthening of the relationship between mainstream and SEN teachers. In addition, SEN teachers routinely become more familiar with the national curriculum and subject content. Parents and school community at this school are very positive about this co-teaching arrangement, and students appear to enjoy the presence of an additional teacher to help them during class activities. Yet there are challenges. First and foremost, training in the co-teaching approach is required for teachers, and sufficient teachers need to be available to work in teams. For the lower grades, additional adult support is a necessity with the high number of students in each class (see the four pillars of learning; UNESCO, 1996). Further, training related to differentiation and UDL has been identified as the top priority in this school.

In summary, co-teaching as a practice is still evolving in this school. However, examples such as this are vital not only to build inclusive school cultures to support students with autism but also to strengthen inclusive education programs across the country.

Remaining Challenges and Concerns Regarding Inclusion

The Maldives has achieved significant milestones in the development of inclusive education across the country since its ratification of the UN CRPD in 2010. However, despite legislation, policy development, strategic planning, and professional training for teachers, providing quality education to students with SEN remains a challenge. Concerns and ongoing challenges are related to systems for early identification and the educational impact on students with SEN, an equitable system of resource distribution based on needs of the school, capacity building of staff through initial teacher education and ongoing professional development, and community building and commitment to inclusive education. Some of these concerns are more seriously related to schools in isolated areas.

Early identification and intervention systems previously focused from a disability perspective still endure. Consistent identification of students with SEN remains a challenge because of inadequate identification tools and processes, as well as insufficient staff with expertise to administer such processes. As a consequence, many students with SEN learn in mainstream classes without additional or adequate support, contributing to the demands on classroom teachers. Hence, it is crucial to develop a system of identification of students with SEN that emphasizes support and interventions rather than labeling to maximize all students' access, engagement, and participation in a meaningful, quality education.

The resource allocation model for students with SEN in the Maldives requires revision so that resourcing is based on a model of equity. Currently, funding models are uniform and are determined from information provided by individual schools based on the diagnosis of students with SEN, as well as information collated through conventional checklists for developmental delays and functional skills. The national resource allocation model is not adjusted based on the requirements of mild-to-

complex learning needs. For example, a student with a mild learning disability is allocated the same resourcing as a student with very severe behavior issues due to autism. Similarly, a student with mild hearing loss is resourced comparable to a student who has very severe physical challenges due to cerebral palsy. Hence, there is an urgent need to develop a national system to capture the specific learning and support needs of individual students.

Lack of human resources and the capabilities of available personnel has been an ongoing challenge associated with the implementation of inclusive education in this country and is perhaps the most crucial issue facing the entire education system (Di Biase & Maniku, 2020). Despite increased emphasis on education for pre-service and in-service teachers, quality remains one of the key aspects requiring improvement, particularly for those teaching in remote regions.

Supporting communities on remote islands has been a major challenge in the education, health, and social welfare sectors, with each typically having the potential to influence educational opportunities. Despite the evolution of hub schools and school clusters designed to support all school staff, the isolation of very remote communities and schools makes it more difficult to address the societal issues and professional learning that can advance inclusive education for all students. Additionally, a multi-sectorial approach in delivering services is yet to be developed. For example, health, education, and social services operate as separate systems in the delivery of services. Moreover, staffing these schools is difficult as teachers are reluctant to work in remote locations despite additional allowances and other benefits. An innovative and reliable multi-sectorial support mechanism to reach the very remote schools, physically or virtually, is a high priority. Investment in modern technology has the potential to play a vital role in the effective implementation of quality inclusive education in the Maldives.

While many teachers can accommodate students with mild-to-moderate SEN, catering to students with very severe learning profiles continues to challenge many schools. For example, teachers and parents share concerns that schools don't have the capacity to support the needs of students with blindness, severe hearing impairment, autism, as well as a range of learning disabilities. Similarly, the availability of, and access to, additional services for students with SEN is minimal. For example, therapies such as speech-language pathology and physiotherapy and timely medical diagnosis and specialist services are not available in the country and are not accessible to the majority of the population. Affordable and accessible outreach education and health services, therefore, are urgently needed if the obligations of CRPD and the Disability Act of the Maldives are to be upheld. Currently and despite ongoing efforts, some students cannot access school or other avenues for education during their lifetime.

Community awareness and involvement are an integral component of inclusive education. Despite an increase in community awareness to educate students with SEN in this country, pockets of discrimination and violation of the fundamental rights of students exist in some islands. A whole school approach to educating students with SEN has played a significant role in increasing awareness among parents, teachers, and students. Further work is required, so all members of the

community, including leaders and health service providers, become familiar with the rights of students with SEN. Media sources could be used strategically to increase public awareness about the rights of persons with disability and students with SEN, together with the contributions that these individuals can make to their community.

Conclusion

Since 2010, there have been significant changes in the inclusive education landscape of the Maldives. Important building blocks are now in place within the education system to help schools create a community in accordance with inclusive values and a place where all students feel that they belong and can learn. A comprehensive inclusive education policy, in line with CRPD and Disability Act (2010), has guided decentralized support systems such as hub and school clusters. Additionally, a national threefold monitoring system of inclusive education programs is being established across all schools. The new government has also introduced revisions to the inclusive education policy and the strategic action plan according to recommendations made by Carrington et al. (2019).

However, increased stakeholder involvement and research are required to advance inclusive education in the Maldives. Ongoing work to expand teachers' expertise, strengthen school leadership, refine resourcing models, develop specialized services such as speech therapy, and promote positive community values towards students with SEN is pivotal if inclusive education is to move forward in this country. Likewise, applied projects involving researchers partnering with practitioners and families are required to develop the much-needed early identification and intervention processes for students with SEN and to evaluate how the whole school and co-teaching model are being implemented in city and remote locations. Nevertheless, an inclusive education system is emerging in the Maldives, and this system provides a foundation on which to build inclusive schools and communities in which every student has the opportunity to experience a meaningful education and success.

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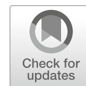
Chapter 3
Inclusion of Students with Special Educational Needs in Singapore



Levan Lim, Kenneth Poon, and Thana Thaver

Abstract The past two decades have witnessed much progress towards the development of inclusion for students with special educational needs (SEN) in Singapore. There are now far more students with SEN enrolled in mainstream schools compared with numbers in special education schools. This chapter provides a contextual understanding of how the inclusion of students with SEN within mainstream schools has become a national educational agenda, with government initiatives setting directions for change and teacher education playing a supportive role. Relevant literature and educational research associated with inclusion in Singapore are reviewed to provide insights into its state of inclusion. This chapter also provides an overview of the implementation of inclusion in mainstream schools and how this is supported through school-based structures and professional development. This chapter concludes with discussing key issues, challenges and recommendations for future research that can affect the advancement of inclusion in Singapore.

Keywords Inclusion · Professional development · Singapore · Special educational needs · Teacher education · Teachers

Introduction

Singapore, an island city-state located at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia, is a relatively young nation which gained its independence in 1965. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with over 5.5 million people living on a land size of 728 square kilometres. Its population is multiracial, multilingual and multireligious, comprising four main ethnic groups: Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian; and there are four official languages, namely, Mandarin,

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Malay, English and Tamil, with English used as the lingua franca in society and the medium of instruction in schools.

Since its independence in 1965, Singapore has steadily soared, over the course of five decades, to become one of the most prosperous, peaceful and successful countries in the world, with a global reputation for its economic and educational achievements. Singapore's transformation into an economic powerhouse has always relied upon and been propelled by its national policies and its only natural resource—*its people*. The local population has demonstrated a preparedness to confront the headwinds of change over the past five decades in order to succeed and thrive in a volatile, uncertain and competitive global economy. The education of its people has thus been paramount for Singapore, to support and sustain its economic growth as well as maintain its social cohesiveness and harmony among its diverse citizenry (Tan, 2014).

Singapore's high achievements in education have attracted much international interests and scrutiny in recent years. Student performances, from the primary to the tertiary levels, are consistently the highest achieving in the world, as evident in the international comparisons in math, science and reading achievements in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). While the mainstream education system has maintained emphasis on academic excellence, it is also a system that is changing in response to an increasing number of students with special educational needs (SEN) attending mainstream schools.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe changes in Singapore's education system—a system that is evolving in response to the inclusion of students with SEN. The educational context for students with SEN in Singapore is described, together with details of relevant initiatives and policies that have influenced inclusion within mainstream education. Local literature, including the existing empirical research base related to the inclusion of students with SEN, is then reviewed to provide an overview of the areas of attention and focus within the field of inclusive education in Singapore. This empirical research base can inform future areas for development and research. Preparation of personnel for supporting inclusion is then described, followed by information covering how inclusive policies and practices have been implemented within mainstream schools. The chapter concludes with a discussion of issues and challenges associated with educational legacies and current practices, as well as recommendations for how the inclusion of students with SEN can be advanced in Singapore.

The Educational Context for Students with SEN

Prior to 2004, students with and without SEN were perceived as belonging either to special education or to mainstream education systems, respectively (Lim, Thaver, & Poon, 2008). This clear-cut distinction was due to the traditional 'dual-system' arrangement whereby mainstream education remained quite separate from the

special education system. The latter largely comprised special education schools run by social service agencies (formerly known as voluntary welfare organizations) headed by the National Council of Social Service (Lim & Nam, 2000; Lim & Quah, 2004). There are currently 19 government-funded special education schools in Singapore, run by 12 social service agencies catering to students with autism spectrum disorder, mild to severe intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities and sensory disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2021). At the present time, there are about 5000 students with SEN enrolled in special education schools where curricula—guided by the Special Education Curriculum Framework launched by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2012—are tailored to meet the learning needs of these students.

There are several legacies arising from the traditional dual system of education. The system inadvertently contributed to a situation where generations of mainstream Singaporean students without SEN had little or no direct contact or interaction with their peers with SEN. This lack of personal knowledge and experience gained from 'lived' interactions inevitably resulted in mainstream students developing negative stereotypic images of and attitudes towards persons with SEN. These stereotypic images and attitudes tended to continue into adulthood and were held by many members of the public (Lim, Thaver, & Slee, 2008).

The dual system of education also spawned separate teacher education programmes for mainstream and special education teachers at the National Institute of Education (NIE), Singapore's sole teacher education certification body (Lim, Thaver, & Poon, 2008). In addition, the dual system of education contributed to a lack of flexibility in allowing for students with SEN to move between systems (Lim & Quah, 2004). For example, even the relocation of students from a special education school to a special class within a mainstream school SEN would have been difficult if not impossible—although it would obviously have encouraged regular contact between these SEN students and other students.

Unlike special education schools, mainstream schools are run by MOE and have a centralized curriculum that is delivered to large classes of 30 to 40 students. The average size of primary classes is 33 students (Hirschmann, 2020). Singapore students attend primary school from grades 1 to 6 and, at the end of their sixth year, take a national examination known as the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Upon passing the PSLE, students then proceed to secondary schools where, depending on their performance in the PSLE, they are streamed into various tracks. Towards the end of the secondary years, students take either the General Certificate of Education at the normal level (GCE 'N' level) examination or the more academically demanding General Certificate of Education at the ordinary level (GCE 'O' level) examination. Those who perform well in the GCE 'O' level examination can gain entry into either a junior college or a polytechnic. At the end of 2 years in junior college, students take the GCE advanced level (GCE 'A' level) examination. Students in the polytechnics graduate with a diploma upon successful completion of their programmes. Educational progression and success in Singapore's mainstream education system thus rely heavily on students' ability to pass and do well in examinations.

Singapore was not a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework on Action for Special Needs Education, which proclaimed inclusive education as the 'most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix). Unlike many of its regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) neighbours, Singapore has yet to formally adopt inclusive education as an official educational policy, nor has it enacted any legislation regarding inclusion or placement in the 'least restrictive environment' for students with SEN. However, over the years prior to 2005, there were many attempts to integrate some students with SEN into regular classrooms. The successful integration of students with SEN within a mainstream school rests primarily upon their ability to cope with the expectation that they can meet the academic standards. The traditional emphasis on the national curriculum, examinations and academic achievement has proved to be a major obstacle to implementing true inclusion in Singapore. In other words, the features of mainstream education in Singapore—a centralized curriculum with a heavy emphasis on examination-oriented assessment, a large class size, a lack of school-wide systemic supports for students with special needs and (prior to 2005) an inadequately trained teaching force for supporting students with SEN in mainstream schools—have all contributed to impeding the progress towards inclusion of students with SEN. Students with SEN who lack the cognitive capacity for mainstream academic work would stand little or no chance for success in the mainstream school.

In addition, particularly during the 1990s, Lim and Tan (2001) highlighted three forces that deterred the inclusion of students with SEN: (i) the marketization of education to foster competition, (ii) a collateral risk-averse stance towards perceiving the intake of students with SEN as negatively impacting 'league tables' and (iii) an elite-oriented educational system. The prospects for inclusion were not encouraging during this period of education (Lim & Quah, 2004; Lim & Tan, 1999).

The prominence of integration as the route for SEN students to enter mainstream education during the period prior to 2005 was guided by the report of the Advisory Council on the Disabled: Opportunities for the Disabled (1988). This was Singapore's preeminent national document concerning the education of students with SEN during that period. The document stated that 'Whenever possible and feasible, special education should be provided within the regular education system. A child should only be placed in a special school if he cannot be well educated in a regular school' (pp. 37–38). A key recommendation from this report was that 'integration should fit the disabled child to the most suitable educational environment' (p. 38). Quah (1993), however, noted that special education services required by a number of these students were generally provided *outside* mainstream education, which would conditionally diminish the responsibility of mainstream education to provide appropriate education for a student with SEN if his or her needs could not be met in a mainstream school.

Post-2004 Contextual Influences on Inclusion

The year 2004, with the inauguration of a new prime minister, proved to be a propitious year in terms of heralding brighter prospects for inclusion in Singapore. In his inauguration speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong specifically included reference to people with disabilities as part of envisioning Singapore as an inclusive society. About a month later, he advocated for students with SEN to be better supported within mainstream schools. In hindsight, these significant announcements proved to be the catalysts for a dramatic change in the national approach to the inclusion of students with SEN in Singapore—which has continued to the present.

This direction towards a more positive commitment to inclusion spelled the softening of boundaries between mainstream and special education, with increasing numbers of students with SEN enrolling in mainstream schools. It even reached the point where the number of students with SEN in mainstream schools has overtaken and surpassed those in special schools. The number of students with SEN in mainstream schools rose from 2500 in 2005 (Chan, 2005) to 13,000 in 2013, to 24,000 in 2018 (Toh, 2018), to 25,600 in 2019 (Choo, 2019) and currently constitutes about 80% of all students with SEN. The remaining 20% who require higher levels of support are served in special education schools (Ang, 2020b).

The increase in numbers of students with SEN attending mainstream schools in the post-2004 years has been accompanied by several new initiatives and developments to support their educational needs. These advances in Singapore indicate a progressive shift towards inclusion. In the post-2004 literature, terms such as 'inclusive' and 'inclusive education' have been increasingly used to describe and discuss directions, efforts and concomitant issues (Lim, 2009; Lim & Thaver, 2018; Lim et al., 2014, 2019; Poon et al., 2013, 2016; Strogilos & Lim, 2019; Walker & Musti-Rao, 2016; Wong et al., 2015; Yeo et al., 2016; Zhuang, 2016). While Singapore still lacks a formal inclusive education policy and legislation related to the inclusion of students with SEN, the rise in the use of these terms in the literature can be ascribed to (i) the influence of the global trend in many countries in the region and around the world that have embraced inclusive education as official policy and (ii) the energized national attention and focus since 2004 on improving the quality of life and learning of persons with disabilities in the context of inclusion within mainstream schools, communities and society.

At the nationwide level, after Prime Minister Lee's announcement concerning persons with disabilities in the envisioning of Singapore as an inclusive society, three national roadmaps (known as Enabling Masterplans) have also played a key role in supporting Singapore's shift towards a more inclusive education system. These three consecutive Enabling Masterplans were launched by the Ministry of Social and Family Development: the first from 2007 to 2011, the second from 2012 to 2016 and the third and current from 2017 to 2021. These Enabling Masterplans, each with a span of 5 years, have guided the development of policy and services across wide-ranging areas to create an inclusive society, where people with

disabilities are able to optimize their potential to contribute to their communities and society as well as realize their status as equal citizens.

The current Enabling Masterplan is especially supportive of inclusion, with a clear recommendation to 'enhance integration and inclusion of children with special needs within the context of our education system' (Enabling Masterplan Steering Committee, 2016, p. 26). Both the second and third Enabling Masterplans placed an emphasis on facilitating interactions between students with and without SEN so as to promote better understanding and inclusiveness in learning to deal with difference. Collaborative partnerships between mainstream schools and special education schools have been initiated by MOE to facilitate more interactions between students from both types of schools through the Satellite Partnership Programme which began in 2008 with two special education schools and three mainstream schools.

Participating schools are generally within close proximity, which is conducive to creating opportunities for students from both types of school to mix and interact through cocurricular activities, games and community projects. In addition, students with SEN from special education schools who are considered academically ready can join their mainstream school peers for classes in academic subjects. These school partnerships have provided the space for exchange of ideas and practices, as well as forged collaborations between teachers from both types of schools. It has been observed that there has been a deepening of understanding and greater acceptance of individuals with SEN on the part of mainstream school students and a greater confidence in interacting with SEN peers. There has also been valuable learning of social skills on the part of students from special education schools (Teng, 2019). The majority of special education schools are currently in partnerships with mainstream schools in the Satellite Partnership Programme.

Another significant development in the post-2004 period concerns the inclusion of students with moderate to severe special educational needs within the Compulsory Education Act. When the Compulsory Education Act was drawn up in 2000 for all primary school-age children, children with SEN were excluded from the compulsory education framework. The Committee on Compulsory Education did not see, then, the need to incorporate special education schools within this framework. The committee rationalized that students with sensory disabilities (hearing or vision) who could be accommodated within mainstream schools were already integrated in these schools, while those students with more severe physical and learning disabilities were better placed in special education schools with their own curricula. Similarly, any enforcement of 'compulsory education' for students with SEN was seen as 'unduly harsh' as the voluntary organizations running the schools did not have sufficient teaching resources, expertise or space to comply. The Committee on Compulsory Education also upheld MOE's stance of sharing the funding costs of special education schools with the National Council of Social Service (the umbrella body for all social service agencies) and recommended that children who were not able to attend national schools because of their disabilities be exempted as a group from the Compulsory Education Act and its legislative requirements (Tan, 2010).

This perspective was to change with the passage of time. The steering committee for the second Enabling Masterplan (2012 to 2016) requested relevant parties to look

into the challenges of including students with SEN in the Compulsory Education Act, with the purpose of including these children in the Act by 2016. This committee also held the view that Singapore needed a reform in the governance of special education with MOE taking greater ownership and providing leadership in human resource development, curriculum development and appointment of special education leaders (Enabling Masterplan Steering Committee, 2011).

An announcement in November 2016 by the then Minister of Education (Schools), Ng Chee Meng, included an intention for the Compulsory Education Act to include students with moderate to severe SEN after the necessary strengthening of the special education sector (Teng & Goy, 2016). The Act was extended in 2019 to all students with SEN, with the requirement that they attend either mainstream primary schools or government-funded special schools. All schools are now recognized as part of the National Education System, as opposed to a dual system which characterized the pre-2004 era (Ministry of Education, 2020b).

In 2012, Singapore signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and ratified it in 2013 (Ministry of Social & Family Development, 2013). Singapore's ratification of the UNCRPD reinforces its commitment to ensuring that citizens with disabilities have the same human rights as every other citizen. This ratification also means that Singapore assumes responsibility for securing and protecting the interests of persons with disabilities in areas stipulated in the UNCRPD document. By ratifying the UNCRPD, in particular Article 24 which is on Education, Singapore needs to make progress towards ensuring that its education system is inclusive.

Research on Inclusion

The literature published on inclusion of students with SEN in Singapore consists of articles putting forth ideological justification and support for inclusion, as well as critiques of the educational context in relation to prospects for implementing inclusion (e.g. Lim & Quah, 2004; Lim & Tan, 1999, 2001). Articles have also provided critical discussions of contextual influences on inclusion (Lim & Thaver, 2018; Lim et al., 2019; Strogilos & Lim, 2019; Zhuang, 2016), descriptions of NIE's teacher education pedagogical model in working with teachers to more effectively address teachers' attitudes towards students with SEN (Lim et al., 2008a, b; Lim & Thaver, 2019; Thaver, 2013) and an emerging body of empirical research related to the inclusion of students with SEN.

The empirical literature base pertaining to inclusion of students with SEN in Singapore comprises studies on (i) attitudes towards inclusion evident in mainstream teachers and other school staff members such as school counsellors (Poon et al., 2016; Thaver, 2013; Thaver & Lim, 2014; Yeo et al., 2016), (ii) parental expectations and challenges related to the inclusion of their children with SEN (Wong et al., 2015), (iii) exploration of how support personnel develop their identities and roles in

supporting students with SEN in mainstream schools (Lim et al., 2014) and the impact of inclusion on students with physical disabilities (Yeo & Tan, 2018).

With regard to teacher attitudes, Poon et al. (2016) surveyed 131 teachers and school professionals from two mainstream secondary schools, and results indicated an overall neutral attitude towards inclusion. Pre-service mainstream teachers surveyed by Thaver and Lim (2014) reported generally negative attitudes towards people with disabilities, ambivalence towards inclusion of students with SEN in the mainstream and a preference for special education school placements for these students. A study by Yeo et al. (2016) involved focus group interviews with 202 teachers across 41 mainstream primary schools and found that the teachers shared more negative than positive experiences. The positive experiences included teachers' satisfaction with the progress achieved by students with SEN and with their own new learning from working with these students. Negative experiences related particularly to stress when handling challenging behaviours and to coping with instructional difficulties while trying to meet the diverse needs across the entire class.

To examine the possibilities of changing teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, Thaver (2013) implemented and evaluated the impact of a disability awareness course for pre-service teachers, designed to develop more inclusive attitudes towards disability and inclusion. The results showed that the course produced significant changes in pre-service teachers' awareness and attitude, with the teachers reporting more positive views and greater acceptance of persons with special needs. Importantly, there was also an increased realization of their own agency in creating a more inclusive society and a greater openness towards inclusive education.

In Yeo and Tan's (2018) study assessing the impact of inclusion on students with physical disabilities in mainstream primary schools, the researchers found that these students while meeting academic expectations and indicating comparable levels of self-esteem as their peers without SEN had experienced greater peer-related difficulties (e.g. bullying by other students and exhibiting less prosocial behaviour such as being considerate of their peers' feelings) and they had lower participation in school activities compared with their able peers.

Wong et al.'s (2015) study on parental views of the inclusion of their children with SEN in mainstream schools revealed that they associated special education with social segregation and inclusion as providing broader opportunities to strengthen social skills and build positive peer relationships. Parents also expressed concerns over the amount of pressure they needed to exert on their children to help them meet social and academic expectations. They also wondered whether their children would emerge from school to become contributing members of society.

Lastly, Lim et al.'s (2014) study on the development of the identities and roles of support personnel (i.e. Allied Educators—Learning and Behavioural Support) noted the importance of mainstream schools in supporting the professional growth and inclusion of staff who are directly assisting in the education of students with SEN.

This body of empirical studies on inclusion of students with SEN in Singapore, though limited, highlights key areas for further understanding and intervention, namely, (i) the role of teacher education in facilitating more inclusive attitudes on the part of teachers; (ii) how students with SEN can be better supported across

various dimensions of school life, such as greater participation in school activities; (iii) creating more inclusive classroom communities through the socio-emotional education of all students in relating positively with each other; (iv) parents as partners with schools in promoting more positive school-based experiences for their children with SEN; and (v) situating the professional development and contributions of school staff members for inclusion within the broader umbrella of building whole-school capabilities and inclusive school cultures. A whole-school approach utilizes the complementary efforts of individual teachers and support personnel and results in collective teamwork to better support *all* students, including those with SEN.

Personnel Preparation for the Inclusion of Students with SEN

Shortly after Prime Minister Lee's 2004 call for better supports for students with SEN in mainstream schools, two new milestone programmes at NIE were launched the following year for this purpose. One was to train personnel for a new educator scheme—the Allied Educators [Learning & Behavioural Support, AED(LBS)] formerly known as special needs officers—whose role was to support students with mild SEN, starting with students with dyslexia and autism spectrum disorder in mainstream schools. Over time, they would begin also to support students with other special educational needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and sensory and physical impairments through individual, small-group intervention or in-class support in collaboration with the classroom teacher. Until the new support scheme for special needs arrived, primary schools in Singapore primarily relied upon learning coordinators (LSCs), one for literacy and one for mathematics at each school, to support students at risk of literacy and numeracy difficulties in the first 2 years of primary education. LSCs are mainstream teachers who have received additional training from NIE to support literacy and numeracy development (Poon et al., 2013).

The other NIE programme introduced in 2005 was the 'Teachers Trained in Special Needs' (TSNs). This programme aimed to boost the capacity of mainstream primary and secondary school teachers to work with students with SEN. The goal of the TSN programme was to train approximately 10% and 20% of all primary and secondary school teachers, respectively. Poon et al. (2013) noted the variance in the roles that teachers were given after training, with some continuing to serve students with SEN as their teachers while others being deployed to mentor other teachers and school professionals. Some were charged with the responsibility to establish school support structures, such as case management teams for students with SEN.

Since their inception in 2005, both the AED(LBS) and TSN training programmes have continued to the present time. Over the period since training began, the growing number of graduands from these two programmes, alongside other teachers and allied professionals (educational psychologists, school counsellors, school leaders), has contributed to building the systemic capability of mainstream schools. These

schools are now able to respond more effectively to the influx of students with SEN entering mainstream education through a whole-school approach.

In addition to equipping teachers with knowledge and skills to work with students with SEN, the NIE has also been using the disability awareness pedagogical model developed by Lim, Thaver, and Slee (2008). This model is used with both pre-service and in-service teachers to help them become critically aware of their own attitudes towards disability and inclusion within the Singapore context. Many of the teachers have grown up in a dual system of education, so there is a need to go beyond focusing only on teachers' knowledge and skills for working with students with SEN and to also develop their inclusive attitudes. As noted by other researchers (e.g. Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Tait & Purdie, 2000), equipping teachers solely with knowledge and skills has been found insufficient for developing more favourable attitudes towards students with SEN and their inclusion.

Implementing Inclusion: Towards Greater Systemic Capability

The Ministry of Education recently introduced the 'Tiered System of Support for Special Educational Needs' (TSS) as a framework for providing support to all mainstream schools. The aim is to further consolidate the coordination and management of school personnel and resources for supporting diverse students, including those with SEN (Aljunied, 2021; Dutt et al., 2019). Since 2005, the gradual enhancement of systemic capability to serve students with SEN in mainstream schools through the provision of trained personnel from the AED(LBS) and TSN programmes has laid the groundwork for schools to implement the TSS framework.

Similar to the multi-tiered model of Response to Intervention used in other countries, where level of support is matched to a student's ability and needs (Batsche et al., 2005), TSS emphasizes a problem-solving and progress monitoring approach to inform instructional and educational decisions. Within a multi-tiered model of service delivery, various personnel with different areas of expertise play complementary roles. There are three levels of support in TSS: (i) tier 1 involves proactive identification of learning and/or behavioural needs of students at risk and implementation of in-class support by the regular classroom teachers, (ii) tier 2 offers greater support with 'pull-out' remedial or reteaching sessions for small groups, and (iii) tier 3 involves one-to-one intervention provided by the AED(LBS) with input when necessary from the educational psychologist, school counsellor and/or TSNs. Social service agencies from the disability sector also provide additional supports and interventions for students who may require specialized school-based services (e.g. for students with hearing loss, visual impairment, physical disabilities and emotional and behavioural difficulties). In each school, a case management team oversees the implementation of interventions for students with SEN. Educational psychologists from the Psychological Service Branch in MOE play a supportive role

in meeting with and providing training sessions to case management teams to enhance their capabilities.

The TSS thus provides the framework for whole-school processes and procedures for implementation and evaluation of recommended support and intervention for students with SEN (Aljunied, 2021). The recent introduction of the TSS represents a significant step towards effective inclusive education through its emphasis on early identification and response to the educational needs of diverse students within a whole-school ecosystem.

To further strengthen the systemic capability of mainstream education to support students with SEN, a professional development roadmap was unveiled in March 2020 by MOE. This roadmap addresses the need for all mainstream educators to acquire basic knowledge and skills in special needs education strategies in order to better support students with SEN in their own classes. This significant milestone for the professional development of all mainstream teachers is part of the SkillsFuture for Educators initiative. This initiative delineates core competencies which all mainstream teachers are expected to attain at pre-service ('emergent' level) and in-service ('proficient' level) through online learning and professional development workshops (Ang, 2020a; Ministry of Education, 2020a).

The implementation of the tiered system of support in mainstream schools, together with capability strengthening of school support through more professional development, will not only improve the quality of support and intervention for students with SEN but will also hopefully address concerns raised by AED(LBS) in Lim et al.'s (2014) study. These concerns related to staff having to take on multiple roles beyond their professional responsibilities to support students with SEN. It was evident that greater collaboration and teamwork between them and mainstream teachers are necessary (Yeo et al., 2016).

To further strengthen teacher ownership and teacher leadership in building school capabilities for implementing inclusion across mainstream schools, a Special Needs (SEN) chapter was established a few years ago by the Academy of School Teachers, established to spearhead professional development of MOE staff members. This community of teacher leaders for SEN from primary and secondary schools across Singapore is guided by a core team of representatives from MOE and NIE. The SEN chapter serves as the steering committee to chart professional learning directions for teachers to support inclusion in mainstream schools. The establishment of the chapter recognizes that effective implementation of inclusion for students with SEN needs to be accompanied by a professional development and a learning plan for teachers.

Current Situation and Challenges

Prior to 2004, the absence of an inclusive education policy meant that inclusion of students with SEN in the mainstream lacked impetus and direction. Prime Minister Lee's announcement of an inclusive society in 2004 proved to be the driving force

for changes in the education system and in broader society to become more inclusive. The fact that these changes have sustained their momentum over the past 17 years, and even accelerated recently with the occurrence of macro-systemic changes in policy and practice, shows the long-standing commitment of the government to enhancing integration and inclusion of children and students with SEN.

Singapore's approach to inclusion is unlike the 'rights-based' approach found in many Western countries, where individuals with SEN can exercise their rights through legislation to access and participate in mainstream settings with necessary supports and services. Instead, the inclusion of students with SEN within mainstream schools came about as part of the government's re-envisioning of Singapore as an *inclusive society* (Lim et al., 2019). The inclusion of students with SEN thus emerged from an aspirational envisioning of Singaporean society, and how the advancement of inclusion will continue is subsumed within larger contextual influences and developments. This way to advance inclusion may not be easy, given that Singapore culture is strongly pragmatic (Lim & Thaver, 2021) and heavily influenced by principles of meritocracy (Wong, 2021).

The strengthening of support at the systemic level does indicate a move in policy and practice towards a more collaborative and capability-building approach to educating a diverse student population. There is now evidence of a system that is more customized and responsive to individual learning needs. The success of such a change hinges upon raising teacher competencies. It is timely that the Ministry of Education recently launched the professional development roadmap for all mainstream educators to gain basic knowledge and skills in special needs education in order for them to better support students with SEN in mainstream schools. For many years, the TSN programme catered to increase the expertise of in-service mainstream teachers in primary and secondary schools—however, the percentage of all teachers trained was relatively low (only 10% and 20%, respectively, of primary and secondary school teachers). Ideally, *all* teachers in pre-service teacher education courses should be adequately trained to support the education and management of students with SEN. As noted by Poon et al. (2013), even when teachers had received appropriate training, the ways in which they were ultimately deployed may not have maximized their potential contribution to schools. This situation is currently being addressed in schools through the implementation of the TSS framework.

In spite of all the initiatives to increase the capability of mainstream education for including increasing numbers of students with SEN, current high standards set in the curriculum, and the high academic achievement expectations, make differentiation of curriculum content, methods and assessment, far from easy. The current provision is based on simply attempting to support students with SEN to cope with a standardized curriculum and to pass examinations (Strogilos, Lim & Buhari, 2021). This situation is more aligned with the notion of integration with support, rather than true inclusion. Strogilos et al. (2021) studied the use of differentiated instruction as an inclusive pedagogy for primary-aged students in Singapore and reported that contextual influences such as the standardized curriculum and national examinations constrain the use of differentiated instruction. These influences also elicited tension within teachers and AEDs-LBS who are expected to deliver an equitable, inclusive

and relevant education for students with SEN, amid pressure to prepare these students to pass examinations.

While the efforts to ensure inclusion for students with mild SEN within mainstream schools have indeed progressed, their counterparts with moderate to severe SEN continue to face challenges accessing a more inclusive educational experience. Since these students with moderate to severe SEN are catered for in special education schools and their interactions with mainstream students come mainly from the Satellite Partnership Programme, the inclusion of students with moderate to severe SEN presents a current challenge in Singapore to explore educational possibilities for these students through the UNCRPD.

Research must continue to play an important role in deepening our understanding of effective implementation processes that support inclusion of students with SEN, through monitoring and evaluating the current system. Areas for future research include examining and improving the attitudes of key school stakeholders (school leaders, parents of students with and without SEN, peers), exploring effective ways to strengthen school partnerships with parents, using inclusive pedagogies for students with SEN, stakeholders' (including students with SEN) perspectives on what are enablers and barriers to implementation of inclusive processes and the impact and learning outcomes of inclusive practices for students with different types of SEN.

The importance of understanding the use of inclusive pedagogies (such as differentiated instruction) in particular settings is evident in the research by Strogilos et al. (2021). A study of situated practices can highlight contextual variables that impinge upon the effective use of particular strategies, thereby providing evidence of what needs to be done to improve practice. Participatory action research can offer a suitable approach to re-examine practices and contextual variables by involving key stakeholders such as school leaders and MOE personnel. The outcomes can then lead to designing new solutions to address barriers to inclusive learning for students with SEN. This type of participatory research can be used by school communities to examine and evaluate the implementation of the TSS within mainstream schools.

Conclusion

Developments over the past 17 years show progress being made towards establishing a more supportive educational ecosystem for the integration and inclusion of students with SEN in Singapore. These realizations constitute actions and responses taken after ratifying the UNCRPD, and they reveal how Singapore is protecting the interests and rights of its citizens with disabilities while building an inclusive society, as envisioned in 2004. It will be interesting to witness the further unfolding of Singapore's ratification of UNCRPD in terms of strengthening inclusive education through implementation of inclusive teaching practices and identification of practices that may impede inclusion of students with SEN.

Much has been accomplished to support the integration and inclusion of students with SEN, and educational reform has recently been occurring to strengthen the capabilities of mainstream schools to meet the needs of students with SEN. This progress underscores Singapore's commitment to better support students with SEN and facilitate their inclusion within mainstream communities and society. Future research must provide a measure of accountability to ensure that such efforts are adequately monitored to promote optimum student outcomes.

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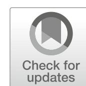
Chapter 4
Teacher Resilience in the Chinese Context of “Learning in Regular Classroom”: A Response to “Lazy Inclusivism”



Guanglun Michael Mu

Abstract Three decades after the advent of “Learning in Regular Classroom” (LRC), remarkable developments have been achieved in inclusive education in China. Parallel to these developments is the strident criticism of the structural absence of system support to LRC. Behind this structural problem lurks “lazy inclusivism” where seemingly hardworking legislation, regulation, and education paradoxically engage in much tokenistic inclusive practice that barely introduces transformational change. In response to the paradox of “lazy inclusivism,” this chapter draws on multiple correspondence analysis to quantitatively investigate the ordinary and extraordinary wisdom of a national sample of 1167 Chinese LRC teachers. When faced with visible adverse conditions (e.g., lack of system support) and invisible structural constraints (e.g., neoliberalism), some LRC teachers may play the game of tokenism and become “lazy”; others, however, may strategically refuse to play the game, demonstrating resilience to symbolic violence of “lazy inclusivism.” The chapter showcases teacher agency in seeking and creating resources in the face of deficient LRC support system and in counteracting neoliberalized structural constraints. Such teacher agency buttresses a sociological process of resilience that purposefully transforms inclusive education into an enabling and welcoming pedagogical space for the betterment of children with diverse needs in China.

Keywords China · Lazy inclusivism · Learning in Regular Classroom · Neoliberalism · Sociology of resilience · Teacher agency

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Introduction

China has the largest population with disabilities in the world. According to the most recent national census data, among the 83 million Chinese people with disabilities, approximately 5 million are children (between 0 and 17 years in age) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). The population of school-aged children (6–14 years) with disabilities amounts to 2,460,000, including 130,000 with visual impairment, 110,000 with hearing impairment, 170,000 with speech disability, 480,000 with physical disability, 760,000 with intellectual disability, 60,000 with mental disorder, and 750,000 with multiple disabilities (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). In this recent decade, the school enrolment rate of children with disabilities has demonstrated a steady growth. Since 2017, the Chinese government has endeavored to lift the school enrolment rate of children with disabilities in compulsory education years to 95% by 2020. This ambitious goal is stated in the《第二期特殊教育提升计划 (2017–2020)》(*Special Education Promotion Plan, Second Stage, 2017–2020*). Currently, students with disabilities in compulsory education years receive a textbook fee waiver and an incidental fee waiver, and the annual public spend per student with disabilities is ¥6000 (approximately AUD $1300). This financial support is called "两免一补" (the Two-Waiver-One-Subsidy Policy).

According to the Chinese Ministry of Education (2019a), the total enrolments of children with disabilities in regular and special schools were 665,942 in 2018, with girls accounting for 36.36% of these enrolments; an overwhelming proportion of schooled children with disabilities (98.09%) was accommodated in compulsory education years. Table 4.1 summarizes statistics from the Ministry of Education (2019a) and demonstrates school enrolments of children with disabilities in compulsory education years by school level, gender, and disability type. In 2018, there were 479,255 primary school enrolments (years 1–6) and 173,967 junior high school enrolments (years 7–9), among which 48.48% and 55.61% respectively were accommodated in regular schools through the national program "Learning in Regular Classroom" (LRC, 随班就读).

Table 4.1 School enrolment by disability type and gender

Disability type	Primary school	% Female	Junior High School	% Female
Visual impairment	18,456	39.86%	10,482	39.90%
Hearing impairment	25,576	39.40%	9772	39.04%
Speech disability	12,384	34.71%	4421	34.11%
Physical disability	63,667	37.23%	36,761	37.49%
Intellectual disability	91,438	36.06%	28,997	34.65%
Mental disorder	8407	28.36%	2749	32.88%
Multiple disabilities	12,400	36.34%	3558	34.57%
Total LRC enrolments	232,328	36.71%	96,740	36.66%
Total school enrolments	479,255		173,967	
% LRC	48.48%		55.61%	

LRC is a nationwide program initiated by the Chinese government in the 1980s to make regular schools accessible to students with disabilities. Such initiative is commendable for its good intention to provide equal access to schooling for children with disabilities. Three decades of LRC have seen a widening participation of students with autism, visual and hearing impairments, as well as learning and physical disabilities in regular schools. Despite these impressive achievements, LRC remains enmeshed in thorny structural problems such as inadequate system support (Wang, Mu, et al., 2015a) and loose teacher training (Mu et al., 2015; Wang & Mu, 2014; Wang et al., 2017). In the face of these problems, national responses are unwavering: the State Council (2010, 2019) and the Ministry of Education (2018, 2019b, 2020b) have consistently and unequivocally accentuated the importance of LRC. With these national policies cascading through the education system, educators industriously engage with laborious work to accommodate and assimilate children with disabilities in an assumed inclusive educational setting, which, matter-of-factly, remains a dominant, mainstream system fraught with self-governance, competition, performativity, and high-stakes testing, among many other neoliberal logics of schooling (Mu, 2019; Mu et al., 2017). Herein lies a paradox that has long plagued LRC: Many children with disabilities are included in a regular classroom physically but de facto excluded educationally.

