

Special Education in China: Viewing Special Education Through a Cultural Lens

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand the cultural perceptions of disabilities and the impact on special education for teachers at schools in China. Teacher education and knowledge of disabilities was studied through surveys and interviews with Chinese national teachers ( $N = 12$ ). The two main themes found were the shift in view of those with disabilities from disgrace to honor and the need to use the values in collectivism to continue the positive changes in China. Many teachers were found to have a desire to help students with disabilities but felt they did not have enough knowledge. China is taking steps to better help those with disabilities, however, the lack of research on Asian cultures' impact on special education has made using culturally appropriate and effective methods difficult. Approaching special education from a collectivistic mindset, one that believes educating children with disabilities is good for all of China, is the suggested first step, followed by evaluating current education methods to see how effective they would be in that culture, and providing a general education of disabilities for all teachers.

### Special Education in China: How Cultures Affect Special Education

While all countries have people with disabilities living in them, most of the research on disabilities has been conducted about and in western countries. Asian countries have cultures that differ significantly from their western counterparts. To see what practices created in the west could transfer to Asian cultures, an understanding of the various impacts Asian cultures have on special education would need to be developed. As a step in the process of developing effective and culturally relevant special education practices in Asian countries, China was studied. The purpose of this ethnographic research was to understand the cultural perceptions of disabilities and the impact on special education for teachers at schools in China.

#### **Literature Review**

Little research has been conducted on the impact of culture on special education in China. What research was found could be divided into three overarching categories with comparisons between western cultures, mainly the United States, and China. The first section, disability and society, looks at the overall view of those with disabilities within the different cultures of China and the United States. The next section, educational models, looks at the general methods used in the classrooms and how those with disabilities are served in the education systems. The last section, instructional methods, looks at the ways students with disabilities are taught in the different cultures. After performing the literature review, the lack of research examining the cultural impact on Chinese special education became evident. More research in this area could prove beneficial to improving special education globally and domestically.

#### **Disability and Society**

In the world, those who feel they are ordinary have historically erected boundaries to create a society that benefits them and rarely benefits but often excludes those with disabilities

(Armstrong, 1999). School is often one of the places where the struggles between those with and without disabilities are played out, and the culture a child is educated in will affect his or her perceptions of the world (Armstrong, 1999; Farland-Smith, 2009). Often, those who are under-educated or have low achievement are those that end up facing long-term unemployment and exclusion (Brine, 2010). Even with the institution of compulsory education, many students are leaving the school system (Brine, 2010).

Most of the world's population of people with disabilities is estimated to be in developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin American, the Caribbean, and the Middle East with about 150 million of them being children and less than 2% receiving rehabilitation service in any way (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010). The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) established treaties that include policies for international education and training, however, much of this training is only for low-level temporary jobs that do not provide long term employment or security for those enrolled (Brine, 2010). When examining different cultures and the impacts on education, one must remember that no society has a perfect mindset towards those with disabilities:

A mythology has developed in recent years that non-Western cultures have very negative attitudes towards people with a disability, to the extent that they hide, abuse, and even kill their disabled family members. This phenomenon, however, is not restricted to non-Western societies, as the concept of 'otherness' and lack of personhood of persons with a disability is endemic to some extent in all societies. (Parmenter, 2014, p. 1083)

Stigmatizing and the arising desire for *designer babies* are problems in many countries irrespective of how developed they are which could put those with disabilities on the disregarded fringes of society (Parmenter, 2014).

**United States.** Inclusive education is a common practice within the United States and other Western countries (e.g., Canada). The start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the beginning of classes for students who were struggling largely run by religious or philanthropic institutions instead of the state (Bélanger & Garant, 2001). The Civil Rights movement began the push for legislation that advocated for rights for those with disabilities under the Kennedy administration (Parmenter, 2014). *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) not only brought about positive change for people of other races, but it also was the beginning of the movement for education rights for those with disabilities. A struggle some face in the practice of inclusive education is that the concept of inclusive education can have many different meanings to different people, and some have pointed out that inclusive education policies often lack a set system for using the desired method and therefore do not create a consistently inclusive environment (Bélanger & Garant, 2001; Hardy & Woodcock, 2014).

Historically, the United States along with many other western countries has had the federal government take on a large part of the responsibility of taking care of its citizens (Parmenter, 2014). In recent decades the United States has taken a more active role in providing for its citizens with disabilities which can, at times, overlook the importance of the family and its role in a person's life, regardless of ability or disability.

**China.** Asia's "sociocultural political contexts are vastly different from that of the developed countries" (Chiu, Wei, Lee, Choovanichvong, & Wong, 2011, p. 37). Asian societies and the West have very different contexts (Chiu, Wei, Lee, Choovanichvong, & Wong, 2011).