To unveil the nature of the LRC paradox, I coin the term "lazy inclusivism" (also see Mu, 2020, 2021a, and 2021c) which was informed by the notion of "lazy multiculturalism" (Watkins & Noble, 2019). It is used to satirize the institutionalization of any ethical but tokenistic "inclusive" models that insidiously reproduce structural inequality by strategically concealing its logic of silencing the epistemologies of children with disabilities. Here, the adjective "lazy" is not used to scapegoat educators for the hidden cracks in the system. After all, even getting children with disabilities in the door of a regular classroom requires persistent passion, insistent belief, and consistent effort. I use "lazy inclusivism" instead to describe an astute system that tailors a cloak of laborious business to shroud its own laziness in achieving real inclusion. When various stakeholders are busy with "dumping children into what are essentially extensions of their former segregated experiences" (Barton, 2012, p. 12), "lazy inclusivism" achieves its efficiency by making everyone too busy to introduce transformational change. In this chapter, my goal is to grapple with "lazy inclusivism" through a sociological thinking of resilience. To this end, I first situate disability and special education in the historical context of China. These are important social and educational antecedents of LRC. I then provide a panoramic review of teacher agency and teacher resilience in the professional world of LRC teachers. This is followed by an empirical study that reckons with teacher agency in the neoliberal LRC context. Using multiple correspondence analysis, I create a plot to map "lazy inclusivism" and resilience of and to neoliberalism. I conclude the chapter with a call for moving toward a sociology of resilience to structural constraints in the Chinese LRC context in particular and the global inclusive education context in general.

Situating Disability in the Historical Context of China

The earliest documented accounts of disability in human history can be found in some ancient Chinese classics. For example, 《左传》 (*The Commentary of Zuo*, 300 BC) documented "耳不听五声之和为聋, 目不辨五色之章为昧" (deafness is that ears cannot hear five sounds, and blindness is that eyes cannot see five colors.). More than 2000 years ago, while ancient Greeks and Romans commonly practiced infanticide of children with disabilities (Braddock & Parish, 2001), ancient Chinese had formulated a benevolent attitude toward, and social responsibility for, people with disabilities. Confucius (551–478 BC), the great Chinese philosopher, pedagogue, and politician, has long asserted that "废疾者皆有所养" (people with disabilities should be looked after). Therefore, it is widely recognized that Confucianism construes disability, by and large, as a positive construct (Pang & Richey, 2006; Piao et al., 1995; Worrell & Taber, 2009; Yu et al., 2011). However, Confucian philosophy, at least to a certain extent, is also considered to be culpable for social discrimination against people with disabilities due to its ontological position of social hierarchy and class stratification in relation to personal characteristics (Ellsworth & Zhang, 2007; McLoughlin et al., 2005).

Two thousand years later, the Chinese state continues to promote social acceptance and support of people with disabilities. Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China and particularly during the Mao's era, communist humanitarianism had been consecrated as a supreme, sacred national ideology. With the ideology thus constructed, many welfare factories and welfare houses were established for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, such communist ideology believed egalitarianism as divine and individualism as profane and consequently eliminated any special benefits for people with disabilities (McCabe, 2003; Potts, 1999, 2000). In contemporary China, although the living status of individuals with disabilities has gradually improved and will continue to improve (Pang, 2010), social discrimination and stereotypical stigma against disability remain (Feng, 2010; Piao et al., 1995; Shang et al., 2011). Therefore, Confucian philosophy, communist ideology, and contemporary society are loaded with competing and conflicting discourses of disability.

Development of Special Education in China: A Historical Review

The development of special education in China has followed a complex trajectory. In 1859, 洪仁玕 (Rengan Hong, one of the earliest pro-capitalism political vanguard in imperial China) compiled《资政新篇》(*The New Treatise on Political Counsel*), where he proposed "兴跛盲聋哑院" (the development of schools for lame, blind, deaf, and dumb people). Hong's proposal was not echoed until 1874 when the first special school for children with visual impairments was established in Beijing,

followed by the establishment of the first special school for children with hearing impairments in Shandong in 1887 (Piao et al., 1995). Many of these earliest endeavors were indebted to the efforts of missionaries (Piao et al., 1995). In the early 1900s, under the sponsorship of 张謇 (Jian Zhang, a philanthropic entrepreneur), a special school for both deaf and blind children was established in Jiangsu (Piao et al., 1995). This was the first special school established by Chinese people. Prior to the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, there were 42 special schools serving approximately 2000 children with disabilities (Piao et al., 1995). The number of special schools has grown dramatically since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, reaching 2192 by 2019 (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

After 1949, the system of special education teacher training was formally established and gradually promoted, but it suffered from a delayed growth due to the political instability and economic adversity particularly during the Cultural Revolution (Ellsworth & Zhang, 2007; McLoughlin et al., 2005; Piao et al., 1995). The year of 1978 was the milestone in Chinese history. With the country reopening to the world, the concept of "special educational needs" proposed by Warnock (1978) travelled to China, eliciting far-reaching influence on special education in the country. However, the normal-abnormal model created a binary system that separated regular education and special education (Wang & Zhu, 2019). Since the 1980s onward, pre-service training of special education teachers has proliferated, with many tertiary institutions offering relevant degree programs. In 1981, the Department of Special Teacher Education was established in Zhaodong Normal College in Heilongjiang Province, which became the first institution specifically for pre-service training of special education teachers (Wang & Mu, 2014). Currently, there are approximately 60 higher education institutions offering undergraduate special education programs and 13 offering postgraduate special education programs.

In 1982, Professor Piao at Beijing Normal University developed the first undergraduate special education course in China (Wang & Mu, 2014). In 1986, the Ministry of Education approved the first undergraduate degree program in special education at Beijing Normal University, with an enrolment of 15 students in that year (Wang & Mu, 2014). In 1989, the Ministry of Education published the national curriculum for special teacher education. But textbooks at that time were mostly translated from western publications, for example, *Educating Exceptional Children* by Kirk and Gallagher (1979). Piao (1991) complied《特殊教育概论》(*Introduction to Special Education*), the first localized textbook in China. In terms of research, the first special education institute was established by Beijing Normal University in 1980. Informed by Marxism compensation for deficit, Piao (1995) proposed a three-dimension compensation model: biological, social, and psychological. Scholarly journals on special education started to emerge in the 1990s. Influential ones include《中国特殊教育》(*Chinese Journal of Special Education*),《特殊教育研究》(*Special Education Research*), and《现代特殊教育》(*Modern Special Education*).

Concomitant with the continuous development of special education is the increasing criticism of the notion for its connotation of abnormality and deficit. In his seminal work on *The Fundamental Problems of Defectology*, Vygotsky (1993, p. 30) decisively holds that "a child whose development is impeded by a defect is not simply a child less developed than his peers but is a child who has developed differently." He criticizes the well-worn cliché of the deficit discourse toward children with disabilities and warns "no educational practice can be based on purely negative definitions and fundamentals" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 31). In this vein, the Vygotskian positive child psychology echoes the long-standing Confucian philosophy of "有教无类" (education without distinction). These schools of thought not only recast traditional problems of underdevelopment into diverse pathways to development but also lay foundations for contemporary understandings of inclusion. Informed by the concept of inclusion, education systems worldwide began to rethink the traditional model of special education that segregated children with disabilities from regular schooling. In China, Learning in Regular Classroom (LRC) emerged in the 1980s as an alternative of special education.

Learning in Regular Classroom: An Alternative of Special Education

As briefly introduced at the beginning of this chapter, LRC is a national program and policy that requires all regular public schools to open their door to children with disabilities. LRC is therefore construed as China's engagement with, and contribution to, the global surge of inclusive education. The earliest policy directive of LRC dated back to 1986 when the State Council published the《关于实施义务教育法若干问题的意见》(*Recommendations for Implementing Compulsory Education Law*) and urged to establish special classes in regular schools for children whose disabilities did not impede normal learning. However, the term "LRC" did not appear in this document. A trawl through policy documents located the earliest use of the term "LRC" in the 《关于印发<全日制弱智学校(班)教学计划>(征求意见稿)的通知》(*Announcement of the Trial Education Plan for Full-Time School/Class of Students with Intellectual Disabilities*). The document was promulgated by the Ministry of Education in 1987. The Ministry stated that most children with mild intellectual disabilities have been accommodated in regular schools through LRC; such model was considered to be not merely conducive to the interactions between children with intellectual disabilities and "normal" children but also feasible for regions with no special school/class for children with disabilities, rural regions in particular, to provide these children with access to schooling. Since then, LRC has appeared in most, if not all, programmatic national education policy documents.

In a most recently published policy document《教育部关于加强残疾儿童少年义务教育阶段随班就读工作的指导意见(June 2020)》(*The Ministry of Education's Instructions on LRC for Children with Disabilities in Compulsory Education*

Years), a series of specific policy directives and requirements are articulated. These include the initial screening of the disabilities of school-aged children and their eligibility for LRC; profiling of each LRC-enrolled child; ensuring their enrolment within the school catchment area and allowing for selection of a school with better LRC resources within the school catchment area; establishing a resource room for schools with more than five children with disabilities and resource centers at prefectural, municipal, and provincial levels; adjusting curriculum to accommodate the diverse needs of children with disabilities with a particular focus on promoting laboring skills and avoiding assessment solely based on academic performance; constructing inclusive school campuses; promoting professional skills of LRC teachers through pre-service education and in-service training; and strengthening cooperation across relevant government departments and home-school partnership.

With the top-down policy directives, LRC has become a nationwide program for educating children with disabilities. Yet the omnipresence of LRC does not exclude special education. In 2017, the State Council promulgated the《第二期特殊教育提升计划 (2017–2020)》(*Special Education Promotion Plan, Second Stage, 2017–2020*). One of the fundamental principles of *the Plan* is the combinatorial model of LRC and special education, coupled with drop-in education program and distance education. The model considers LRC as the protagonist and special education as the mainstay. In this respect, China differs from Italy or some states in Canada described as “being fully inclusive” (McMenamin, 2018, p. 626) in that it does not take an absolutist but a symbiotic approach to inclusion where LRC and special education are concurrent. Such approach resonates with the understanding of education as inclusive as much as differentiating (del Pozo-Armentia et al., 2020). It also aligns with the philosophy of social justice and educational inclusion:

> The notion that full inclusion and only full inclusion can represent a just stage of affairs for all disabled children is flawed. . .what is needed is. . .an approach that acknowledges the value of different types of provision but also recognises that what might suit one child and family might not suit another. (McMenamin, 2018, pp. 634–635)

Relation between LRC and special education is so complex that it merits scholarly discussion in a separate paper. This chapter, therefore, is situated only in the LRC context. Since its inception in the 1980s, LRC has experienced both achievements and challenges. According to a recent review (Wang & Zhu, 2019), teachers in regular schools, in general, have shifted their attitudes toward LRC, from rejection through approval to cautious support; special education teachers commonly hold a positive view of LRC; many student teachers, however, are yet to obtain in-depth knowledge about LRC; the attitudes of officials in education departments are largely dependent on the local developmental status; compared to parents of typically developing children, parents of children with special needs tend to have higher levels of understanding and support to LRC but worry about the effective implementation of LRC; and peer students’ attitudes to LRC vary. Key areas of research also include system support to LRC teachers (Mu et al., 2015, 2017; Wang et al., 2012, 2017; Wang, Wang, et al., 2015b) and the professional development of LRC teachers (Wang, Mu, et al., 2015a; Wang et al., 2013). Nevertheless, the yet-to-be-

perfect LRC system remains a challenge for LRC teachers' professional development. While there may be multiple possible responses to such challenge, I have recourse to teacher resilience. In what follows, I take a sociological perspective to discuss resilience that may help LRC teachers navigate through structural constraints in neoliberal times.

Teacher Resilience and "Lazy Inclusivism" in the Neoliberalized LRC Context

Teacher resilience explains the reasons why some teachers stay in the challenging career (Yonezawa et al., 2011) and "keep on teaching despite all the negative factors" (Ebersöhn, 2014, p. 573). Teacher resilience can be also construed more broadly as the everyday capacity to sustain educational purposes and manage unavoidable uncertainties in the practice of being a teacher (Gu & Day, 2013). In the precarious professional world of a teacher, resilience not only contributes to teacher retention (Beltman et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2018) but also enhances teacher commitment (Clarà, 2017), well-being (Beltman et al., 2016; Clarà, 2017; Schussler et al., 2018), job satisfaction, and happiness (Ebersöhn, 2014). Teacher resilience together with teacher knowledge, skills, and qualities form a bricolage of effective teaching and engaged learning that enhance student resilience (Selvaraj, 2018) and student performance both in academic (Ebersöhn, 2014; Gu & Day, 2013; Selvaraj, 2018) and emotional domains (Gibbs & Miller, 2013). Despite the significance of teacher resilience, barely any research has delved into the resilience process of inclusive education teachers, and there are only crumbs of empirical studies concerning that of special education teachers (Belknap & Taymans, 2015; Castro et al., 2010). A retrieval of published work in Chinese returned no resilience research concerning LRC teachers, with only sporadic research scattered in the Chinese literature concerning special education teachers (Wang, 2015). This very paucity creates an urgent need for scholarly discussion of teacher resilience in the LRC context.

Before I proceed with the discussion of teacher resilience, I need to mark a distinction between resilience of neoliberalism and resilience to neoliberalism. The former, with the underlying logic of individual responsibilization, celebrates and consecrates personal capability in adapting to challenging situations and nimbly transmits accountability from the public to the private domain (Bottrell, 2013; Chandler & Coaffee, 2016; Garrett, 2016; Grossman, 2013; Joseph, 2013). When the challenging situations are fraught with persistent system flaws, neoliberalized resilience prompts individuals to adapt to the problematic system and hence reproduces structural problems in the system. Such reproduction is often built on the grounds of a subliminal ontological complicity between the adaptive individual and the neoliberal system to which the individual is made to adapt. Resultantly, neoliberalism itself has institutional resilience and obtains a powerful self-reproductive

force that Bourdieu (1979) conceptualizes as symbolic violence—"a more effective, and in this sense more brutal, means of oppression" (Bourdieu & Eagleton, 1992, p. 115). Resilience of neoliberalism transforms individuals into adaptive agents but never transcends any structural constraints. The latter form, that is, resilience to neoliberalism, differs squarely in its anti-neoliberal attempt to turn the covert problematic system into an overt systematic problem, spark transformational change to the system, and question the unquestioned symbolic violence.

"Lazy inclusivism" is a form of symbolic violence. Its symbolic power is persuasive and pervasive, everywhere but nowhere. Its invisibility makes it rather difficult to revolt. It keeps LRC teachers busy maintaining its laziness. Teachers' commitment and acquiescence to the symbolic violence of "lazy inclusivism" are translated into tokenistic "inclusive" practices, which—however meticulously designed and laboriously implemented—are really lazy because they barely introduce transformational change but only celebrate teacher performativity against the neoliberal criteria. Despite the resilience of neoliberalism, some LRC teachers refuse to become lazy, demonstrating resilience to the institutional resilience of neoliberalism. This will become clear when I present my empirical study in the next section. My interest in teacher resilience is grounded in a transformational position of challenging and changing the status quo of "lazy inclusivism." In a time when my research was entrapped in an impasse that structural problems can be challenged but barely transcended, my research on LRC teachers' professional development shone a light in the darkness. Let me first denounce the dark side before I discuss the silver lining.

In China, university-based degree programs of teacher education have no if any LRC component. In the national *Teacher Education Curriculum Standards* promulgated by the Ministry of Education in 2011, a unit on development and learning of special needs children is designed only for student teachers of early childhood years but not for those of primary and secondary school years. Although Chinese professional standards for teachers forcibly reflect an inclusive discourse of respect, equity, and diversity (Carrington et al., 2015), teacher education curriculum largely adopts a segregated approach. That is, degree programs are designed and deployed in a binary mode—special teacher education *or* general teacher education; the latter has no unit on inclusive or special education except for student teachers of early childhood years. Although the curriculum for special education teacher training addresses the demands of special schools, the absence of inclusive education components in the curriculum for general teacher education overlooks the fact that students with disabilities are becoming increasingly visible in regular schools and inclusive educational practices are part and parcel of the professional world of LRC teachers.

Apart from the lack of pre-service education, LRC teachers are troubled by inadequate in-service support (Wang, Mu, et al., 2015a). Even problematic is the neoliberalized education system that deploys standardized testing and regulated assessment to accentuate teacher accountability in performativity. As a result, teachers, LRC teachers included, are deprived of the occupational autonomy in defining the conditions and methods of their professional work. When professional norms and mores are no longer constructed from within the occupation,

deprofessionalism looms large and reduces teachers to neoliberalized bodies. Resilience of neoliberalism is therefore deep-seated. Interestingly, in the neoliberalized LRC context, teacher agency was found to be a core of LRC teachers' professional competence (Mu et al., 2015), a significant contributor to LRC teachers' professional skills (Wang et al., 2017), and a robust facilitator of the resilience process of students with disabilities (Mu et al., 2017). Here, agency denotes LRC teachers' purposeful and strategic action of seeking support and professional power to create opportunities for optimizing, rather than compromising, their LRC pedagogy and practice in the resource-scarce LRC context. Although teacher agency has proved to help regain, at least to a certain extent, teacher professionalism in the face of neoliberal encroachment, its potential was found to regress in oppressing and stressing contexts such as high-stakes testing (Mu, 2019).

Previous studies, when using quantitative methods, commonly count on linear modeling to analyze the dialectical relationship between agency and structure. Statistical analyses thus conducted often cloak the nonlinear relationships between agency and structure, leaving possible nuances and dynamics unraveled. To redress this, I employ an explorative and descriptive quantitative method called multiple correspondence analysis to visualize "lazy inclusivism," explore resilience patterns in the neoliberalized LRC context, and look into future directions for building teacher resilience to "lazy inclusivism."

Mapping Resilience to and of Neoliberalism in the LRC Context: Multiple Correspondence Analysis

Data used in the analysis include a sample of 1167 LRC teacher participants in my collaborative research with China. Of these sampled teachers, 313 were from Beijing in the north of the country, 175 from Guangdong in the south, 68 from Shanghai, and 88 from Jiangxi in the east, as well as 448 from Sichuan and 75 from Yunnan in the southwest. Although this is a national-level dataset, it is by no means my intention to generalize. Rather, my analysis revolves around the problems identified in the sample and provides some insights into the focal phenomena under discussion, that is, neoliberal constraints and teacher resilience to them.

In the sample, there appears a female predomination (86.5%), which reflects the fact that the teaching profession remains female prevalent. Approximately three quarters of the sample (76.8%) were primary school teachers. Professional ranks of the sampled teachers varied from junior, through medium, to senior, accounting for 27.6%, 49.9%, and 22.5% of the sample, respectively. Most of the teachers (85.3%) have obtained a bachelor's degree or above, the remaining 14.7% with a diploma. The sampled teachers ranged in age between 21 years and 65 years, with a mean age of 37.7 ($SD = 8.2$). They differed markedly in teaching experience, ranging from novice teachers with one or less than 1 year of teaching to veteran teachers with a 40-year experience ($M = 15.2$, $SD = 9.7$). Their LRC experience

also demonstrated dramatic variance, ranging from one or less than 1 year to 37 years (M = 8.3, SD = 8.4). One third (33.6%) of the sample reported teaching students with a particular type of disability, whereas two thirds reported teaching students with multiple types of disabilities. To my disappointment, about one third of the sample (32.3%) has not yet received any LRC-related training.

To unveil resilience to and of neoliberalism, I have recourse to multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) (Hjellbrekke, 2018). Different from linear statistical methods (e.g., regression) that often impose models on data, MCA constructs models to follow data and enables complex patterns to emerge from data analysis. Most linear models assume multicollinearity among independent variables as statistically problematic. MCA, in stark contrast, explores the relational patterns associated with the categories corresponding to a selected set of variables. In this vein, MCA turns the problematic multicollinearity into a legitimate problem of "correspondence" for examination. For the purpose of the analysis here, I include 16 variables, each measured by a 5-point Likert scale. In MCA terms, I have 80 categories included in the analysis (16 × 5). The 16 variables include 10 that gauge neoliberal constraints and 6 that gauge teacher agency. The former was measured by the degree to which teachers were made accountable for internal regulation, external evaluation, student test performance, parent complaint, media coverage, and heavy workload. The latter was measured by the degree to which teachers purposefully seek and create resources to facilitate their LRC practices (see measurement development, validation, and application in different samples of Chinese LRC teachers in Mu et al. (2017), Mu et al. (2015), and Wang et al. (2017)).

The relations of the 80 categories are explored through MCA. In the MCA plot, the ten variables of neoliberal constraints and their corresponding categories are demonstrated by circles, while the six variables of teacher agency and their corresponding categories are demonstrated by stars. As each variable is measured by a 5-point Likert scale, each variable has five categories (values), showing as one to five in the MCA plot, with one demonstrating the lowest level and five demonstrating the highest level. Figure 4.1 shows the MCA plot. The first dimension by itself accounts for 41.4% of the variance in the data, the second dimension by itself accounts for 34.5%, and the third dimension, which is not shown in the MCA plot, accounts for 25.0%. The percentage here exceeds 100% because variance jointly accounted for by multiple dimensions is not taken into consideration.

In the MCA plot, categories centered around the origin do not contribute much to their corresponding dimensions. As such, Fig. 4.1 suggests that two category clouds located further away from the origin may be most useful to explain the dimension formation. The cloud on the right-hand side comprises the highest level of teacher agency (the stars marked with a value of 5) and the lowest level of neoliberal constraints (the circles marked with a value of 1). The cloud on the top-left corner of the plot shows a reversed pattern. These two clouds seem to demonstrate a competing social space of agency and structure. To identify possible patterns of resilience of and to neoliberalism, I explore each dimension in detail. For each dimension, I only retain explicable categories in the MCA plot. Explicable categories refer to those contributing to their corresponding dimension more than the

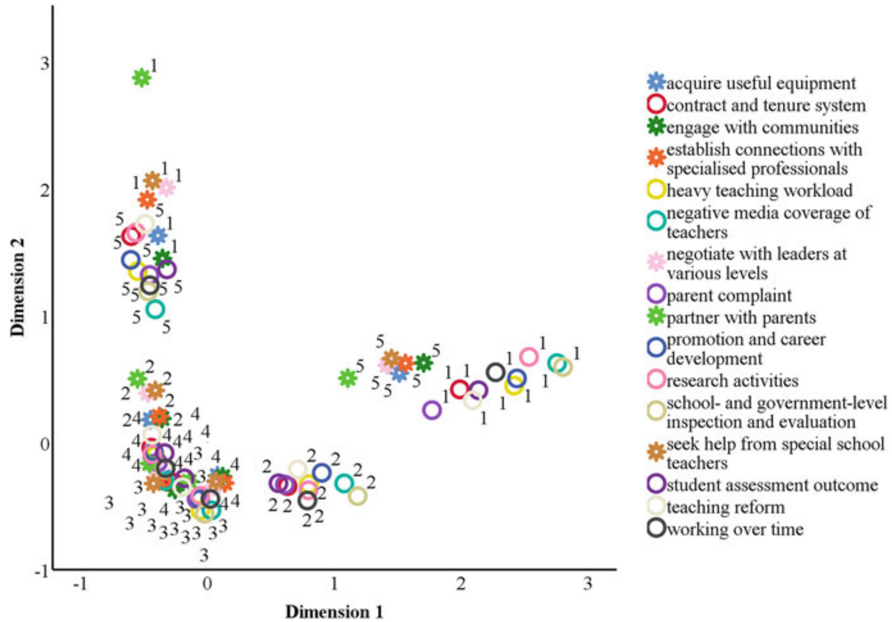

Fig. 4.1 Relations of teacher agency and neoliberal constraints

average contribution of all categories. In the current study, there are 80 categories under examination. Each category on average accounts for 1.25% (1 ÷ 80) of the variance in the data. Categories with a contribution less than 1.25% are therefore removed from further analysis.

Dimension 1: An Agentic Professional World of LRC Teachers

Figure 4.2 maps the explicable categories of the first dimension (horizontal). The category clouds of relatively weak neoliberal constraints (the circles labeled by their corresponding category with a value of one or two at the end) are located, respectively, to the right and left of the category cloud of strong teacher agency (the stars labeled by their corresponding category with a value of five at the end). This dimension constructs an agentic professional world of LRC teachers where strong teacher agency may be emancipated from a low-constraining neoliberal context.

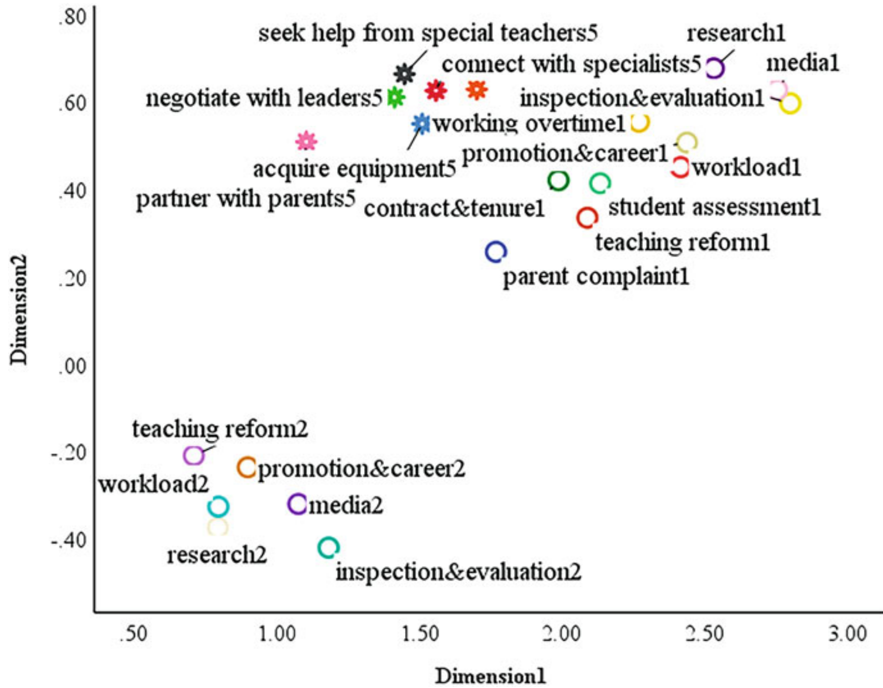

Fig. 4.2 An agentic professional world of LRC teachers

Dimension 2: A Neoliberalized Professional World of LRC Teachers

Figure 4.3 maps the explicable categories of the second dimension (vertical), which constructs a neoliberalized professional world of LRC teachers. The cloud on the top-left corner of the MCA plot comprises the categories of strong neoliberal constraints (marked with a value of five at the end of the label) and the categories of week teacher agency (marked with a value of one at the end of the label). By taking teacher agency away, neoliberalism is not merely culpable for the “laziness” of LRC teachers but also in itself resilient to change—a phenomenon referred to as resilience of neoliberalism in the foregoing exposition.

Moving downward the second dimension, there appears, in the bottom-right corner of the MCA map, a cloud where the categories of moderate neoliberal constraints (marked with a value of three at the end of the label) are grouped together as a stand-alone pattern. In practice, this would mean that LRC teachers barely relate themselves to agency when neoliberal constraints “quietly” encroach on the teaching profession in a mild manner and therefore may be perceived by LRC teachers as tolerable or even acceptable. In this vein, LRC teachers may become “lazy” because they may compromise themselves with neoliberalism without optimizing LRC

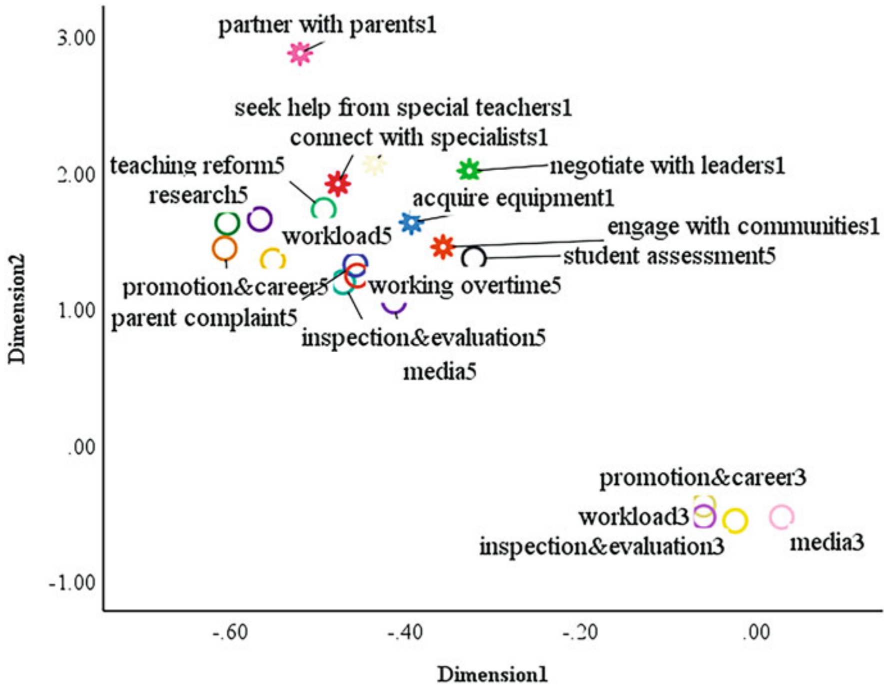

Figure 4.3. A neoliberalized professional world of LRC teachers

opportunities for the sake of children with disabilities. As a result, symbolic violence of "lazy inclusivism" succeeds in imposing power without taking any violence.

Putting together, a neoliberalized professional world of LRC teachers is inundated with "lazy inclusivism." LRC teachers may still have to work laboriously to accommodate and assimilate children with special needs in an assumed inclusive educational setting. Paradoxically, such hard work is really "lazy" owing to its reductionist approach to inclusion that shows little interest in deconstructing the fixed, essentialist understanding of disability constructed and sustained within current schooling (Liasidou, 2012). When successful accommodation and assimilation are translated into neoliberal measures of school effectiveness, the dominant, mainstream schooling is further justified. In this vein, "lazy inclusivism" is a Trojan Horse for social inequality and educational exclusion.

Dimension 3: Resilience to Neoliberalism

Figure 4.4 maps the explicable categories of the third dimension (vertical). In stark contrast to the previous two dimensions where agency and structure demonstrate a mutually exclusive pattern, the third dimension constructs a space where neoliberal

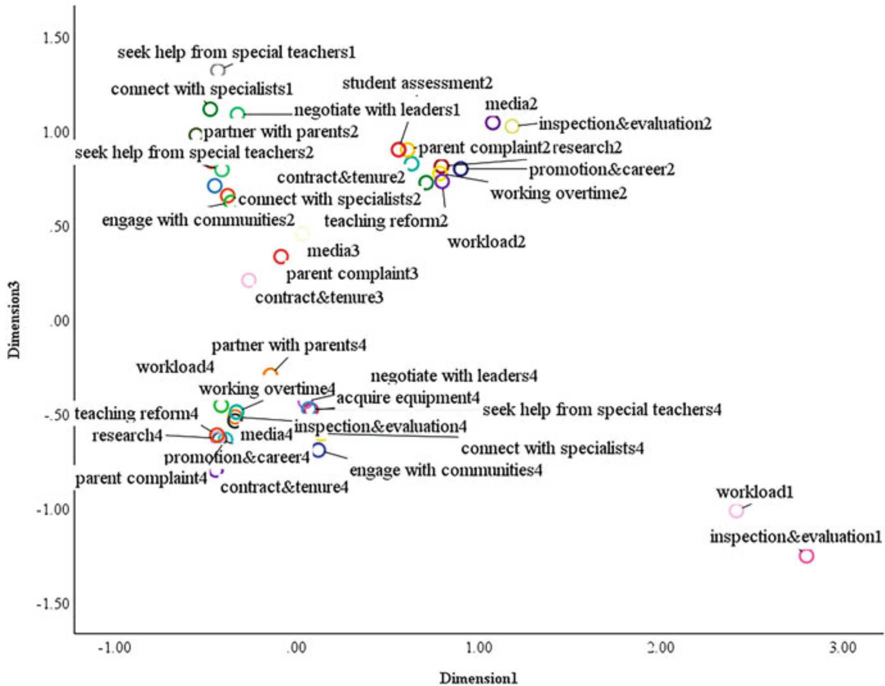

Figure 4.4. A resilience professional world to "lazy inclusivism"

constraints tend to evoke the enterprise of teacher resilience to neoliberalism. The cloud on the top half of the MCA plot comprises the categories of feeble neoliberal constraints (labeled with a value of two at the end) and the categories of weak teacher agency (labeled with values of one and two at the end). Excitingly, as shown in the cloud at the bottom half of the MCA plot, LRC teachers perform active agency work (labeled with a value of four at the end) despite a strong coercion of neoliberal constraints (labeled with a value of four at the end). This pattern provides evidence on resilience to neoliberalism and hence resilience to "lazy inclusivism."

In order to further explore the mechanism of resilience to neoliberalism, I have made attempts to also project other available variables in this dataset onto the MCA plot. These variables mainly measure the demographic features of the sampled LRC teachers, including their educational qualification, age, years of teaching, years of LRC experiences, professional ranks, LRC training history, as well as school location and school sectors. Unfortunately, all these supplementary categories barely help to explain the patterns of groupings in the MCA plot as they are all largely centered around the origin in the plot. Because the supplementary categories are non-explicable, they are not shown in the MCA plot. While the analysis here successfully locates "lazy inclusivism" and resilience of and to neoliberalism in the MCA plot, possible mechanisms behind resilience to neoliberalism remain

undiscovered. To demystify how LRC teachers shun away with the neoliberalized laziness, future research is needed.

Conclusion

The past three decades have seen marked achievements of LRC. Nevertheless, LRC remains a far cry from success. In this chapter, I take a critical perspective to the status quo of LRC and coin the term "lazy inclusivism" to understand the underlying problems of LRC. I then situate "lazy inclusivism" in the neoliberalized LRC context. Drawing on a national level dataset and employing MCA, I analyze the relations among teacher agency, neoliberal constraints, teacher resilience, and "lazy inclusivism." When LRC teachers work diligently to meet the neoliberalized education agenda for the sake of surviving and thriving in the neoliberalized professional world rather than crafting a welcoming and enabling LRC pedagogic space, "lazy inclusivism" imposes a form of symbolic violence that takes control of LRC and breeds the resilience of neoliberalism. As a result, LRC continues to pay lip service to children with disabilities without transcending the structural problems that undermine the journey of these children to inclusive education. Some LRC teachers, however, refuse adaptation to neoliberalism and engage with the resilience to neoliberalism through their agency work. The available data here are unable to uncover the mechanisms of such resilience process; thus, future investigation is urgent. As transformational change remains a catchword without the intention to seam system cracks, I propose a sociological thinking of teacher resilience that has potential to force "lazy inclusivism" to retreat.

Teachers' professional world is inundated with a psychological discourse of resilience that portrays "model teachers" who continue to perform well against all odds. Such discourse prevails in teacher training, policy rhetoric, media report, and every walk of LRC teachers' professional life. The success of these teachers is laudable, but under the cloak of "model teachers," there hides a neoliberal conspiracy of individual responsibilization or what Evans and Reid (2016, p. 338) would call "a dark and dehumanising political agenda." Such an agenda recasts LRC teachers into ascetic bodies who have to cope with all stress and pressure, without realizing the underlying problem of "lazy inclusivism." As an alternative of psychology of adaptation, a sociology of resilience can awaken the ascetic bodies from their epistemic slumber and reforge them into reflexive pedagogues who are able to question the unquestioned and bring to light the hidden (Mu, 2021b). The key is to keep some distance away from the psychological discourse of resilience, through teacher training, policy directives, media coverage, and teachers' everyday world of work.

I want to conclude the chapter with two contextual reflections, one on the Chinese political environment and the other on the global pandemic. China has long been known as a highly politicized society. When pushed from national, then local governments and authorities, LRC can become a top-down political task rather

than a bottom-up educational enterprise. This is a phenomenon of academic politicism where political force subjugates educational interest. When teachers are made busy with fulfilling the political task of LRC, they derail from the project of inclusive education and fall prey to "lazy inclusivism." The recent outbreak of COVID-19 shifted schooling to a study-at-home mode. This has further marginalized students with disabilities whose home cannot provide resources to address their special needs. In response to the political and the pandemic tensions and other structural constraints, I call for a sociological approach to teacher resilience that purposefully transforms, not perfunctorily ornaments, LRC into an enabling and welcoming pedagogical space for the betterment of children with disabilities.

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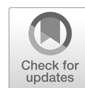
Chapter 5
Inclusive Education in a Chinese Context: A Hong Kong Perspective



Mantak Yuen, Florence Wu, Fay Wong, Patcy Yeung, Cici Lam, Kit Chan, Gloria Ma, and Cheng Yong Tan

Abstract Until 1997, the education system in Hong Kong had very clear separation between special and mainstream education, with almost all students with special educational needs being placed in special schools or special classes. The first step toward inclusive education came in 1997 in the form of a pilot project to increase "integration" of students with disabilities into the mainstream. This chapter provides an overview of the evolution of inclusive education in Hong Kong since that time, under the influence of Chinese traditions and culture, plus its past history as a British colony. Particular attention is given to provision of training for teachers and the implementation of a whole-school approach to inclusion. The authors indicate how local evidence, plus ideas and trends from overseas, have so far shaped (and will continue to shape) legislation, policies, and practices related to inclusion. Problems encountered in implementing inclusive practices in Hong Kong schools are identified.

Keywords China · Cultural influences · Inclusion · Hong Kong · Policies · Teacher education

Context

Hong Kong was a British colony for over 150 years but was returned to China in 1997 to become a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. Hong Kong is located at the southeastern tip of China and has a total area of 1107 km^2 with a population of approximately 7.52 million in 2019. The official

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languages of Hong Kong are Chinese and English. Majority of the population use Cantonese (88.9%) as the usual spoken language, followed by English (4.3%) and other Chinese dialects (3.1%). During the colonial period, the education system of Hong Kong was modeled on the British system.

Education in Hong Kong

The education system of Hong Kong covers kindergarten, primary and secondary school education, special education, postsecondary education, and other forms of education and training. Kindergartens, which are all privately run, provide education for children aged 3–6. The government provides 12 years' free primary and secondary education to all children through public sector schools. In the school year 2019–2020, a total of 883,189 students were enrolled in Hong Kong's day schools including 1049 kindergartens (174,297 students), 587 primary schools (373,228 students), 504 secondary schools (327,394 students), and 61 special schools (8270 students), respectively (Education Bureau, 2020b).

Students with special educational needs (SEN) receive education in either mainstream or special schools. Some kindergartens provide training for children aged 2–6 who have mild disabilities (intellectual, physical, auditory, or vision). For primary and secondary education, the government adopts a dual-track mode for implementing special education by retaining special schools for those who need high levels of support while also encouraging students with less severe special educational needs to receive education in the mainstream. In the school year 2019–2020, there were 61 aided special schools in Hong Kong, falling into 6 categories: 41 schools for children with intellectual disability, 2 schools for children with visual impairment, 1 school for children with hearing impairment, 7 schools for children with physical disability, 8 schools for social development, and 1 hospital school (Education Bureau, 2020a). Boarding service is available in approximately one-third of these special schools. The Education Bureau also subsidizes any allied health professionals, social workers, and support staff that are required.