Historically, China, along with many other Asian countries, placed emphasis on the family unit taking care of their own members before asking for help from organizations or the government (Parmenter, 2014; Chiu, Wei, Lee, Choovanichvong, & Wong, 2011). Family values are placed above individual values and gender roles are more clearly set in Asian societies with prevalent stigmas existing against people with severe mental disabilities and their families, “even in major Asian cities like Hong Kong” (Chiu, Wei, Lee, Choovanichvong, & Wong, 2011, p. 35). Asian countries have an acknowledged difference in their cultures making them more collectivistic as opposed to the individualistic cultures found in most western countries (Chie, Wei, Lee, Choovanichvong, & Wong, 2011). The collectivistic cultures are more focused on what is best for the whole whereas individualistic cultures are more focused on the individual and doing what is best for a person.

In China, many who do not receive an education are those who live in rural communities because the government typically establishes schools in major cities (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010). In the school setting, many teachers at the primary and secondary level view students with special needs as a burden in their class (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). However, a lack of empirical research exists on how early childhood educators feel about inclusion (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). A 2012 study by the Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission revealed that 50% of principals and teachers would not accept children with severe disabilities, and 20% of principals and 50% of teachers did not know much about implementing inclusive education and the supports and resources available to them (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). Primary and secondary teachers in Hong Kong had positive views about inclusion for children with mild disabilities, but that view became negative when a child had a moderate to severe disability (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). The lack of disability training teachers

receive negatively impacts those teachers' views; most teachers rated a three to four on a five-point scale for agreeing with inclusion, meaning most are only modestly supportive of inclusion (Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Barker, 2015). Providing teacher training played a large role in positively influencing teacher acceptance of students with intellectual, visual, hearing, and speech disabilities in the study conducted by Lee, Yeung, Tracy, and Barker (2015).

Knowledge and experience with special needs and those who have special needs did not consistently influence teachers' views of inclusion, but training appeared to make a more favorable difference for some areas of disability (Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Baker, 2015). A Hong Kong study of teachers' stress also found that teachers have an extremely high level of stress when students with behavioral problems were in their classes (Pang, 2012). A possible cause of the teachers' high stress was the increased demand placed on them (Pang, 2012). The neutral to slightly positive view of inclusion in Hong Kong is significant since inclusion has only been mandated since the 1990s and governmental mandates do not necessitate full acceptance by people (Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Baker, 2015). However, support does not extend to all students with disabilities, specifically those with intellectual and physical disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); the lowest acceptance was for students with behavioral disorders and the highest was for specific learning disabilities and speech and language disabilities (Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Baker, 2015). These views are held by most teachers in early childhood, primary, and secondary education; school administrators tended to have more negative views which could be due to their increased responsibilities and pressures for student achievement (Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Baker, 2015; Pang 2012). To improve educators' views of inclusion, more training and support for educators appears to be a viable approach (Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Baker, 2015; Pang, 2012).



Many Asian countries have made positive steps towards accepting people with disabilities in mainstream society, but a serious problem for Asia is the lack of data for those with disabilities (Parmenter, 2014). The difficulty in obtaining the prevalence of disabilities in specific areas comes from the many different definitions countries can have for impairments and disabilities (Parmenter, 2014).

One study in China focused on families of children with ASD, and found that families will often abandon, hide, or neglect those children because of a fear of the community's lack of understanding and pressures placed on the family (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). Another study found a lack of awareness of disabilities in China with one of forty-three parents knowing about ASD before their child was diagnosed, however, progress is being made with more people learning about ASD (Hobart & Colleges, 2008). In mainland China, families often send their children with disabilities to more rural areas to be raised by other family members (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). In Hong Kong, parents tend to be judged by how well their child behaves and achieves, and when parents advocate for their child with a disability, they often face discrimination, misunderstandings, prejudices, and the need to have connections to get services for their child (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). Because many doctors in Hong Kong are still unaware of ASD and all that it entails, "It can take up to 4 years to obtain an ASD diagnosis" (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015, p. 1165), and ASD has only recently been recognized as a disability in mainland China (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). Parents also often do not know how to ask their child's doctor questions about the diagnosis, and doctors provide little help or information for the parents (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). Many children diagnosed with ASD have been asked to leave their school or not been allowed to enroll in school, and many families are dissatisfied with the access to supports for their child (Tait,

Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015; Hobart & Colleges, 2008). A study in Hong Kong did find that using direct instruction with inquiry-based learning could be beneficial for students with ASD in an inclusive classroom (Briggs, 2015).

Due to a culture focusing on maintaining one's self-image, many Chinese will not admit to having a family member with a disability like epilepsy or mental illness (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). Newspapers in China also report on children with disabilities being illegally abandoned, although the claims are unsubstantiated (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). Ultimately, raising a child with ASD is an extremely difficult task with little supports for the parents (Tait, Kung, Hu, Sweller, & Wang, 2015). However, globalization, especially through media and technology, is increasing the speed of change in Asia's culture (Parmenter, 2014). China has made steps to increase its ability to meet the needs of families with children who have disabilities, however, there is a lack in research in how many people have disabilities and what methods are used to meet the needs of those with disabilities.

### **Educational Models**

Mass education has rapidly spread throughout the modern world, even in the poorest of countries (Bolie, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985). Bolie et al. (1985) explained, "Education has been generated by worldwide social movements in modern history" (p. 146). Many societies are highly differentiated with each person serving in his or her own unique role, and this differentiation has played a role in the expansion of education (Bolie, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985). Teachers' knowledge and ideologies will affect their education methods used in relation to specific student groups, content taught, and in their unique belief system (Carrington, 1999). Many believe that special education should be either inclusion, where students are educated with their peers regardless of disabilities, or exclusion, where students are educated separately from

peers because they have disabilities (Corbett, 1996). However, neither inclusion nor exclusion should be exclusive of the other (Corbett, 1996). Instead, Corbett (1996) stated, “inclusive education is supposed to be centrally concerned with improving the quality of life for learners, rather than sometimes getting sidetracked into an ideological battlefield” (p. 63) and that “equality and inclusion without consideration of differences is meaningless” (p. 58). Although many countries have educational policies that have inclusion as one of their goals, many of those that are considered developing countries (most in Africa, Asia, Latin American, the Caribbean, and the Middle East) are not effectively implementing those goals, and many materials that are found in the most basic classroom are not found in the classes of the developing countries (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010).

**United States.** Different types of education models are used by different teachers, but whatever type of education model is used, teachers’ beliefs will affect their actions in implementing the models (Carrington, 1999). One problem that has arisen with inclusive policies is the lack of adequate provisions for various students’ needs, shedding light on the necessity for clearer plans to encompass more students (Hardy & Woodcock, 2014). Inclusive education has also been given various definitions over the years, creating another difficulty in determining what exactly constitutes as inclusive educational practices (Florian, 2014). Whenever inclusion is instituted in the classroom, school factors such as school policy, class allocation of students, principle attitude toward inclusion, quality of special educator’s support, relationship between general and special educators, and teacher confidence in teaching methods will affect the success of inclusion (Carrington, 1999). Teachers play a large role in the success of inclusion within schools and schools play a large role in influencing the complete inclusion of those with

disabilities in society therefore, teachers are a key to acceptance within a culture (Esposito, Tang, & Kulkarni, 2018).

**China.** The Asia-Pacific region is the fastest growing economic region in the world, but little is known about its development of inclusion because such studies have mostly been conducted in the West (Lim & Thaver, 2014; Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). Inclusive education is important in many countries, but the quality of the inclusion is subjective to the perspectives of the individuals where it is implemented (Lim & Thaver, 2014). The inclusive movement is growing in Asia, but there is still not enough empirical information for how this shift is working in Asia, especially “for children in early childhood” (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015, p. 79). China has 214 million students in primary and secondary grades (more than four times that of the United States); in the elementary classroom, sixty or more students can be found in one class (Farland-Smith, 2009). Overall, typical students from East-Asian countries do very well in academic subjects, even when in other countries (Balestrini & Stoeger, 2018). This higher achievement is due partly to larger investments parents make in learning; societies in Eastern Asia place a special cultural emphasis on learning and education (SCELE) that is not found in the United States (Balestrini & Stoeger, 2018). Both the United States and China have national standards, but China has a chosen curriculum and implementation method so that every educator teaches the same thing the same way on the same day (Farland-Smith, 2009). Both countries also appear to be pushing for more inquiry-based learning, but less is known about China’s method of implementation (Farland-Smith, 2009).

Vivian Heung, who works for the Department of Special Education and Counselling at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, New Territories, Hong Kong stated that Hong Kong has high test scores, but those scores mask the “many underachieving students . . . coming from

different backgrounds” (Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas, & Phongakorn, 2014, p. 1065). China is still in the beginning stages of implementing inclusive education and often faces concerns with “inadequate facilities and personnel training programmes, . . . lack of funding structures, . . . [and] absence of enabling legislation” (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010, pp.116-118). Hong Kong promotes inclusion, and the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO) enacted in 1995 and Code of Practice in Education enacted in 2001 denounce discrimination and give guidance for helping students with disabilities and their families (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). Also, the Inclusive Education Pilot Project was initiated in 1997 to include all children in regular schools (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). Through this project, teachers were provided with training on inclusion (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). Even with Hong Kong’s strong push for inclusion, only 218 of the 900 preschools in Hong Kong have integration programs to serve 1,860 children with special needs, and many teachers feel unprepared for inclusion (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015). Overall, China is still working to instate inclusive practices but needs more research in the ways to go about implementation.

### **Instructional Methods**

Globalization is increasing the interconnectedness of the world and effecting many different aspects of a person’s life. Views from all over the world are now able to influence one person. As globalization increases, the effects of increased interconnectedness are evidenced in classroom practices, teacher training, administrative views, and the people involved in education (Joseph, Marginson, & Yang, 2005).