Students with severe or multiple disabilities are eligible for placement in a special school if they have undertaken relevant assessments, are supported by recommendations from specialists, and have parental consent. Other students with milder disabilities or SEN would attend mainstream schools. Students' disabilities or SEN are categorized into nine major types including (a) specific learning difficulties, (b) attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, (c) autism spectrum disorders, (d) speech and language impairment, (e) intellectual disability, (f) hearing impairment, (g) physical disability, (h) visual impairment, and (i) mental illness (Education Bureau, 2014, 2020b).

The Education Bureau provides mainstream schools with additional resources and professional training to help staff cater for students with disabilities or other special needs. In the school year 2019–2020, all public sector mainstream schools were provided with a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to support a

whole-school approach to inclusive education. SENCOs are responsible for helping to promote an inclusive ethos and culture in the school and—in collaboration with a student support team—coordinating early identification and intervention, planning effective support for students with SEN, determining appropriate resource allocation, enhancing professional capacity of teachers to cater for student diversity, and facilitating home-school and multidisciplinary collaboration (Education Bureau, 2019b; Westwood, 2021).

SENCOs are now expected to have completed 240 hours of training to serve in this position and, for promotion purposes, to have completed at least 90 hours of additional study (Legislative Council, 2019a). SENCOs are recommended to attend other professional training courses such as Certificate in Professional Development Programme for Teachers (*Catering for Diverse Learning Needs*); Audit Commission, 2018). As of 2018, some 188 SENCOs (77%) have completed the basic, advanced, and thematic training courses provided by the Education Bureau. These courses are described later in section on teacher preparation and ongoing professional development.

Legislation, Policies, and Guidelines Related to Inclusion

There is currently no government mandate for providing inclusive education in schools. In Hong Kong, the *Disability Discrimination Ordinance* enacted in 1996 aimed to prohibit discrimination in the community and the workplace on the basis of disability but did not specifically address the issue of inclusion of those with a disability in schools. In 2001, the Equal Opportunities Commission issued a *Code of Practice on Education*, providing some guidance to schools for developing policies to ensure equal learning opportunities for students with disabilities (Hsieh et al., 2017).

It is evident that rather than stemming from a government mandate, the impetus for moving toward inclusion in Hong Kong has come mainly from the influences of international trends. However, the Education Bureau (equivalent to the Ministry of Education or Department of Education in many countries) has encouraged the growth of inclusion and has provided support in terms of money and resources and also through professional development opportunities for teachers.

Since the year 2000, the Education Bureau has steadily increased its tangible support to schools. The *Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education* is an official document providing important guidelines to ordinary schools on catering for learner diversity (Education Bureau, 2008, 2014). Schools are encouraged to adopt a Three-Tier Intervention Model to cater for student diversity—similar to the Response to Intervention Model now widely used in other developed countries (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Fuchs et al., 2003; Jones & Ball, 2012). At Tier 1 in this model, all students should receive effective evidence-based teaching, with some differentiation of curriculum content or learning activities where necessary. Any students not making sufficient progress then receive additional

support at Tier 2 or intensive individualized support at Tier 3, according to their needs (Education Bureau, 2014). This tiered approach is regarded as applicable in special schools as well as mainstream schools.

Evolving Policies and Practices

Existing and evolving policies on inclusive practices in Hong Kong schools are based on five basic principles—early identification, early intervention, whole-school approach, home-school cooperation, and cross-sector collaboration (Education Bureau, 2019c). Policies are constantly reviewed and modified based on experiences gained and in light of other reforms in general education that are ongoing. Most recent changes in policies have included modification to the procedures for early identification and intervention (Education Bureau, 2019c); inclusion of "mental illness" as a type of special need (Audit Commission, 2018), clarity in the role and status of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO; Education Bureau, 2019b), and additional resources for supporting students with autism spectrum disorders and also for non-Chinese-speaking students with special needs (NCS; Education Bureau, 2019c; Government of HKSAR, 2019). Changes were also made to the Learning Support Grant, which represents a major source of assistance provided by the Education Bureau to support ordinary schools (Education Bureau, 2019a). Starting in 2019, this Learning Support Grant has been increased for Tier 3 support (individual, intensive) to four times the rate for Tier 2 support (usually small group additional teaching). Recent advances have also seen the addition in schools of a regular teaching post of Special Educational Needs Support Teacher (Education Bureau, 2019a).

In Hong Kong, as in other parts of the world, the past two decades have seen an increase in the number of students identified with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The government has undertaken to strengthen support for these students through improved multidisciplinary collaboration using the tiered intervention model (Government of HKSAR, 2019). An additional annual funding of $60 million will be allocated for enhancing social and cognitive development of students with ASD in schools, in collaboration with nongovernment organizations.

It is appropriate that students with special needs who do not speak Cantonese or Mandarin have now been given due attention in recent policy changes. Students whose spoken language at home is not Chinese are supported so as to facilitate their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. Given their unique cultural and language background, these students are likely to encounter additional challenges in learning and social development. The policy changes endeavor to assist the schools in strengthening effective support for NCS students with special needs by additional funding allocated to mainstream schools (Education Bureau, 2019c).

Brief Review of Inclusion Research in Hong Kong

An analysis of research on inclusive education in Hong Kong involved a literature search through journals, books, government documents, website of Hong Kong Education Bureau, Centre for Advancement in Inclusive and Special Education (CAISE) of the Hong Kong University, and other relevant websites. Searching with keywords "Hong Kong," "inclusive education," and "research" found that (1) the amount of research increased significantly after 1997, (2) main topics researched were closely tied to evaluating or interpreting various policies and procedures initiated by the Education Bureau, and (3) very few studies investigated adaptive teaching methods or the progress of integrated SEN students.

After the Education Department (now the Education Bureau) initiated the "pilot project on integration" in seven primary schools and two secondary schools in 1997, research suddenly grew to explore how students with SEN were being integrated into mainstream settings (e.g., Crawford et al., 1999; Lam & Phillipson, 2009; Luk-Fong, 2005; Yuen et al., 2004). Data were mostly from the mainstream primary school settings, where it is relatively easier to include these students in the curriculum. These studies mainly explored perspectives of teachers and other stakeholders by using questionnaires, interviews, and case studies. Little or no attention was given to investigating the integrated students' own reactions or their progress (Forlin, 2010; Forlin & Rose, 2010; Forlin & Sin, 2010). A few studies have also examined the importance of school leadership in promoting successful inclusive education (e.g., Poon-McBrayer, 2012, 2017), and recently more funding is allocated to research in preschool settings (Leung et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2019).

In 2001, the Education Department introduced the principle that integration needs to be implemented through a Whole School Approach (WSA), with all teachers working collaboratively and drawing as necessary on outside support (Forlin, 2007b). At the same time, the Department improved funding to support students with special educational needs, first in primary schools and later expanded to secondary schools. The concept of WSA originated overseas (e.g., Department of Education Western Australia, 2009; Estyn, Government of Wales, 2010), and research was soon undertaken to find out if the approach would prove to be suitable for Chinese schools and classrooms in Hong Kong. Rao and Yuen (2007) pointed out the limitations of transplanting "Western practices" without considering the local cultural context. A main concern was whether Hong Kong's traditional ways of teaching and classroom management (tending to be formal and rigid), such as the overemphasis on rote learning and examinations typically found in Chinese classrooms (Watkins & Biggs, 2001), were compatible with approaches that rely on collaboration among teachers (Forlin, 2007a).

Studies also began to investigate teachers' attitudes and beliefs concerning inclusion (Dowson, 2007; Forlin, 2007a, b; Forlin et al., 2008) and to question the professional readiness of those responsible for teaching increasingly diverse groups of learners (Poon-McBrayer, 2014). Although most teachers may agree *in principle* that children with special needs have a right to education in the mainstream, many

remain skeptical of their own ability to teach and manage these students (Forlin, 2010; Chao et al., 2016). In the early stages of implementing integration, many teachers were expressing a high level of discomfort (Sharma et al., 2006). Studies found that in Hong Kong there is still insufficient support available to help teachers gain the extra knowledge and skills required to adapt and differentiate instruction for students with learning difficulties (Hsieh et al., 2017).

On the other hand, parents of SEN students began to express dissatisfaction over teaching practices in their children's schools. They raised questions regarding the professional knowledge of the teachers and the adequacy of support from teaching assistants. They also asked how their children could be better accommodated in the curriculum and how classroom tests and assessments could be modified.

After the WSA to Integrated Education had been implemented for over a decade, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC, 2012) conducted a study involving 192 schools now admitting students with SEN. It was found that most of these schools have managed to have at least one in ten of their teachers receive special education training. However, parents were still voicing concerns over the professional knowledge of teachers and the inadequacy of support their children received. The EOC report called for more support for students with special educational needs integrated in mainstream classrooms. It is reassuring to see that a new government initiative in 2017 has been to formalize the role and increase the status of SENCOs.

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development

As highlighted in 2008 at the UNESCO conference on inclusive education, ". . . it remains essential to train teachers by equipping them with the appropriate skills and materials to teach diverse student populations and meet the diverse learning needs of different categories of learners" (p. 5). The teachers' training in Hong Kong has shifted from training teachers of the special educational settings to all teachers of the general education settings (Hsieh et al., 2017). Much of this training devotes attention to the practicalities of how to apply inclusive pedagogy within a curriculum subject framework (Wong et al., 2019).

In Hong Kong, there are two ways for teachers to obtain professional development for educating students with SEN: (1) pre-service training for undergraduates and (2) in-service training for frontline teachers (Legislative Council, 2019a). In terms of pre-service teacher preparation, the UNESCO (1994) has long advocated for all universities to include content on inclusion and inclusive practices for teachers in initial training. This content should equip beginning teachers with basic skills and understandings needed for teaching a wider range of ability and disability within their classes (Sharma et al., 2006; Yuen et al., 2004). As teachers gain experience, this basic knowledge can then be enhanced with appropriate in-service courses and workshops.

In Hong Kong, the first undergraduate study in special education started in 1995. After the *Disability Discrimination Ordinance* emerged in 1996, plus the *Code of*

Practice on Education in 2001, an increasing number of undergraduate and postgraduate programs appeared in local universities to equip prospective teachers with the understandings and attitudes required for supporting students with SEN. Pre-service training tended to be a single unit on "students with special needs" or "adapting curriculum and teaching methods" for early childhood, primary and secondary school settings. At Master's and Doctoral degree level, programs aim to build on teachers' experience and skills by deeper study and provide an opportunity for conducting research projects in this field (Chao et al., 2017).

In 2007, the Education Bureau launched a 5-year teacher professional development plan for advancing inclusive education. The plan was to provide all in-service teachers with knowledge and appropriate practices to cater for the learning and adjustment needs of atypical students. During the decade 2007 to 2017, 36% of the total teacher workforce had received this basic training. In-service teachers are provided with options across a three-tier program covering basic, advanced, or thematic courses to enhance their professional capacity. Regular teachers of government and aided primary, secondary, and special schools who are to attend these training courses would be granted paid leave, and replacement supply teachers would be provided to their schools (Legislative Council, 2019a, b).

The basic course (*Catering for Diverse Learning Needs*) is a 30-hour program to strengthening teachers' capability to devise effective teaching and learning strategies for students with SEN. The course covers the concept of nondiscriminatory and inclusive practices, the characteristics of different types of disability or learning difficulty now found in schools, early identification and learning support (including curriculum adjustments and assessment accommodations), and the three-tier intervention model (Chao et al., 2017; Education Bureau, 2015). Within each school, a minimum of 15% to 25% of teachers are required to complete this basic course.

The advanced course is a 102-hour program to further enhance the capacity of teachers and potential school leaders to provide organized support for students with persistent learning difficulties (Tier 2 support; Forlin, 2010; Sin et al., 2010). The focus is on using evidence-based interventions for students who are not making adequate progress in the regular class Tier 1 program. There is also a school-based project enabling teachers to put learned strategies into practice. It is hoped that within each school, at least six to nine teachers will complete the advanced course.

The thematic courses (90 to 120 hours) enable teachers to study in greater depth the needs of particular categories of exceptionality—namely, specific learning difficulties; intellectual disability; autistic spectrum disorder; behavioral, emotional, and social development needs; attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; physical disability; visual impairment; hearing impairment; or speech and language impairment. These courses are designed to equip teachers with expertise to plan and deliver intensive individualized support for students at Tier 3. The hope is that a minimum of six to nine teachers in each school will have completed a thematic course, with at least one teacher studying each disability category.

Another area in which developments have occurred includes students' mental health and well-being. The Education Bureau is now providing a *Professional Development Programme for Mental Health* for serving teachers (Education Bureau,

2017). The aim is to strengthen the capacity of in-service teachers to identify and support students who display mental health issues. The program is presented at two levels, *elementary* and *in-depth*. The elementary course (18 hours) provides fundamental knowledge for understanding students' mental health needs. Attention is then given to appropriate supportive measures that can be used in school settings. The in-depth course (30 hours) for designated guidance teachers or counselors provides advanced knowledge for identifying and taking preventive measures for students with significant mental health problems, especially any with suicidal tendencies. Commencing in 2017, a minimum of one teacher in each school needs to complete the elementary course, and at least one teacher needs to complete the in-depth course.

In addition to the training offered by tertiary institutions, the Education Bureau encourages schools to devise their own school-based teacher professional development plan. In the latest release of the *SENCO Manual* (Education Bureau, 2020c), oversight of upskilling serving teachers is regarded as a SENCO responsibility. It is suggested that the SENCO in each school, in collaboration with principal, curriculum leaders, and school counselors, should review existing "special needs knowledge and skills" among the teaching staff and then devise professional development plans.

As Hong Kong plans to retain special schools for the most severely disabled students, it is obvious that teachers in these schools need to be particularly well trained and proficient. Training courses for special school teachers have existed for many years, but a specific course on "Education of Students with Severe or Multiple Disabilities" was introduced by the Education Bureau in 2012 (Legislative Council, 2019b). The course includes 240 hours of lectures and 6-month practicum for special school teachers. Commencing from 2018, each special school is expected to raise the percentage of teachers with the special education qualifications to 100% within a 5-year period.

Implementing Inclusion in Hong Kong's Schools

Since 1997, students with SEN have the right to enroll in mainstream schools or in special schools for specific disabilities when necessary (Education Bureau, 2009). In 2019, data from Education Bureau indicated that SEN students who have enrolled in mainstream schools are now spread across 456 primary schools and 389 secondary schools (Legislative Council, 2019a). In the 2018/2019 school year, $2012 million additional resources were allocated to mainstream schools to facilitate the implementation of inclusion (Legislative Council, 2019b). Since 2019, the Learning Support Grant (LSG) has been restructured so that $15,000 is earmarked for any student who needs Tier 2 (small group tuition) and $60,000 for each student who needs Tier 3 support. If a school intake of SEN students reaches a threshold of grant of $600,000, the school will be supported with an additional teaching post, paid for from the total grant received (Education Bureau, 2019d).

In addition to financial assistance and supplementary resources, staff in mainstream schools are also encouraged to seek advice when necessary from special school staff as part of an Enhanced Support Service (Education Bureau, 2005). Resource teachers from special schools can also provide school visits and after-school support to SEN students who are studying in the mainstream schools, and lesson observation between special and mainstream schools is available.

Case Study: Including Students with Impaired Hearing in the Mainstream

Students who have hearing impairment represent a group of learners with the potential to do well in the mainstream; if appropriate, well-targeted support is provided. This support usually comes in the form of assistive technology (e.g., radio frequency hearing aid, cochlear implant, amplification of teacher's voice) and support from a trained teacher of the deaf. Communication is also greatly improved if class teachers can use sign language. In Hong Kong, a Sign Bilingualism and Co-enrolment (SLCO) program was established in 2006 to address the needs of students with impaired hearing in kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools. SLCO was developed by the Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Sign bilingualism is an approach in deaf education that adopts the natural language of the deaf community (gesture, signs, speech, and lip reading) as the means of communication and instruction in the classroom (Pickersgill, 1998). The approach combines sign language with spoken and written language (Biederman, 2003). In Hong Kong, this involves the use of Hong Kong Sign Language and written Chinese.

Co-enrolment refers to the integration of a deaf or hard-of-hearing student in a regular classroom by utilizing a variety of support services (Kirchner, 1995). Team teaching by a trained teacher of the deaf and a hearing teacher is adopted, with the expectation that a hearing-impaired student can then enjoy access to the same curriculum as their hearing peers (Kirchner, 2004).

Sign Bilingualism and Co-enrolment blends well into the recommended three-tier model of support, and schools have autonomy and flexibility to provide a SLCO class under the existing Hong Kong integrated education policy. Hearing students and their peers with impaired hearing are all studying the same curriculum. Schools using SLCO simply promote a deaf-friendly environment at Tier 1 level, but at Tier 2, co-teaching and adjustment of teaching to a more student-centered approach are implemented to help students catch up with their classmates. At Tier 3, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is designed and implemented one-to-one for each student with hearing impairment. In Hong Kong, SLCO participating schools currently have one co-enrolment class at each grade level, with deaf or hard-of-hearing students studying with their hearing peers.

Based on the findings from a study of SLCO (Wong, 2018), the evidence is that enrolling hearing-impaired students with hearing students in a SLCO classroom with the support of a teacher of the deaf co-teaching with the regular school teacher, positive and supportive teacher-student interactions and interactions among peers are facilitated. Under this system, regular teachers and teachers of the deaf are required to take up extra workload for planning and adjusting activities to accommodate students with diverse learning needs. In reality, not all mainstream teachers are willing to devote extra time for these accommodations because of their already heavy workload. From 2017, it is hoped that SENCOs could help by reducing the workload of regular teachers to enable them to engage in Tier 2 and Tier 3 support.

One key component of support from the government is hiring a trained teacher of the deaf to team teach in the mainstream classroom. Together, the regular class teacher and the teacher of the deaf prepare teaching resources for SLCO classes and where necessary provide individual tutorials for hearing-impaired students according to their IEP. This co-teaching has shifted the emphasis from teacher-centered didactic methodology to more student-centered mode. In addition to co-teaching, teachers of the deaf are also responsible for individual tutoring of some deaf students through after-school support and for providing parent counseling. Often these teachers also provide sign language training for the hearing students.

Remaining Challenges and Concerns

Hong Kong is still experiencing challenges in overcoming barriers to inclusion, such as teachers' negative attitudes (Chao et al., 2016) and their lack of confidence in teaching children with disabilities (Committee on Teachers Work, 2006). Many teachers still face difficulties in accommodating differences in students' learning pace, adjusting learning objectives and curriculum content, and handling behavioral issues (Li & Cheung, 2019; Zhu et al., 2019). This lack of confidence is hampering the progress of inclusive education.

The rate at which students with special needs are being placed in mainstream schools is much faster now than the rate at which additional teacher training in inclusive practices is being provided. In 2018, 49,100 students with SEN (8.8% of the student population) were enrolled in the mainstream—a 179% increase compared to 10 years earlier (Legislative Council, 2019a). The Education Bureau has admitted the need for more teachers to be trained and expressed the hope that the newly established roles of SENCOs in each school could help with in situ school-based professional development (Education Bureau, 2020d). However, at the time of writing, only 65% of public schools have this SENCO position filled (Legislative Council, 2019b).

Another problem in implementing effective inclusion is that the traditional teaching approach used in primary and secondary schools still tends to be "one size fits all," with little or no attention to individual differences in students' ability and learning rate. This will not change if inclusion is seen as needing only the

provision of extra support at Tier 2 and Tier 3 by withdrawing SEN students from the mainstream for group or individual tuition. This withdrawal model means that the classroom teacher does not see a need to change his or her “one-size-fits-all” approach. What is also required (but is always difficult to achieve) is a differentiated approach to classroom teaching and curriculum content at Tier 1 that can address differences among learners. The model in the USA suggested by Tomlinson (2014) includes adapting the content, process, and product from lessons at Tier 1 to match students’ needs in mixed-ability classrooms. Without this style of teaching, students who do not find learning easy will rapidly lose motivation at Tier 1—and their meaningful inclusion becomes an illusion. In Hong Kong, curriculum differentiation is only just beginning to appear in local primary and secondary schools, and there is still a very long way to go before it becomes common practice. The shortage of teachers trained and experienced in differentiated approaches for curriculum and assessment will continue to be a major hindrance to the progress of inclusive education in Hong Kong (Yu & Yin, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The quest for effective inclusion of students with SEN and disabilities in the Hong Kong education system is an ongoing challenge for policymakers and educators. Progress has been made since 1997, but there is still much to be done. Reforms thus far have tended to be piecemeal and reactive rather than proactive in preparing mainstream schools to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of students.

There are recommendations that can be made for advancing inclusion by building on what has already been achieved. First, tertiary institutions and providers of school-based training must positively influence teachers’ beliefs about the value of inclusive education and their own ability to contribute (Li & Cheung, 2019). Professional development courses can only impact practice if teachers *believe* in inclusive education and are efficacious in their professional practice (Chao et al., 2016; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). There is the ongoing need to strengthen teachers’ expertise by equipping them with requisite knowledge and skills to deliver adaptive forms of teaching.

A second recommendation is to review, and where necessary modify, the role of assessment in classrooms. What is conspicuously missing at the moment is a reform in processes of assessment of students’ learning. Hong Kong’s schools are still preoccupied with tests and examinations, partly as a result of traditional expectations within Chinese communities, but also driven by the current era of standards and accountability. For changes to occur, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment processes all need to be reviewed and updated to be compatible with inclusive practices (Watkins et al., 2005). Future research can investigate how teachers’ professional development can ensure that, taken together, curriculum content, pedagogy, and assessment processes serve the needs of *all students*.

The third recommendation is to move beyond a belief that if the government simply provides more and more funding and resources, inclusive education will become easy. Decades of reform to promote and improve inclusive education in Hong Kong have been associated with the investment of substantial resources—but there are still problems that have been described above. Detractors may rightly question whether this investment really makes a difference to the learning outcomes of SEN students. An equally valid question is whether this investment of scarce educational resources for one minority group reduces the opportunities for improvement in academic achievement of all students without special needs or disabilities (Lam & Phillipson, 2009). For example, the expenditure involved in the preparation, training, and hiring of SENCOs and support teachers may be perceived by some as undesirable, because these resources could otherwise be used to improve general classroom teaching. To counter this view, SEN professionals should be recognized for their contribution to the mission of schools to ensure excellence and equity in education (Schleicher, 2009). Future research could seek to clarify how the investment in SEN education has impacted on the learning experiences and outcomes of SEN students and how SEN education has shaped empathy and attitudes of acceptance in students without special needs.

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Chapter 6
Inclusive Education in Macao SAR: The Influence of Colonial Legacy, Confucian Values, and School Marketisation on Policy and Practice

Ana Maria Correia

Abstract The rise of inclusive school provision is unstoppable across Asia-Pacific countries—but the uniqueness of its conceptualisation and subsequent implementation is manifest in many ways. Geography, the cultural context of the place and the values embedded in the practices of the community, legal framework, economy, and tensions between past and current policies, especially in regions with a colonial legacy, are all decisive yet variable factors. They give each region's perception of inclusive education a unique character. Macao SAR is an example of a multicultural city situated at the crossroads of various cultural, economic, and religious influences which play a role in the development of inclusive education. In this chapter, the interplay between historical factors, culture, policy, and economy is examined, alongside the public support for inclusion and the transformation of schools into inclusive settings. Macao can be seen as a bridge between European and Asian cultures, where social and educational changes occur within contested spaces and conflicting interests. The author examines the current education model in Macao in which private non-subsidised and subsidised schools have in place a restrictive acceptance criterion. A glance into the legal framework of inclusive education helps illuminate how the pace and scale of change have been accomplished. The role of government and universities is important—with their training and public awareness strategies of workshops, conferences, training courses, public events, and locally based research and publications. These opportunities provide fertile ground for building a dynamic system of information sharing between teachers, scholars, parents, and community groups to promote the message of inclusion. While the government provides leverage resources for schools to implement inclusive education, there are still some challenges to overcome, and a great many issues remain to

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be resolved with regard to policy, attitudes towards children with disabilities, and school placement.

Keywords Colonial legacy · Culture · Inclusive education · Macao SAR · Special education needs · Teachers' attitudes

Colonial Legacy and Marketisation of Education

The current approach and practice of inclusive education in Macao are grounded in the historical, cultural, and ideological context of the city. The uniqueness of Macao, a 30-square-km city located on the western side of the Pearl River Delta, 64 km away from Hong Kong SAR, makes it an interesting case to research on several grounds. Macao is one of the Special Administrative Regions (SAR) of China and is considered the most densely populated region in the world. Chinese make up 95% of Macao's population, and the remaining 5% is composed by other ethnic groups, mainly immigrants from the Philippines, Portugal, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The place is characterised by a mixture of Western and Eastern lifestyles and an overall prosperity associated with the gaming and hospitality industry. The prosperity of Macao, however, is a recent phenomenon subsequent to the liberalisation of these industries in 2004. Under the Portuguese administration, Macao faced significant financial difficulties due to the insubstantiality of its governance, and education was one of the colonial enterprise worst-impacted areas.

Since the foundation of St. Paul College, the first Western-like University in East Asia founded in Macao in 1594, Catholicism has had an enduring presence in Macao, and its major sphere of activity has been in education. The interest of the Catholic Church in education was threefold. By investing in schools, especially targeting disadvantaged segments of the population, Catholic priests and missionaries were fulfilling their true Catholic mission of helping the poor and the most vulnerable. Secondly, owning education organisations was a means to reach out families and disseminate the ethos of Catholicism among the Chinese community. Additionally, taking a lead role in the educational field resulted in filling the gap in educational provision, as the Portuguese administration was merely concerned with the schooling of the Portuguese-speaking population, while the local Chinese community was basically ignored by the government. Education developed as a private initiative, with the government investment circumscribed to a very few official schools as from the mid-twentieth century onwards. On the threshold of the new millennium, the 15 operating public schools were serving only 6% of the local students.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the political turmoil in China brought thousands of immigrants to Macao (Lau, 2009) leading to the establishment of additional private Catholic and non-Catholic schools. While the colonial administration remained unresponsive to the illiteracy of the local population and the lack of educational provision, the private schools, most of them administered by religious congregations, made substantial efforts to provide access to education to the most vulnerable

groups—the poor, the girls, the working adults, and the refugees from the civil and international war conflicts. The demographic fluctuations continued affecting the rise and fall of private schools in the following decades.

During the 1970s, the drastic decline in birth rate forced several small schools to merge, leading to the rise of a few larger, stronger, and more attractive schools. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Chinese open policy brought a new wave of immigration into the city which in turn led to a shortage of school places. By the end of the 1980s, it was common to count 60 or even 70 students in both primary and secondary classrooms (Correia & Teixeira, 2017). The increase in student numbers should lead to the increase in teacher numbers; however, as the demand for teachers was consistently higher than the local supply, a large number of practitioners insufficiently prepared (Correia & Teixeira, 2017) entered the system, which undoubtedly affected the quality of education in the subsequent years.

Contrary to other places, where education moved from the public sphere of governmental regulation to the private sphere of market regulation following the footsteps of capitalism, Macao adopted neoliberal ideology firstly as a strategy for survival. To be able to operate in an economically viable manner, over time school organisations embraced several features of the neoliberal ideology such as competitiveness, selectiveness, and meritocracy. In the long run, the most successful schools, regardless of their religious and humanistic roots, became magnets to attract the richer families seeking highly competitive and exclusive educational environments to educate their children. These highly academically oriented schools housed the idea that individual pursuit of success results from one's talent and is a value that reverts to the entire society. Treating parents and students as consumers and education as social capital led school leaders to adapt several domains of their educational programmes to fit the beliefs, expectations, and personality of the parents they served, which holds true to present day. The most selective private schools in Macao focus on preparing their students to be sent abroad following the belief that studying abroad is key to professional realisation. Even families with limited economic resources prefer to rely on private schools with affordable tuitions, due not just to the lack of public educational provision but also to the dubious reputation of the public sector. Private schools are considered more suitable and aligned with parents' expectations than public schools. Up to present day and despite the educational reforms implemented by the Macao SAR government, there is an ostensible reliance on the private sector of education and a mistrust in the public schools, which is clearly deep-rooted in Macao history of education but also in the global and local trend of marketisation of education.

The Fundamental Law of Non-Tertiary Education System (2006) that came into effect in 2006 is a milestone in the history of education in Macao. The Law implemented the 15-year free education policy, and private schools were invited to join the public school support network. The majority of them adhered to the scheme for free education, while some others preferred to avoid government intervention and thus keep operating based on market principles.

Confucian Values

Research findings suggest that Confucian values are pervasive across Chinese societies regardless of their political configurations. The influence of Confucian values in contemporary Chinese societies such as Hong Kong (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014; Tait et al., 2016; Yuen et al., 2017), Macao (Correia et al., 2019), Taiwan (Zhang et al., 2005), Japan (Zhang et al., 2005), and Korea (Park, 2012) has received extended consensus among researchers. In the field of education, Confucius-inspired values underpin the expectations, attitudes, and behaviours of parents, teachers, and school leaders and influence educational policies and practices.

Many studies have explored Chinese families' commitment to their children's education (sacrificing financial and material resources, allocating time to study with their children, giving up career opportunities) irrespective of their occupational area and economic status, when compared to European and American families (Chen, 2001; Chiang & Hadadian, 2007; Chong, 2007; Wang et al., 2015). An emphasis on academic achievement is widely reported as the central tenet of educating children among Chinese families, who associate academic success with moral, social, and economic fulfilment, not just attributed to the individual but extended to their family and the wider society (Phillipson, 2007; Chiang & Hadadian, 2007). Chinese families' expectations for academic achievement led parents to encourage their children to study hard and bring home the highest possible test scores, a phenomenon particularly accentuated in the case of boys as they are expected to fulfil their filial obligation, to provide for their own household, and to ensure the family lineage. Otherwise, if the child does not match up to the family's expectations in terms of school success, parents "feel responsible and even blamed for their failure" (Park & Chesla, 2007, p. 306). Chiang and Hadadian (2007) suggest that in the Confucian tradition, a child with a disability is not just seen as failing to contribute to the family's material prosperity but also seen as a misfortune that befell the family. The emphasis on academic achievements puts students, parents, teachers, and schools under great pressure and fuels competition. The negative effects of a competitive school ethos hit especially students with SEN. In face of a high, competitive school climate, parents of students with SEN may prefer to protect their child in a more restrictive setting rather than expose him/her to stressful and tactless environments.

Special and Inclusive Education Policy

This once highly deregulated education system has been the object of successive policy enactments to minimise the negative effects of the marketisation of education. The school system is still decentralised, and a few schools continue to approach education as a commodity to be purchased rather than a public good, but the reforms undertaken in the recent years have contributed to decrease inequalities and social

segregation. Currently, the school system includes a free education network of public- and private-subsidised schools along with private schools. Private-subsidised schools are to some extent under governmental surveillance, as they are recipients of public funds. Private schools operating outside of the local education system hold high level of autonomy, a drift backed by the government, which still provide direct subsidies for students attending those schools.

At present, 74 schools offer regular education, 10 public and 64 private, with 67 schools having joined the free education system, while the remaining 7 are private independent institutions (Annual Report of Education, 2018). The promulgation of the Fundamental Law on Non-Tertiary Education in 2006 stated the right to educational opportunity of learners with special education needs. The purpose of educating students with SEN, according to the Fundamental Law (2006, Chap. 3, sub-sect. 1, Article 12), is to "provide appropriate education opportunities for the development of body and mind [and to] assist them to integrate in the society, to develop their potential, to compensate for their limitations and to partake in employment" (p. 1540). There is, at the legislative level, a recognition of the value of integrating all members of society and enable them to contribute to the community. The expression "inclusive education" is included in the Fundamental Law to refer the education of students with SEN "carried out preferably in general schools in the form of inclusive education" (Fundamental Law on Non-Tertiary Education, Chap. 3, Article 12, p. 1541). As private schools are not enforced to become inclusive settings, school principals and administrators can interpret the policy text according to favour their own interests or ignore it. There is also no explicit reference made in regard to the expected learning outcomes of students with SEN. The emphasis is on integration, e.g. the inclusion in or transfer of students with special education needs to general education schools, where they follow the mainstream curriculum with extra supports and adaptations. The first statuses governing special education were promulgated in 1996, during the Portuguese administration and were revised in 2020, after a public consultation had taken place in 2015. The newly published legal framework that rules special and inclusive education states that schools *should* adapt to the policy of special education regarding students' admission. The text intends to *influence* the policy implementers to enrol students with SEN in their schools, but they are not held accountable for not translating the policy into practice. The new Administrative Regulation of Special Education (2020) introduces nuances in regard to the screening and assessment of students with SEN, but the school placement policy is not affected. The main contribution of the Administrative Regulation concerns the students who are gifted, in terms of school progression, curriculum flexibilisation, instructional supports, and certification.

According to the 2020 Regulation, decisions regarding the education of students with SEN are to be made in collaboration with families. A student referral requires explicit parental permission for further action to take place, and parents are granted the right to disagree with the results of the assessment or the recommendations concerning school placement resulting from the assessment. As for the participation of parents in the education of their children, their involvement is restricted and almost dispensable under the legal frame. While underlying parents' duties to secure

an appropriate education to their child with SEN, the policy text does not include any reference to the rights of parents. By levelling down parents' role and participation in the educational process and in the IEP elaboration, implementation, and evaluation in particular, the policy text might be interpreted as favouring the interests of policy-makers and school administrators and operate as an uninviting message to parents. The 2020 Administrative Regulation does not contemplate the inclusion of students with SEN in the preparation of the IEP, regardless of their age group.

Research on Inclusive Education in Macao

Research on inclusive education in Macao is comparatively slower than in nearby regions of Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chiuho So (2005) was one of the first to research inclusive education in this special administrative region, identifying as major issues presented to schools and teachers the inadequacy of teacher training, the lack of experience teaching children with SEN, the absence of professionals in schools to establish special education teams, the reluctance of school principals in accepting students with SEN without reservation, and the lack of government initiatives to promote the acceptance of inclusive education within the community. This researcher recommended that the Macao government "can borrow ideas from Hong Kong and Taiwan" (2005, p. 63) and organise activities to "strengthen the understanding of the public towards inclusive education and to increase the acceptance and care towards the students who have special needs" (2005, p. 63). So's overview of inclusive education in Macao focused the attention on issues that have been recurrent in subsequent studies, namely, the disinclination from part of the educational stakeholders in accepting the generalised provision of inclusive education in both public and private sectors. This work reflected the state of knowledge about inclusive education in the early 2000s, both conceptually and linguistically, as shown by the interchangeable use of "integration" and "inclusion" and the inclusion of terms which nowadays are considered derogatory.

Chris Forlin (2011), analysing inclusive education in Macao through Western conceptual lens, has argued that the placement model of children with SEN in Macao is not inclusion per se but what in other regions is called integration, as it focuses the child with SEN, rather than all learners in the class, and admits a range of placement options within the regular school. This researcher acknowledged the flexible interpretation of inclusion as a sensitive compromise that fosters a movement away from segregation. Forlin's qualitative study was based on interviews with principals and vice principals from two Macao public schools designated at the time of the research as "experimental inclusive schools" (Forlin, 2011, p. 9). The findings of the study pointed out that both schools accepted students with learning difficulties; developmental or language delay; ASD; physical, vision, or hearing impairment; hyperactivity; and emotional problems. It also stated that teachers in the two participant schools were provided the necessary upskilling to cater for their students' needs. Forlin's study found that the involvement of parents of children with SEN in school

activities was limited and a few parents of children without SEN expressed resistance to inclusion, with some having withdrawn their children from the school. This researcher suggested that the influence of Confucianism might be linked with the deterrent acceptance of inclusion by the community.

In 2012, a report commissioned by the Macao Youth and Education Bureau and produced by the Hong Kong Institute of Education listed several problems and offered recommendations for schools offering inclusive education. Areas of emphasis were (1) the government should improve the assessment services, as the far too long period of time of the assessment and referral processes in place prevents students to be provided timely supports, (2) school staff knowledge and preparation have to respond more effectively to the needs of students with SEN, and (3) schools accepting students with SEN should be allocated professional resources, teaching equipment, and funds. In the report, the government was advised to promote inclusive education within the community through the organisation of workshops and seminars targeting firstly staff and parents, focusing on the rights of the students with SEN, and raising awareness in the community regarding existing support services. Additionally, schools were advised to move into gradual integration of all categories of students, including those with severe disabilities, providing them appropriate learning supports instead of excluding them, to establish a curriculum development team to set up learning guidelines for students with SEN, to develop and monitor the implementation of Individualised Education Programs, to ensure a barrier-free campus, and to strengthen the communication between school and parents.

Yi-Lee Wong (2013) undertook a study into in-grade retention rates in Macao, associating the high in-grade retention rates with (1) the colonial legacy that led to a rather chaotic education system, where schools under the private sector were entitled by the Basic Law to design their own curriculum, assessment standards, and regulations, and (2) private schools' vested interests in boosting reputation and enrolments. This researcher argued that private schools used in-grade retention as a device for social selection, as students retained for the second time were invited to change to a school compatible with their academic skills. Subsequently, Correia and Teixeira (2017), in a qualitative study based on interviews with teachers, underlined the negative effects of the competitive atmosphere and intensive examinations practiced by private schools, highlighting that the system was particularly disquieting for students with SEN. These researchers compared the 1.8% of students receiving special education services in regular schools throughout Macao, with the 14% of public school students receiving special education and related services in the USA (NCES, 2020), and suggested that the sizable variation might indicate that the process of assessment is not operating properly or at a proper pace in Macao (Correia & Teixeira, 2017). A few other studies were published by Macao and Hong Kong researchers from 2017 to present day (Chan, 2019; Correia & Tchiang, 2019; Monteiro et al., 2018; Correia et al., 2019; Yuen et al., 2017; Kuok et al., 2020; Teixeira et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2017). These studies reported a range of advances facilitated by the government financial supports to Macao schools and associated the

slow pace of inclusive education development with the invisible barriers raised by elite schools (Tong et al., 2017).

The mixed-methods study by Teixeira et al. (2018) involved 508 teachers working in self-designated inclusive schools. These researchers concluded that despite the efforts of the government to encourage schools to become inclusive environments and provide inclusive education training for teachers starting in 2005–2006 academic year, the weak accountability structures in place did not ensure full commitment by all schools. Several studies (Correia et al., 2019; Teixeira et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2017) highlighted that teachers in Macao held reservations about working in inclusive classrooms. However, researchers in each study urged all schools to accept students with SEN to prevent the concentration of the latter in a small number of schools.

The study of Monteiro et al. (2018) revealed that the more training and teaching experience teachers had, the more likely they were to report being confident about teaching in inclusive classrooms. In line with previous studies, some participating teachers in this study perceived themselves as not being prepared to teach students with SEN and were especially concerned with students showing physical aggressiveness. These participants reported that they needed more mentoring opportunities and training focused on their specific needs, such as designing instructional supports, differentiated assessments, strategies to manage students' behaviour, and curriculum adjustments for students with SEN. The researchers recommended that all schools should establish an Inclusive Support Team and implement a whole school approach to inclusive education.

The study by Correia et al. (2019) focused on the impact of the community prevailing Confucian culture on shaping school cultures and teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Correia and colleagues concluded that the influence of cultural dimensions on the development of inclusive education manifests itself in very different ways: from parents who are unwilling to disclose their concerns when called on by the school to discuss their child's school report to teachers maintaining that segregated schools are the best possible placements for students with SEN. They do not contend that non-Confucian heritage culture does not face barriers in the implementation of inclusive education but consider that these barriers might be greater in societies influenced by Confucian values and beliefs which underline the ways of feeling and reasoning about individual differences within the community.