**United States.** The United States has national standards and is making a strong push for implementing inquiry-based and 21st century learning which has been found to have positive effects on students’ desires to work and achieve in class (Farland-Smith, 2009; Borovay, Shore,

Caccese, Yang, & Hua, 2018). Studies suggest that instructors who engage in active learning in their instructional methods are typically more effective than if they used traditional lectures (Jensen, Kummer, & Godoy, 2014). Considering students' interests and helping them feel like they can succeed are two key factors in the instructional environments the teacher creates (Jensen, Kummer, & Godoy, 2014). With the increase in globalization, some may feel countries will begin to look the same, or become Americanized, however, each people and culture, although they will change with increased globalization, will change in their own unique way as influenced by their own cultures (Joseph, Marginson, & Yang, 2005).

**China.** Heung said that “examination-driven learning, academic achievement, and excellence are deeply rooted ideology and scant attention is paid to developing a student-focused education system” (Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas, & Phongaksorn, 2014, p. 1065). Heung also stated that reform has occurred in Hong Kong’s curricula and assessment and that the launching of integrated education has given students with disabilities opportunities to learn with non-disabled peers (Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas, & Phongaksorn, 2014). To continue to move forward Heung asserted that resourcing should be increased, teacher training should be improved, and teachers should be more competent (Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas, & Phongaksorn, 2014). Currently, few educational institutions provide training for support personnel such as “vocational counsellors, evaluators, and work placement specialists” (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010, p. 117) in schools that educate students with disabilities (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010). Children with a disability could have the cost of their education increase by 2.3 times that of children without a special need (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010). Evidence suggests that many developing countries are adopting inclusion policies because of the implications of equality and social

justice, but the benefits are not being reached because barriers have arisen in the implementing of effective inclusion practices (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010).

China has profound transformation taking place in its education system and the studies conducted about education (Joseph, Marginson, & Yang, 2005). However, historically, in the People's Republic of China, social scientists have not gained as much renown compared to others in the international community, and few publications produced in China have been cited in international catalogs (Yang, 2005). Western thought has traditionally believed that things are one or another, right or wrong, but Chinese traditions focus more on unity and oneness, and the education highlights two important values: growing moral character and a group instead of individual emphasis, which is typically the focus of special education (Yang, 2005). Even with these differences, Chinese researchers are attempting to replicate western countries in their research instead of focusing on their country and what would best suit it and its culture (Yang, 2005). Some argue that strategies for understanding and the interpretations of the studies would be from a western perspective and that "western social theories face serious problems in their application to other societies/cultures." (Yang, 2005, p. 70).

China received its original education theories from the west (often through missionaries) and Japan and began its educational research in 1901 (Yang, 2005). By the late 1940s, almost all education fields in the west had some representation in China, however, that education was often confined to the elite (Yang, 2005). When the Chinese Communist Party gained power in 1949, China became isolated from the west and relied on the Soviet Union (Yang, 2005). During that time, Marxist and Leninist education practices were the guiding theories, and after the split from the Soviet Union, China began the Great Leap Forward in 1957 targeting its socialist education (Yang, 2005). From May 1966 to November 1977, during the Cultural Revolution, China cut

itself off from the world (Yang, 2005). By the late 1970s, China changed to an open-door policy, and by 1981, China rebuilt following international trends, and since 1985, China has implemented education reforms and new educational developments (Yang, 2005). However, China's education research falls short in contextualizing and modifying knowledge imported from around the globe and social sciences have fallen behind the natural sciences, causing slow progress in solving practical problems and encouraging social progress (Yang, 2005). Criticism is also rare from social science research because of how heavily state controlled social science research is (Yang, 2005). Yang (2005) explained, "When Chinese educational researchers are invited to contribute chapters to books edited by international scholars and published by major academic publishers, their works often contrast sharply with thoroughly researched academic analyses" (p. 75). China's educational research rarely lists references (3.44% of the time), and the references listed rarely come from peer reviewed or foreign literature (Yang, 2005). However, Chinese literature is beginning to use international sources more frequently in publications (Yang, 2005). China is in the process of studying and implementing new teaching methods in the classroom, however, many were developed in the West with little data existing on how East-Asian cultures react to and interact with the methods developed.

### **Conclusion**

A large amount of the research conducted on special education has taken place in western countries with a large lack of research existing in east Asia, specifically China. The Chinese government has begun advocating for the rights of students with disabilities in recent decades, but little research has been conducted on the culture and its impact on special education (Eleweke & Rodda, 2010; Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015; Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas, & Phongaksorn, 2014; Yang, 2005). Researchers call for further research into China and educators'



perceptions on disability and special education (Parmenter, 2014; Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015; Lim & Thaver, 2014; Yang, 2005).

### **Method**

The purpose of this study was to understand the cultural perceptions of disabilities and the impact on special education for teachers at schools in China. No current research exists on this subject matter. Beginning research on Chinese culture and special education could prove helpful with research in special education in other cultural environments outside of western cultures.

### **Design**

For this basic qualitative study, an ethnographic design was used. Qualitative methods were used to explore and gain a holistic view of the influence of Chinese culture on its special education methods. Because the purpose of this study was to understand the cultural perceptions of disabilities and the impact on special education for teachers at schools in China, an ethnographic study was chosen to focus on an entire cultural group and gain full, detailed descriptions from those participating. In the research conducted, cultural perceptions of disabilities and the impact on special education were generally defined as the teachers' general understanding and acceptance of disabilities and persons with disabilities in the classroom. Participants involved in the Chinese education system completed a questionnaire and were interviewed with a predetermined set of questions used to understand what view they think their country has, what view they hold, and what they think of how their country views and helps those with disabilities. The interviews were recorded and then typed out verbatim. They were analyzed for common themes along with the questionnaire given and then coded, which was then used to develop proposed methods of special education to be implemented.

**Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher of this qualitative study, I am the human instrument who collected, analyzed, and categorized the data. Because I was deciphering the data, it was inevitably interpreted through the lens of my personal beliefs of education which have a western, American perspective. Knowing that I bring this bias, I observed and moderated those opinions to the best of my abilities. Before conducting the research, I came in with the assumption that China does not have an effectively implemented or accepted method for educating students with disabilities, and I believed some western methods could be adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities in China. To keep myself consciously and intentionally aware of my assumptions and biases, I kept a reflective journal throughout the data collection process to document personal thoughts and ideas and to attempt to separate those thoughts and ideas from the data I collected.

**Setting**

The setting for all the interviews and questionnaires were three major cities in northeastern China, and the schools were dispersed throughout the cities in more urban areas. Teachers were interviewed in their Chinese schools or workplaces. Interviews took place in various schools across China with differing student body and faculty sizes. Three of the schools in China were special education schools and four were private schools. Two of the private schools were international schools and served students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, one was privately owned and funded and included pre-kindergarten to eighth grade, and one was funded by the government and was a high school (grades seven through twelve). Of the three special education schools, one was a school for the blind and went through elementary school

(grades kindergarten through three), one was government run and had no set grade levels, and one was privately owned and had no set grade levels.

### Participants

The selection process for participants involved purposefully choosing respondents based on their involvement in the education system in China. The purpose for this selection was to receive the most cultural viewpoints from those directly involved in educating students in China. Participants were teachers in Chinese schools, working as a teacher for at least one year, and were Chinese nationals. Participants also came from a variety of Chinese schools such as a small private school and a special education school, as seen in Table 1. In total, twelve teachers were interviewed from seven different schools in northeastern China. At approximately the eighth interview, repeated themes began to emerge, and by the twelfth interview, no new themes had emerged, leading to the conclusion that thematic saturation had been reached (Patton, 2015).

Table 1

*Demographic Table of Participants*

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Teaching Degree</u>	<u>Types of School</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Years Taught</u>
Zhū Xìnxīn	Female	Yes/No	International	Elementary	1
Qiáo Shūlán	Female	Yes	Private	Highschool	29
Hú Yǎjìng	Female	Yes	Private	Highschool	15
Méi Lìshā	Female	Yes	Special Education	Special Education	10
Bái Qiàn	Female	Not Applicable	International	Elementary	3
Lǐ Hǎibō	Female	Yes	International	Elementary	10
Mǎ Lín	Female	Yes	Government	Highschool	10
Ān Hōngbīn	Male	No	International	Elementary	3

Luó Lì	Female	No Answer	Special Education	Special Education	No Answer
Kē Bólún	Male	Yes	International	Elementary	2
Zhēn Ní	Female	No	International	Elementary	2
Liú Hépíng	Male	Yes	Special Education	Special Education	6

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*Note.* The teacher Zhū Xìnxīn selected both yes and no on the questionnaire regarding whether she had a teaching degree.

### **Data Collection**

Several data collection methods were used. A questionnaire with demographics was first given to the participants. The second section of the questionnaire contained questions about self-efficacy and attitudes teachers had about students with disabilities and special education. Next, semi-structured individual interviews with scripted questions were conducted with each of the twelve teachers to collect data on the participants views, beliefs, and ideas. Eleven of the interviews were conducted in English and one interview was conducted with an interpreter present. Two of the English interviews had a translator present to assist in communication. Observations were also conducted in several schools with field notes being recorded after the observations. Information from how the classes were conducted was used in the data collections.

### **Data Analysis**

The first analysis was of the questionnaires filled out by the participants. Questionnaire data were analyzed through identifying similarities in the teachers' responses, coding the responses, and grouping the codes into similar categories which were then reduced further down into themes. Next, to analyze the data collected from the individual interviews, I transcribed the interviews verbatim, reviewed the transcripts line by line multiple times, identified codes, grouped similar codes into categories, and then grouped categories into overarching themes. I

conducted the same analysis on my field notes of observations. After analyzing each set of data individually, I then examined the information collected from the questionnaires and field notes and used that data to support the themes found from the interviews and from what I observed in classes to triangulate the data (Patton, 2015).

### **Trustworthiness & Ethical Considerations**

To establish credibility, a representative of the participants was given the opportunity to review the final interpretation of the data. The representative found the data interpretation to be accurate. The original data was preserved, and records of the researcher's thought process was kept for dependability. A faculty advisor not directly involved in the data collection was consulted to look at the design and analyze it for appropriateness to establish confirmability. Efforts were made to ensure maximum sample variation in terms of gender, type of school, and grade levels taught to increase the transferability of findings. For ethical considerations, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and site approval, adult informed consent for participants over 18, pseudonyms, and data secured on a password protected computer were used.

### **Results**

Throughout the research, teachers evidenced numerous similarities in their responses to the questionnaire and interview. They had a strong desire to teach their students the best way possible and to learn more ways to help their students. Two major themes were identified in data analysis: Theme 1: Disgrace to Honor, and Theme 2: Building on the Value of Collectivism.

#### **Theme 1: Disgrace to Honor**

In this first theme, teachers mentioned noticing the shift in views to be more accepting of those with disabilities as evidenced by statements such as Méi Lishā's: "I think it's changed a

lot.” Luó Lì, with the help of a translator explained the change from past to present: “From government policies to society, the acceptance level is pretty high... Back then, a few decades ago, people, when you see some disabled people on the street you might take a second look or keep staring at them, but nowadays it’s more normal... every year they [teachers] go to different trainings about special ed.” In many aspects of Chinese society, changes have taken place to create more supportive environments for those that have disabilities.

**Schooling through college.** The first area of change many mentioned was education. Teachers mentioned advancements for students with disabilities from pre-school to college. One teacher noted the changes he saw but also of the struggles within the schools he sees now:

I think that China’s making improvement, and their making improvements on how to treat people equally, and I’ve seen a lot of change in schools and the teacher are trying a lot of new thing which is good thing. But I think education in China in general is still, it can’t get rid of the old form, the old habit of teaching just because the managers or the people who are in charge of the school are still the older generation. And the younger generation might have creative ideas and they are able to try, and they are waiting to try new things, but they aren’t given opportunity to try, to do so. But I think that China has a very good promise in future ahead of it. (Ān Hōngbīn)

China has made great advancements in the education it provides. Schools have been opened for people with specific disabilities such as blindness and numerous other disabilities. Some general education schools also accept students with disabilities and are working with the parents of those students and with parents of students without disabilities to foster understanding. Certain colleges also allow students with disabilities to enroll if they meet the criteria necessary for

admittance. Lastly, teachers made mention of trade schools to allow students to train in a certain skill set and get a job in that field. From the interviews, these schools appear to have been accepting students with disabilities for the longest amount of time. China is seeing amazing advancements in its special educational practices and is continuing to improve in what it does for those students with disabilities.

**People with disabilities in China can find their niche and achieve.** In China, people with disabilities can find different avenues and make a living for themselves. If students are not able to go on to college, or if they cannot complete high school, they can get training for different trades. Méi Lìshā stated, “Most the students if you do not go to college most of them will do work as massage, you will see a lot of that.” At times, acceptance into the colleges for students with disabilities will depend on the disability and the level of severity, often making trade school a more viable option. Zhū Xìnxīn said, “For part of the people who have disability they can live, but I think it depends on which kind of disability.” The different disabilities a person may have can affect what they can do, but they will still be able to find a way to achieve and support themselves in China.

**Government tries to take care of those with disabilities.** The Chinese government makes many efforts to support those with disabilities from birth through adulthood: “The government has a plan for this group of students...[and] what the government has been doing is beneficial to the students and also the families” (Luó Lì). Part of the government’s plans include places that can diagnose if a child has a disability, orphanages, disability certificates, and laws to protect those with disabilities.

**Diagnosing disabilities.** Hospitals, some evaluation centers, and special training organizations that meet certain requirements are permitted to diagnose children and infants with

disabilities. Mǎ Lín said, “If it’s a mental disabled, for sure [there is a set process to identify them].” A pregnant mother will have established a relationship with a doctor before giving birth and will have routine exams throughout her pregnancy. If the baby is suspected to have a disability, the doctor will begin working with the mother to establish a plan to provide the best possible interventions for the child, and if a child is diagnosed with a disability later in life, a doctor will work with the parents to enact an intervention plan as soon as possible.

***Orphanages.*** China has established orphanages to care for children who do not have parents who can properly support them. Many children with disabilities are cared for by orphanages. These children will go to public school if possible and be in the general classroom with their peers. If a child has a disability requiring them to be in a special educational setting, the government will send in professionals to give training on how to provide the proper care and education for those children. Lǐ Hǎibō said, “In the orphanage, the government would send people with expertise to train kids in the orphanage. Yes, they would train people, and these people would work in the orphanage with the kids.” Some parents who cannot provide for their child’s disability will send their child to an orphanage to receive needed care and regularly visit that child. Lǐ Hǎibō gave an example: “I know some parents, they sent their kids to the orphanage if they are really, there’s a kid who has really severe down syndrome.” China uses orphanages and trained staff to tend to those with disabilities in whatever the individual’s needs may be.