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development

The development of teacher education in Macao is shaped by historical factors as well as the size of the city. The colonial government's failure to commit itself to education led to a rather volatile and underqualified teaching force, the consequences of which are still noticeable today. Up to the 2000s, the teacher turnover was high, with approximately half of the teachers giving up teaching after a few years of practice (Lau, 2009). According to Lau Sin Peng (2009), only 71% of the teaching

force in the private sector held a bachelor's degree or above in the school year of 1994–1995, and from those, only 60% had teacher certificates. In the 1990s, the emphasis was on producing qualified teachers through in-service qualification to meet the demands of schools (Vong & Wong, 2009).

Prior to the establishment of higher education institutions, Saint Joseph Secondary School held responsibility for the provision of pre-primary and primary education teacher training programmes. The 1-year certificate for pre-primary and primary school teachers was active since 1956 and was revised in 1988 to become a 2-year part-time programme. It eventually faded out in 2017, after three higher education institutions, University of Macau, Macao Polytechnic Institute, and University of Saint Joseph (the former two public and the latter private), had their teacher education programmes firmly established. The first agreement to create a teacher education programme provided by a higher education institution is dated back in 1985 and was established between the Chinese Educators Association in Macao and the South China Normal University, to develop and implement a teacher training programme for upgrading in-service teachers with professional and pedagogic knowledge (Vong & Wong, 2009; Lau, 2009). In 1987, the University of Eastern Asia, the precursor of the University of Macau, introduced teacher education programmes for pre-primary and primary in-service teachers.

At present, three higher education institutions offer degree programmes and/or teacher certificates in education. The University of Macau offers 4-year degree programmes for pre-service teachers and a postgraduate certificate in Education. Students choose among six streams, namely, secondary Chinese, English, mathematics, integrated science education (biology, chemistry, and physics), pre-primary, and primary education. Macao Polytechnic Institute trains teachers in physical education and visual arts. Finally, the University of Saint Joseph offers 4-year degree programmes for pre-service teachers for pre-primary, primary, and secondary education teachers (in the streams of secondary English and secondary Portuguese languages) and a 1-year Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) for in-service and pre-service teachers (pre-primary, primary, and secondary streams). The latter attracts expatriates from Asia-Pacific and Western countries to the teacher profession and in-service teachers lacking the professional qualifications required by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau. As the University of Saint Joseph offers three mediums of instruction (Chinese, Portuguese, or English), the programme is highly international. The University of Saint Joseph also offers a Master's programme in education with a specialisation in special and inclusive education, with high demand from residents and foreigners, in some extent due to the possibility of choosing among Chinese, Portuguese, or English as the medium of instruction. The applicants are mainly in-service teachers, but the demand comes from other professionals such as counsellors, social workers, psychologists, and therapists, reflecting an increasing interest about special and inclusive education in the community. Students completing the specialist modules in the special and inclusive education and an introductory module on inclusive education are certified by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau as resource teachers in local schools.

Most of the existing curricula of teacher education programmes available in Macao higher education institutions include a small (varying from 15 to 45 hours) amount of teaching hours allocated to the theory and practice of inclusive and special education. However, to the author's knowledge, there is no specific undergraduate or graduate programme in Macao higher education institutions on special and inclusive education, which has led to a persistent lack of teachers and paraprofessionals in this area.

Continuous teacher education has gained weight especially after the System Framework for Private Teaching Staff of Non-tertiary Education (2012) entered into force. This law established a career progression for private schools' teachers, providing benefits and rights that didn't exist earlier. It lessened the discrepancies between the public and private teaching careers and discretionary decision-making processes in areas such as pay structure, teaching periods per week, and teachers' welfare benefits. According to the System Framework for Private Teaching Staff of Non-tertiary Education (2012), all teachers are evaluated by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau and are divided into six levels of rank according to their experience, qualifications, performance evaluations, and hours of professional development. The law states that teachers must complete a number of professional training hours before they can progress to the next level. This requirement has driven teachers to enrol in professional development courses in recent years, with most of them organised by the Education and Youth Bureau directly or in collaboration with local higher education institutions.

The Macao SAR government has offered professional development courses on special and inclusive education for in-service teachers since 2006. Three types of courses have been implemented: the "Basic Course on Catering for Diverse Learning Needs", a 36-hoursintroductory course on inclusive education targeting general education teachers, school principals, and student counsellors; the "Course for Special Education Resource Teachers", comprising 100 hours of face-to-face sessions, which qualifies the participants as "resource teachers", and a 180-hour course for special education teachers which is offered by the Education and Youth Bureau for teachers who do not fulfil the requisites to teach in special education schools.

In the year of 2018, the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau offered ten introductory courses on inclusive education, nine in Chinese and one in English medium, and two courses for special and resource teachers. In 2019, eight introductory courses and one course for special and resource teachers, all in Chinese medium, were provided for in-service licensed teachers in Macao.

For all professional development of teaching staff organised by the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau in collaboration with tertiary education institutes, the licensed teachers who complete the courses are subsidised. Additionally, those who are not in-service teachers employed by local schools but find a full-time teaching position in the school year immediately after completing the course are also equally subsidised. The commitment of the government to improve teachers' professionalism is continual over the recent years. In the school year 2017–2018, the proportion of teachers with professional qualification was 97 in the pre-primary education, 95 in

primary education, and 90 in the secondary education (Annual Report of Education, 2018).

How Inclusion Is Implemented in Schools

The education for children with SEN in Macao has gradually shifted from an entirely segregated education system towards a more inclusive approach since 2006. Private-subsidised schools are encouraged by the government to become inclusive settings, a move that has progressively taking place, despite considerable hesitancy and slowness. Schools that accept students with SEN are granted government subsidies, which vary according to the number of enrolled students. Three types of school placement are available to students with SEN in Macao:

1. Full inclusion in general education schools
2. Integration in “small classes of special education” in general education schools
3. Integration in “special education classes” which might be located in general or special education schools

Table 6.1 presents the percentage of students diagnosed with SEN over the last 10 years, according to data compiled from the Annual Report of Education (2018).

Table 6.1 shows that while the percentage of students with SEN placed in special education settings decreased from 2010 to 2019 (from 57.4 to 35.6, respectively), the percentage of students with SEN pursuing their education in inclusive settings is increasing: from 42.5% in 2010–2011 to 64.3% in 2018–2019. The 2.9% of students diagnosed with SEN in 2018–2019, although following an ascending line, is noticeably lower than in other countries, suggesting that the screening and assessment processes may be facing difficulties or obstructions.

In Macao, IEPs are mandatory for students diagnosed with SEN since 2006, regardless of the type of school they attend to. Apart from the legal requirements, the government provides guidelines for schools regarding the construction of the IEP, which include an “Individualised Education Program” and a “Plan of Educational Activities” (Chan, 2019, p. 35). The former describes the student’s educational needs and academic record, including supports and programmes, and the latter provides specific information regarding expected learning outcomes and the implementation of the plan. The IEP team consists of the school board, educators, and other professionals such as psychologists, student counsellors, speech therapists, physical therapists, and occupational therapists (Chan, 2019) who are fully responsible for the IEP design and implementation. Students attending special education classes and special education small classes are provided a special education curriculum, which has been developed since 2016. The special education curriculum comprises learning ability progression ladders for Chinese language, mathematics, general studies, science and humanities, information technology, and arts and is expected to serve as a reference for all the schools offering special education classes and special education small classes (Yuen et al., 2017). Students with SEN placed in general education

Table 6.1 Students with SEN in schools in Macao from 2009–2010 to 2018–2019

Academic year	Students in non-tertiary education	Total number of students with SEN	% of students with SEN in non-tertiary education	Students with SEN in inclusive education classes	% of students with SEN in inclusive education classes	Students with SEN in special education classes	% of students with SEN in special education classes
2009–2010	73,826	874	1.1	372	42.5	502	57.4
2010–2011	72,364	977	1.3	426	43.6	551	56.3
2011–2012	70,719	1044	1.4	484	46.3	560	53
2012–2013	69,403	1098	1.5	516	46.9	582	53
2013–2014	68,923	1304	1.8	629	48.2	675	51.7
2014–2015	69,516	1430	2.0	806	56.3	624	43.6
2015–2016	72,613	1592	2.1	949	59.6	643	40.3
2016–2017	74,375	1841	2.4	1134	61.5	707	38.4
2017–2018	76,346	2116	2.7	1349	63.7	767	36.2
2018–2019	77,999	2301	2.9	1480	64.3	821	35.6

schools follow the regular curriculum with extra supports and adaptations. The adaptations are specified and implemented through the IEP and entail learning dimensions such as giving additional time for students to complete the assignments, enlarging print, and providing braille boards (Chan, 2019).

According to Chan (2019, p. 37), in most cases "... parents do not actively participate in the preparation of IEPs", but the 2020 Regulation states that parents must be informed about the dates of the IEP meetings and invited to participate ideas if they choose to do so. The new legislation encourages schools to share the IEP with parents and mandates them to provide a copy of the document upon request.

Challenges and Recommendations

Inclusive education is comparatively newer in Macao compared to Western countries and also in comparison with several countries from the Asia-Pacific region. The model adopted reflects a careful approach by the government in face of less than desirable levels of acceptance of full inclusion from teachers, parents, and school boards. The challenges and concerns regarding the development of inclusive education are linked to teachers' access to training opportunities on pedagogical skills to respond to students' needs, the need to build a whole school approach to inclusive education, to ensure greater equity between schools for inclusive education, to increase opportunities for parental involvement in education of their child with SEN, and to foster evidence-based solutions to problems faced by schools though research and partnerships between schools and local higher education institutions.

Teachers' Access to Training Opportunities

Despite government efforts to provide training in special and inclusive education to general education teachers since 2006, research has shown that lack of specific training for inclusive education is still a major justification provided by teachers for not being receptive to teach students with SEN (Monteiro et al., 2018). The current teacher education programmes may be inadequate in preparing teachers to meet the growing number of students with SEN. In the study of Monteiro et al. (2018), teachers required training to handle behavioural and emotional problems, to acquire adequate management skills for inclusive classrooms, to differentiate instruction, and to prepare effective IEPs. Teachers, particularly novice ones, enhance their teaching skills if they are given mentoring opportunities in school. More experienced inclusive teachers may provide practical supports and examples of good practices, which have the potential of bridging the gap between conceptualisations of special and inclusive education and the day-to-day practice of frontline professionals. As teachers' weekly schedule may hinder their attendance at training workshops outside the school, a variety of training formats, such as

in-school training and online training, should be considered. In Macao, teachers are requested to fulfil a certain amount of teacher training hours every 3 years. If only short-duration courses are available to teachers, the results can be seen as disappointing for them because they may not be able to acquire more than surface knowledge, turn their pedagogical ideas into action, or critically discuss what they have implemented afterwards. A better teacher training for inclusive education could involve the establishment of training and resource centres for in-service teachers to support inclusive practices in general education schools. Teacher training for inclusive education should also address common misleading myths and cultural misunderstandings about students with SEN and their families. Promoting a better understanding of special and inclusive education is not a requirement for teachers only; the school middle and top management structures should be provided with training in special and inclusive education.

Establish a Whole School Approach to Inclusive Education

To advance inclusive practices in Macao schools, all educational stakeholders should be involved and accountable for their positive participation. A whole school approach to inclusive education combines the efforts of teachers, resource teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and community stakeholders to create a culture for the high-quality learning and realisation of all students, regardless of their differences and exceptionalities. A whole school approach requires the whole school community to navigate their viewpoints, differences, and divergences, in order to set a plan that serves the best interest of each child's education and appropriately implement and monitor it over time. This is a challenge to a number of private schools, which are perhaps reluctant to replace one image of high academic and selective setting by another one that might be considered to reduce the enrolment rates. However, as the provision of inclusive education is growing and the practice of expelling students may be further regulated, even those schools opting for being independent from the government should be prepared to advance inclusive practices. Private non-subsidised schools in Macao will maintain their standards of excellence after embracing inclusive practices if a whole school approach to inclusive education is implemented. This move entails shared school policy goals and objectives related to what is expected to be achieved by each child: a multi-tier approach to ensure greater equity between schools for inclusive education.

Increase Opportunities for Parental Involvement in Education of Their Child with SEN

In a study consisting of 115 parents of school-aged children with SEN (Correia et al., 2021), parents reported that the IEP meetings were mainly focused on compliance with the law rather than providing opportunities for school professionals and parents to engage collaboratively in fruitful exchanges and planning. The aforementioned study revealed that although the Macao legislation stipulates that all students with SEN are entitled to an IEP, several schools are not implementing this practice; parents do not understand the IEP purpose and their role in it, and schools are not involving parents in its preparation or inviting parents to support their child's education at home. As communication with parents is of vital importance to the child's education, teachers and school professionals should advocate for the centrality of the families in the assessment and intervention process rather than addressing parents as peripheral partners. Ng and Kwan (2020) suggest that Macao schools could provide a pre-IEP meeting document as part of the IEP protocol development. As part of the preparation of the IEP meeting, teachers could email or call parents to further explain them the purpose of the IEP meeting and their role in it, as well as respond to their queries. This procedure should encourage parents to participate and contribute ideas, which would facilitate the collaboration between the parties. As Correia et al. stated (2019), parents of Confucian heritage cultures do not usually engage in advocacy for their child with SEN. Instead, they tend to show respect and conformity to the decisions made by the government or the school in regard to their child. In this cultural context, it is crucial that educators send welcoming and appreciative messages to families to encourage them to participate in the educational process of their children. Parents' contributions should not be neglected as they are valuable and irreplaceable.

Concluding Remarks

In Macao, the intersection between the historically rooted vitality of the private sector of education, the more recent blast of school marketisation (Garcia et al., 2014), and the Confucian tradition of resonating education with family honour presents substantial challenges to the enactment of inclusive education policies and their implementation. Although findings from cultures of non-Confucian heritage show that children with SEN and their families face day-to-day difficulties in regard to school and social participation, well-being and achievement (Glazzard, 2013; Yssel et al., 2007), these hurdles may be greater in societies where Confucius values influence the ways of coping with individual differences within the family, school, and society. In Macao, parents, school administrators, and policy-makers dream of producing outstanding sons and daughters, excellent schools, and an affluent city. This dream is echoed in the non-advocacy attitude of parents with

children with SEN, in some school administrators' disinclination to transform their schools into truly inclusive settings, in the adjustments of the policy texts to suit the economic and ideological interests of dominant groups, and in the deeply rooted idea of social harmony.

Neoliberal values have been associated since the 1990s with exclusionary practices in schools, as they disregard honouring values such as equity and respect for diversity. Macao government has been steadily regulating the once highly deregulated education system and has been, since 2006, succeeding in lowering educational inequalities. The provision of 15 years of free education serves as an example of the positive outcomes of the educational reforms.

With regard to inclusive education, policy-makers should publicly deliver clear-cut messages to parents, school principals, administrators, teachers, and community at large about its commitment to the implementation of inclusive education. To formulate policies in the best interests of children, families, and society, it is crucial to move beyond the improvement of enrolment ratios to a level that aims to ensure quality education and excellence for all students.

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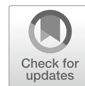
Chapter 7
Inclusive Education in Republic of Korea



Hyun-Ki Shin and Yoon-Suk Hwang

Abstract Republic of Korea has seen exponential growth in not only the economy but also inclusive education. According to special education statistics (Ministry of Education, 2019), over 70% of school-aged students with disabilities are physically placed in general schools. Despite the quantitative growth in inclusive education and the existence of an inclusive education policy, it is questionable that the students placed in general classrooms and special classrooms of general schools receive appropriate individualised educational services as students with disabilities in regular schools return to special schools. Contrary to a global trend of special education moving away from segregation and making its way towards inclusion, Korean inclusive education has evolved in a way that necessitates strengthening both inclusion and segregation by extending specialised support for inclusive education and opportunities for special education. The authors in this chapter will discuss Korean cultural and traditional backgrounds, statistics showing the current status of special and inclusive education, policies and legislation of Korean special and inclusive education, research on curricula, and teacher training for inclusive education. Implications for the advancement of inclusive education will be explored.

Keywords Cultural backgrounds · Inclusion · Inclusive education · Policies · Legislations · Republic of Korea

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Introduction

Republic of Korea has seen exponential growth in both the economy and special education. Inclusive education has been a strategic direction at which policies of Korean special education aimed. However, this policy-led approach posed challenges and limitations to the implementation of inclusive education. Contrary to a global trend of special education moving away from segregation and making its way towards inclusion, Korean inclusive education has evolved in a way that necessitates strengthening both inclusion and segregation by extending specialised support for inclusive education and opportunities for special education. In this chapter, we will discuss cultural backgrounds, current statistical status, and policies and legislation of Korean special education to investigate the sources of these rather conflicting implementation practices, along with current research in pre- and in-service teacher training for inclusive education. We will then explore practical implications for the advancement of inclusive education.

Inclusive Education in Republic of Korea: Cultural Contexts

As a mono-cultural and mono-ethnic society, Republic of Korea has a long history and tradition of homogeneous lifestyles. People with disabilities had a role to play within this community living culture and were looked after as fellow humans by people in the village. People with disabilities by default were included in the archetypically integrated lifestyles. In this traditional society, ties within family kinship were highly regarded. As seen in Simcheongjeon, a Korean folk tale from the Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910), filial Simcheong and her neighbours looked after and lived harmoniously with people with disabilities, such as Simcheong's father. However, traditional attitudes towards people with disabilities and levels of social inclusion for them have declined (Jung, 2005).

Lee (1981) found the cause of such regression and discrimination against people with disabilities in agricultural cultures, which was explained by five types of orientation. Orientation towards general persons mark the first characteristic. In agricultural culture where labour is precious, people were divided into two categories, those with labour force and those without. People without labour force were naturally excluded in this structure. People who know how to manage the entire process of cultivating, storing, and trading crops were regarded as capable persons. This tendency was also found in academic achievements. Students who were good at all subjects, rather than selected ones, were acknowledged as excellent. With orientation to all-rounders, the second characteristic of agricultural cultures, people with disabilities were perceived as being incomplete.

A class structure existed in Northeast Asia consisting of four categories of people based on professions (i.e. *Sa* for gentry scholars, *Nong* for farmers, *Gong* for artisans and craftsmen, and *Sang* for merchants and traders). People in a higher class (e.g. *Sa*)

governed those in a lower class (e.g. *Sang*). People could easily become frustrated in this hierarchical structure, and people with disabilities could become easy targets for displacement of their frustration. From the western perspective, prevailing shamanic practices in agricultural cultures resulted in a deficiency of super-ego, and this manifested in the lack of care for people with disabilities. Lastly, traditional welfare for the old through cooperation within village communities has become weakened, resulting in the lack of care for the disadvantaged.

Despite their continuing effects, no proper consideration has been given to these cultural backgrounds and traditional problems in developing and implementing inclusive education policies. Inclusive education policies developed in different cultures were applied under the force of special legislation without undergoing cultural adaptations. The inevitable results of not taking specific cultural backgrounds into consideration are reverse inclusion. In 2014, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Committee) responded with 66 principal areas of concern and recommendations for adopting and implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD; United Nations, 2006). Of these the following concern is related to article 24, Education, and raises the issue of a reverse from inclusive education to segregated education in Republic of Korea (CRPD, 2014):

> 45. The Committee is concerned that, despite the existence of an inclusive education policy, students with disabilities in regular schools return to special schools. It is further concerned about reports that students with disabilities enrolled in regular schools fail to receive education that is suitable to their impairment-related needs.

It is important to understand the necessity of taking unique cultural backgrounds into consideration when developing and implementing inclusive education policies to put into practice the universal principle that every human being is equal before the law.

Inclusive Education in Republic of Korea: Current Statistics

According to the Korean Statistical Information Service (2020), the Korean population is 51,843,195 as of March 2020 (male 25,858,743; female 25,984,452). Of these the kindergarten, primary, and secondary school-aged population is 6,136,793. The Korean school-aged population includes 137,225 students with multi-cultural backgrounds. Of these 116,766 students (i.e. 85%) are from internationally married families. The number of students with multi-cultural backgrounds has increased by 15,013 (i.e. 12.3%), compared to 122,212 in 2018. This trend shows that the recipients of special education services have been extended to students with multicultural backgrounds and support programs have been diversified in language and communication.

There are 92,958 school-aged students with special education needs (SEN), comprising 1.5% of the total school-aged population (Ministry of Education, 2019). Table 7.1 shows the types of their educational placement. Of 92,958

Table 7.1 The current status of school-aged students with SEN

Year	Total	Infant	K	P	M	H	P-H
2019	92,958	532	5989	41,091	18,462	21,502	5382

Note: *P* primary schools; *M* middle schools; *H* high schools; *P-H* post-high school

Table 7.2 Educational placement of school-aged children and young adults with SEN

Placement	Special school (28.0%)	General schools		Special education support centre (0.5%)	Total
		Special unit (54.7%)	General classroom (16.8%)		
Students with SEN	26,084	50,812	15,687	375	92,958

Table 7.3 The types of disabilities of students with SEN

Type	ID	ASD	PI	DD	HI	SLI	EB	VI	HI	LD
No.	49,624	13,105	10,200	7309	3225	2204	2182	1937	1763	1409
%	53.4	14.1	11.0	7.8	3.5	2.4	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.5

Note: *ID* intellectual disability; *ASD* autism spectrum disorder; *PI* physical impairment; *DD* developmental delay; *HI* hearing impairment; *SLI* speech/language impairment; *EB* emotional disturbance; *VI* visual impairment; *HI* health impairment; *LD* learning disability

school-aged students with special education needs, 28% are placed in special schools and 71.5% in general schools.

Although the majority of students are enrolled in general schools, only 16.8% are in general classrooms and 54.7% are placed in special units/classrooms either on a full-time or part-time basis, indicating their physical level of inclusion (Table 7.2). Despite the quantitative growth (i.e. the increasing number of students with SEN enrolled in general schools), it is questionable that the students placed in general classrooms and special classrooms of general schools receive appropriate individualised educational services. The recommendations made by the Committee (2014) for adopting and implementing the CRPD add weight to this doubt.

As presented in Table 7.3, over 67.5% of school-aged populations with SEN have intellectual impairment (Ministry of Education, 2019). It is most likely that they require adjusted curriculum and behavioural support. However, general education teachers supporting students with SEN in general schools usually receive the bare minimum amount of in-service training, such as disability awareness. Little opportunities are available for them to receive specialised in-service training on curriculum adaptation and behavioural support. In addition, pre-service training in special education largely occurs at an undergraduate level. This teacher training system limits opportunities for general and special education teachers to work collaboratively.

Inclusive Education in Republic of Korea: Legislative Contexts

The legislative backgrounds of Korean special education can be found in *the Special Education Promotion Act* (1977–2008). The enactment of *the Special Education Promotion Act* (1977–2008) was the turning point for special education to move away from charity-based benevolent social work to state responsibility. Korean Ministry of Education announced the Special Education Development 5-Year Plan during the second 5-Year Economic and Social Development Plan (1967–1971) that established special schools and classes, creating a compulsory primary education curriculum at special schools, securing the special education workforce, and providing financial support to private special schools. This 5-Year Special Education Plan presented the basic level of development for special education but was invalidated as the military government at that time prioritised economic development over other aspects of development. Special education subsequently became part of the Long-Term Comprehensive Education Plan, which was announced during the third 5-Year Economic and Social Development Plan (1972–1976).

Korean special education in the 1960s and 1970s was centred around private schools catering for students with hearing and/or visual impairment run by benevolent social workers. Education for students with intellectual disabilities and physical disabilities, such as cerebral palsy and brain injury, was about to begin. Education for students with disabilities was not seen as an astute use of scarce economic resources when economic growth was the national priority, students without disabilities were educated in over-crowded classrooms, and schools operated two or three shifts a day to reduce student occupancy. Special education had a low priority. Leaders of special education during this time called for the enactment of *the Special Education Promotion Act* (1977–2008) under the catchphrase of “it is time to show national interest in education for students with disabilities, as gross national income per capita is over $1,000”.

Special Education Promotion Act

The Special Education Promotion Act (1977–2008) is the forerunner of *the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities*. It was enacted on 31 December 1977 and enforced on 1 January 1979. It has been amended a few times until 2008 since promulgating its second revision in 1994. According to Paragraph 6, Article 2 (Definitions), “Integrated Education is defined as providing children with disabilities with special education at regular schools (i.e., non-special schools) as usual or temporary bases for the development of normal social adaption abilities”. Despite the differences between integration and inclusion, the authors used “integration” to keep the term used in government translated legal documentation. Paragraph 1 of Article 13 (Prohibition of Discrimination, etc.) explains that “When children with

disabilities want to enter schools, the principal should not take any actions that would put these students at a disadvantage, such as refusing to receive applications and denial of acceptance to those who passed entrance examinations due to their disabled condition". Paragraph 2 of Article 13 further stated that "Special school principals at all school levels should take appropriate measures to provide appropriate convenience for entrance examination and schooling for children with disabilities based on types and degree of disability". Contrary to the clear statement concerning prohibition of discrimination for entrance procedures, there are no specifically stated measures to prohibit discrimination regarding schooling procedures.

In *the Special Education Promotion Act* (1977–2008), integrated education was regarded as the extension of special education methods. Paragraph 1 of Article 15 (Integrated Education) stated that "Without due reasons, principals at regular schools should accept the request from students with special education needs or their parents or principals of special education institutes for integrated education". Paragraph 3 of Article 15 (Integrated Education) further specified that "Principals at regular schools should establish and operate special classrooms in accordance with the presidential Decree and provide materials and equipment necessary for special education within the limits of budgetary appropriations".

As found in the expressions, "without due reasons (Article 15, Paragraph 1)" and "within the limits of budgetary appropriations (Article 15, Paragraph 3)", Korean inclusive education was presented as a recommended practice reflective of the national social-economic contexts, rather than a necessary practice ensuring students with disabilities' right to education. Inclusive education in a legal sense began through the establishment of special classrooms in regular schools, rather than enrolment of students with disabilities in regular classrooms in regular schools.

Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC

Despite the contribution of *the Special Education Promotion Act* (1977–2008), new legislation was necessary to reflect social changes that people with disabilities face in the twenty-first century. The Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC (2018) was newly enacted to meet the needs of people with disabilities living in the knowledge information society. This act mandated the early identification, assessment, and evaluation of disabilities, free education for young children under the age of 3, the extension of compulsory education from kindergarten to high school, and the establishment and operation of special education support centres, enabling recruitment of professional staff.

Contrary to its forerunner, the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC (2018) defined "integrated education" as "education provided for persons eligible for special education in a regular school with other persons of the same age which is suitable for the educational needs of each individual without any discrimination according to the type and level of disability (Article 2, Paragraph 6)". Another advance was stating "Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 4)" based on

the Act of the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, Remedy against Infringement of their Rights, ETC (2017). Furthermore, Article 21 (Integrated Education) includes Paragraph 1, "The head of a school at each education level shall apply his/her best endeavour to realize the principle of integrated education in executing the various policies on education"; Paragraph 2, "The head of a regular school where persons eligible for special education are placed under Article 17 shall establish and execute a comprehensive plan for education, which includes the adjustment of curriculum, support of assistants, support of learning assistive devices, and training of teachers, etc."; and Paragraph 3, "If the head of a regular school provides integrated education under paragraph (2), he/she shall install and operate a special class in accordance with the standards under Article 27, and be equipped with the facility, equipment, textbooks and teaching equipment prescribed by Presidential Decree". Together, they legally documented the will to implement inclusive education.

However, the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC (2018) is a special act and different from general acts, which are higher acts (e.g. *the Framework Act on Education* and *the Elementary and Secondary Education Act)*. For example, Paragraph 1, Article 4 (Equal Opportunities in Education) of *the Framework Act on Education* (amended in 2007) states that "No citizen shall be treated with discrimination in education for reasons of gender, religion, faith, race, social standing, economic status, or physical conditions, etc.". Article 59 (Integrated education) of *the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (amended in 2012) documented "Where any person who needs special education intends to receive education at an elementary school, middle school, high school, or various kinds of schools equivalent thereto, the State and a local government shall establish policies necessary for conducting integrated education, such as providing for separate admission procedures and curricula". There is a limitation in assuming that students with disabilities will automatically be part of "all citizens" in Article 4 of *the Framework Act on Education* (amended in 2007) and "any person who needs special education" in Article 59 of *the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (amended in 2012). Although the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC (2018) and its predecessor have contributed, as special acts, to education for people with disabilities, they also separated special education from education for all. For this reason, there is now a call for integrating special education-related acts into their higher acts, such as *the Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (amended in 2012), to actualise inclusive education for all.

Inclusive Education Portrayed in Korean Legislations and Policies

Inclusive education has been the key theme of Korean special education policies in the twenty-first century. Inclusive education in Republic of Korea drew policy

attention when the United Nation declared 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP) to promote participation and equality. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (2005) at that time announced *2005 Special Education Operational Plan*, established the operational goal of "maximising education effectiveness for all students through sharing responsibilities between general and special education", and took the basic direction of "strengthening and generalising inclusive education" (p. 22–27). This is the first publicly proclaimed national policy that aimed to strengthen the implementation of inclusive education through shared responsibilities between general and special education. This basic theme remains current.

As discussed earlier, inclusive education portrayed in special education legislation and national policy takes the form of establishing and operating special classrooms in general schools (e.g. Article 15, the *Special Education Promotion Act*, 1977–2008), which is similar to resource rooms that were prevalent in the 1970s in the USA under the principles of mainstreaming or the least restrictive environment. Although Article 17 (Placement and Education of Persons Eligible for Special Education) of *the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC* states required measures for the instalment and operation of an inclusive education plan, it does not specifically mention general classroom-centred inclusive education with necessary measures. In addition, Paragraph 3, Article 21 (Integrated Education) of *the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC* specified that the head of a regular school provides the facility, equipment, textbooks, and teaching equipment prescribed by the presidential decree for integrated education. This further indicates that inclusive education in Republic of Korea still remains at the level of physical inclusion and has not progressed into educational/academic inclusion or social/psychological inclusion. This resulted in a phenomenon of reverse integration, attracting 66 concerns and recommendations on adopting and implementing the CRPD from the Committee in 2014.

Inclusive Education in Republic of Korea: Research Contexts

Upon the announcement of "2005 Special Education Operational Plan", the Korean government set the objective of "creating school cultures for students with and without disabilities to learn to live together" (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, 2005, p. 19). There were three specific directions taken to meet this objective. First, disability-related curriculum resources and pedagogy were developed for schools to raise disability awareness in students without disabilities. In addition, students without disabilities were provided with opportunities to take part in activities designed to experience what it is like to have disabilities. Lastly, students without disabilities were given opportunities to volunteer at disability support facilities to raise awareness of disabilities.

However, these approaches to promote inclusive education did not generate the expected outcomes because they did not take into consideration power dynamics of

Korean school cultures. "Performance and university entry exams" are prime in Korean education. In an overly competitive environment, exam scores are the only concern for students and parents, and teachers are expected to take on the role as experts in improving exam scores rather than implementing inclusive education to nurture all-round future citizens. Korean inclusive education policies took a top-down approach, but "Creating school cultures for students with and without disabilities to learn to live together" (Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development, 2005, p. 19) literally means the creation of a new culture, which needs to organically evolve within individual schools. Major shifts in school philosophies are imperative for competitive school cultures to transform into community-oriented cultures that promote co-living, and changed school philosophies need to be reflected in curriculum delivery. This entire process takes time and signifies the importance of having a balance between philosophical and methodological approaches towards inclusive education that is not optional but compulsory.

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Korean Inclusive Education

Research on inclusion for young children with disabilities began in the 1990s when setting the onset time on the basis of published work (Cho & Lee, 2009). The Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC (2018) ensures free education for young children with disabilities under the age of 3 and compulsory education for those over the age of 3. A maximum number of young children with disabilities placed in a single kindergarten classroom were limited to four in order to enable individualised education (Noh et al., 2011). Reflecting social and legal change, 5060 of 5186 young children with disabilities were enrolled in regular classrooms (1638) and special classrooms (3422) of early childhood inclusive education facilities (Ministry of Education, 2019).

The quantitative expansion of early childhood inclusive education was accompanied by the growth in research on early childhood inclusive education. According to a thematic review of qualitative research published between 2007 and 2016 (Cho, 2017), the most often studied topic was perceptions and requirements of inclusive education for young children with disabilities (36.2%) followed by curriculum and pedagogy (25.6%), collaboration and teaching profession (21.2%), and experience of and practice for inclusive education (17%). In addition, the majority of qualitative studies under review had teacher participants, echoing the criticality of teachers for success of inclusive education for young children with disabilities as previously recognised by Lee et al. (2007). Collaboration among all stakeholders is vital for the implementation of inclusive education and is worth researching (Noh et al., 2011). In this line, Lee et al.'s (2019) narrative inquiry showed a journey on experiencing change in educational philosophy and practices as a regular kindergarten teacher and developing a sense of agency in implementing inclusive early childhood education.

In 1971, Chil-Sung Primary School in Daegu ran special classrooms to manage over-crowding and under-achievement among students. This could be seen as the

beginning of integration in primary school settings, if one takes it as the establishment and operation of a special classroom within a regular school. There is a belief that putting inclusion into practice in primary education settings is more straightforward than secondary education environments because there is more time left for students to prepare for university entry exams, which creates more room for teachers and parents to focus on critical non-academic education. To examine this belief, Son (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with special education teachers, regular education teachers, parents of students with and without disabilities, and students without disabilities about beneficial and challenging aspects of inclusive education in primary schools. The findings suggested that inclusive education is beneficial for social development in students with disabilities, but it induces stress in them as these students are often academically neglected. Inclusive education is beneficial for debunking myths about disabilities and nurturing social service spirit in students without disabilities. However, studying with students with disabilities sometimes compromises the safety and rights to learning of students without disabilities. Parents of children with disabilities prefer inclusive education to special education, whereas parents of children without disabilities tend to be ambivalent about the effects of inclusive education. Regular education teachers find inclusive education demanding and rather unsatisfactory because it is difficult to provide individualised education to students with disabilities in their classrooms given their lack of specialised skills and knowledge, time, and resources.

In addition to academically highly competitive environments, lack of a research base to inform best practice adds to challenges in implementing inclusive education in secondary education settings. Lee (2010a) screened and analysed 53 research studies on secondary inclusive education published over the last 10 years. Of the 53 papers under review, 20 studies concerned attitudes of students without disabilities towards students with disabilities and peer relationships, 23 examined teachers' and parents' attitudes towards inclusion and students with disabilities, whereas only 3 studies attempted to investigate inclusive secondary education from the perspectives of students with disabilities. An imbalance was also found in the examination of the operation of inclusive classrooms (e.g. curriculum management) as more studies were conducted in middle schools (six studies) than high schools (one study). This discrepancy may reflect the field difficulties in conducting inclusive education in high school settings.

The majority of studies with secondary education teachers explored their understanding of inclusive education, specific types of disabilities, and curriculum and pedagogy to identify their needs for learning how to implement inclusive education. By contrast, there was little research on reporting how these needs were met and with what effects. Despite the dominance of subject learning, only 7 of 53 studies examined secondary inclusive education curriculum and pedagogy. Furthermore, of the 20 studies concerning the attitudes of students without disabilities towards students with disabilities and peer relationships, the majority of studies examined the effects of disability awareness programs and their related activities. Taken together with the expressed need of regular education teachers for the professional

development on disability understanding and awareness programs (Lee, 2010a), research suggests the field needs for raising disability awareness and understanding.

Special Education Curriculum for Teachers

Full inclusion necessitates all students' participation in social and academic learning and access to regular curriculum (Park, 2019). Reality, however, is not anywhere close. A range of factors may explain these discrepancies, such as lack of preparedness on the part of teachers who are responsible for inclusive education (Hwang, 2008; Lee, 2010b), but difficulties in the curriculum operation cannot be disregarded. Teachers in inclusive education settings expressed difficulties in finding ways of engaging students with disabilities in academic learning (Park, 2010), suggesting that teachers are insufficiently supported in their use of the curriculum guide when teaching students with disabilities.

Teachers frequently make decisions on what, when, and how to teach, along with how to conduct assessment. Therefore, the curriculum needs to include operational guidance, which can be different in its scope and standards depending on the levels of curricula. Guidance for the national-level curriculum would be presented at the general, universal, and standardised scope and levels, whereas province and school level curricula reflect regional and school characteristics and therefore would be more specific and practical. In addition, curriculum normalisation entails a balance between strengthening the national-level curriculum and specialising the school-level curriculum (Hong, 2002). Guidance on academic and pedagogical inclusion also needs to be presented differently depending on the curriculum levels.

Inclusive Education and the Special Education Curriculum

The Korean Special Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2015) includes only a limited amount of guidance on inclusive education. For example, guidance on inclusive education in Generals states the compilation, operation, and support for the school-level curriculum. Little guidance is provided on teaching, learning, and evaluation in inclusive education settings, which makes little contribution to the development of inclusive education learning and teaching methods and strategies. In addition, guidance on inclusive education in Generals suggests overall directions (e.g. education opportunities for all students, national-level curriculum support) only. Detailed information on or examples of the operation and implementation of the curriculum are not provided in either Particulars or Commentaries.

One role of curriculum is to guide teachers in their development of education activities. Insufficient teacher support for designing meaningful learning activities and programs results in inadequate academic inclusion (Shin, 2008). The curriculum support would be necessary to create learning environments so students with disabilities can actively participate in classroom learning activities. It would be

important to provide guidance on inclusive education in Generals comprehensively addressing a range of aspects of inclusion. Taking a specific and differentiated approach to regular curriculum access for students with disabilities is an international trend (Lee & Jung, 2010).

Including guidance on inclusive education in Particulars of the special education curriculum would provide more specific and direct support for teachers. This is because Particulars consist of all subject-specific and non-subject-specific curricula, and instructional inclusion can be performed at this operational stage of curricula. Whether guidance is included in Generals or Particulars, they are still at the national curriculum level. Further specified guidance, such as detailed explanations and concrete examples, can be provided in Commentaries and/or Teachers' guide, which will provide more practical support for the operation of the province-, school-, and classroom-level curriculum.

In addition to the curriculum and subject specific guidance previously mentioned, it would be important to provide guidance on how to take disability-specific information into consideration for instructional inclusion if students' disabilities create particular learning requirements. An example approach would be that the national-level curriculum points to an overall direction of inclusion, while Commentaries and Teachers' guide provide more specific guidance on individual subject content, disability-specific characteristics, and learning requirements they can potentially create and ways of differentiating curriculum to accommodate disability specific learning requirements.

Korean inclusive education has been led by special education. The National Institute of Special Education (NISE) supports the implementation of inclusive education through the development and distribution of teaching and learning materials to be used at regular schools in collaboration between special and regular education teachers. Examples of recently developed and distributed materials are Individualised Education Plan Field Strengthening and Operation Guidebook (Jung et al., 2019), School Curriculum Inclusive Education Support Teacher Role Models (Kim et al., 2019), and Assessment and Evaluation Manuals for Students with Disabilities (National Institute of Special Education, 2016).

Special Education Pre-service and In-service Teacher Training

Despite areas needing improvement, Korean special education has seen rapid growth over the last decades in supporting students with disabilities, which could not have happened without well-trained capable teachers. After all, teachers are one of the most important contributing factors for student success (Hattie, 2012). As society has changed, the education needs of students have evolved to the degree they require services beyond those provided by traditional special education. A range of additional learning needs of students call for highly specialised teaching-learning

services. Regular and special education do not appear to effectively respond to such demands as there are 33,635 secondary school students who dropped out of their schools (Korean Educational Developmental Institute, 2019), casting doubt on not only teacher expertise, accountability, and effectiveness but also the validity and reliability of teacher training.