***Disability certificates.*** When people are diagnosed as having a disability, they are sometimes able to get special aid from the government. To get this aid, they must have disability certificates. These certificates are given by government officials after someone with a disability provides evidence for their disability. Kē Bólún said, “I know some people they will get a



certificate. Like it will say what kind of level disability, what kind of disability. So, they will need to go to some bureaus, maybe fill out some form, go to hospital get some proof and they can get that thing,” and Ān Hōngbīn said, “There are different certificate that would prove they are disabled and need some kind of financial support or other things.” This certificate will often be a means for someone to get financial aid from the government if they cannot work on their own. The distribution of the monetary aid is facilitated by other government officials established in different regions and cities throughout China. Officials are also in charge of tracking how many persons with disabilities reside in each area and what the different disabilities are. Through the information these officials gather, those with the highest needs are aided first down to those who need the least aid. Through the disability certificates, the government works to ensure the wellbeing of its adult citizens with disabilities.

*Laws.* China has put forth numerous laws to protect individuals with disabilities from those who may seek to do wrong or disenfranchise them. For children, Chinese law requires nine years of formal education as seen in Lǐ Hǎibō’s statement: “The only required education is the nine-year obligated education for kids.” Mǎ Lín added the fact that all children, regardless of disability should have equal access to education: “The China’s law says that all the children have the equal right to be educated.” China also has laws to protect adults with disabilities when they seek jobs and are in the workforce. Lǐ Hǎibō expressed her feelings toward such laws, “I think it’s good. They need to work. They need to support their family.” When asked about the specifics of the laws, Hú Yǎjìng stated, “In China, yeah [there are laws], but I don’t know more details,” and Ān Hōngbīn thought, “In some way they are helpful.” Ultimately, although the teachers did not know specifics about the laws, they knew there were laws in place, and they had seen how those laws had been beneficial for those with disabilities.

**Different nongovernmental organizations try to help.** Privately run schools and nonprofits in China try to step in to offer support for individuals and families of those with disabilities. At one such school, Méi Lìshā stated, “We believe the kids have the future. That is most important... if you cannot change your children, you change yourself.” Organizations like the school this teacher works at have come to aid those with disabilities through providing for the physical needs of those with disabilities and their families and providing training for the families in how to best advocate and care for their children. Lǐ Hǎibō mentioned, “In China, most of support or service I heard of, comes from organizations, charity, or people who like the person I mentioned [a friend who works with those with disabilities].” Nongovernmental organizations aid in areas where a need is present such as educating parents on their child’s disability. China has made amazing advancements in its perception of and aid offered to those with disabilities. Schooling has become more open, more jobs are available, the government has taken steps to protect those with disabilities through government organizations and laws, and nongovernmental organizations have become involved in aiding those with disabilities creating the beginnings of wrap around support for those with disabilities.

## **Theme 2: Building on the Values of Collectivism**

Collectivism and the honor that comes with it are a large part of Chinese culture and have an influence over many of the actions a person takes. Whenever a person does something within society, they will consider the different groups they are involved in (such as work, family, and friend groups) and the impact different actions will have on those groups. Often a person will or will not take an action based on whether the action will benefit those in the groups or not. According to the teachers, to help China continue to improve in special education, the values within collectivism must be used to show how special education will benefit all.

Teachers stated that improving education would be good for all of society because the students with disabilities would be better educated so more students could join the workforce and continue advancing society. Additionally, some of the teachers mentioned how some special educational methods might benefit all students. Liú Héping spoke of his belief that China could improve more but that it still had a lot of benefits in place, “I think, maybe China also develop more, but still have a lot.” Another teacher summed up the necessary change in people’s mindsets before actions taken for the disabled community has lasting effects:

It would mean through more and more people; they are really accepting disabled people from the bottom of their heart. And they don’t really care about their handicapped problem, they really value their beautiful heart, the mental beauty, I mean the inner beauty. Then only by then the handicapped people will feel like they can feel more confident. (Mǎ Lín)

Two subthemes pertaining to policy and teacher training were identified within the overarching theme of the value of collectivism.

**Subtheme 1: Policy.** One of the two major areas of change the teachers thought necessary is in governmental policy. What teachers said about policy changes was typically either changes they thought the government should enact or laws and policies that they knew were already in place but felt should be enforced more. The advancements made by China were great, but the teachers also saw where China could continue in its advancements.

***More funding for special education.*** One of the most common things mentioned by teachers was the need for more government funding in special education. Kē Bólún said, “We don’t put enough money in the education.” Teachers saw how investing more in special education could provide general education schools with more resources and training to aid

students with disabilities. When asked about the current support given for students with disabilities, Zhēn Ní remarked, “I think we should support them more,” and Bái Qiàn said, “I feel like I didn’t see any facilities for disability people and to respect them and to help them or for the classroom either.” Mǎ Lín knew of facilities for those with disabilities but thought more focus should be on what the individuals needed: “We can see those kind of facilities [for those with disabilities]. But I don’t think they have done enough to help disabled people. I would suggest or advise in the future there could be, we shouldn’t just focus on facilities, we should focus on people.” Teachers could see the government’s investment in special education but thought more funding would assist schools to further reach students with diverse kinds of disabilities.