Korean special education teacher training began with a teaching degree at a high school level in 1950. Since then, teacher training systems have undergone a lot of change, establishing and abolishing teacher certificates issued on the basis of majors in specific disability types; introducing a double degree system for early childhood, primary, and secondary education pre-service teacher training; and introducing a double or minor degree system for secondary special education pre-service teacher training, to name a few. Issues of special education teacher training have been widely studied, such as improvements in special education teacher training and curriculum, and qualification standards for teachers working in special education schools (Jung, 2016).

Teachers in the twenty-first century are expected to be equipped with expertise and effectiveness to provide quality education services for all and to prepare students for life-long education. Recent approaches to amalgamating special and regular education, full inclusion, universal design for learning, response to intervention, and positive behaviour support are national-level education policies and instructional strategies that have become key factors influencing special education teacher training. Investigation of the history of teacher training would be instrumental for contemplating how to prepare teachers ready for future.

Bright and Dark Historic Sides of Special Education Teacher Training

Special Education Teacher Training

A greater number of tertiary education institutes providing special education teacher training courses, extended teacher training periods, and increased university admission quotas for the department of special education had pros and cons. Extended teacher training periods contributed to the enhancement of quality teacher training, and increases in admission quotas enabled addressing special education teacher shortage. Taking multi-tracked approaches to special education teacher training (i.e. bachelor, post-graduate, and special education post-graduate degrees) produced special education teachers with a range of subject expertise. This also contributed to the enhancement and diversification of quality teacher training.

However, rapid increases in university admission quotas, especially extending teacher training to a post-graduate level (i.e. Master's degree in special education) resulted in unwanted consequences. Graduates majoring in special education had higher employment rates, which motivated a number of universities to seek permission from the Ministry of Education to establish new departments of special

education. This increased the danger of producing an excessive number of graduates and lowering the quality of teacher training. Contrary to the intention of quality special education teacher training, in some cases graduate schools in education have been functioned as a stepping stone to promotion among some regular education teachers.

Teacher Qualifications

Special education teacher qualification systems need to take into account concepts of special education, the area and scope of special education services, and teacher disposition prior to progressing into teacher skillsets. Special education, as a minority education sector, endeavoured to develop and establish teacher training programs that are quality matched to general education teacher training programs within relatively short periods of time. Introduction of a minor special education degree and temporary implementation of special education teacher qualification exams met the special education teacher shortage while maintaining minimum standards of special education teachers. Moving away from disability-specific special education teacher training (e.g. majoring in intellectual disability within special education) to disability integrated teacher training (e.g. majoring in special education) and multi-tracked approaches to special education teacher training encouraged experts with diverse subject expertise to become special education teachers and addressed the narrowness of special education.

On the other hand, the improvement processes of teacher qualifications systems lacked a research base on concepts of special education, the area and scope of special education services, and teacher disposition and quality. The status of special education policies and qualifications became secondary to regular education. Special education systems attempted to claim their position by assimilating to regular education systems, neglecting the specificity of special education. Disability integrated qualifications also endangered the specialty of sensory disability and other types of disability specific education.

Teacher Training Curriculum

Curriculum for special education teacher training has begun to unify across tertiary education institutes since 2007 and has been stabilised through undergoing multiple changes in 2016, which marked the organisation of national quality insurance systems. Curricula for primary and early childhood special education teacher training were relatively well established. Special education extended its academic scope and re-established ten disability-specific subjects reflective of legal terms and regulations. Opening up special education training at post-graduate levels to graduates with various subject skills and knowledge enabled a response to the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities.

Problems were noticed. Departments of special education established in tertiary education institutes with no previous history of training teachers showed major limitations in the operation of curriculum and over-reliance on casual academics for curriculum delivery because of a lack of relevant human resources and infrastructure. In addition, some tertiary education institutes created cultures where academics paid more attention to meeting university admission quotas and less to their responsibilities for teaching, research, and pastoral care. A mismatch between how special secondary education teachers are trained and what they are expected to teach in the field remains unchanged. Difficulties in securing expertise among special education teachers (e.g. learning prerequisites and dealing with student internalising problems) warrant a mention.

Teacher Education in a New Learning Era

Korean special education began by training teachers for students with moderate to profound disabilities and accommodating students' specific types of disabilities, such as sensory, intellectual and physical disabilities. Until inclusive education was specifically mentioned in the Special Education Promotion Law (1994), segregated- and disability-type-specific education approaches influenced special education teacher training. Teacher training focused on types of disabilities has evolved into disability integrated approaches with a focus on a mild to borderline level of disabilities. There are many factors influencing perspectives about teacher expertise, such as attitudes and beliefs about learning, teaching and disabilities, education policies, regular education responses to learning requirements of students with disabilities, disability characteristics, and research on effectiveness of special education services and pedagogies. Changes in these perspectives necessitated a shift in special education teacher training.

Schools are changing. The large majority of students with disabilities are now placed in special and regular classrooms of regular schools (Ministry of Education, 2019). The inclusion movement called for innovative approaches to teacher training systems for both regular and special education teachers to fulfil their new roles. Effective regular education teachers collaborate with special education teachers with knowledge about curriculum and pedagogy to motivate students for learning and differentiate student learning content and processes. Effective special education teachers collaborate with general education teachers with knowledge about evaluation, assessment, learning, and behaviour intervention. Mutually complementary roles provide impetus to training both teachers together, such as the provision of special education for obtaining both qualifications and the provision of dual qualifications for all teachers (Mastropieri et al., 2017).

Teacher Effectiveness and Tasks for Korean Special Education Teacher Training

Traditionally special education was intended to provide special, supplementing, and meaningful services for students whose learning requirements were not easily met by regular education. However, it is questionable whether special education has been fulfilling this intention. School leaders and parents embrace the concept of normalisation and focus on securing equal learning opportunities. However, special education has focused on unequal (i.e. equitable), relevant, tailored, and individualised opportunities. It is important to remember some students with disabilities have been treated differently. What makes education for students with disabilities equal may be unequal learning and teaching, such as the provision of more frequent, intensive, individualised, and carefully designed learning experiences.

Teacher effectiveness indicates teachers who are effective for obtaining positive outcomes, attracting attention because it influences student attendance and learning. Quality effective special education teachers have been often conceptualised from the perspectives of input factors (i.e. qualifications that are believed to be useful for promoting effective practices) and students' positive outcomes. Input factors include preparedness, specialty development hours, teaching experience, and qualification status. Another way is examining what teachers actually do and whether it is known to be the practices that are conducive to promoting students' positive outcomes. A third approach is considering what quality effective special education teachers are expected to achieve in relation to situating one's own teaching on research-based practices.

Based on Korean special education training history and new teaching roles in changing times, the following suggestions are made to assist training quality effective special education teachers. The field of special education needs to move beyond inclusion and towards magnanimity. Taking disability integrated approaches for training teachers would be more compatible with the future of special education. While retaining the current 4-year pre-service teacher training period, it would be beneficial to include 1-year advanced field training curriculum in industry-university partnership, benchmarking the Finnish models of training teachers at post-graduate levels and the US models of stressing field work and experience.

The current curriculum of post-graduate schools of education designed for general education teachers to become qualified to teach special education needs to be improved, quality controlled, and extended from 2.5 years to 3 years. The current curriculum of undergraduate school of special education needs to reduce general elective units and focus more on gaining field experiences and units that are related to curriculum, counselling, collaboration between special and general education teachers, and pedagogies supporting students with internalising and externalising problems. It would be more appropriate to have research-based and university-designed teacher training programs in alignment with the national directions of

teacher training, rather than imposing nationally standardised teacher training programs.

Prospects of and Recommendations for Korean Inclusive Education

The Ministry of Education (2017) announced *the Fifth Special Education Development 5-Year (2018–2022) Plan*. This plan includes the establishment of 22 new special schools and 1250 new special classrooms in regular schools, which attracted concerns from the Parents Solidarity for Education Rights because this goes against the directions of inclusive education. Korean inclusive education is centred around including students with mild to borderline disabilities. A number of parents who organised inclusive education for their children with disabilities during their primary schooling periods decide to enrol them in special schools for secondary education because of discrimination and psychological withdrawal experienced at regular schools or better job training available in special schools. This reverse from inclusive to segregated education echoes the Committee's concerns and recommendations for adopting and implementing the CRPD (2014). This suggests inclusive education has not been properly implemented over the last 10 years despite *the Act on Special Education for Persons with Disabilities, ETC* (2018) stating the right of students with disabilities to be educated without discrimination and with their peers.

When the two tracked approaches, strengthening segregation by extending special education opportunities and progressing inclusion by extending specialised support, were adopted in Korean special education, the above problems were to some degree expected to happen. Implementation of inclusive education requires collaboration between general and special education, which can only result from proper planning and preparation, such as centralising administration and communication systems within a general school and building research-based planning and support systems. Special education-related legislation was promulgated, and implementation plans were announced without proper planning. This swift action contributed to the rapid growth of inclusive education. However, it also created the educational phenomenon of children with disabilities subsequently returning to more segregated special schools, leaving behind deep scars like those of adoption terminated children.

The Parents Solidarity for Education Rights argued that priority should go to developing policies supporting quality inclusive education rather than merely increasing the number of special schools that deprive students of social interaction and development and sets them up for exclusion in communities. The National Human Rights Commission of Korea also advised the Korean government to adopt policies that enhance people with disabilities' rights to education in inclusive education environments. In order to advance inclusive education, it is important to identify and strengthen facilitating factors and address inhibitory factors. The

enhancement of regular-special education teachers' capacity to conduct inclusive education and the development of shared responsibilities and a shared vision for inclusion among key stakeholders, such as school leaders and policy makers, would be critical facilitating factors (Park et al., 2015). A practice example would be supporting research and development for a universal core school standard curriculum that embraces both general and special education curricula.

Martin Buber (1996) said that a different name for human being is relationship. If inclusion is established to recover human relationships, prior to focusing on methodological aspects of inclusive education, based on a belief that all human beings deserve respect, this may bring more positive instruction effects in inclusion.

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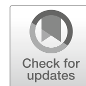
Chapter 8
Inclusive Educational System and Practice in Japan



Yoriko Kikkawa, Megumi Wakui, Naotake Iketani, and Fiona Bryer

Abstract This chapter explores the distinctive way in which the dual educational system in Japan has extended its special education services to create opportunities for more inclusive practice within mainstream schools. Legislation has promoted top-down political recommendations. New national policy and revision of special-needs education curriculum have encouraged blending of academic and special-needs expertise. It was expected that special-needs schools could assist leaders and teachers in mainstream schools to include students with disabilities and other special educational needs in group learning, but many issues have slowed implementation of this assistance. The strong preference of busy mainstream teachers to maintain their traditional practice has reflected the minimal training and support from universities and schools.

Keywords Disability · Inclusive education · Japan · Students with special educational needs · Teacher practices · Value-based practice

Japanese Context of Education for Students with Disabilities and Other Special Educational Needs

In Japan, the current approach to inclusive education arises out of an ongoing movement guided by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) towards framing and implementing a special-needs

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education system for students with disabilities and, more gradually, for other students with special educational needs (SEN). The legal basis of this approach is framed to strengthen resources and supports in special-needs schools that address disability-oriented needs, to share those strengths with mainstream schools, and to acknowledge the special needs of students with developmental disabilities in regular schooling. The Japanese philosophical and political ideal for what to implement is to create a better societal understanding of persons with disabilities, their difficulties, and their human rights.

The modern history of education in Japan expanded the view of who should receive education and what that education entails. Compulsory regular schooling, *Gakusei*, started in 1872. A separate system of compulsory education for specific categories of students with disabilities emerged during the period between 1938 (vision and hearing) and 1979 (intellectual and physical disabilities, health impairments). In 1973, the National Institute of Special Education (NISE) was founded to embody MEXT's recommendations and to conduct research on teaching of students with disabilities so that local schools and educators can use the practice in line with community circumstances. Between 2003 and 2007, the legal framework developed by MEXT for its special-needs education system made it possible to have special-needs services in different settings.

As educational authorities have acted, over time, to promote the new special-needs education system (started in 2007), MEXT hoped to establish an inclusive education system over more of the country's schools. It must be noted, however, that this top-down notion of inclusion for a cohesive society is an abstraction that had little meaning for grassroots inclusive practice. Instead, issues of how to implement the special-needs education system have been realised through recommendations to create a fundamental learning environment for all students, to provide reasonable accommodations for individual needs, and to create new opportunities for students with and without disabilities to experience learning together (MEXT, 2007, 2012).

In 2012 and 2018, MEXT highlighted integration of the respective expertise within regular and special-needs education, which encouraged further revision of policies and regulations for special-needs education. The strong national commitment was evident in the many progressive actions of government. Examples included formation of a Special Committee for special-needs education in the Central Council for Education (2010), confirmation of *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2014), enforcement of *Legislation to Eliminate Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities* (2016), and other general and continuing reforms to national curriculum (i.e. Course of Studies).

Strong social-emotional values about child development and society shape the direction for all Japanese education and enter into its approach to a special-needs education system (Kikkawa & Bryer, 2013). Cultural values are assigned to both enrichment of the individual potential of the whole person and the maintenance of the group as a social good. Desired outcomes include more participation of students with disability in society and more friendly and nondiscriminatory acceptance of these students by peers without disabilities. In the new special-needs education system, interactive and joint learning activities for students, universal design for

lesson development, and other structural reforms to assist teacher practice give expression to the notional path to inclusion.

Structural Changes in Special-Needs Placement

Special-needs education is for students with disabilities, in consideration of their individual educational needs, which aims at full development of their capabilities and at their independence and social participation. It is carried out in various forms including (a) special schools renamed for special-needs education (special-needs schools, hereafter); (b) a special-needs class where they spend most of time within a regular school; (c) *tsūkyū* or resource room where they spend a short period of time within a regular school; or (d) a mainstream class.

Special-needs schools are schools for children with comparatively severe disabilities. These schools often have continued to serve single-disability categories such as visual or intellectual disabilities with specialist-qualified teachers, but some schools can accept several types of disabilities. Special-needs classes are small classes for children with comparatively mild disabilities. Both special-needs schools and classes can be offered in the compulsory elementary (6–12 years) and lower secondary schooling (12–15 years), and special-needs classes can be offered as a branch class in a hospital for sick children as needed. Special-needs schools but not special-needs classes can offer kindergarten (3–6 years) and upper secondary schools (15–18 years).

Resource rooms for elementary and lower secondary schools (established 1993) were added in a national policy from revised *Enforcement Regulations for the School Education Law*. Categories initially eligible for support comprised speech/language disorders, hard-of-hearing problems, emotional disturbances, low vision, physical/motor disabilities, and health impairments. A 2006 revision of the *Basic Act on Education* extended education in resource rooms to include students with autism, learning difficulties, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. MEXT (2013) published *Educational Support Materials*, summarising disability-specific needs and practical suggestions for all defined categories. Upper secondary schools opened resource rooms in 2018 in tandem with emerging concern about students transitioning into post-school life. Resource rooms can also provide some extra support to mainstream teachers to help meet the diverse needs of learners with other special educational needs.

Table 8.1 illustrates structural changes made during conversion into the current special-needs education system. As the legally approved categories of disability increased, the number and kind of educational options also increased. According to the *School Education Act* (Article 81, updated 2011), schools must provide education for students from any defined category to overcome learning and daily-life difficulties related to their disabilities (MEXT, 2018b). Japan's long-term sub-replacement fertility affected the decline in total enrolments between 2007 and 2019. However, the number of eligible students doubled in the annual reports for

Table 8.1 Total number of students in Japan and those receiving educational support

		Kindergarten	Elementary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Total[a]
2007						
	Total of all students	-[b]	*10,815,272*		–	*15,928,464 (100%)*
	Special-needs schools[c]	1653	33,411	24,874	48,235	108,173 (0.7%)
	Special-needs classes	–	78,856	34,521	–	113,377 (0.7%)
	Resource room	–	43,078	2162	–	45,240 (0.3%)
	Total	1653	121,934	61,557	48,235	266,786 (1.7%)
2019						
	Total of all students	*1,842,228*	*6,440,317*	*3,278,467*	*3,252,168*	*14,813,180 (100%)*
	Special-needs schools	1438	44,475	30,374	68,147	144,434 (0.98%)
	Special-needs classes	–	200,561	77,579	–	278,140 (1.88%)
	Resource room	–	116,633	16,765	787	134,185 (0.91%)
	Total	1438	361,669	124,718	68,934	556,759 (3.76%)

[a]The population of Japan is approximately 126.8 million
[b]Indicates missing data
[c]Private special-needs schools are relatively rare, with under 15 schools and under 900 students

special-needs education (MEXT, 2020b). Tripling of the number of students in special-needs classes resulted in more regular schools hosting these classrooms (i.e. from 26,297 in 2007 to 46,590 in 2019). Moreover, special-needs schools continue to add extra classrooms (3162 in 2019). For example, these schools enrolled 10,887 out of 62,442 students prescreened on a health check in the Year 1 level of the 2019 cohort classified with special needs in Table 8.1.

The rising number of students in special-needs schools between 2007 and 2019 may also indicate more community awareness of the opportunities that these schools provide for supporting students with disability (Kayama et al., 2020). Parents may better understand and accept disability (Kato, 2019) and may value the resources in special-needs schools (Yada & Savolainen, 2017). Also, some students may be diverted from those regular classrooms where the environment does not meet the learning and development needs of students assessed as having a disability (Kato, 2019). Explicit legal recognition of social barriers to educational opportunities in the *Basic Law for Persons with Disabilities* Article 2 (revised 2011) may also add to total numbers. These barriers comprise items, institutions, practices, ideas, and other things in society that limit opportunity to engage in continuous daily life or social life.

Although attendance numbers at a resource room are relatively small, they actually tripled between 2007 and 2019. The 2017 regulation of making the ratio of 1 teacher for 13 students as a fundamental constant in this setting called for more resource room teachers. Typically, the municipal board assigns this role to regular teachers, who often lack formal qualifications or training as special-needs educators to achieve the most effective programming for students with learning difficulties at all school levels. They may consult with classroom teachers, assigned special-needs classroom teachers, and assigned special-needs coordinators in the mainstream school, and they can seek advice from a special-needs school teacher from the assigned special-needs school, 90% of which now assign someone to this task (MEXT, 2017a). In addition, various efforts in regular classes include instruction in small groups, team-teaching, instruction according to different achievement levels, and the use of support assistants.

Table 8.1 does not contain data for students in mainstream classes with some educational difficulties but who are not legally eligible for extra support. In the most recent data from a 2012 teacher survey, 6.5% of students showed some educational difficulties in elementary and lower secondary mainstream classes, of whom 58% received educational support at some time. The survey report formalised acknowledgement of students with developmental disabilities being enrolled in mainstream classes and their need for educational support in mainstream classes. Within contemporary circumstances, teachers can implement teaching practice based on mainstream curriculum with considerations of individual needs. A planned 2020 survey to examine current numbers of students with SEN and their access to support was deferred due to the pandemic.

In addition to students who have learning and behavioural difficulties due to a potential diagnosis of developmental disabilities, other students with SEN could include small numbers of immigrant students needing to learn Japanese, students refusing to attend school (perhaps some related to a developmental disability), and students with difficult home backgrounds. Although there is not yet a legal framework for including these populations in the special-needs education system, a special-needs assistance system has been established to support these diverse learners: it started for elementary and lower secondary schools in 2007, kindergartens in 2009, and upper secondary schools in 2011.

For 2021, MEXT (2020a, b) has budgeted across-school allocations for 65,800 special-needs assistance (7900 in kindergartens, 57,000 in elementary and lower secondary schools, and 900 in upper secondary schools). Teaching qualifications are not compulsory for this part-time contract role, and approximately 60% of assistants have teaching qualifications. The importance of upskilling these assistants was recognised, and many municipal boards provide seminars to these assistants.

Legislation, Policies, and Guiding Documents Related to Inclusion

In terms of special-needs education (*tokubetsu-shien-kyouiku*), the year 2007 was an important turning point. After the 2007 signing of Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified in 2014), a period of conceptual and structural adjustments across the existing dual model of system and practice in Japanese education has involved a major legislative program, regulatory changes to enrolment policy and decision-making protocols for educational authorities, and important revisions of national curriculum.

The concept of *zest for life* was introduced in the 2008 special-needs education system to foster student development across academic competence, rich heart, and healthy body. The latest revision of its course of studies continued zest into a new concept of *shishitsu-to-nouryoku*, or competencies for living (MEXT, 2018b). Teachers must address three components of these competencies (i.e. development of knowledge and skills, judgement and self-expression, and motivation to learn and humanity) across each curriculum area. For further development of competencies for living, cultivation of moral character was a new and separate addition to the curriculum prompted by *Basic Education Act* Article 1.

The MEXT 2012 report by the Central Council for Education outlined future directions for positioning an inclusive education system within Japan's dual system of special-needs and regular education. This recommendation list guided the reforms of policies, regulations, and curriculum to advance special-needs education that, in turn, have consequences for progress towards inclusive practice. Recommended adjustments to accommodate individual needs ranged from strategies in daily instruction to long-term planning for a student's development.

This report identified five key points for future directions to enable students with and without disabilities to learn together in local mainstream schools. The first is the principle calling for an inclusive education system to create cohesive society. The other four points have promoted various and ongoing actions to improve enrolment, environmental structures, functional capacity, and staff training. Although some supporting systems have been established, some local schools expressed an additional burden on teachers and school resources.

An example of guidance to decide special-needs placement for a student was a change to enrolment protocols in a 2013 revision of *Enforcement Ordinance for School Education Law*. By law, parents and school boards can participate in a more flexible process to decide placement for students with disability (MEXT, 2013). Previously, Prefecture Boards of Education regulated attendance of students with disability in special schools and approved exemptions. The revised process has allowed Municipal Boards of Education, which regulate regular schools, to enrol a student with disabilities and report exceptions to their prefecture board. Each municipal board was expected to consult with parents and relevant experts in education, medicine, and psychology to obtain input before determining the support

required. A third of the boards have provided parent guidelines for enrolling their child (MEXT, 2020b).

A practical example of fundamental environment for student with disabilities to receive sufficient education was the cap placed on class size and teacher-student ratio (MEXT, 2018b). A 2017 revision of *Basic Education Standards* particularly gave municipal boards the flexibility to reduce class size for regular classes. Revision of the teacher-student ratio in regular classrooms by MEXT has set an upper limit of 35 students in Year 1 and 40 in Years 2–6 and lower secondary, which will be further reduced to 35 students in Years 2–6 by 2026. Currently, the maximum size in special-needs classes is 8 and 13 in elementary and lower secondary resource rooms. Other structural changes included special-needs coordinators in almost 100% of schools and special classes and resource rooms in many mainstream schools (MEXT, 2019).

To address functional capacity, MEXT referred to securing qualified teachers and promoting collaborative networking between schools and between schools and other relevant organisations. In alignment with this fourth point, classroom use of interactive and joint learning activities (*kouryū-oyobi-kyoudou-gakushū*) was viewed as the most effective medium to meet individual needs and to enrich the relationship between students with and without disabilities (MEXT, 2012, 2018a). National curriculum recognised more use of intergroup activities that create environments for joint learning, which encouraged local schools to use this practice.

The unfolding history of this practice reveals the deep concern in Japanese education about equal rights, fairness and positivity, and democratic personalities through evidence-based encounters in group-to-group practice (Kanamaru & Kataoka, 2016). An initial proposal for an educational integration movement in the 1960s was considered too innovative and ambitious at that time. The formal start of interactive education (the past form of this practice) occurred as special activities, regulated in the 1971 and 1972 revision of special school curriculum, and this practice was expanded across the entire curriculum in the following 1979 revision.

This initial form, aiming for students with disabilities to interact with students in the general population, incurred criticism that simple interactions between these groups do not lead to cohesion in society. Earlier practice resulted, in some cases, in typically developing students controlling the interaction, with teachers continuing to use mainstream learning topics and materials in their lessons.

Subsequent revisions to curriculum, disability legislation, and MEXT reporting have emphasised the educational need to maximise opportunities for this practice with local children and adults to create a cohesive society. The concept of students with and without disabilities learning together and respecting each other, together with the role of group in lesson planning for student learning, has become a staple part of educational practice (Kikkawa et al., 2019). The desired outcome of the practice is to enrich *kokoro*, or heart, of students through experiences of such interactions.

The MEXT (2018a) report by the Central Council for Education was explicit about long-term preparation of upper secondary students with disabilities for transition to living in community. Teacher boards were expected to develop a network of

teacher organisations to facilitate the systematic use of interactive and joint learning activities across educational settings. More flexibility about learning outside a legally designated placement was the tool chosen to promote learning for *kokoro-no-bariafurī* or disability education for promoting peer acceptance and antidiscrimination, that is, this practice aims to educate students without disabilities about persons with disabilities and their difficulties as well as students with disabilities to accept their own disabilities and be involved in local community.

Several examples illustrate the fifth key point of improving professional skills and knowledge of teachers and school staff to enrich special-needs education. MEXT (2012) required teachers and schools to use the plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle to conduct quality assessment to develop school-wide curriculum and to build inclusion capacity. MEXT (2018b) required the development of a long-term individual support plan for elementary school students with SEN by 2020 and for secondary school students by 2021, in line with the 2016 revision of *Law to Support Persons with Developmental Disabilities*, and teachers are expected to consult widely with parents, designated colleagues, and other agencies (e.g. welfare, employment).

Similarly, writing and evaluating learning objectives for year groups and disability categories was a practical application of the new curriculum framework (i.e. competencies for living) announced by MEXT (2018b). For example, when writing learning objectives and evaluating learning outcomes in their present grade, elementary teachers need to consider their connection to competencies of grades before and beyond elementary school (i.e. vertical alignment of learning) and to individual needs addressed in *Educational Support Materials* (MEXT, 2013). Improving these skills requires change to professional development for school leaders to manage school-wide curriculum and for mainstream teachers to deliver the new national curriculum.

MEXT's political views of inclusion have been standardised in contemporary revisions of the Course of Studies (MEXT, 2018b), which every 10 years considers any changing priorities in the national curriculum. The new curriculum for each level of mainstream schooling was introduced to kindergartens in April 2018 and to elementary school in April 2020. When teachers need to modify the curriculum for individual needs, they are expected to refer to *Educational Support Materials* (MEXT, 2013) and/or the revised *Special-Needs Schools Curriculum*, started in April 2020. New curricula were enacted for lower secondary schooling in April 2021 and come into force for upper secondary schooling in April 2022.

In review, therefore, topics raised in the 2012 MEXT report on special-needs education that redefine classroom roles and responsibilities continue to be relevant today for teachers, school leaders, and mainstream schools with their mix of regular and special-need classes and resource rooms. Advances have been made in changing enrolment protocols and the structural framework, but less progress is taking place in practical and functional aspects of system change. "Learning on the job" about how to provide special-needs support applies to many special-needs coordinators, special-needs classroom teachers, and resource room teachers, as well as to school leaders expected to manage the operation of the special-needs education system in their mainstream schools.

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development

A crucial factor in achieving successful inclusive education is the capacity of teachers to cater for individual differences among students. Building this capacity in mainstream teachers remains an ongoing issue for Japan (Forlin et al., 2015). Existing gaps in the expertise and self-efficacy of Japanese teachers in this domain reflect gaps in formal teacher education (Yada & Savolainen, 2019). Teacher education has no specialist license for new teaching roles (special-needs class, resource room, or coordinator).

Teacher education qualifications for special-needs schools remain focused on specific disabilities. There are 161 undergraduate university degrees and 60 post-graduate courses of this kind. MEXT (2020b) reported that 83% of teachers working in special-needs schools are qualified to teach in a disability-specific setting. The full range of special-needs and inclusive placements is not well served in available postgraduate courses designed for training special-needs coordinators in special needs and behaviour management. An upcoming report about the future direction of special-needs education is likely to continue highlighting the need for more comprehensive professional development of teachers already in mainstream schools rather than an inclusion-dedicated degree for future graduates (MEXT, 2017b).

MEXT recommended that mainstream schools improve their recruitment of teachers already trained in special-needs education to enable other teachers to access their expertise. MEXT (2020b) reported that, in 2007, 32.4% of all teachers employed in special classes had a teaching qualification for special-needs schools (34.2% for elementary, 28.6% for lower secondary). In 2019, however, these figures had decreased to 30.9% (32.3% for elementary, 27.6% for lower secondary).

A course on the foundations of special-needs education became compulsory for all preservice teachers in 2019. Lectures on history, policy and regulation, and foundations of planning and curriculum are insufficient to prepare graduating teachers for special-needs education. In order to increase the expertise of mainstream teachers, schools have been tasked to organise in-service and external professional development that provides practical information on inclusion strategies such as co-teaching between mainstream classroom teachers and special-needs teachers (NISE, 2018b).

Professional development, therefore, remains the main priority for special-needs support in mainstream schools. In 2009, a policy change to *Teacher License Renewal Policy* required 30 hours of university courses approved by MEXT to be completed by teachers every 10 years. Courses can be focused on special-needs education in general and on curriculum development and adaptation. Teachers who are assigned as resource room teachers or special-needs coordinator are asked to attend other workshops offered by MEXT, NISE, and universities.

There is a process for informing teachers about innovations relevant across the inclusive education system. When MEXT intends to release notice of a change of policy, model schools are chosen and university researchers are asked to work with school teachers to conduct research to explore effective methods and approaches.

Findings are then published as reports that inform the next steps to be taken (e.g. NISE, 2018b).

Given the mainstream backgrounds of most new resource room teachers, MEXT (2020a) published step-by-step guidelines for working in this setting. Topics in the guidelines cover understanding what a resource room is, gathering information about a student, and developing, implementing, and revising individual support plans. Ways to overcome instructional difficulties and increase students' independence and functional academic skills are described.

Research on Inclusive Education in Japan

Inclusive education is a philosophical idea rather than a practice in Japan's system (Han et al., 2013). Resource rooms prompted some early research on teachers' practice in elementary and secondary schools (Fujii, 2015). Benefits of intergroup activities had already been reported for typically developing students (e.g. Hoshino & Sato, 2011), but benefits for students with disabilities were less studied (Kusumi, 2016). Consultation with a special-needs school had delivered improvements in Japanese literacy, numeracy, behaviour, and group participation (Ootsuka & Ito, 2018). Yet, problems in negotiating meeting schedules and other practical issues of teachers interfacing with each other have frustrated implementation of interactive and joint learning activities (Mori & Sato, 2020).

A new area of research emerged to address individual needs of diverse learners including both students with disabilities and SEN (DSEN) in the mainstream. This area has been added to further studies by special educators in their traditional fields of specific disability and by mainstream educators in subject-specific research around revised curriculum. The idea of education as "learning and living together" has led to the development of research in group interaction, lesson design, networking, and cultural goodness of fit.

At the present time, the research focus is more on teachers' skills than student outcomes. Mainstream teachers have expressed a preference for strategies that they can fit into whole-class learning. For example, Ishida et al. (2019) surveyed Japanese teachers in mainstream classrooms about the feasibility of class-wide and individualised strategies for their students with DSEN. They preferred using class-wide adaptations such as (a) setting school-wide and class-wide rules, (b) reinforcing appropriate behaviours using clear praise and explanation, and (c) providing verbal and visual prompts and making quick adjustments to a lesson. In contrast, some individualised adaptations such as using electronic devices (e.g. iPad, computer, touch panels) were regarded as much harder to deliver in mainstream classrooms.

Japanese teachers have reflected on instructional adaptation of lessons in their daily practice and professional development. Teachers in special-needs classes have engaged in close observation and group inquiry to "make their lessons better through inductive viewing of a child and class as a whole" (Kikkawa, 2014, p. 266). Similarly, math specialist teachers have worked with elementary classroom teachers,

observed their maths lessons, and provided practical advice on effective instructions (Inoue et al., 2019). These follow-up discussions examine holistic envisioning, adaptability, inclusiveness, and ways to optimise the immediate impact of a lesson. Wright et al. (2020) reported that strategies tried during lesson study later appeared in teachers' thinking and their routine classroom practice.

Okamoto (2014) reviewed 35 studies of how teachers use networking to improve instructional and relational support when student behaviour interfered with learning. Most of these studies involved students with developmental disabilities enrolled in elementary mainstream classes. According to this review, many classroom teachers reported collaborating with university staff, other teachers, and parents across topics including assessment of the student's needs, development of instruction and support planning, and evaluation of plans. Strategies and methods used in these studies were aligned with applied behaviour analysis. Hence, many studies included university-based professional advice.

Okamoto (2019) reviewed 49 studies of teaching practices for students with DSEN from 1993 to 2018. Special-needs schools (69%) outnumbered elementary special-needs classes (16%) and mainstream classes (2% each for elementary and lower and upper secondary; 6% for lower secondary special-needs classes). Across these studies, 32 examined lesson content and methods by analysing lessons in various ways (e.g. topics and materials, lesson flow, grouping, role of teachers, questioning, encouraging). Comparing the results of his review with those of previous reviews, Okamoto (2019) suggested that recent national endorsement of special-needs schools as a community resource centre could lead to more studies of lessons as a way to expand teachers' professional capacity.

Some researchers examined the fit between Japan's ethos and inclusion. Japanese teachers participated in two recent cross-cultural studies investigating teachers' perspectives and attitudes toward inclusive education (NISE, 2018a; Yada et al., 2018). For example, Yada et al. (2018) compared Japanese and Finnish teachers' perceptions of the most suitable educational environment for students with disabilities. In both countries, teachers with high self-efficacy valued more inclusive placements in contrast to those with low or moderate self-efficacy; however, Japanese teachers, even those with high self-efficacy, considered that segregated environments are better to educate students with severe disabilities.

Another cross-cultural study focusing on interactive and joint learning activities compared Japan with Sweden and Finland (NISE, 2018a). Both Japan and Sweden encouraged typically developing students' understanding and acceptance of students with disabilities and their relationships. For this reason, students with disabilities were usually involved in academic learning with the same age group of mainstream classes, consistent with a focus on lessons' content and objectives. In contrast, Finland's curriculum focused on task achievability and student self-esteem, so a student with intellectual disabilities would not attend lessons where academic demands did not match the student's ability or meet his or her particular needs. NISE suggested that recommendations of the best practice for inclusive education must balance academic learning and social interactions between students with and

without disabilities by considering each country's education system, teacher placement, and national curriculum.

Agrawal et al. (2019) compared policies and educational services for students with learning disabilities in ten countries. Provision to students with these disabilities in Japan was reported to be 30 years behind the USA. Like Ishida et al. (2019), they suggested that the Japanese emphasis on whole-group instruction has slowed progress in providing individualised teaching strategies that have proven effective elsewhere in supporting students with learning disabilities:

> The learning environment to which children are exposed within peer groups is key to developing the abilities to work collaboratively with others as adults. It has been relatively unusual, therefore, for a child to be pulled out of the peer group during the school day, for example, for individualized service. (Kayama, 2020, p. 41)

A meta-analysis of studies investigating teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education reviewed information about cultural effects on attitudes. A positive effect of individualism on teachers' attitudes contrasted with attitudes associated with collectivism. It was concluded that interventions that work in some countries may not be as successful in other countries (van Steen & Wilson, 2020).

How Inclusion is Implemented in Schools

Japan's inclusive education expanded placement options for students with disabilities and increased opportunities for students with and without disabilities to experience learning together. Educational support for students with DSEN in special-needs classes, resource rooms, and mainstream classes is expected to consider individual needs and differences. All teachers are now expected to provide, to some extent, support for these students in their classes, referencing special-needs school curriculum and/or *Educational Support Materials*. One aspect of inclusive education, which implements individual support for students with developmental disabilities, appears to be less advanced than other aspects.

Japan has achieved a series of major successes in identifying students with DSEN and expanding access to education, disseminating information about adapting lessons across all education, and recognising post-school issues of community inclusion. However, the continuing need for flexibility in implementing special-needs education in local communities arose basically from the scarcity of necessary skills and knowledge in mainstream schools. This flexible and gradual adoption, together with the traditional value of group learning, may still be delaying implementation of practice for "inclusive support" for students with developmental disabilities in mainstream classes.

Lesson study, or *jugyou-kenkyū*, has helped to advance special-needs education through school-wide curriculum development. It provides a culturally meaningful way to enrich collaboration and build competencies across the dual systems (Kikkawa et al., 2019). Immediate change in lessons is the focus of assessment.

Using the lesson study approach for special needs, "light touch" prevention of interference in group participation for students with DSEN appears to be the focus of teaching strategies (NISE, 2018b).

Collegial sharing of knowledge and dissemination of accommodations to mainstream schools within and across prefectures vary according to local circumstances. Collaborating teams use an inductive process of observation and reflection about ideal lessons and embed individual supports within class-wide instruction and management. The PDCA model can be aligned with more intensive and advanced use of Japanese lesson study as a vehicle for professional development activities (Saito et al., 2015). International research has confirmed the positive long-term effects of lesson study on teachers' knowledge and instructional skills (Willems & van den Bossche, 2019).

Some researchers have combined lesson planning into universal design (e.g. Kikuchi, 2020). This sociocultural Japanese ethos resonated with the three-block approach of universal design for learning, in which system change includes collaboration, instructional practice includes cooperative learning, and socio-emotional community includes collective vision (Katz, 2013). Targeted strategies to better accommodate students with DSEN within the classroom have involved *narrowing* a focus on what to teach during one lesson; *visualising* the explanations and instruction using blackboard, pictures, or videos; and *sharing* thoughts among students in a pair or small group (Tanoue & Ikari, 2017).

Similarly, a multilayered instruction model (MIM) of teaching students with SEN, proposed by Kaizu et al. (2008), modifies design of class instruction to accommodate individual needs (Ito, 2016). MIM distinguishes effective lessons for all students, reasonable accommodations for slower learners, and resource room support for students who need most help. Although not practiced widely, use of MIM helped to improve integrations between regular pedagogical strengths and special needs school practices. Use of both universal design and MIM typically embeds individual supports and peer-mediated instructions in whole-class lessons.

A class-wide intervention helping two Year 3 boys to transition into lunch (Tsurumi et al., 2012) illustrates the mixing of peer-mediated instructions and individual supports in class lessons. The special-needs coordinator rehearsed lunch preparation with the boys. Then, the classroom teacher provided visual cues and confirmed the step-by-step procedures to the whole class and used positive reinforcement (i.e. praise for being ready). Although overall preparation of the class improved, the boys still failed to get ready on time. The next support was serving a small grouping (*han*) within the class their lunch after all members of the group were ready, which encouraged students to assist peers. To ensure positive relationship among students, the class rule was clarified to the class (e.g. use kind voice, use instructions clear to peers, and do not criticise).

Kikkawa et al. (2019) reviewed behaviour support for students with SEN in Japanese schools using another three-tier model of school-wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS) tested in the USA. Tier 1 supports of broad rules and responsibilities improve class climate for all students; Tier 2 supports for small groups of students build on the presence of Tier 1 supports and reduce disruptions of class

learning (Beamish & Bryer, 2019). In Japan, Tier 3 individual supports are often provided outside traditional classroom practice and are weakly linked to class-wide preventive supports and small-group interventions.

One case study of qualified special-needs teachers in an elementary school unit observed teachers working with small groups of students with intellectual and other disabilities (Kikkawa, 2014). They collaborated to develop a series of life-skills lessons with carefully designed learning environments and tools that enhanced peer support among the students. For example, the special-needs classes prepared for a pancake shop and invited mainstream students to their activities. Fostering these interactions and relationships established a caring and supportive culture across mainstream and special classes (Kikkawa & Bryer, 2013).

Challenges, Concerns, and Recommendations for Action

Implementation of inclusion in Japanese schools has been challenging. The special-needs education system has gained strength in special-needs schools and, to a lesser extent, in special classes. Barriers to implementation of inclusive practice of students with DSEN in mainstream classrooms need to be identified.

An urgent underlying concern is teacher supply. Shortages of staff trained in special-needs education and familiar with inclusive practice are a major challenge now and in the future. The most senior generation, due to retire within the next 10 years, provides approximately 35% of all public elementary and lower secondary teachers. At the same time, Japan's sub-replacement fertility indicates a likely shortage of teachers from the middle and young generations. Media blacklisting of this profession, for rising workload expectations and its high risk for mental health, has added to the challenge of recruiting new teachers.

Another staffing concern is the filling of gaps in staffing by using classroom teachers who have not passed an employment examination. Annual transfers of these casually employed teachers between schools can interfere with the stability and safety of classroom environments for students with DSEN. Moreover, the training and experience of special-needs school teachers may not transfer directly to supporting students with developmental disabilities in the mainstream. A new certifying system could allow allied professionals like psychologists with some teaching components to become special-needs consultants.

Direct licensing credentials of a degree in inclusive and adaptive teaching could become a bridge to prepare mainstream teachers for roles as special-needs coordinator, special-needs classroom teacher, or resource room teacher, who can better help develop the skills of other mainstream teachers. For example, almost 100% of mainstream schools have one or more special-needs coordinators, but most of these teachers only started special-needs training after being assigned. Private mainstream schools have even fewer coordinators (47.4%). A new specialist inclusion degree for resource room teachers might speed up the change process towards more effective

supports for students with developmental disabilities, but there is little interest in the immediate future.

The compulsory requirement to develop an individual support plan for students with DSEN has raised new issues for teachers and school administrators. Teachers need more training in how to produce a plan and how to involve parents as key stakeholders in the process. On a positive note, almost all elementary and lower secondary students in special education classes (97%), resource rooms (81.5%), and mainstream classes (73%) are said to have a plan (MEXT 2020b). However, interviews with parents of students with DSEN from Year 2 to upper secondary indicated that many did not participate in the process and did not receive a copy of the plan (Hayakawa, 2016).

Implementation of individual support plans and related curriculum management for students with DSEN is challenging. Identifying and implementing the most effective individualised instruction strategies and accommodations during lessons needs more emphasis (Kikkawa, 2014). Action research for teaching teams to study what informs implementation of inclusive strategies in lessons may help. Issues of mutual benefit and fair exchange among peers need to be monitored in the revised course of study regime of lesson planning and delivery.

More research and practice must attend to the voices of students with DSEN. Researchers in the UK have highlighted the role of student voice in leading to better understanding of effective inclusion (e.g. Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). In particular, planners need to consider how at-risk students perceive their classroom experiences and to monitor how inclusion is understood by typically developing students especially in later school years. For example, does receiving resource room support adversely affect a student's status and social acceptance in the mainstream class? Rescheduling the pandemic-deferred 2020 survey of students with SEN in mainstream classrooms and their access to support is needed urgently, to capture the current situation of these students and thus to inform policy and practice.

Conclusion

Between 2007 and the present, implementation of inclusive education in regular schools has progressed by extending special education into mainstream settings and by systematically revising national policies and curriculum while maintaining cultural values of group cohesion, peer relationships, and morality in teaching and learning. Emerging issues for mainstream schools to succeed in future implementation of inclusion are the willingness of the next generation of teachers to take on this workload, the capacity of teacher education to prepare new graduates for differentiated instruction and behaviour management, and an awareness that planners need to listen to student voice, personal preferences, and actual experiences when planning for long-term intervention. The energy, goodwill, and cooperation of the teaching profession—classroom teachers, team leaders, school administrators, and

professional bodies—remain the critical infrastructure to sustain future progress towards a more inclusive education system.

The everyday realities of mainstream class sizes of 35–40 students for 1 teacher may also shape the continued preference for a whole-class teaching approach to lessons and curriculum blending of academic, social-emotional, and life skills in these lessons. Until now, upskilling of educational supports for students with DSEN in mainstream classrooms has relied on teachers' voluntary self-engagement in online, in-house, or university-offered professional development. Teachers have been able to embed individual support in whole-class instruction. Their sociocultural practice, which has shaped the current approach to supporting students with DSEN within a class and which has evolved gradually, has been built upon generations of lesson study practice and expertise in reflective inquiry. Delivering this type of practice usually requires intensive experiences and guidance from senior teachers. However, staff turnover may weaken this practice, which is also the foundation of special-needs education in regular schools, in the near future.

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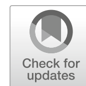
Chapter 9
Inclusive Education in British Columbia: Teaching to Diversity



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Abstract The western-most province in Canada, British Columbia (BC), is situated on the northern Pacific Ocean. Covering 944,735 square kilometres, this province has a population of over five million people, of which approximately half live in and around the city of Vancouver in the south-west corner of the province. The province became a part of Canada in 1871; however, First Nations, the original inhabitants of the land, have a history of at least 10,000 years in the area. The education system in Canada is administered by each provincial and territorial government. BC provides universal, free elementary (i.e. grades K–7; ages 5–12) and secondary (i.e. grades 8–12; ages 13–18) education that is compulsory until age 16. Currently, there are approximately 530,000 students in the K–12 system with a projected annual increase of 1.0% over the next 10 years. Educational systems and societal thinking directly influence the philosophy and practice of inclusion in Canadian school systems. In this chapter, the development of inclusive education in BC is described. Inclusion in BC is not just about students with special needs. It encompasses a full range of student diversity within the publicly funded kindergarten to grade 12 (K–12) school system. The provincial policy towards students with diverse learning needs is one of inclusion and teaching to diversity. The historical to present-day context of inclusive education and the current policies, procedures, and guidelines that are used to support educational services for BC students with diverse learning needs are described. Because the province is composed of 60 school districts, each with its own characteristics, general trends are presented. The resources associated with implementing inclusive education (i.e. Ministry of Education roles and supports, school administration, teachers, and teaching assistants) are then explored. The

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chapter concludes with suggestions and recommendations for the provincial education system as it moves forward in the twenty-first century.

Keywords British Columbia · Inclusion · Inclusive education · K–12 · Special education

Canadian Context

Canada is located in the northern part of the North American continent, extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic Ocean, and is the world's second largest country (9,984,670 km^2) by land mass. The country has a population of approximately 37 million people. Canada is a federal state governed as a parliamentary democracy and federally and is officially bilingual (French and English). Additionally, Nunavut recognises Inuktitut as an official language, and the Northwest Territories extend official language status to nine aboriginal languages. It is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world and has one of the highest per capita rates of immigration. The basic structures, with some variance, of the Canadian education systems within all provinces and territories are composed of three divisions: elementary, secondary, and postsecondary. Students begin school in kindergarten (age 5) and complete secondary school in grade 12 (age 17/18). The mandatory student attendance age ranges from age 5 to 7 years at entrance and 16 to 18 years at exit. School grade configurations vary across the country; however, common configurations are elementary (kindergarten [K] to grade 5, K–6, or K–7), middle schools (grades 6–8, 7–8, or 6–9), junior secondary schools (grades 8–9 or 8–10), or secondary schools (grades 7–12, 8–12, or 9–12). Statistics Canada (2019) indicates that 92% of Canadians graduate from secondary school. Postsecondary education choices include career colleges, community colleges, and universities.

Education policy, funding, and organisation in Canada are the responsibilities of provincial and territorial governments with the federal government being responsible for First Nations education). All the ten provinces (Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan) and three territories (Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon) have some form of policy on inclusive education. In many respects, school systems across the provinces and territories can be quite different from one another. According to the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), "(W)hile there are a great many similarities in the provincial and territorial educational systems across Canada, there are significant differences in curriculum, assessment, and accountability policies among the jurisdictions that express the geography, history, language, culture, and corresponding specialised needs of the population served" (CMEC, 2008, para. 3).

British Columbia Context

British Columbia (BC) is the most western province within Canada, comprising almost 10% of the total land mass and accounting for 5.1 million people, of which more than half live in the city of Greater Vancouver in the southwestern corner of the province. The BC Ministry of Education (BCME) identifies over 2300 schools for the 2020/2021 school year. In the same school year, enrolled students included approximately 553,000 public school students, 8100 independent school students, and 2200 home-schooled children. There has been a steady decline in K to grade 12 enrolment in BC over recent decades, particularly in small, rural, and remote school districts; however, projected numbers appear to be increasing at approximately 1% on an annual basis. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) is the provincial union of professionals representing 45,000 public school teachers in the province (BCTF, 2020). Education in BC is generally divided into primary (grades K to 7), secondary (grades 8 to 12), and postsecondary pathways.

Education is compulsory in BC up to the age of 16. In order to graduate from the BC education system, every student in the graduation program (grades 10 to 12) must pass 12 basic courses from clusters of subjects in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, and fine arts. Students who successfully complete the provincial graduate requirements are awarded the BC Certificate of Graduation or "Dogwood Diploma". The BC public school system is an inclusive one where the majority of students with diverse learning needs participate fully in the regular education classroom, unless student needs require a different program. Most students with diverse learning needs (defined as a student who has a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural nature, has a learning disability, or has special gifts or talents) (BCME, 2016) will be awarded a Dogwood Diploma. If a student is not able to meet the Dogwood Diploma requirements—for example, due to a cognitive or intellectual disability—they will be awarded a school leaving certificate or "Evergreen Certificate". The Evergreen Certificate represents the completion of personal learning goals; it does not represent graduation.

In British Columbia at the turn of the twentieth century in the major cities of Victoria and Vancouver, programming was developed for students with visual and hearing loss, as well as for those with intellectual disabilities (Segal & Ladyman, 2000). Despite these initial efforts, no concerted approach to standardisation of services existed until the 1970s when a Special Education Division was first created within the Ministry of Education (MOE) with a guide to assist schools and school districts in the development of their special education programming. This initial guide was revised and refined through the 1980s into the Ministry of Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines. An iteration of this original document guides the delivery of special educational services across the province today (BCME, 2016).

Legislation, Policies, and Guiding Documents in British Columbia

The Canadian constitution was patriated from Britain in 1982 with the subsequent Canadian societal adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a charter that has influenced all aspects of Canadian society. Specifically, with respect to equality rights, the charter states:

> Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982, s. 15. p. 1)

Thus, the charter guarantees student rights and specifies responsibilities of governments at national, provincial, and institutional levels ensuring human rights are both achieved and maintained. Inclusion of students with special needs in Canada is related to equity stemming from a commitment to equitable treatment that is guaranteed in the Canadian Charter. Provincial education policies must be consistent with the Constitution Act, which contains the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982).

In the late 1980s, British Columbia saw a revision of the School Act (1996), which is a provincial statute governing primary and secondary education that ensures all children who were of school age and residents were entitled to an education program. Students with diverse learning needs were no longer separate from other students in their basic rights to an educational program, and legislation was passed to determine the definitions of students with special needs, the need for Individual Education Plans (IEPs), and the placement of these students in the education system. Implementing inclusion is central to BC's public school system practices. Students with diverse learning needs participate fully in the typical classroom *unless* student needs require a different location:

> Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms, and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others. (BCME, 2016, p. v)

The BC School Act

The BC School Act contains the legislation associated with important roles, rights, and responsibilities for stakeholders in the education system. Originally created as legislation in 1996, the act includes such rights and responsibilities of students and parents, school personnel, school trustees, boards of education, and the Ministry of Education (BCME, 2016). For example, the responsibilities of a teacher include "designing, supervising and assessing educational programs and instructing,

assessing and evaluating individual students and groups of students" (School Act, 1996, part 3), while the responsibilities of the Minister of Education include the "charge of the maintenance and management of all Provincial schools established under this Act" (School Act, 1996, part 9).

Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

Special education services for students within the BC education system are governed by policy (i.e. the School Act) and the BC Special Education Services—A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines document (BCME, 2016). The Special Education Services—A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines document was originally published in 1995, after an extensive provincial Special Education Review, and was recently updated in 2016. The purpose of this manual is to provide a single point of reference regarding legislation, provincial ministry policy, and guidelines to assist school boards in developing programs and services that enable students with special needs to meet the goals of education (BCME, 2016).

The manual also contains procedural information to assist in accessing programs and services provided at the provincial level. For example, the manual defines education as a shared responsibility and explains that "it is expected that students with special needs will participate fully in these programs" (BCME, 2016, p. 6). A brief overview of the Manual and what it contains are provided in Table 9.1.

At approximately 150 pages, the manual is comprehensive. It includes clear roles and responsibilities for stakeholders involved in providing educational services for students with special needs in BC (e.g. teachers, administrators, teaching assistants, and school and community service supports such as speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, counsellors). The manual outlines a clear, detailed, systematic process for the development of the IEP, providing a strong baseline from which to consider student strengths and needs. Lastly, the inclusion of separate sections of special needs categories allows stakeholders a common baseline upon which to discuss programs and a jumping-off point for developing effective instructional practices and service supports. The current *BC Ministry of Education Special Education Services—A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines,* published in 2016, is presently under review.

From Exclusion to Segregation to Inclusion

The history of educating students with diverse learning needs in Canada (and BC) follows a path from exclusion and institutionalisation in the late nineteenth century to one of gradual progression toward inclusion where all students are welcome in

Table 9.1 Details of the special education services—a manual of policies, procedures and guidelines

Chapter	Content	Example
A. Policy	The *plan* of what to do in *particular situations* that has been *agreed* to *officially* by the provincial *government*	BC promotes an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners
B. Roles and responsibilities	The documentation aims to standardise expectations across all locations and contexts	Teachers' assistants play a key role in many programs for students with special needs
C. Developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP)	The planning process associated with an IEP	Early identification is an essential element of successful program planning for students with special needs
D. Services	Special considerations associated with students with special needs in the schools	Counselling services are provided primarily by school counsellors and by other mental health professionals (e.g. youth and family counsellors, behavioural therapists)
E. Special needs categories	Categories are established to assist school districts in identifying the needs of students and in providing appropriate education programs	Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders that may affect the acquisition, organisation, retention, understanding, or use of verbal or nonverbal information
F. Provincial resources	Provincial resource programs established by order of the minister and operated by a board	Provincial outreach program for autism and related disorders (POPARD) (https://autismoutreach.ca/)
G. Quick references	Internet resources	Special education technology-BC (SET-BC) (https://www.setbc.org/)
H. Appendices	Appendices	Braille instructional program (PRCVI)

neighbourhood schools with typical peers. The norm for students with special needs for the first half of the twentieth century (approximately 1900 to 1950) was segregated schooling. The middle of the century saw a shift, and Andrews and Lupart (2000) describe special education during this period as one of broad categorisation with the separation of students into high and low incidence categories which continues to be reflected in the *BC Ministry of Education Special Education Services—A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*. Over this period, students in the low incidence category (e.g. physically dependent, multiple needs) were educated primarily in separate schools, while students in the high incidence category were educated in the same schools as more typical students, but in separate classrooms. Moving this timeline forward, the 1970s reflected an educational environment that was *least restrictive*, the 1980s promoted *mainstreaming* where students with high incidence needs (e.g. learning disabilities, ADHD) were placed in regular

education classrooms, and the 1990s saw the introduction of *inclusion* where all students experienced the full range of the services provided in their neighbourhood schools. As Lynch and Irvine (2009) identify, Canadian policy has demonstrated consistent movement towards "authentic inclusion" as this approach to education students with special needs reflects the basic value of acceptance we hold as a nation.

The *BC Ministry of Education Special Education Services—A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines* defines inclusion as "the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education" (BCME, 2016, p. V). This practice goes beyond the previous educational approach of integration to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others. In BC, inclusion is not just about students with disabilities; it is about a full range of student diversity (Specht et al., 2016). It "means all students belong and are valued members of their classroom and neighbourhood school communities" (Inclusion BC, 2017, p. 3). The rationale for inclusion as an education approach to students with special needs is not difficult to rationalise as research generally finds that the practice is beneficial not only for students with disabilities but for all students (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009). Inclusion results in improved social and academic outcomes for all children in inclusive classrooms (Kalambouka et al., 2007; Timmons & Wagner, 2008). In BC schools, *all* students belong and are valued members of their classroom, school, and neighbourhood communities.

British Columbia Ministry of Education Funding Model

Since 2002, there have been declines in BC provincial funding for public schools. The BC education system is funded via a basic allocation (i.e. a set amount of money provided per school-age student enrolled in a school district). This allocation includes funds to support the learning needs of students who are identified as having learning disabilities or mild intellectual disabilities, students requiring moderate behaviour supports, and students who are gifted. Some students with special needs may require additional support and accommodations to enable them to access and participate in educational programs. This additional supplementary funding is based upon special needs categories.

Once a special needs designation is confirmed, the level of funding is then determined. This level of funding depends on the severity of the special need diagnosis and designation. It is important to note that the funding goes to the school district, not directly to the individual student. However, the funding amount is used to provide services to the student. In other words, the district allocates funds as needed per student. Each of the funding levels has different criteria that must be met. Not all students with a designation receive additional funding on top of the provincial base funding allocated per student. Once a designation is confirmed, a case manager/special education teacher (e.g. Learning Instructional Support Teacher

(LIST), Learning Resource Teacher (LRT), etc.) is assigned to the student and that teacher develops the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Teacher Preparation in British Columbia

The BC Teachers' Council (BCTC) is an independent board within the BC Ministry of Education that regularly reviews and approves changes to teacher education programs at BC postsecondary institutions to ensure their graduates meet publicly viewable approval standards (https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/resources-for-teachers/training-and-professional-development/teacher-education-programs#approval). There are currently 13 approved teacher education programs in BC (BCME, 2021a), and program options range from a 4-year undergraduate program to 11 months at the post-degree level. Teacher education programs, either undergraduate or post-degree, are differentiated by instructional level, and applicants must typically decide between early childhood (pre-K), elementary (grades K-7), middle-school (grades 6 to 9), or secondary school (grades 9 to 12). Applicants at the secondary level must choose at least one major teachable area (e.g. mathematics or music).

Programs, as stipulated by the BCTC, are required to have courses in First Nations pedagogy, human development, educational foundations, curriculum content areas, effective practice and current research, evaluation and testing, as well as content which provides for inquiry and reflective practice and recognises the diverse nature of our society (e.g. gender equity), an explanation of school administration and framework, and information related to teaching students with special needs (i.e. learner characteristics, intervention planning and evaluation). Additionally, all programs typically include some variety of school placement (i.e. teaching experience). The issuing of teaching certification in BC is the responsibility of the provincial government via the Ministry of Education Teacher Certification Branch (TCB).

Despite the stated requirement for three credits or the equivalent (i.e. 36 contact hours) in studies related to teaching students with special needs, there is some variance in both program structure and what is required for pre-service teachers depending on the teacher education program. For example, the Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver/Lower Mainland of BC is offered at the post-degree over 16 months (4 terms from September to the following December). This program is structured so that students take course work as part of a small group. In the initial fall term (September to December), students are enrolled in a 15-unit (3 units is equivalent to approximately 36 contact hours) class EDUC 400: Foundations of Education & Schooling. In this class (or series of classes), pre-service student teachers are introduced to special needs education. The Bachelor of Education elementary program at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops is a 2-year program (September to April over 2 consecutive years) after meeting admissions requirements of approximately 2 years of postsecondary study which includes

a number of program prerequisites. Students in this program take EDIE 4100: Special Education as part of their program, a 3 credit (36 contact hours) course provided in the fall of their second year in the program. In all, teacher education programs depend upon school placements to provide additional skills and understanding in the area of special education that might not be provided during classroom instruction. Information on approved teacher education programs in BC is detailed here for further elaboration (BCME, 2021a). The format, content, and expectations for professional development (Pro-D) for teachers in BC are school district dependent and not prescribed. Typically, such opportunities range from one-day workshops to extended collaborations between schools and universities.

Implementing Inclusion in British Columbia's Schools

Teachers are most concerned with how to "do" inclusion and manage implementation challenges. In 2015, British Columbia mandated a revised provincial curriculum, referred to as BC's New Curriculum (BCME, 2020a), that acknowledges and supports teaching the diversity of students in BC classrooms. Key curricular competencies include a focus on three areas. The first of these is core competencies (i.e. communication, thinking, and personal and social competencies). The second is essential learning (i.e. society's aspirations for BC's educated students). The third is a focus on literacy and numeracy foundations. The curriculum shifts towards a competency-driven curriculum, where competency is not the destination; rather the focus is on developing competence and learning over time as opposed to how much curricular content is covered (Inclusion BC, 2017, p. 8). Further, this new curriculum, with the areas of focus identified, supports all students, including those with diverse learning needs. The new BC curriculum is less prescriptive, allowing flexibility and choice for teachers and students, enabling teachers to be creative and innovative in their design of learning experiences (p. 9).

The revised BC curriculum focuses more on the "how of inclusion" and the new ways of teaching and pedagogy that supports teaching to diversity where teaching to diversity suggests "all means all" and removing barriers to learning and inclusion. While traditional integration focused on extensive supports and resource needs, BC's "new curriculum" focuses on assets and growth models in which all students advance. For example, personalised learning, classroom flexibility, and teaching approaches that empower students to be well-rounded, critical thinkers and life-long learners. This new curriculum represents a shift towards competency-driven, deep learning over time rather than on how much curriculum content is covered. Less prescriptive curriculum allows for flexibility and choice for teachers and students, enabling teachers to be creative and innovative in their design of student learning experience approaches. Response to Intervention is used as a planning framework to develop different support levels for a class instead of trying to design 30 individual and differentiated programs. Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Differentiated Instruction (DI), and Response to Intervention (RtI) are acknowledged and

supported as central instructional approaches in the BC Ministry of Education (see BCME, 2021b).

Identifying and Addressing Student Learning Needs: The Individual Education Plan

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) format and development and implementation process has also evolved significantly over the past few years in BC. Beginning in 2015, some school districts in the province began examining the format of the IEP (MyEducationBC, 2021). Prior to this time, the focus had been on attempting to capture every aspect of the student's education in one document, often resulting in what was an exclusive, rather than inclusive, educational program for the student. Further, when considering students with significant needs, teachers often deferred the development of the IEP to other professionals (e.g. special educator, medical professionals, etc.). This meant that the student's education plan was developed by professionals who often did not know the student well and nor were they necessarily familiar with the curriculum and the student's classroom context. Further, the students with IEPs typically were not aware of the long-term goals that were to be targeted and implemented.

With this awareness, a more significant change was initiated in 2017 to move to a new format, now referred to as the Competency-Based Individual Education Plan (CB-IEP) (MyEducationBC, 2021). In BC, classroom teachers in elementary schools and subject area teachers in secondary schools are responsible for the learning of all students with special learning needs in the class (see Sect. 17(1) and (2) of the School Act, 2016). Regardless of who else is involved in a student's learning and education, the teacher is responsible for designing, supervising, and assessing the program for that student. When other professionals are involved in working directly (or indirectly) with that student (e.g. specialised instruction), the classroom teacher is responsible for taking the lead in a collaborative process with the other members of the student's team to ensure a coordinated approach.

A team-based approach is foundational to the CB-IEP. A student's needs can be very complex, and for this reason, a collaborative, team-based approach is essential. Further, the CB-IEP focuses on the student's competencies rather than deficits, providing a focal point for building on the student's strengths to ensure continuous and maximum development. Developing an IEP is a collaborative, interactive, continuous process between the teachers, school-based team members, parents, and students. It is a process focused on identifying barriers to a student's learning and developing long-term goals and short-term objectives to address those barriers, therefore enabling the student to access the curriculum and/or develop functional skills and independence. The long-term goals in the CB-IEP are intended to specify instruction that is above and beyond what is provided for all students.

One of the most important changes is that the CB-IEP is much more student centred and involves significant student voice. The CB-IEP is created to address all domains (i.e. cognitive, academic, emotional, and behavioural), and student strengths and needs are identified and addressed in each domain. SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound) long-term goals are still included in the CB-IEP, as they are in the Individual Education Plan (IEP), although they are now written in such a way that they are more accessible for everyone who works with the student. A student profile and learner profile are also included in the CB-IEP and are developed through an interview with the student and written using the student's language. Another change from the previously used IEP format is that the CB-IEP includes curriculum competencies and authentic ways of reflecting BC's New Curriculum (BCME, 2020a), and inclusive practices and principles of equity and accessibility are identified through assessment. The CB-IEP is designed to reflect the needs of the student to enable him/her to access the regular education curriculum with the intent of developing competencies to foster deeper and more transferable learning. Taking such competency-based approaches enables teachers to measure a student's progress across classroom and other educational settings relative to the regular education curriculum. The CB-IEP is based on the realisation that the student, despite implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and guidelines, as well as additional evidence-based instructional approaches and strategies, is not learning at the same pace as same-age peers and classmates. Additionally, the CB-IEP is based on essential supports derived from the psychoeducational assessment (i.e. those supports that are required to enable the student to be successful in their learning) as well as the universal support provided to all students.

The development and implementation of IEPs and CB-IEPs, involving understanding and planning for the needs of a student, occurs in five continuous, interconnected, and flexible phases, namely, identification and assessment, planning, program support/implementation, evaluation, and reporting (BCME, 2016). Two contexts can exist for the process of assigning a special needs designation to a student, based on the results of a comprehensive psychoeducational assessment. In the first context, a family arrives at a school with a child who already has a diagnosis. The family shares relevant documentation with school administrators and the school-based team, who then review the documents to ensure that the diagnosis meets the criteria for the child to be formally designated according to BC Ministry of Education policy. If so, the child is then assigned the relevant designation (BCME, 2016). In the second context, a student who is exhibiting learning difficulties or behavioural challenges (i.e. without a current diagnosis) is referred for a psychoeducational assessment. For example, a diagnosis of a specific learning disorder (SLD) is determined through the psychoeducational assessment process conducted either by a certified school psychologist who is on staff in a school district or by a registered psychologist outside of the school system. Prior to this formal psychoeducational assessment, informal and formal assessment data and learning evidence are gathered at the school level and then, if warranted, a request is submitted for the psychoeducational assessment. Once the results of the psychoeducational assessment are provided, the school board submits a request to the BC Ministry of

Education to determine whether a diagnosis meets the criteria for a ministry designation. A key point in this determination is whether the student's needs can be managed by school personnel or if outside support is required (Walker, personal communication, March 23, 2021).

It is important to distinguish between a diagnosis and a designation. It is possible to have a student with a diagnosis that does not meet the criteria for a BCME designation. Whether a student meets the criteria for a specific diagnosis is determined by the professional administering a relevant assessment (e.g. registered psychologist, physician, speech and language pathologist, etc.). The decision about a designation is made at the ministry level. A designation is typically based on the impact on learning at school and/or impact on a student's educational program at the school level.

Once a student's designation is confirmed, the process moves to the next phase, which involves the development of the IEP, program support, and implementation. At this phase, a level of additional funding is then determined. The level of funding depends on the nature and severity of the special need diagnosis and designation. Each of the funding levels has different criteria that must be met. Not all students with a designation receive additional funding on top of the provincial per pupil base funding allocated by the BC Ministry of Education. Any additional funding that is allocated on the basis of a student designation goes directly to the school district, not to the individual student. However, the funding amount is to be used to provide services to the student who requires the support. Once a designation is confirmed, a case manager or special education teacher (e.g. LIST, LRT) is assigned to the student, and that teacher develops the IEP in collaboration with the student's teacher(s), the family, the student as appropriate, and relevant support services personnel.

Currently, BC school districts have the option to use either the Individual Education Plan or the new Competency-Based IEP format. Individual school districts and individual schools also have the option to develop another format of their own. However, all IEPs and CB-IEPs must include long-term goals, a description of services to be provided to the student (above and beyond what a typical student would receive), and an impact statement, each of which must align with the student's designation. Long-term goals must be specific and targeted. All IEPs must also include short-term objectives that are observable and measurable, each of which is addressed with specific strategies.

Instructional Frameworks, Approaches, and Strategies Supporting Inclusive Education for All Students

The process of identifying systemic, instructional, and support barriers to student engagement and learning, initiated by the movement towards inclusive education, has led to international and Canadian research and development, as well as the

adoption of numerous instructional approaches and strategies designed to eliminate or reduce barriers to student learning. Highlighted here are Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2020; Katz, 2012, 2013), Differentiated Instruction (McQuarrie et al., 2008; Tomlinson, 2005, 2014), and Multi-tiered Systems of Support such as Response to Intervention (McIntosh et al., 2011).

Universal Design for Learning

Developed by the Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework that guides the development of flexible learning environments and curricula designed to understand and address the needs of all students in today's diverse classrooms. The framework offers flexibility in how students can access learning materials, how they engage with the materials, and how they show or demonstrate what they know. UDL guidelines focus on three main domains: (1) engagement, the why of learning; (2) representation, the what of learning; and (3) action and expression, the how of learning. Specific guidelines are offered in each of these domains to guide teachers in considering and developing learning opportunities that will support the engagement of all students in their classroom. Teachers who have embraced its principles report that UDL has revolutionised their teaching practice and their students' engagement (McGhie-Richmond & Sung, 2013).

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated Instruction provides an instructional planning framework that responds to unique learner needs by differentiating the content, process, product, and learning environment. Considerable research has focused on Differentiated Instruction (see Tomlinson, 2005 for a review), and the approach aligns with approaches such as Understanding by Design (Tomlinson & Tighe, 2006); Differentiated Instruction is provincially endorsed in British Columbia schools through the Know-Do-Understand Model and personalized learning approach (BCME, 2021b). Increasingly, it is a widely used instructional strategy endorsed by BC teachers (BCTF, 2020).

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is the "integration of a number of multiple-tiered systems into one coherent, strategically combined system meant to address multiple domains or content areas in education" (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016, p. 5). Integrated MTSS models of learning, behavioural, and mental health supports have proliferated over the last decade (Epstein, 2011; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016; Thomas et al., 2019). Focused on high-quality instruction and intervention, the

aim is to integrate academic and behavioural domains and to monitor progress frequently to make careful decisions about instructional goals. A preventative focus, intervention, for all students is initiated, and a continuum of support is provided in response to student needs. In BC school settings, special educational services are increasingly focused on ways to intervene with children at higher risk of academic, behavioural, and mental health challenges. Academic Response to Intervention, schoolwide positive behavioural interventions and supports, and more recently trauma-informed education and practices are examples of multi-tiered continuums of support with increasing intervention or instruction based on need. Similarities across these tiered approaches include multi-level coordination, such as administration buy-in and support, teacher practices, school-wide policy and procedural changes, professional development and sustained support, and collaboration and consultation with school staff and mental health professionals (Chafouleas et al., 2016; Horner et al., 2005; Thomas et al., 2019).

Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a process by which students who are struggling are identified early and through proactive increasing levels of intervention, student failure is prevented (BCME, 2020b; McIntosh et al., 2011; Witzel & Clarke, 2015). This approach to inclusion and intervention is responsive to student needs aiming to reduce the strain to differentiate between disabilities and difficulties due to language and cultural diversities and for those who experience low socioeconomic status (McCardle et al., 2005; Montreuil, 2016). RtI is a proactive approach focused on prevention and early intervention of academic and behavioural problems (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009).

The RtI approach has arisen out of concerns with traditional approaches to assessment and service delivery such as focus on within-child deficits, delays in services, and overreliance on cognitive assessment results as problematic when considering cultural bias in cognitive testing, particularly for students living in poverty and for indigenous students (Baydala et al., 2009; McIntosh et al., 2011; Weddle et al., 2016). Many school districts in BC have implemented RtI models with positive outcomes. Implementation includes three tiers of instruction and intervention practices. Tier 1 represents universal, high-quality, classroom instruction delivered to all students. The curriculum provided is supported by research which shows effectiveness for the majority of students and is delivered by the general classroom teacher. Some students do not make adequate progress, and through universal screening (i.e. classroom-based assessment) and progress monitoring, students are identified as at risk for academic difficulties or failures and who would benefit from the Tier 2 instruction. Typically, about 20% of all students will require additional supplements to Tier 1 (Grosche & Volpe, 2013; Hosp et al., 2016). Tier 2 includes evidence-based intervention delivered in small groups consisting typically of three to eight students for 20–40 minutes, at least three times a week over a period of 8–10 weeks (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009). Student progress is monitored. If

students continue to struggle, and do not demonstrate adequate response despite adjustments made in the context of Tier 2, the need for additional intensive Tier 3 intervention is indicated. Typically, 5% of students would require Tier 3 which involves in-depth identification, comprehensive evaluations to best address learning needs, and additional individualised intervention (Grosche & Volpe, 2013; Hosp et al., 2016). Special education in general is often conceptualised as the final tier of an RtI system (Hosp et al., 2016).

In addition, many schools in BC (and across Canada) have implemented an RtI model for social and emotional behaviour termed School-Wide Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support (SWPBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2009). Employing the RtI framework, students displaying characteristics of behavioural difficulties are usually considered for Tier 2 and Tier 3 strategies to centre on improving outcomes, while Tier 1 programs are intended for all students to promote skill development and prevention for an entire student population. SWPBIS is generally focused on prevention of problem behaviour through proactive practices and explicit instruction of school-wide expectations (e.g. safe, positive, and caring school environments). Through positive school climate and instruction in prosocial skills, students in schools that implement SWPBIS typically find a reduction in problem behaviour, increased achievement scores, and improved student perceptions of safety (McIntosh et al., 2011). In BC schools, Tier 1 SWPBIS has been shown to lead to reduced discipline referrals and suspensions, improved student perceptions of safety, and improved academic achievement (McIntosh et al., 2011).

Barriers to Inclusion and Recommendations Moving Forward

In June 2017, an Inclusive Education Summit in BC was attended by over 80 educators, parents, and education-related professionals. A report titled "Implementing Inclusion in BC's Public Schools" summarised the outcomes of the summit. The results revealed that many of the ingredients necessary for effective inclusion were yet to be achieved (Inclusion BC, 2017). A steady decrease in government funding leading to the loss of classroom and specialist teachers, growing student assessment waitlists, and increasing class size and level of student complexity were among the challenges identified. Yet, despite the challenges, the summit attendees believe that BC's New Curriculum, which supports diversity, will lead to even more inclusive learning opportunities for students.

This focus "requires a shift in mindset to an understanding that all kids can learn and that all teachers can teach all students, given the right support" (Inclusion BC, 2017, p. 5) with the message that "new models of teaching to diversity are a far better investment of education dollars than previous outdated systems. . .beginning with a plan that is designed for ALL students" (Inclusion BC, 2017, p. 6). This shift involves "implementing a Response-to-Intervention (RtI) planning framework that

enables students to move between support levels as needed" (Inclusion BC, 2017, p. 10).

Other key ingredients for success that were identified include strong leadership (i.e. guidance from the BCMOE and an update to the *Special education services—A manual of policies, procedures and guidelines*); advocacy on the part of all stakeholders, investment in resources (e.g. additional coursework focused on special/inclusive education – UDL, DI, RtI – at the pre-service teacher education level); collaborative consultation; and increased professional development opportunities for teachers (e.g. opportunities for teachers focus on learner characteristics of students with special needs as well as evidence-based intervention programs, approaches, and strategies).

Final Thoughts

This chapter provides a brief, yet timely, overview of the educational experiences of students with special needs in BC—from history to current policy, approaches, and practices. Students with special needs in BC have the legal rights to an inclusive education experience as well as an educational program that is designed and implemented for their particular needs and strengths. However, the special and/or inclusive education system in BC is not without challenges. For example, the policy document that guides programming is out of date and needs replacement at best and an up-to-date revision at the least. Additionally, a student with special needs may experience substantial differences in programming across different school districts. That said, we have also provided a number of areas that offer excellent pathways for the province to follow as it goes about making these necessary changes to policy, procedure, and ultimately student-level experiences.

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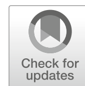
Chapter 10
Aotearoa New Zealand's Journey Towards Inclusive Education: Just Education or Empty Promises?



Jude MacArthur

Abstract The 2018 announcement of *the Education Conversation* | Kōrero Mātauranga (*the Conversation*) generated hope for a genuine transformation of the Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa) education system. The Minister of Education in the newly elected Labour-led Coalition Government outlined an ambitious and far-reaching plan "to meet the needs of all learners, no matter who they are, or where they come from" (Ministry of Education, Kōrero Mātauranga: Let's talk about education, 2021c). *The Conversation* follows on from a number of reviews and complaints that, despite Aotearoa's commitment to United Nations Conventions and its national legislative and policy provisions aimed at inclusive education, disabled children and young people in Aotearoa are discriminated against in a system that is not delivering on the promise of equity and belonging at school. Of particular concern is the Ministry of Education's apparent lack of, or misunderstanding of, the inequities of "special" education and its failure to contest the latter in its bid to develop "the world's best education system for all our children and young people" (Ministry of Education, National Education Growth Plan 2030, 2019a). It is argued that while the outcomes of *the Conversation* may serve some students well, for others, little may change. The chapter begins with an account of the historical and socio-political context, policies, and guidance that form the backdrop to *the Conversation*. It critically examines the changes being proposed in light of the inequities experienced by disabled students, with a view to the possibilities for engendering transformative change in the compulsory education sector that results in just education for *all*.

Keywords Aotearoa New Zealand · Disability · Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga · Inclusive education · Special education

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Introduction

Kōrero Mātauranga, the Education Conversation (which in te reo Māori means "Let's talk about education") is a series of ongoing education conversations initiated by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2021c) that aims to "help build the world's best education system for all our children and young people". Children and young people, Māori, Pacific peoples, parents, and disabled people are prioritised by the Ministry in this conversation that guides a 30-year vision for education in Aotearoa. *The Conversation* takes place around significant changes being proposed in Aotearoa's education system as part of the Ministry's Education Work Programme. This chapter is being written as these changes, heralded by the Ministry of Education as "significant", unfold. It is a good time to critically reflect on where we have come from, where we are heading, and how we look as a nation when it comes to our national and international obligations to disabled children and young people in education.

I have used the terms "disabled students", "disabled adults", and "disabled children and young people" in this chapter, but I respect that some individuals or groups prefer the term "person with a disability". Placing the word "disabled" first is consistent with the language used within various disability rights' groups such as the Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (n.d.). The social model of disability and critical disability literature uses the term "disabled people" to acknowledge the ways in which socially constructed barriers oppress some members of society. People are disabled by a society that takes no account of people who have impairments and excludes them; disabled children and young people are disabled by an education system that defines them as separate and different in negative ways and/or fails to provide the high-quality, inclusive environments needed to fully participate, learn well, and have friends. I have also chosen to place inverted commas around the term "special" in some parts of this chapter to signal its problematic status as an invented, socially constructed label that is "imposed on students, usually without their consent" (Rutherford, 2016, p. 128).

Making good decisions about the future of our schools relies on a shared understanding about what inclusion means and why it is important. While recognising that the terms inclusion and inclusive education are dynamic in their meaning and dependent on local context, I draw on a rights- and evidence-based interpretation that also considers how teachers enact inclusive pedagogical practice (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Florian, 2014; Slee, 2018). Roger Slee's think piece prepared for the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report poses three questions that seem integral to the transformation of our education system towards inclusion:

> What kind of world do we want our children and young people to live in?
>
> What kind of schools and classrooms are required to achieve that world?
>
> When we look at our schools—who is in, who is out, who decides and what are we going to do about it? (Slee, 2018, p. 9)

Inclusion can be viewed as a process that, in practical terms, ensures presence, participation, and success (academic and social) for all students in education. A central message is that every learner matters and matters equally. Children's rights to quality education in their local regular school are guaranteed, and to uphold these rights, neighbourhood schools take a principled approach, building their capacity to teach all students, eliminating barriers to belonging and success, and enacting inclusive values such as equity, participation, rights, respect for diversity, community, and sustainability (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; MacArthur & Rutherford, 2016; Slee, 2018).

Context

Kōrero Mātauranga, The Education Conversation is occurring within a diverse socio-political space and the ongoing influence of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

Population

Statistics from the 2018 census put the population in Aotearoa at 4,699,755 and reflect an increasing diverse cultural make-up. People who identify as Māori, the Tangata Whenua, indigenous people of Aotearoa (775,836 in total), represent 16.5% of the population, with the vast majority of people (70.2%) identifying with at least one European ethnicity. Fifteen percent of the population identify with at least one Asian ethnicity, with 8.1% identifying with at least one Pacific ethnic group. The largest Pacific groups are Samoan, Tongan, and Cook Islands Māori; two-thirds of Pacific people were born in New Zealand. 1.5% of the population (70, 332 people) identify with at least one Middle Eastern/Latin American/African ethnicity (Stats NZ, 2019).

Aotearoa's largest inhabited islands are the North Island, Te Ika a Māui, and the South Island, Te Waipounamu. Almost three-quarters of the population live on Te Ika a Māui, compared with 23% on Te Waipounamu. Aotearoa is predominantly urban with 72% living within 16 main urban areas and 53% living in four major cities. Approximately 1.5 million people (33%) live in Aotearoa's largest city, Auckland.

Te Tiriti O Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi)

Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in 1840, was a written agreement between the British Crown and Māori chiefs, Aotearoa became a British colony in 1841, and Māori

became British subjects. Te Tiriti was meant to be a partnership between Māori and the Crown to create unity, but English and Māori language documents differed considerably leading to different understandings and expectations and to breaches that challenge interpretations of Te Tiriti to this day.

Treaty principles are included in Acts of Parliament, and the Treaty is one of the eight principles in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, providing a foundation for schools' decision-making. In delivering the curriculum, schools must consider what their classrooms and wider school culture and community will look like when the Treaty's principles of *partnership*, *participation*, and *protection* are enacted. The curriculum upholds Aotearoa's bicultural foundations (Ministry of Education, 2020d), enabling students to acquire knowledge of te reo Māori (Māori language) and tikanga Māori (Māori culture).

There is, however, considerable uncertainty about what each principle means as it is played out in the life of schools and other community settings. Glynn (2015) suggests that Pākeha and others who identify as non-Māori can learn to position themselves in relationships with Māori as treaty partners by examining their own participation, power, and privilege, acknowledging and reflecting on the historical and continually destructive impact that colonisation and the loss of land, language, health, and mana has on well-being and success of Māori today. The work of Māori education researchers and kaiako (teachers) has enriched understandings of inclusion in Aotearoa through the articulation and enactment of Māori values embedded in collective identity, responsibility, action, and accountability (see, e.g. Bevan-Brown et al., 2015; Macfarlane, 2012, 2015). Macfarlane's (2012) braided river metaphor describes the separate streams of the rivers of Te Waipounamu (South Island) which continually diverge, converge, unite, and divide as the river flows towards the sea, yet we see and understand the river as one. As a compelling metaphor for inclusion, the river represents an ongoing display of unity in diversity. Rather than implying that we are all the same, and that what *I* want and value is also what *you* want and value, Glynn (2015, p. 171) suggests that as treaty partners, we can begin from the inclusive position embodied in the whakatauki (proverb), "He iwi ke koutou, he iwi ke mātou (You are different, we are different, but we can work together)".

The Primary and Secondary Compulsory Education System

Education is compulsory from ages 6 to 16, and most children attend public schools that are funded by the government where attendance is free. Schools follow The New Zealand Curriculum which covers subjects that are taught at primary and secondary levels and specify the standards students should reach by subject. There are 13 year levels: primary education is from year 1 to 8 (approximately ages 5–12); and secondary education is from year 9 to 13 (approximately ages 13–17). Most children, including children with disabilities, attend their neighbourhood state school; at secondary level, students may be able to choose between single-sex or

co-educational public schools; and secondary schools in rural areas are more likely to be co-educational and serve a wide geographical area. Most secondary schools are state schools; about 10% of students attend "integrated" state schools which are usually designated as having a special character, such as a particular religious affiliation, or education approach (e.g. Steiner or Montessori). Just under 5% of children attend private schools that are not government funded, fees are charged for children's tuition, and private schools do not have to follow The New Zealand Curriculum. Some students also receive support from The Correspondence School, Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu, which uses multimedia and online learning. NCEA is the national senior secondary school qualification, which assesses student achievement in the last 3 years at school.

Māori-Medium Education

In Māori-medium schools, some students are taught curriculum subjects in Te Reo Māori for at least 51% of the time. Kura Kaupapa Māori schools are a unique New Zealand primary school education system in which children are immersed in a Māori language and cultural environment with the aim of enabling graduates to "live as Māori" within the wider world. They are state schools where teaching is in te reo Māori and is based on Māori culture and values; follows the curriculum for Māori-medium teaching, learning, and assessment, Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (Ministry of Education, 2017); and caters for students from years 1 to 8 or years 1 to 13.

Inclusive Education in the Compulsory Sector

Most students with disabilities attend their local, community school, participating alongside their peers in ordinary single-cell classrooms or open innovative learning spaces, consistent with the goals of disability, education, and human rights policies that support inclusive education described in the following section. In 2017, 8% of primary age students were identified as having a disability and 15% of intermediate and secondary school age (Ministry of Education, 2020a).

Supports for disabled students in regular schools are provided through a range of funding mechanisms that do not rely on diagnosis. This is a distinctive approach internationally, giving schools autonomy to identify students who will benefit from additional support to participate and learn (Gaffney et al., 2017). A tiered model for learning support increases in intensity depending on students' "needs" and their learning context. Students and their teachers can access support from a range of itinerating professionals such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behavior (RTLB) who can support teachers with ideas for teaching and learning, introduce class- or school-wide programs, and work directly with a student or small groups of

students (Gaffney et al., 2017). Other "specialist" teachers provide support for children, young people, and their teachers, but access to this level of support is through bespoke criteria and application processes that are reliant on students being formally identified as having 'high' or 'very high' or other specific 'needs'.

Three residential special schools aim to provide support for a small number of students that the Ministry of Education (2020b) describes as having "social, behaviour and/or learning needs that are highly complex and challenging". Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand (BLENNZ) runs a national network with resource centres across the country for students who are blind, with live-in provision for students who need residential programmes to support their learning. Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education New Zealand provides a national network of services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing; students are supported in their local schools through their Resource Teachers Deaf service. There are also residential options, early childhood support, and resource centres for deaf students.

Twenty-seven separate day special schools are designed for students from Years 1–13 who are described as having "a high level of need"; students can enrol in these schools under a Specialist Education Agreement. The majority are located in Aotearoa's two largest cities, Auckland and Christchurch; many have self-contained "satellite" classes located in regular schools where ". . .students can get the specialist teaching they need in a regular school environment" (Ministry of Education, 2020b). Approximately 0.4% of all children and young people of school age are enrolled in and attend separate day special schools or their satellite classes. In comparison, other countries in the OECD range from 0.5 to 6% (Gaffney et al., 2017). Students in satellite classes are enrolled in the base special school (not in the school that the class is located in) and may spend either all or part of the day in the self-contained classroom. Some special schools also provide an outreach teaching service where a teacher from the special school "moves between schools to support students" with disabilities, which "means that students can be enrolled at their local school and receive specialist teaching support from the specialist school" (Ministry of Education, 2020b).

Despite Aoteroa's policy commitments to inclusive education (described in the following section), the Ministry of Education's words suggest an uncontested acceptance of "specialised" settings where, as Williamson and Gilham (2017) put it, "students are slotted or placed by disability status. . . and other historical practices that speak of marginalization and segregation" (p. 52). Furthermore, the Ministry explains that "the specialist nature of the services provided to support students with learning support needs and disabilities" is reflected in the 2020 Education and Training Act (Education and Training Act, 2020) where special schools are renamed as "specialist" schools. It could also be argued that a "bifurcated system" (Slee 2014, p. 271) of "regular" and "special" and the associated knowledge bases are evident in the steady increase in special school enrolments over the past two decades (taking into consideration population growth), from 1971 students (0.27% of all school students) in 1998 to 3786 (0.46% of all school students) in 2019 (Education Counts, 2021). These points are picked up as barriers to inclusion later in the chapter.

Policy, Guidance, and Legislation Related to Inclusion

There is a long history in Aotearoa of what might be fairly described as a struggle for inclusion (Slee, 2014), with documented variations in disabled students' and their whānau and families' experiences indicative of a kind of lottery that means certain students' chances of success are dependent upon variables beyond their control (Rutherford, 2014). The Ministry of Education (2020d) reports that disabled students are more than 1.5–3 times more likely than their non-disabled peers to be stood down and suspended and to frequently move schools; about a quarter of younger disabled students and 40% of older disabled students report that it is difficult for them to play or make friends; and there are indications that many disabled students continue to have unmet needs for their learning at school and are more than twice as likely to attain no qualification at school. When being welcome, included, and taught well in one's local school comes down to where a student lives and attends school, the devil in policy detail deserves some attention.

Disability Policy: The New Zealand Disability Strategy

Early childhood services and the compulsory school sector have binding obligations to inclusive education under the New Zealand Disability Strategy (Office for Disability Issues, 2016). The Strategy's vision is for a society that highly values the lives and continually enhances the full participation of disabled people. It provides a framework to guide all government agencies (including schools) when making policy and developing services that affect disabled people. Particularly pertinent to this chapter is the Strategy's goal that disabled people will "get an excellent education and achieve our potential throughout our lives". These obligations are backed up by the school curricula.

Human Rights Conventions and Legislation

The government of Aotearoa is a signatory to international human rights conventions that support a rights-based approach to inclusive education. In signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 (UNCRPD; United Nations, 2006), the government agreed under Article 24 (the right to education) to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels. Similarly, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's principle of universalism suggests that all children should be able to participate in quality education and be protected from discrimination (United Nations, 1989). No child should be denied access to education because of disability (Smith, 2016).

Despite Aotearoa's commitment to these human rights conventions and policy support for inclusive education, the road to inclusion is described as long and bumpy (Grant, 2019), with research pointing to children's and young people's rights to an inclusive education being breached (IHC, 2019; Kearney & White, 2018; MacArthur et al., 2018). The Ministry of Education's own data shows that about 22% of students aged 5–11 have some record of receiving learning support while also suggesting that there are large pockets of unmet need with 41% of students with disabilities aged 5–11, including a third of those with learning impairments, having no record of Ministry-funded learning support (Mhuru, 2020). A 2016 Youth Law report describes barriers to disabled children's participation in education including not being allowed to enrol at their local school; being excluded from extra-curricular activities; only being allowed to attend school for part of the day; being bullied by teachers or other students; not receiving enough support in the classroom; being suspended or excluded from school for reasons relating to their disability; and being asked to move to another school (Starr & Janah, 2016). In a perverse twist that fails to address systemic problems in education, schools that welcome disabled students tend to attract more disabled students, becoming "magnet" schools and facing pressure on their resources (Rutherford, 2016). Meanwhile, the government continues to invest in new segregated settings for disabled students despite General Comment No. 4 on Article 24 of the UNCRPD (United Nations, 2016) stressing governments' responsibilities to the goal of *non*-exclusion.

The New Zealand government has been criticised by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2018) for denying disabled children's rights to an inclusive education under Article 24, with the Committee recommending disabled children's rights to an inclusive education in Aotearoa be given legal status (Grant & Matthews, 2015; Moran, 2014). The replacement of the 1989 Education Act with the Education and Training Act (the Act) in 2020 presented such an opportunity, but unfortunately the Act stopped short of establishing inclusive education as an *enforceable right*, leading the disability commissioner to conclude that an opportunity to uphold disabled children's rights had been lost (Tesoriero, 2020) and IHC's Head of Advocacy to emphasise that "the right to turn up to the local school gate (still) does not count as an explicit right to inclusive education" (Grant, 2019). The Act continues the promise of its 1989 predecessor that disabled students have the same rights to enrol, attend, and receive education in state schools as nondisabled students. It also clarifies that *all* students have the right to attend school for *all* of the hours that the school is open for teaching and provides parents with access to new local complaint and dispute resolution panels that will hear serious disputes where these cannot be resolved at the school level, including disputes relating to children and young people's rights to education. Nonetheless, the word "inclusion" is conspicuous by its absence, being used only once to establish that one of the objectives for Boards of Trustees which govern schools is to "ensure that the school is inclusive of, and caters for, students with differing needs" (Education and Training Act, 2020, Clause 127c). Thus inclusion appears to be established as a matter of compliance rather than a goal that schools might work towards in order to contribute to an inclusive society.

In response to high numbers of concerns about the difficulties disabled children and young people have enrolling at their local school and participating in school life, IHC (an advocacy organisation for people with intellectual disabilities) has used Part 1a of New Zealand's Human Rights Act to lodge a complaint with the Human Rights Commission in 2008 (IHC, 2020). Arguing that children with disabilities experience discrimination in education, the complaint was upheld by the Human Rights Review Tribunal in 2020, and this landmark case will now be heard by human rights experts. While writing this chapter, the director of the Office of Human Rights Proceedings has agreed to provide legal representation to IHC citing the way in which disabled students experience discrimination in their access to education to be a serious matter of great public interest (IHC, 2021).

Education Policy

Knowledge from human rights conventions, policy, and legislation are powerful reminders of children's human and legal rights to an inclusive education in their local school, and over the years education policy has generated some hope in this regard. The New Zealand curricula and recent policy developments in *the Education Conversation*, Kōrero Mātauranga, provide examples of some progress being made.

New Zealand Curricula

The national curricula for school-aged students, the New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa (based on Māori philosophies), set the direction for student learning and provide guidance for schools as they design and review their local curriculum. Each document includes a vision, values, key competencies, learning areas, achievement objectives, and principles, one of which is inclusion (Ministry of Education, 2007). The curricula are written for all students, and it is therefore expected that teachers will lead learning for every student, including students who have disabilities, with a range of systems aiming to support teachers' work. "Inclusion" is one of the New Zealand Curriculum's eight principles, while its values, "to be encouraged, modelled and explored" (p. 10), include equity and respect for human rights. As Rutherford (2021) notes, the curricula are open to interpretation by teachers, principals, and school boards of trustees according to their values, beliefs, and school/community priorities. Some schools may be less mindful of the principle of inclusion, and of the equity and rights values that teachers are responsible for putting into practice, and it is therefore crucial that future teachers know about and have a commitment to implementing those aspects of the curriculum that relate to human rights and to inclusive education. The curricula are enhanced by the Māori education strategy, Ka Hikitea (Ministry of Education, 2021b) and the Action

Plan for Pacific Education (Ministry of Education, 2021a), which support teachers to develop learning contexts that are culturally responsive.

The Education Conversation, Kōrero Mātauranga

The Education Conversation, Kōrero Mātauranga (Ministry of Education, 2021c) follows on from two earlier inclusive education policies. In the 1990s, *Special Education 2000* came with the government's aim "to achieve, over the next decade, a world class inclusive education system that provides learning opportunities of equal quality to all students" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 5). A formal review, however, concluded that gaps in accountability and inequities in resources and opportunity for students with disabilities based on a competitive, individual funding model made it difficult for schools to provide the seamless, integrated service that had been promised (Wills & McLean, 2008; Wylie, 2000). *Success for All* (Ministry of Education, 2010) followed, with aspirations to address the inequities inherent in a dual system of special and regular education and to support all schools to demonstrate inclusive practices by 2014.

Eight years later, *the Conversation* generated further hope for a genuine transformation of Aotearoa's education system. The newly elected 2018 Labour-led Coalition Government outlined an ambitious plan to help build "the world's best education system for all our children and young people" through a series of conversations and widespread consultation with students and whānau as well as those responsible for educational legislation, policies, structures, and practices, from early childhood to tertiary education. Changes taking place for disabled students emerged out of two initiatives: the Ministry of Education's work programme based on findings from *Our Schooling Futures, Stronger Together, Whiria Ngā Kura Tūātinitini*, an independent taskforce review of Aotearoa's Tomorrow's Schools policy of the 1980s (Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce, 2019), and the development of the *Learning Support Action Plan* (Ministry of Education, 2019c).

Our Schooling Futures, Stronger Together delivered a sobering message about equity and inclusion for children and young people in education. This was unsurprising to many critics of New Zealand's neoliberal reforms of the 1980s that left schools to operate as autonomous, competitive, self-managing entities, loosely connected to each other, largely on their own and without sufficient support (e.g. Rutherford, 2014, 2016; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Wills et al., 2014). While the school system works well in many places, the review deemed it to be unfair, unjust, and inequitable for Aotearoa's most disadvantaged children and young people, including children from disadvantaged homes, too many Māori and Pacific families, and disabled children and young people. Disabled students do not have the same access to education as other students; some schools have made them and their family or whānau feel unwelcome when seeking enrolment; and once enrolled, the support students need to learn and participate, if approved, takes too long to arrive, leading to a lack of trust in the system. More commonly such support

is either unavailable, contestable, fragmented, or non-existent. The Taskforce described slow and uneven transfers of professional knowledge and skills and wide variability in children and young people's performance across schools.

In response, the Ministry of Education has reiterated that all schools should be equitable and great places for all children and young people to learn, and to this end, the education system requires a "reset", with a greater level of resource and expertise at the front line where it is needed. *Supporting all schools to succeed* (Ministry of Education, 2020c) outlines changes designed to address the disparities. An Education Service Agency (ESA) will be established within a redesigned Ministry of Education, in order to provide more locally responsive, integrated, timely, and accessible supports for schools, students, and families, particularly those the system currently does not serve well. As a foundation for implementing other non-structural initiatives at a system-wide level that will impact on equity, the proposals aim to shift behaviour, rebuild trust and relationships, and foster greater collaboration. The individual responsibility of schools is reiterated in goals aimed at strengthening their capability to undertake self-evaluation and continuous improvement, including ensuring effective engagement with whānau and communities. Support will be given to strengthen local groups of schools in their Communities of Learning, and consideration is to be given to resourcing for schools' staffing entitlements. Under the "Future of Learning and Work", the government aims to provide "a more cohesive national approach to support flexible learning and specialist provision" that includes the role to be played by "national and local special schools" (Ministry of Education, 2020c, p. 35).

Shaping a stronger education system with New Zealanders is the Ministry of Education's future oriented plan that reflects "the overwhelming aspirations of New Zealanders, as expressed in the kōrero, for a more inclusive, equitable, connected and future focussed New Zealand learning system" (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Objective 1 places learners at the centre by valuing, sustaining, and connecting them to their identity, language, and culture; ensuring their education is free from bias, discrimination, and racism; and confirming that teaching and learning build on their strengths. Objective 6 aims for a "World class inclusive public education: New Zealand education is trusted and sustainable".

The *Learning Support Action Plan* (Ministry of Education, 2019c) sets out improvements to learning support for disabled children and young people and includes six "strategic priorities":

1. Introducing Learning Support Coordinators in schools and kura
2. Screening to enable teachers and other educators to identify and respond to children's learning support needs earlier
3. Strengthening early intervention
4. Providing additional, more flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people
5. Increasing access to supports for gifted children and young people
6. Improving education for children and young people at risk of disengaging from education (p. 6)

To support its delivery, Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) were introduced in 2019. LSCs work with clusters of schools to build teacher capability; identify and plan for the disability and learning support needs of children and young people in the school or kura; and lead school-wide and kura-wide engagement with parents and whānau. An evaluation of the first year was generally positive but also indicated some areas of concern including limitations to access for intensive and targeted support; long wait times for support; poor access for rural schools/kura; a lack of consideration of te ao Māori and mātauranga Māori in support service design; and issues with meeting funding criteria (Andrews et al., 2021).

Prority 4 in the *Learning Support Action Plan* introduces a new category of student for schools to be aware of "neurodiverse children and young people… a broad term that includes (but is not limited to) dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, autism spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, trauma related disorders, and auditory or visual processing disorders". Priority 4 aims to build teachers' understanding and capability "to teach and respond to neurodiverse children and young people in an adaptive way to progress their learning at an appropriate depth and pace" (p. 32).

While *the Conversation* appears promising as an inclusive education framework, it remains to be seen how the Ministry of Education's aims, goals, and proposed changes impact on the development of inclusive school communities, with some recent developments beginning to look like barriers. While *the Conversation* was taking place, the government announced that $8 million would be assigned to rebuild Salisbury School, a residential special school in Nelson, with additional funding allocated to the establishment of "special" units. Segregated "special" education "cannot pass itself off as an unproblematic ally or as a branch member in the inclusive education fraternity" (Florian, 2014 p. 14), and the assertion that special schools and units are part of an inclusive education system is troubling (Higgins et al., 2006; Kearney & Kane, 2006).

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development for Inclusion

Education policy, whatever its ideological keystone, is made real through its enactment in schools, by principals, teachers, and support staff. Initial teacher education and teacher professional learning take place within and are shaped by the policy context described in this chapter—how teachers think about students, their learning, and rights is evident in their language and daily teaching practice, so what happens within teacher education to inform teachers' thinking and actions? The government's obligations to Article 24 of the UNCRPD include ensuring "All teachers and other staff receive education and training giving them the core values and competencies to accommodate inclusive learning environments, which include teachers with

disabilities" (United Nations, 2016, p. 5). Developing teachers' capability in this way is considered:

> ...a key asset in the introduction and sustainability of inclusive education. The lack of understanding and capacity remain significant barriers to inclusion. States parties must ensure that all teachers are trained in inclusive education based on the human rights model of disability. (United Nations, 2016, p. 12)

The teacher education system in Aotearoa does not distinguish between "general" and "special" education, teacher education courses typically comprise a 3-year course of full-time study, or teachers with a Bachelor's degree can complete a 1-year graduate diploma of teaching (primary/secondary), or a Master's of Teaching (primary/secondary). The Teaching Council Aotearoa New Zealand plays a key role by setting out the high standards for ethical and professional behaviour expected of all registered and certificated teachers and the expectations regarding effective teaching practice for all practicing teachers and students in initial teacher education. All teachers' capabilities are governed by the *Code of Professional Responsibility* and the *Standards for the Teaching Profession* (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020) which are based on foundational Māori values that define, inspire, and guide teachers in their practice:

- *Whakamana:* empowering all learners to reach their highest potential by providing high-quality teaching and leadership
- Manaakitanga: creating a welcoming, caring, and creative learning environment that treats everyone with respect and dignity
- Pono: showing integrity by acting in ways that are fair, honest, ethical, and just
- Whanaungatanga: engaging in positive and collaborative relationships with our learners, their families and whānau, our colleagues, and the wider community

All providers of teacher education programmes in Aotearoa must meet specific requirements set out and managed by the Teaching Council which approves, monitors, and reviews such programmes. Graduates must be prepared "with the knowledge, skills and teaching strategies to teach in inclusive ways"; they must understand all children's rights to equitable educational opportunities and have the pedagogical knowledge to "identify and respond appropriately to learners with diverse and additional learning needs" (Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2020, p. 16). This includes knowing how to access student supports; to implement approaches that support inclusion; and to draw on approaches such as Universal Design for Learning. In response to the government's Education and Science Select Committee inquiry into identification and support for students with "dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorders in primary and secondary schools" (New Zealand Parliament, n.d.), there is now a requirement that teacher education programmes include a specific focus on these topics.

Experienced teachers have an obligation to develop professional relationships with a diverse range of learners, families, and whānau and to maintain and raise their own professional standards through professional learning and development (PLD). The Ministry of Education provides targeted regional funding for PLD that aligns

with national priorities which, at the time of writing, encourage a focus on developing and delivering high-quality learning experiences aimed at equity and excellence. Schools also receive discretionary PLD funding through their operations grant. A review of PLD funding for schools in 2014 found that while PLD opportunities based on school and teacher inquiry could lift schools' capability, weaknesses included the following: inequities in funding between schools; PLD opportunities did not always meet schools' needs and were not always consistent with the research evidence about effective PLD; and schools did not always know how to align their PLD with school improvement (Professional Development Advisory Group, 2014).

Concerns have been raised about the lack of attention to disability in teacher education in Aotearoa and to preparing teachers to work effectively with disabled children and their families and whānau (Rutherford, 2021), with Wills et al. (2014) proposing that disability has become lost in the morass of diversity. Some evidence for this view can be found in the research by Attwood et al. (2019) with 40 beginner secondary school teachers who believed inclusion was important but did not feel confident to teach students with disabilities or to work collaboratively with families, whānau, and other professionals, and most declared little to no experience teaching students with disabilities while on practicum.

Just Education? Key Challenges and Concerns

While drawing together the threads from this chapter to consider key challenges and the implications for change, the primary teachers' union, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI), released its independent review on staffing in Aotearoa's primary schools, *Pūaotanga, Realising the potential of every child* (Maharey et al., 2021). Pūaotanga means "a new dawn, a new pathway. . .emerging/unfolding. . .toward enlightenment" (p. 10). The need for transformation is clearly implied.

In support of inclusion, Aotearoa can claim a number of policies that forefront equity and describe inclusive education as a goal and a necessary precursor to an inclusive society, with some new developments emerging out of *the Conversation* sitting comfortably with this goal. A key concern, however, is the persistent slippage away from these policy aims. Pūaotanga notes that consistently reported inequities for Māori, Pacific, and disabled students now span decades and points to poor staffing levels in schools that have not kept up with the effects of social change and increasing student diversity in schools. At the same time, an equally persistent dual system of "special" and "regular" education is evident in continued government spending on segregated "special" units and schools. This suggests a confusing policy context for teachers' work that risks undermining the government's own stated commitment to an inclusive education system.

Pūaotanga also calls for a review of how teachers and teacher aides are trained. In addition to a confused policy context, the neoliberal political and educational reforms of the 1980s have left their mark on education generally and teacher

education more specifically. Principles of inclusion can struggle to find a place in a wider climate that sees the cutting/rationalisation of some teacher education programmes, increased class sizes, and reduced student contact time (Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018; Wills et al., 2014). Attwood et al.'s (2019) research also found that teachers who had a personal connection with a person with a disability felt better prepared to include learners with disabilities in their classrooms. This tells us something about the formative nature of relationships in understanding human diversity and encourages teacher educators to consider how such experiences can be maximised through programme content and student practica, rather than being left to chance. Some teacher educators in Aotearoa have turned to the discipline of Disability Studies in Education to support a more critical orientation in teachers which allows them to recognise and contest dominant deficit ideologies such as normalcy, ableism, fixed-ability assumptions, and the language and practices of "special needs". These approaches advance a democratic approach to teaching that is based on all children's educational rights to be valued and included in their local school (see, e.g. Morton et al., 2021; Rutherford, 2014, 2021; Rutherford & MacArthur, 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the background to and features of *the Education Conversation*, Kōrero Mātauranga, policy in Aotearoa that aims to achieve the world's best education system for all our children and young people. Behind this ambitious goal are many stories of persistent injustice, inequity, and discrimination against children and young people with disabilities, or who are Māori, from Pacific families, or are poor or otherwise disadvantaged. Those stories include their families and whānau.

A beacon of hope for *just* education lies in the efforts of researchers, teachers, and teacher educators who are looking for ways to do things differently in education, who are prepared to challenge the inequities in order to contribute to the development of inclusive school communities. The most recent policy efforts aim for the "best education" for all children and young people to rectify the injustices, with much interest now focused on the effects of the structural changes emerging out of *the Conversation* on the values, behaviours, and practices of those working in education and, most importantly, on the lives of disabled children, young people, and their whānau.

Glossary

These translations of Māori language are provided to support understanding; they do not fully describe the complex ideas, values, and relationships inherent in the words.

Aotearoa: the Māori name for New Zealand

Māori: Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand

Te reo Māori: Māori language

Tikanga Māori: Māori culture

Whānau: extended family group that includes physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions

Pākehā: European (non-Māori) New Zealander

Tangata Whenua: used in Aotearoa New Zealand to refer to indigenous Māori people

Kura: school, education, learning

ākonga: student, learner

Tumuaki: principal

Kaiako: teacher

whakatauki: proverb

Te ao Māori: Māori world view that acknowledges the interconnectedness and interrelationship of all living and non-living things

Mātauranga Māori: Māori knowledge—the body of knowledge originating from Māori ancestors, including the Māori world view and perspectives, Māori creativity and cultural practices.

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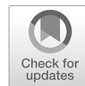
Chapter 11
Inclusive Education in Australia: An Unfolding Reform



Wendi Beamish, Kathy Gibbs, Margaret Toomey, and Lisa McGarrigle

Abstract In Australia, inclusive education is on the agenda of all state governments, with calls being made for genuine reform throughout all school systems. Despite the maintenance of segregated schools and classes for students with certain forms of special educational needs (SEN) or disability in some states and territories, the inclusion movement is supported by a growing assortment of legislation, policies, and guiding documents. As education in this country is primarily a state responsibility, the move towards inclusive schooling for students with SEN varies considerably according to local socio-political, historical, and geographical contexts. Given these circumstances, many mainstream teachers are experiencing difficulties in providing quality education for all students, including those with complex learning needs. A scoping review of the Australian literature related to inclusive education reveals that research to date has predominately focused on investigating teachers' attitudes and beliefs about inclusion and their professional preparation for working in inclusive settings. Inquiries into effective inclusive pedagogies for classroom use are now emerging, albeit slowly. A case study of practices at a local urban primary (elementary) school illustrates current efforts being used to advance inclusive education in that setting. At the moment, several key challenges need to be overcome for students with SEN to be successful learners in Australian mainstream schools. Strong, collaborative commitment and action by governments are needed to drive the inclusive education agenda forward in this country.

Keywords Australia · Inclusion · Inclusive education · Policies · Teacher education · Teacher practice

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Introduction

The island continent of Australia, informally referred to as the *Land Down Under*, is the world's sixth largest country with a total area of 7.69 million km^2 distributed across eight states and territories. Despite its large area, Australia's relatively small but multicultural population of 25.73 million live chiefly in urban areas around major cities along the eastern and south-eastern coastline. Statistics indicate that 90% of the population occupies only 0.29% of the land area, and 85% lives within 50 km of the coast (Cox, 2018; Daley et al., 2017) with the other 10% living inland in rural and outback remote areas.

The structure of the education system is similar throughout Australia and operates across three distinct sectors (government, Catholic, and independent). Compulsory until at least the age of 16, education at mainstream and special schools extends from primary (kindergarten/preparatory though to year 6) to secondary (year 7 through to year 12). Learning environments, however, differ substantially across metropolitan, regional, and remote settings. Large city schools may have over 2000 students, while small outback schools may have only 20 students. In remote areas students receive distance education and School of the Air.

Currently, just under four million students across all school sectors in Australia access educational services. In 2018, 7.7% of students under age 15 were reported to have a disability, with 69% of those between ages 5 and 14 being educated within inclusive classrooms in mainstream primary and secondary schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The quality and effectiveness of inclusive schooling for these students vary according to individual state government priorities and funding models, together with historical patterns of service delivery for particular student groups in each state and geographic constraints on educational choices.

Within this chapter, the term *students with special educational needs* (SEN) is used to describe students who experience substantial difficulty in the areas of learning and adjustment compared to same-aged peers (Westwood, 2015). Students with SEN therefore include those with verifiable disabilities, learning difficulties, and communication, emotional, and behavioural disorders. This interpretation has a goodness of fit with the Australian government's broad definition of a disability, which includes physical and intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, autism, health conditions, mental health disorders, hearing and vision impairment, and specific learning disability.

Legislation, Policies, and Guiding Documents

As an early signatory to the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994), the Australian government agreed to support Article 2, which called for students with SEN to be educated within local, mainstream schools. Since that time, momentum and support for inclusive education

in this country have slowly intensified. In part, this incremental progress has been influenced by inclusive education being couched in state policies and not federal law. At the federation of the Commonwealth in 1901, the states and territories were given responsibility for school-age students and their education under the Australian Constitution. State governments have continued to exert their autonomous control of schooling through their individual education acts, political agendas, and interpretations of inclusive education and students with disabilities. Nonetheless, the Australian government has continued to action education-related reforms in its areas of responsibility, including disability, teaching quality, and parental engagement.

National Level

Strong legislative support for educating students with disabilities in Australia can be traced back to the ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC; United Nations, 1989) and the enactment of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA; Australian Government, 1992). While the CRC affirmed that every child had the right to an education, the DDA not only made it illegal to discriminate against students on the basis of their disability but also gave parents the choice to enrol their child with a disability in a mainstream or special school. It also required the relevant school authority to put forward a case using the "controversial unjustifiable hardship exemption" (Dickson, 2006, p. 25) should it refuse such an admission.

The subsequent enactment of the *Disability Standards for Education* (DSfE; Australian Government, 2005) strengthened the scope of the DDA through targeted elaboration on the roles and responsibilities of school authorities to provide quality education to students with disability at all school levels (preschool to university) and across the three education sectors. The *Educational Standards* cover five key areas: enrolment; participation; curriculum development, accreditation, and delivery; student support services; and harassment and victimisation. In each area, the rights of students with disabilities are stipulated, together with examples of the steps that must be taken by education authorities to comply with the specified standard. Importantly, DSfE provides clear legislative support for students with disabilities to be included in mainstream classrooms through the use of "reasonable adjustments". Moreover, DSfE indicates that adjustments should be planned through consultation with the student and/or the family. For many students, these adjustments are specified within what is termed an individual education plan (IEP), individual curriculum plan, or personalised learning plan. In general, adjustments are made in relation to classrooms and surrounding environments, curriculum and assessment, and teaching materials and instruction, together with any necessary access to specialist support (e.g. speech pathologist, advisory personnel).

The Education Standards are reviewed every 5 years, with the 2010 review identifying several issues including that "the obligations and requirements under

the Education Standards lack strong accountability frameworks" (Foreman, 2015, p. 12). One reform put in place to increase accountability was the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD)—a nation-wide process in which data are collected annually for school-age students with disability who are receiving adjustments. In 2017, the NCCD process began in all schools, and since 2018 disability funding provided by the Australian government to educational authorities has been based on the NCCD data. The data gathering process is rigorous, with teachers and school teams undertaking specified activities across four phases: (1) planning for the NCCD; (2) implementing the NCCD model to detect if students are receiving adjustments due to disability; (3) validating the adjustment, determining the level of the adjustment (either quality differentiated teaching practice, supplementary, substantial, or extensive) according to guidelines, and providing evidence to support decisions; and (4) reflecting on the NCCD experience to identify how school practices and processes can be improved. Communication with parents is built into the preparation and validation phases.

Two other important educational reforms influencing the education of students with SEN or disability were founded around the same time as the rollout of NCCD—the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2014) and the national Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016). Both reforms drew support from the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008), with its two overarching goals that placed demands on Australian education systems to provide equity and excellence in schooling for all students so that they can develop into confident, capable, and informed citizens.

Funded by the Australian government, the Professional Standards were developed by AITSL in collaboration with teacher accreditation and registration authorities, education systems, and professional associations to provide consistency in teacher quality across the country. Seven standards are specified, describing what teachers should know and be capable of doing across four career stages (graduate, proficient, highly accomplished, and lead). At each stage, the Standards make explicit the elements of high-quality teaching across the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement. Importantly, these Standards require all Australian teachers to be capable of providing inclusive education programmes (e.g. differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of all students; support full participation of students with disability). In a similar fashion, ACARA was funded by the Australian government and all state and territory governments to develop and sequentially make available a consistent and mandated curriculum for all students from kindergarten to year 12. From its inception, however, there have been ongoing concerns about its capacity to meet the learning needs of students with disabilities and SEN (see, e.g. Anderson & Boyle, 2019; Berlach & Chambers, 2011).

State Level

As indicated previously, a peculiar arrangement for education provision exists in Australia, with the six states and two territories independently providing legislation and policy on inclusive education. This arrangement has led to a myriad of disparate regulations, policy frameworks, implementation guidelines, and monitoring strategies, together with substantial inconsistencies in defining students with disabilities and in interpreting fundamental concepts related to inclusivity and inclusive education (Anderson & Boyle, 2019; Berlach & Chambers, 2011; Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). A targeted search for policy-related documents and student disability criteria for funding across departmental websites confirmed this situation.

Findings in relation to documents related to inclusive education showed that six of the eight jurisdictions had disability-focused policies, strategy frameworks, or principles. Queensland and the Northern Territory were the only two with documents with a specific focus on inclusive education. In Queensland, the new *Inclusive Education Policy* states that “Inclusive education means that students can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similar aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs” (Department of Education, Queensland Government, 2021, p. 1). Moreover, the policy provides definitions for integration, segregation, and exclusion in order to distinguish these practices from inclusive education. By comparison, the Northern Territory has put in place a *Framework for Inclusion 2019–29* (Department of Education, Northern Territory Government, 2019), which commits to building government schools that are “inclusive, fair, and focused on delivering learning to meet individual needs” (p. 4). The framework is grounded on eight inclusion principles, articulates a 10-year plan to be actioned in partnership with whole school communities, and includes three cycles of review and feedback, which culminate in a comprehensive 2029 evaluation.

Brief Review of Local Inclusion Research

A scoping review of the Australian literature related to inclusive education was undertaken to identify key themes and provide an overview of the type and quantity of local research in this area. A broad-sweep literature search of four databases (Sage, Taylor and Francis Online, Springer, and PsycInfo) was conducted using “inclusive education”, “special needs education”, and “primary and secondary schools” as key inclusion criteria. Key themes emerging from the review concerned teacher attitudes, beliefs, and efficacy in relation to inclusion; issues surrounding teacher preparation for working in inclusive settings; and inclusive pedagogies for classroom and schoolwide use.

Australian research into teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusion has confirmed and elaborated on international findings that positive attitudes towards

inclusion facilitate successful teaching in inclusive classrooms and that teachers' perception of their efficacy to implement inclusive practices influences their attitudes (Forlin, 1995, 2006; Forlin et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2007, 2012). This extensive body of research has explored factors influencing teacher attitudes and included a range of perspectives from classroom teachers in preschool, primary, and secondary years and from school leaders and pre-service teachers (Carrington & Kimber, 2020; Hoskin et al., 2015; Sharma et al., 2007; Subban et al., 2021; Vaz et al., 2015). Factors contributing to positive teacher attitudes and improved confidence include specific training and experience in inclusive education, interaction with students with diverse learning needs, and knowledge of inclusive education policies (Forlin, 2001; Forlin et al., 2009; Garrad et al., 2019; Gigante & Gilmore, 2020; Hoskin et al., 2015; Loreman et al., 2013; Sharma et al., 2007).

Building on research into teacher attitudes and beliefs, Sharma et al. (2012) developed and validated the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices scale (TEIP) with a large sample of pre-service teachers from countries across the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, Hong Kong, and India. Since that time, the scale has been validated for use in countries including Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, and Brazil (Tümkaya & Miller, 2020). A strong correlation between efficacy and attitudes is emerging from these studies, with teachers who are confident in their abilities to implement inclusive practices reporting positive attitudes towards inclusion. This relationship has been confirmed by studies which, in addition to reporting a correlation between teachers' perceptions of high efficacy and positive attitudes, highlights the need for targeted training and teacher professional development for inclusive education (Subban et al., 2021; Vaz et al., 2015).

Under the leadership of Forlin and Sharma, a considerable body of research spanning two decades has examined the impact and effectiveness of the preparation and training of teachers for inclusive education. Early research focusing on initial teacher education (ITE) programmes highlighted concerns that pre-service teachers were not being adequately prepared for inclusive education and recommended that teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusion need to be informed by both theory and experience (Carroll et al., 2003). This recommendation has been supported by ongoing research into the impact of ITE on pre-service teachers' attitudes, concerns, and confidence. Studies in this area have reported that positive attitudes and efficacy are promoted by knowledge of principles of equity and equality policy, awareness of disability legislation relating to inclusive education, understanding various disabling conditions, and direct contact with students with SEN. Such direct contact is most valuable when pre-service teachers gain practical experience within inclusive classrooms and have opportunities to observe and reflect upon good practices and gain first-hand experience (e.g. Forlin et al., 2009; Lancaster & Bain, 2010; Sharma et al., 2007).

However, while much Australian research has confirmed that these recommendations improve attitudes and confidence, there have been continuing reservations regarding the effectiveness of ITE programmes, with calls for more research to address pre-service teachers' concerns about teaching students with disabilities and reduce potential stress (Forlin & Chambers, 2011). As current research continues to

indicate that pre-service teachers are not feeling adequately prepared to teach in inclusive settings (Costello & Boyle, 2013; Dally et al., 2019; Gigante & Gilmore, 2020), future empirical research is needed to examine how well ITE programmes prepare Australian pre-service teachers for inclusion (Hopkins et al., 2018). Moreover, strong university-school partnerships will be needed to ensure a cohesive transition of graduates from university to the inclusive classroom (Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

For many years, Forlin and colleagues have recommended that practising teachers, in addition to formal training, require professional learning in the form of mentoring and support by teachers with wide-ranging experience in inclusive education. Local research has continued to highlight the importance of authentic mentoring networks and the need for system-wide and long-term planning for professional development (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2013; Bentley-Williams et al., 2017). This research has been supported by the whole school approach, with regional consultants and school-based coaches facilitating collaboration and mentoring, building shared meanings, and contributing to the development of inclusive school communities (Abawi & Oliver, 2013; Bourke, 2009; Bristol, 2015; Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

There remains a critical need for Australian teachers to not only improve their theoretical understandings of inclusive education but also develop various pedagogies for instructing all students, including those with SEN (Boyle et al., 2011). In response to this need, local inquiries into effective inclusive pedagogies for classroom and schoolwide use are gradually emerging; however, to date the response has been limited. For example, only a handful of studies have been undertaken on the use of differentiated instruction in mainstream schools (Gibbs & Beamish, 2021; Jarvis et al., 2016, 2017; Monk et al., 2013; Sharp et al., 2020). Likewise, co-teaching has received only scant attention in ITE programmes (Yoo et al., 2019) and in disability studies in primary (Beamish et al., 2006) and secondary schools (Rice & Zigmond, 2000). While the qualitative nature of this research provides a focus on teacher perspectives and barriers to implementation, there remains a need for empirical research into the effectiveness of inclusive strategies in Australian classrooms. In an important contribution to empirical research into the effectiveness of pedagogies for inclusion, a team of Australian researchers has developed an observation tool to gather data in classroom settings (Finkelstein et al., 2021).

Teacher Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development

AITSL plays a pivotal role in leading and managing national reforms related to quality teaching and leadership (e.g. Professional Standards, teacher registration, accreditation ITE programmes, professional learning of teachers and school leaders, teacher performance and development, and school leadership development). Importantly, AITSL's charters and guidelines in these key areas assure some level of

consistency in teacher preparation, registration, and ongoing professional development across universities and employing education authorities in this country.

Pre-service Teacher Training

Initial teaching qualifications in Australia are obtained via either a 4-year Bachelor of Education or a 2-year Master's in Teaching for those with an undergraduate degree in another discipline. Additionally, pre-service teachers are offered an embedded specialisation in special needs education within their Bachelor's programme at universities in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria. Regardless of the pathway, all ITE programmes must provide evidence that beginning teachers meet all Professional Standards at the graduate level for accreditation to be granted by AITSL and for teachers to gain registration. Hence, all graduating teachers must be able to demonstrate the skill set related to standards focused on the teaching of students across the full range of abilities and engaging professionally with colleagues. For this reason, universities routinely offer an inclusive education subject to ensure that essential content is covered. However, as noted in the previous section, ongoing research (e.g. Carroll et al., 2003; Forlin, 2006; Hopkins et al., 2018; Lancaster & Bain, 2010) continues to show that graduates are not adequately prepared to teach in inclusive schools.

In-Service Teacher Training and Professional Development

Likewise, the professional learning of practising teachers has been substantially influenced by two AITSL initiatives: the *Australian Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders* (AITSL, 2012a) and the *Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework* (Revised; AITSL, 2018). The Charter defines professional learning as "the formal or informal learning experiences undertaken by teachers and school leaders that improve their individual practice, and a school's collective effectiveness, as measured by improved student learning, engagement with learning and wellbeing" (AITSL, 2012a, p. 2). Hence, professional learning is seen to be a shared responsibility between teachers and school administrators and includes undertaking both postgraduate studies at universities and professional learning activities (e.g. in-school workshops, face-to-face conferences, online webinars). Consistent with Professional Standard 6, *engage in professional learning*, every teacher must undertake a minimum of 100 hours of relevant and continuing professional development activities over a 5-year period to remain registered and can be audited by their respective state registration authority (AITSL, 2011). Moreover, every teacher is required to engage in a yearly performance review process, which involves the teacher generating, implementing, and

reviewing a performance and capability development plan, with ongoing feedback and guidance being provided by the school's leadership team (AITSL, 2012b).

Not surprisingly, some teachers view the completion of a postgraduate qualification as a viable option to meeting these requirements, with many Australian universities offering online Graduate Certificate and Master's programmes in special needs education and inclusive education. Specialised online programmes and subjects (e.g. gifted education, deaf education, autism studies) are available at a few dedicated universities. However, there is an increasing shortage of Australian teachers with a special education or special needs qualification to fill specialist positions in many education systems, and this situation is seeing unqualified teachers taking up these positions.

On the other hand, Australian teachers are well positioned to build their capabilities related to teaching students with SEN through a range of professional learning alternatives. They have access to several high-quality national and state conferences and forums with a varied focus (e.g. inclusive education, special needs, and disability-specific topics). Webinars and online workshops are increasingly popular, with some teachers preferring to participate in these activities when they are delivered by a recognised "expert speaker" in the area (Harper-Hill et al., 2022). Additionally, online networking communities such as the new *inclusion ED supporting diverse learners* (https://www.inclusioned.edu.au) are on the rise, as is in-school support to individual teachers and leadership teams by regional coaches in areas such as autism and inclusion.

Implementation of Inclusive Education in Schools

Schooling in Australia is characterised by some unique features and operating systems. As state and territory jurisdictions drive educational policy and practice, inclusive education is implemented in many different ways across jurisdictions and across sectors. However, a whole-school approach to teaching and learning through a three-tiered model of support is commonly used to promote inclusion and student outcomes. Additionally, differentiated instruction and explicit teaching and co-teaching are emerging research-informed practices being used in this country to provide more equitable learning opportunities to all students.

Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory specifically identify a whole-school approach to educational planning and instruction in their policy frameworks, whereas the remaining states restrict the whole-school approach to areas of student well-being and behaviour. In their online policies, the Department of Education in Western Australia (2009) indicates that "a whole school approach refers to cohesive, collective and collaborative action in and by a school community that has been strategically constructed to improve student learning, behaviour and wellbeing, and the conditions that support these". Adopted and adapted from US practice (see Brown-Chidsey & Bickford, 2016), this approach to teaching and learning routinely uses a continuum of tiers to ensure

additional supports are in place for students who may require more targeted or personalised support while ensuring that all students work towards meeting year level curriculum expectations. Emphasis is first placed on effective instruction at Tier 1 level where the academic, social-emotional, and behavioural learning needs of the majority of students are met through effective explicit teaching and differentiated learning experiences provided to the whole class. Tier 2 level comprises supplementary, small group instruction and support for targeted students (including some with SEN) who are identified as not responding sufficiently to Tier 1 learning activities, while Tier 3 level is focused on delivering intensive intervention to individual students (including some with SEN).

With the increased number of students with SEN being educated in mainstream classrooms and the increased implementation of the whole-school approach, the working contexts of regular and special needs teachers have changed in recent times. Special needs teachers (also referred to as support teachers or inclusive education teachers) are now expected to be skilled operators who work alongside regular teachers with the expertise to accommodate the academic, social, and behavioural needs of all learners in mainstream classrooms (Forlin & Chambers, 2017). Collaboration—the positive interaction between regular and special needs teachers—affords collegial opportunities to work together to improve student learning outcomes and professional growth. The Professional Standards (AITSL, 2014) emphasise collaborative teaching partnerships, while state policies provide a range of collaborative approaches so that teachers can share their expertise for the benefit of every student (e.g. Department of Education, New South Wales Government, 2020).

High impact teaching strategies (HITS; Department of Education and Training, Victorian Government, 2019) are a recent innovation in Victorian classrooms and involve the use of specified, evidenced-based instructional strategies to improve student learning. These strategies include individualised goal setting, structuring lesson planning, explicit teaching, collaborative learning, metacognitive strategies, feedback, and differentiated teaching. Differentiated teaching and explicit instruction are becoming more widely used across states as teachers access conferences and workshops, featuring leading experts like Carol Ann Tomlinson (differentiated instruction) and Anita Archer (explicit instruction).

Differentiated instruction is responsive teaching as it is student-centred and uses a variety of research-informed strategies across curriculum planning, assessment and monitoring, instruction, and classroom organisation to accommodate student variability in multi-ability classrooms. In Queensland, the importance of differentiating the curriculum is highlighted in documents such as *Every School Succeeding: State Schools Improvement Strategy 2021–2025* (Department of Education, Queensland Government, 2020) and *Whole school approach to differentiated teaching and learning* (Department of Education, Queensland Government, 2019). Similarly, the Northern Territory encourages schools to use differentiation as part of their everyday teaching practice to identify and address the learning needs of every student through their *Curriculum, Assessment, Pedagogy and Reporting T-12: A*

Framework for Quality Education in Northern Territory Schools (Northern Territory Board of Studies, 2018).

Similarly, explicit teaching is a structured and direct approach that offers support to students through ongoing "scaffolding" and focused feedback. This involves a high level of teacher-student interaction as the teacher models the learning process using an "I do, we do, you do" strategy (Archer & Hughes, 2011). This explicit approach to teaching and learning is well-supported by AITSL, which provides an example being implemented in a primary school and suggests a useful resource package alongside the Professional Standards. Further, explicit instruction was recently validated as a teaching practice by a large sample of teachers for use in Australian early years classrooms which include students on the autism spectrum (see Taylor et al., 2021).

While co-teaching is not considered a high impact teaching strategy, it is increasingly being considered as an optional arrangement as schools shift to the whole-school approach and collaboration increases between regular and special needs teachers. This research-informed practice is based on the premise that the two teachers work together in a single physical space blending their distinct skill set while sharing resources to deliver instruction flexibly and deliberately to meet the learning needs of the entire class. Friend et al. (2010) delineate six co-teaching approaches that can be used to plan and deliver instruction (one teach, one observes; one teaches, one assists; station teaching; alternative teaching; parallel teaching; and teaming). Of these, station teaching and the one teach, one observe approaches are presented as examples in the case study that follows. This case study seeks to illustrate current efforts used to advance inclusive education for all students, including those with SEN.

Case Study: Using Co-teaching to Include Students with SEN

This case study outlines how staff at a large government primary school in south-east Queensland use co-teaching to include and educate all students in their classrooms. The school serves a growing urban community with families from over 140 different nations by providing schooling for approximately 900 students (4–12 years). Almost 5% of the student population have an identified disability and/or speech impairment, while another 10% are identified as being "at risk" in literacy and numeracy. Staffing includes a 6-member leadership team; 53 teachers (regular classroom, inclusion/special education, and specialist in physical education, music, visual arts, language other than English and English as an additional language/dialect); and a range of ancillary personnel (education assistants, guidance officer, speech pathologist).

Following a change of principals during 2015, renewed efforts to improve inclusive education at the school revolved around several key organisational changes. First, the leadership team worked with staff and the school community to generate a school vision around *Empowering Lifelong Learners* and to establish some common understandings about inclusive practices. Importantly, the vision and

understandings have been reviewed on a regular basis (e.g. at student-free days and staff meetings).

Second, the budget was renegotiated to provide an allocation for staff capacity building, particularly in the area of inclusive practices. This area is currently embedded in the school Annual Implementation Plan and has led to the conduct of an action research project, which sought to investigate teachers' perceptions of their capabilities to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms using the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) scale (Sharma et al., 2012). Findings reported by McGarrigle et al. (2021) show that teachers currently at this school ($n = 48$) are favourably disposed towards inclusive education and are generally confident in implementing inclusive practices in their classrooms.

Third, year level teams (regular and inclusion teachers, education assistants) were formed to support the needs of all students regardless of whether they were working above, at, or below year level expectations. This change required reviews of the student support services referral process, procedures for planning for and recording adjustments and writing support plans, and a stocktake of inclusive pedagogies being implemented across the school. Outcomes from this review were detailed in the Inclusive Schooling Practices Handbook, which is available on the school intranet to all staff and is unpacked with new staff during the school induction process.

Co-teaching has played a major role in developing inclusive practices throughout the school. During the initial planning phase, interested teams met to discuss and formulate expectations and protocols for co-teaching together. In addition, professional learning activities were incorporated into regular meetings to strengthen staff knowledge and understandings of co-teaching prior to implementation. Learnings from successive implementation phases of co-teaching within the school have led to new organisational arrangements being put in place. Before commencing co-teaching, members of each year level team share their teaching beliefs and perspectives about shared roles and responsibilities to ensure there is sufficient compatibility among co-workers. Next, each team completes a responsibilities checklist and makes collective decisions about classroom management and classroom procedures (e.g. roll marking, toilet breaks, noise levels). For every participating team, inclusion teachers are located in the same building as regular teachers to strengthen partnerships and provide additional opportunity for both planned and incidental conversations. In addition, inclusion teachers attend all year level meetings, excursions, and camps.

Currently, co-teaching occurs daily in all classrooms in the early years (preparatory to year 2) and the final year (year 6) and across 50% of timetabled classes in years 3 and 4. Non-participation of remaining teams is based on some teachers' concerns about their confidence and capability levels, together with the influence of staff turnover. Such an arrangement aligns with recommendations in the literature—participation in co-teaching should be voluntary.

As mentioned previously, Friend and colleagues (2013) have identified six approaches to co-teaching. Year level teams at this school predominantly use "station teaching" as the way to support students with SEN in key learning areas

of English (reading and writing) and mathematics. In station teaching, instructional content is divided into three or more segments, with at least one segment comprising an independent practice activity. Students are divided into groups and rotate through learning centres (stations) where content is taught or practised. The grouping system for these activities is flexibly determined using ongoing formative data (e.g. task sheets, exit slips for certain lessons). Data are analysed and plans are formulated not only at collaborative learning days and staff meetings but also during each teacher's own time.

The "one teaches, one observes" approach to co-teaching is also used, especially as a mechanism for sharing techniques. For example, this approach was used to upskill a co-teaching team in the use of a Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) communication book so that they could support a student with Down syndrome to communicate with peers and adults. Initially, the speech pathologist modelled using the PODD to the inclusion teacher, who in turn demonstrated how to support the student in using his PODD while leading a whole-of-class art lesson as other team members observed. In another instance, a teacher who had attended a 1-week training course on explicit teaching with Anita Archer used multiple opportunities across the weeks that followed to demonstrate how to use the four core practices associated with this approach while other team members observed her and responding students.

Currently, the leadership team is planning further professional staff development in targeted areas around co-teaching to (a) assist in keeping the conversation and learning happening throughout the school and (b) further increase understanding and build teacher confidence so that all teachers are empowered to experiment and trial co-teaching as an effective method of instruction that is beneficial for all students. In the last few years, staff at this school have learnt that responding to student diversity requires both teachers and school leaders to move beyond established processes and practices and be willing to innovate.

Challenges and Recommendations

For more than two decades, key barriers to implementing inclusive education in Australian schools have been identified in the literature, with little evidence of these findings being addressed by governments and education systems. In recent years, advocacy groups such as the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) have commissioned Forlin et al. (2013) and Cologon (2019), respectively, to investigate current efforts towards inclusion in schooling. Other active researchers in the area (e.g. Anderson & Boyle, 2019; Dally et al., 2019; Finkelstein et al., 2021) have also provided syntheses of current issues and ways of moving inclusive education forward in this country. Four common challenges distilled from these works are consistent with concerns signalled throughout this chapter, namely, inconsistent government frameworks and policies, inadequate staff training, lack of support for

teachers, and a scarcity of research into inclusive pedagogies and practice. These interconnected challenges need to be resolved in order for schools to provide quality educational experiences and outcomes for students with SEN.

Inconsistent Government Frameworks and Policies

First and foremost, service provisions for students with SEN vary widely across the states and territories as well as across government and non-government sectors. These differences can be largely attributed to the existence of inconsistent government frameworks and policies related to inclusive education as illustrated earlier. Anderson and Boyle (2019) have put forward a reasonable solution to this fundamental issue. They suggest that "a natural starting point would be the establishment of a nationally accepted understanding of inclusive education and the development of an Australian Framework for Action" (p. 806). Taking such steps would require genuine collaboration and teamwork among federal and state authorities akin to that demonstrated in the formulation of the 2008 Melbourne Declaration and in combating the unprecedented 2019 bushfires that ravaged the country. If governments could commit to this endeavour, outcomes should include not only improved schooling for all students but more positive community attitudes towards inclusion.

Inadequate Staff Training

Second, with current ITE training viewed as a serious stumbling block to preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms, it is time for Australian universities to review and adjust their programme content. Courses must be specifically aimed at building essential knowledge and skills for including and teaching students with SEN and disabilities. Moreover, a stocktake of field placements should be undertaken, because to be workplace ready, today's pre-service teachers need to have direct experience in inclusive settings where they are coached and supported by highly skilled teachers. This direct experience helps trainee teachers link theory with practice, interact with diverse learners, and gain confidence in teaching to students' differences. Furthermore, school principals, as key stakeholders, need training in inclusive education so that they can better lead whole-school initiatives, support classroom teachers, and facilitate professional learning networks within and across school communities.

Lack of Support for Teachers

Third, reviews into practice have drawn attention to barriers that teachers have persistently identified as influencing their capacity to implement effective inclusive practices in their classrooms. Lack of time, both for planning and for instruction, is viewed as a prime challenge as is a lack of administrative support and having insufficient support staff. If school principals were afforded specific training in inclusive education, they would be more likely, as knowledgeable leaders, to rearrange organisational and staffing structures to reduce the impact of these factors on teachers' practice.

Scarcity of Research into Inclusive Pedagogies and Practice

Finally, funding for research is urgently needed to inform policy initiatives, support practice in schools, and bridge the policy-to-practice gap. This need is based on (a) data showing that inclusive education policies are typically restricted to rhetoric and procedures and (b) lack of local research into which teaching practices should be recommended for inclusive classrooms. University-school collaborations should be adopted as a deliberate strategy to more thoroughly investigate promising pedagogies such as co-teaching and differentiated instruction, particularly from perspectives of feasibility (i.e. access to resources) and outcomes (i.e. for students and teachers). Additionally, investigations to identify local barriers and needs in specific contexts (e.g. rural areas, remote communities) should be conducted to advance inclusive education throughout this geographically diverse country.

Concluding Statement

Inclusive education in Australia has been an unfolding reform aligned somewhat with the progressive rollout of legislations and policies. At this point in time, innovative leadership teams and motivated teachers, not governments and education systems, are building inclusive school communities across this country. Australian students with SEN need and deserve a better deal that delivers what the *Melbourne Declaration* and its 2020 update have promised: equity and excellence in schooling for all students.

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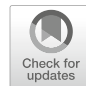
Part III
Conclusion

Chapter 12
Inclusive Education in the Asia-Pacific: Moving Forward with Commitment and Intent



Wendi Beamish, Stephen Hay, and Mantak Yuen

Abstract The multicultural societies considered in this book deliver services and supports in varied ways for students with special education needs. Taken together, these efforts provide a clear picture of the changing landscape of inclusive education across the Asia-Pacific region. In this final chapter, legislation and policies are examined to highlight connections between UN conventions and local initiatives, with comparisons made across case studies presented in this book. Next, a thematic analysis of relevant studies identified in case studies draws attention to pivotal local research on inclusive education within the region. This research, together with interpretation of policies, is subsequently viewed through a lens on the implementation of inclusive education in schools and teacher training. Shared barriers and concerns related to implementing inclusive education in systems and schools are then discussed. Finally, general trends are synthesised, and recommendations are made to advance the inclusive education agenda across the region.

Keywords Asia-Pacific · Disability · Education policy · Inclusive education · Special educational needs

Introduction

This chapter provides insights into the current status of inclusive education policy, research, and practice for students with special educational needs (SEN) across the Asia-Pacific region. We interpret the detailed information reported in case studies from the Maldives, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea, Japan,

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British Columbia, New Zealand, and Australia to provide a critical synthesis of how inclusive education is being enacted. Our approach is to highlight commonalities and points of difference that characterise contemporary initiatives and developments throughout the region. We explore educational policy formulation and implementation to identify challenges and concerns at national and local levels, before advancing recommendations to improve inclusive schooling for students with SEN around the Asia-Pacific Rim.

Guiding Legislation and Policies at International and Local Levels

In order to understand the development and implementation of legislation and policies in a particular country or region, it is necessary to consider the outside influences at play. 'Global social policy' is a term that has emerged to describe how policy frameworks are formulated, exchanged, and translated among the United Nations (UN), various organisations (e.g. UNESCO, OECD), and individual countries. Internationally, UN conventions act as drivers for social and educational action and reform; but unlike national legislation, these conventions do not have legal authority in any particular country. Governments commit to formulating their own national legislation (Acts) by becoming a signatory to a particular convention. This arrangement enables them to enact the intentions of the convention within their own jurisdiction. Acts are typically supported by policy guidelines and strategies to facilitate implementation at the local level.

This international-to-local path to policy formulation and implementation is evident in the case studies reported in this book. Three key UN conventions and declarations were referred to in several chapters—the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994), the *Conventions of the Rights of the Child* (CRC; UN, 1989), and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD; UN, 2007). These benchmark conventions appear to have substantially advanced the advent of inclusive education internationally by enactment of local legislation and policy (Mittler, 2005).

The *Salamanca Statement and Framework* was profoundly influential as it focused directly on the field of special needs education and spoke explicitly to policy-makers, education system administrators, and school personnel. The message it conveyed is evident in the following statement:

> The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating both different styles and rates of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricula, organizational arrangements, teaching strategies, resource use and partnerships with their communities. There should be a continuum of support and services to match the continuum of special needs encountered in every school. (UNESCO, 1994, pp. 11-12)

The *Conventions of the Rights of the Child* and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* further supported inclusive education initiatives, providing a rights-based discourse around anti-discrimination for children and those with disabilities. These conventions influenced the passing of Acts in Australia (Disability Discrimination Act, 1992), Hong Kong (Disability Discrimination Ordinance, 1996), Japan (Law to Support Persons with Developmental Disabilities, 2005), and South Korea (Act of the Prohibition of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities, Remedy against Infringement of their Rights, etc., 2007), thus paving the way for children with disabilities to access and participate in special and mainstream education. In parallel with these reforms, legislative acts specific to education were evident across case studies. For example, at the turn of the century, Singapore established its *Compulsory Education Act* (Singapore Government, 2000), New Zealand passed its *Special Education Act* (New Zealand Government, 2000) while South Korea extended its *Special Education Promotion Act* (Republic of Korea Government, 1977–2008). Similarly, China produced *Learning in the Regular Classroom (LRC) for Children with Disabilities in the Compulsory Education Years* (Xu et al., 2018). Taken together, these legislative frameworks provided the foundation for development of targeted education policies—for example, Australia's Disability Standards for Education (2005), British Columbia's Manual of Policy Procedures and Guidelines (2016), and New Zealand's Kōrero Mātauranga, The Education Conversation (2021).

Recent history has shown that all this upper-level policy activity across the Asia-Pacific region has not routinely translated into effective strategies and practices at local school level. The often-problematic issue of implementing inclusive education practice remains an ongoing global concern, as reflected by the periodic monitoring and reporting of progress across countries (UNESCO, 2015, 2020). These UNESCO reports have called for stakeholders to widen their understanding of inclusive education to include *all students* regardless of background, identity, or ability. They also should strengthen the quality of their inclusive education systems and commit adequate funding for the proactive implementation of inclusive strategies in existing classrooms. The 2020 report pointed out that the delivery of inclusive education requires collaboration, cooperation, and coordination, with horizontal and vertical integration across levels of government (national to local), sectors (social, education, health, and finance), and education (early childhood to tertiary). Above all, this report stressed that "weak collaboration, cooperation and coordination of stakeholders can impede implementation of ambitious laws and policies" (UNESCO, 2020, p. 90).

Local Inclusion Research Across the Region

The inclusion research reported in the chapters here has spanned the last two decades, and studies typically have followed on from policy enactment activity around disability rights, inclusive schooling, and education for students with SEN.

The reporting of these studies was approached differently from country to country, with Australia undertaking a scoping review of local studies, Japan and South Korea using previously published reviews, and Hong Kong, Singapore, and Macao providing a broad review of academic and system level research. The Maldives reported limited research being conducted so far in this small island nation. In contrast, China, New Zealand, and British Columbia did not specifically review their local inclusion literature but focused instead on specific policy initiatives in their respective contexts: *Learning in the Regular Classroom* [LRC] in the case of China and inclusion policy enactment for New Zealand and British Columbia.

Our analysis of inclusion research presented in the seven reporting case studies revealed two major themes. The first theme pertained to teacher attitudes, beliefs, and efficacy regarding inclusion—a common first focus of attention also in previous Western research literature. The second was associated with implementation issues in schooling from the perspective of various stakeholders. NVivo was then used as an analytical tool for confirming the themes and their associated sub-themes. The coding process also revealed connections between the various sub-themes, providing a richness and depth that was not evident in our preliminary data reduction (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Research into teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and self-efficacy was represented by Singaporean ongoing research into changing teacher attitudes towards including students with SEN (Lim et al., 2008; Poon et al., 2016). In the case of South Korea, a review by Cho (2017) revealed that the most frequent research issues pertained to perceptions and requirements for including young children with SEN. In Australia and Hong Kong, investigations into teacher attitudes and beliefs towards inclusion were led by Forlin (2006, 2007), with subsequent studies being undertaken with colleagues. In particular, Forlin partnered with Sharma and Loreman (Sharma et al., 2012) to develop and validate the *Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices* (TEIP) scale across Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, and India. The TEIP scale has since been validated and extensively adopted for inclusion research in many Western and Eastern countries (McGarrigle et al., 2021).

Teacher attitudes appeared as an intersection point for many of the implementation issues examined in local studies. Key among these issues were teacher preparation and ongoing professional development, the importance of school leadership, partnerships with parents, specialist professional support, and school resourcing. Underscoring the importance of the individual contributions made by each of these parties, several case studies stressed the importance of collaboration among stakeholders and the need for networking between teachers to facilitate inclusive education at the school level.

Implementing Inclusive Education in Schools

In broad overview, eight of the ten case studies specifically addressed the topic of implementation, but each emphasised different aspects of service delivery to students with SEN and other diverse learners. Macao and British Columbia spotlighted

the importance of Individual Education Plans, whereas the Maldives and Japan described their respective models of schooling incorporating a mix of special and mainstream classes. Uniquely, South Korea focused on curriculum materials at national and local levels accompanied by special education guides for supporting instruction and assessment. In contrast, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and British Columbia identified key pedagogical frameworks being used within their schools to include all students.

On closer inspection of practice implementation, two common threads were apparent across case studies. The first was concerned with *differentiated teaching*, while the second was related to *collaboration* between mainstream and special education teachers. As could be expected, differentiated teaching was identified as an aspect of implementation in all case studies. Some case studies referred to differentiating delivery of the regular curriculum (e.g. using ability groupings, varying pedagogical strategies, modifying learning outcome levels), while others indicated adapting lessons using principles from Universal Design for Learning (UDL; Rose & Meyer, 2000). A few case studies identified some schools implementing the systematic approach of differentiated instruction as described by Tomlinson et al. (2003) and used mainly in the United States. Half the case studies reported widespread use of the whole-school approach with a three-tiered system of support. This system, adopted from North America (Sailor, 2015), comprises a school response in which at Tier 1 high-quality teaching is provided to all students within the class; then targeted teaching is also provided to small groups of at-risk students (Tier 2); and intensive teaching is provided to a small number of individual students (Tier 3).

The second commonality, collaboration between mainstream classroom teachers and special educators, was reported to a lesser extent. Although many case studies described the central role played by specialist inclusion teachers in the inclusion process, Australia and the Maldives put forward co-teaching as a recommended practice for inclusion (Sailor, 2015). Taken together, our analysis points to the diversity of provisions and pedagogical approaches being implemented currently around the region to include students with SEN.

Finally, several case studies provided commentary around areas where there was a lack of local research relating to cultural dissonance as a consequence of policy borrowing and transplanting practices from Western countries. Our analysis highlighted the need for research into the educational experiences and outcomes of students with SEN within the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, research attention is required into pedagogical approaches and strategies that promote inclusion, particularly because many current practices have been adopted without validation from countries such as North America. Importantly, many Eastern country authors indicated that future local research needs to be attentive to cultural sensitivities and contextual relevance.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development for Inclusion

As indicated in the previous chapters, almost all case studies throughout the region have started to rise to the challenge of training teachers to meet the demands of inclusive education provision. More specifically, at the pre-service level, training with a focus on inclusive and special education was reported in eight case studies. The Maldives, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, Japan, British Columbia, New Zealand, and Australia have compulsory units on special education within their initial teacher education programmes. Moreover, the Maldives, Singapore, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and Australia have initial teacher education courses specifically in special education, special needs education, or disability-specific education.

At the in-service level, many case studies reported the presence of diplomas and Master's programmes. The Maldives has a Certificate III in special education for teachers, while Singapore and New Zealand have diplomas in special education. The Maldives, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia have a range of postgraduate programmes (e.g. Masters of Special Education). Specific professional development programmes for teachers are typically offered (a) externally by tertiary institutions in Singapore, Hong Kong, and New Zealand; (b) internally by education systems in the Maldives, British Columbia, and Australia; and (c) by both external and internal providers in Macao and Japan. Additionally, the Maldives, Hong Kong, and Australia have specific professional development programmes at the school level. Importantly, four case studies (the Maldives, Macao, Japan, and Australia) reported having policies associated with teachers' professional development. In the Maldives, teachers need to have 3 days per annum (total 15 hours) of professional development. In Japan, the relevant policy states 30 hours of approved unit courses, to be updated every 10 years. In Australia, for teachers to remain registered, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) requires them to undertake a minimum of 100 hours of relevant professional development over 5 years.

A more detailed view of existing teacher preparation and in-service programmes in specific contexts is provided by Poon et al. (2013) for Singapore, Hsieh et al. (2017) for Hong Kong, and Morton et al. (2021) for New Zealand. A rudimentary analysis of these publications reveals that it is time for tertiary institutions and education systems to take collective responsibility and work together to ensure that all teachers are equipped with the working knowledge and pedagogy to work effectively in inclusive classrooms.

Barriers to Inclusive Education

Including students with SEN in mainstream classrooms is never a simple matter and has continued to challenge education systems, schools, and teachers around the globe (Forlin & Lian, 2008; Kurth et al., 2018; OECD, 2021). Despite significant differences in cultural, political, socio-economic, and schooling characteristics, the barriers to inclusion highlighted in nine reporting case studies share a considerable degree of commonality; and they are broadly in line with global trends. Across the Asia-Pacific region, our analysis identified five intermeshed categories of barrier to including students with SEN in mainstream classrooms. These barriers are inadequate preparation and training of teachers; under-resourcing of mainstream schools catering for student with SEN; restricted stakeholder engagement; policy formulation and implementation issues; and limited local research to inform practice in schools.

Inadequate Teacher Education and Training

The most significant barrier to inclusion reported in all case studies is insufficient pre-service teacher preparation and additional professional development for practising teachers. In the case of Japan, this training issue was identified as the major challenge to implementing inclusive education, currently and in the future. The pressing need for effective teacher training is corroborated in a recent OECD report which states: "Education systems should develop strategic policy actions to improve the quality and number of teachers to teach students with special needs who are increasingly enrolled in regular schools and classes in primary education" (OECD, 2021, p. 2). Additionally, a number of case studies specified the need for deeper teacher training specifically in the domains of curriculum differentiation and behaviour support. The strengthening of teachers' capacity to differentiate the curriculum is also highlighted in the 2021 OECD Report; but the report recognises that constantly adjusting the curriculum for students with SEN is often a source of stress that impacts negatively on teachers' wellbeing. Many teachers in these regions have not been required in the past to adapt content and methods in this way, because they were expected to teach a whole class in a fairly formal manner. The problem of teachers' lack of expertise in curriculum adaptation can be exacerbated by the other challenges discussed below.

Under-resourcing of Mainstream Schools

Combining with these concerns about inadequate teacher training appears to be the issue of insufficient numbers of suitably qualified teachers and specialist staff for

supporting students with SEN. These concerns appear to be at a critical level in British Columbia where decreased government funding is resulting in decreased numbers of classroom teachers and specialist teachers, increased numbers of students with SEN at schools, and rising student waiting lists. Somewhat similar circumstances were reported in New Zealand primary schools. The information from the Maldives argued particularly for urgent government spending in remote schools enrolling students with SEN. This funding and staffing shortfall aligns with OECD Report data indicating that teachers internationally are signalling governments to recognise the need for a "spending priority" to support students with SEN (OECD, 2021, p. 3). A related resourcing concern voiced in Macao and the Maldives is the need for greater equity of resource distribution among schools.

Restricted Stakeholder Engagement

Current stakeholder engagement at systemic, community, and school levels was identified in most case studies as a primary barrier to the enactment of inclusion. For example, South Korea called for school leaders and policy-makers to share responsibilities and adopt a common agreed vision for inclusion. Macao recommended that all stakeholders in education be held accountable for the implementation of inclusion and that parents be more involved in the process. This of course should include the parents of students without special needs, as well as parents of SEN students. Convincing parents of children without special needs of the merits of inclusion can be a challenge in regions where education has been all about preparing for examinations and segregated special schools have traditionally been established for students with disabilities.

In contrast, Japan targeted teaching professionals and professional bodies, asking for much greater mutual cooperation and collaboration. The Maldives prioritised the need to increase community awareness and involvement in the inclusive education of students with SEN. Community awareness of the purpose and value of inclusive schooling is essential if schools and systems are not to face a constant uphill battle.

Policy Formulation and Implementation Issues

Concerns were expressed in two case studies about system-level policy formulation without adequate consideration of local realities. Similarly, the need for policy formation related to specific school-level practices was advanced in two case studies, while evidence of cultural and socio-political influences needing to mediate global social policies were noted in one case study.

In the case of system-level policy formulation, Australia identified inconsistent government policies as a major barrier. This occurs because administration and service delivery at local school level are the responsibility of the separate states

and territories, not the federal government. Likewise, South Korea voiced concerns at the national level with respect to policies being released without due consideration given to infrastructure planning. In addition, the current national 5-year plan to expand *segregated* education in special schools and classes was acknowledged as running contrary to the philosophy of inclusive education. By way of contrast, Singapore pointed to an existing policy overlap between the UN's rights-based approach to inclusive education and Singapore's broader socio-cultural aspiration to be an *inclusive society* via its national policy agenda.

With respect to school-level practices, there appeared to be some differences across contexts relating to policy and its implementation in two areas. First, several case studies reported individualised planning to be a compulsory option for some students with SEN within their mainstream schools, while Japan stated that it remains firmly focused on providing individual support planning throughout the school years to all students with legally defined disability. Second, many case studies identified the widespread use the whole-school approach within their contexts whereas Macao voiced the need for this approach to be formally supported by government policies.

Limited Local Research to Inform Practice in Schools

As indicated previously, not many studies have been conducted in the Asian-Pacific region to identify highly successful local inclusive practices or to evaluate interventions for students with SEN in mainstream schools. To date, research has focused predominately on understanding the attitudes of teachers and other key stakeholders in relation to inclusive education, together with descriptions of the degree of inclusion reached so far in particular contexts. This type of research does not immediately improve classroom practices.

Several case studies proposed areas in need of exploration to help bridge the current research-to-practice gap. Australia, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea indicated the urgent need to identify specific barriers to including students with SEN in their school context. In addition, Singapore and South Korea took a strengths-based approach and recommended that local research be undertaken to deepen the understanding of local conditions that most easily enable inclusion. Ultimately, this type of research is much more likely to be effective in facilitating inclusion.

One type of research that can be particularly illuminating is the voice of students with special needs and their perspective on their personal trajectories within education. Japan and Singapore have recognised the value of such research, and Japan particularly emphasised a focus on capturing the classroom experiences of this student cohort and their peers to indicate what is working well.

Australia, British Columbia, and Singapore also noted the importance of investigating the actual learning outcomes for this student cohort when included in the mainstream. There is a need to examine learning outcomes in relation to the

recommended use of emerging pedagogical approaches such as differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, and co-teaching. Australia also mentioned the need to investigate the feasibility of these pedagogies and the impact of using them on the workload of teachers.

Various mechanisms were recommended to advance the inclusion research agenda across the region. Australia and Macao both proposed the building of stronger partnerships between schools and local universities, while Singapore suggested more extensive use of participatory action research with stakeholder involvement. Japan pointed to the need for such action research to be firmly school-based and involving direct work with students. The adoption of one or more of these mechanisms holds the potential to narrow the regional research-to-practice gap.

Recommendations

Insights gained from the chapters in this book make it clear that the Asian-Pacific contexts appear to be differently positioned for successfully including students with SEN in mainstream schools—due to historical, political, systemic, and socio-cultural influences. The recommendations provided below are intended mainly to overcome or minimise the barriers detailed in the previous section. It is hoped that each country uses the recommendations as a guide for progressing inclusive education of their students and also for supporting the teachers who now have the responsibility of serving this student cohort.

Recommendation 1: Improving Teacher Preparation and Training

That initial teacher education programmes commit to producing "work-ready" graduates with the essential attitude, knowledge, and competencies for including and teaching students with special needs. The relevant authority in each country should monitor initial teacher education programmes for effective inclusive education content.

That education systems afford a minimum specified amount of ongoing professional development for classroom teachers and specialist teachers to promote their understanding, efficacy, and practice in including and teaching students with SEN. Additionally, teacher registration bodies (or equivalent) in each country should monitor this ongoing professional development for their teaching workforce.

Recommendation 2: Increasing Targeted Funding

That governments and education systems prioritise funding to mainstream schools that are supporting students with SEN and monitor the impact on student outcomes and teaching quality.

Recommendation 3: Expanding Stakeholder Engagement

That education systems support schools in implementing effective processes for enlisting and maintaining the engagement of all stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, peers, and potential employers) and encouraging their input into the inclusive education model for students with SEN.

Recommendation 4: Extending the Inclusion Research Agenda

That a partnership be established between researchers and staff in local education systems and schools to establish a needs-based research agenda and enlist broad stakeholder input when undertaking agreed-upon studies. It is also essential that a mechanism be put in place that will enable details of positive approaches found to work well in some schools are disseminated to all other local schools.

Recommendation 5: Redressing the Policy-to-Practice Gap

That governments develop robust rights-based policies and action plans focused on equity principles that enable students with SEN to achieve their potential in the mainstream. Additionally, governments should then authorise an independent body to monitor the implementation of these policies at the school level, to prevent policy slippage over time.

Conclusion

It is clear from this synthesis of information from ten case studies throughout the Asia-Pacific region that include students with SEN in the mainstream involves complexities of policy translation, funding, teacher expertise, and cultural influences. However, beyond these complexities, our analyses revealed that these contexts share many common needs and interests and often face the same barriers to

providing quality education for all. Accordingly, we have offered here some generic recommendations based on these commonalities. It remains for policy-makers, administrators, researchers, classroom teachers, and school communities to consider each recommendation alongside local resource capacity and collaborate to move their respective inclusive education agendas forward with commitment and intent.

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