*Smaller class sizes.* Another component teachers thought affected the ability of educators and schools to provide effective special education was class size. When asked about the effect class size has on education in China, Bái Qiàn stated, “Yes, affects a lot. [laughs]. Yeah, because seventy [students in a class], you just can’t pay attention to all of them... Most Chinese teachers, they only pay attention on the top ten students or top twenty and then the last ten because they worry that they bother the good students.” Teachers said that in the past classes would have anywhere from fifty to seventy students per teacher but more recently class sizes had dropped to about thirty to forty students per teacher. Bái Qiàn also gave an example from when she was in school: “When I was a student, we had like fifty to seventy [students]... I think this two years ago or one year ago, China started two kid policy so they’re... But before that, so like, there are only one kids in a family, so I think now it’s not this big sized class.” Zhū Xìnxīn added, “On the one hand they want to help, but on the other hand, they don’t have the ability to help” when asked what schools do when they have a student with a disability wanting to enroll. Again, China has made improvements in reducing the student to teacher ratio, but more teachers are needed in

the field to continue alleviating the large class sizes and to make individualized education feasible for the teachers. The continued changes will aid all teachers.

***Giving resources to those with disabilities and their families.*** Outside of education, providing resources for those with disabilities and their families was viewed as a key component to bring continued growth and change in China. Kē Bólún felt very strongly about how those with disabilities should be included in activities: “I think that it’s not fair for them. They, especially those people born that way. I feel they have the right to join in activities in societies and things.” Zhēn Ní remarked that the people with disabilities can sometimes go un-noticed or -accepted: “They are the ones on the border.”

In the workforce, those with disabilities sometimes have difficulty finding jobs because of their disability. They can struggle to get the training for the job they want and if they get the training, they may have to work harder than usual to get hired. Liú Héping said, “I think it’s not easy,” about the difficulty for those with disabilities to get jobs. Additionally, those with disabilities could be encouraged more and given opportunities to achieve their goals. Hú Yǎjìng said, “We don’t really encourage them. ‘Ok, you can just stay at home. Your parents or relative can just take care of you,’” and Ān Hōngbīn said, “If they were provided the opportunity, I think they could achieve certain things.” The teachers believed that the disabled community could do great things if China continues improving itself and offers more resources to those with disabilities in the workforce and in school.

***Enforce standards supporting those with disabilities.*** Teachers made mention of the laws and policies and their benefits for those with disabilities both in school and in the workforce. They also thought the standards established could be better enforced to protect those with disabilities. All children are required to have nine years of education regardless of ability or

disability; however, Lǐ Hǎibō said, “They are supposed to, but the teachers are not trained to help them and there is no special needs department in most Chinese schools. There is no system to support it.” Sometimes school officials will discourage parents from placing their child with a disability in a school because they are unsure of their ability to help. Zhēn Ní said, “I think, legally, a public school, they are not supposed to turn down a student that has different needs, special needs, but most of the times, they will persuade parents to drop their students out anyways,” and Bái Qiàn gave an example: “He [a student with a disability] tried the first semester, he just, he run away from the school and the teacher just told her mother you may need to take him back home or go to other school, just pressured her to quit the school.” Ān Hōngbīn stated, “Many of the disabled children are not placed in school just because their parents are afraid of their being treated poorly.” Because the standards are not enforced as strictly, schools are able to encourage and allow families with children with disabilities to keep them from school. A standard is already in place that all children must receive an education, and if more strongly enforced, more children with disabilities would be in general education classrooms which would encourage more understanding and acceptance of those with disabilities.

**Subtheme 2: Teachers want more training.** The second major subtheme that almost every teacher brought up was wanting more training for teaching and supporting students with disabilities. Zhū Xìnxīn said, “I think all of the teachers, they have compassion and want to better help the kids if the kid is in the classroom.” Teachers often do not know where schools for those with disabilities are or where to go to prepare themselves to teach a student with disabilities. Mǎ Lín said, “Teachers, they don’t really know where those schools [for those with disabilities] are. So, teachers still need to be educated on that part sort of thing.”

When presented with the possibility of educating a student with a disability, Lǐ Hǎibō explained the thoughts that go through her head: “Like, ‘Oh, what am I gonna do? I don’t know how to treat this student and it’s a lot of work. It’s different from the rest of the class. I need to do something special.’” Hú Yǎjìng explained she has been looking to find someone to give her training: “I’m talk about doctor some professional come to help teachers, ‘Ok, when you fix this problem, you do this.’ They will teach us some methods to help you, but so far I cannot find this kind of help.” Ultimately, the teachers want all their students to succeed but are not always equipped to help students with disabilities succeed. In the questionnaire given before the interview, many of the teachers said they received training in special education, but many still felt unprepared to teach students with disabilities, showing the desire teachers have for more training in special education (see Figures 1 and 2). Mǎ Lín summarized the dilemma they face in wanting to help students succeed but not knowing how:

I can’t really give you a lot of love all of the sudden then you can understand everything in my class, and I know I have to make my class, my every class successful and all the students understand what I’m teaching, what I’m talking about. But at the same time, know there’s a kind of problem that is out of my boundary and struggle.

Received Training in Special Education Methods

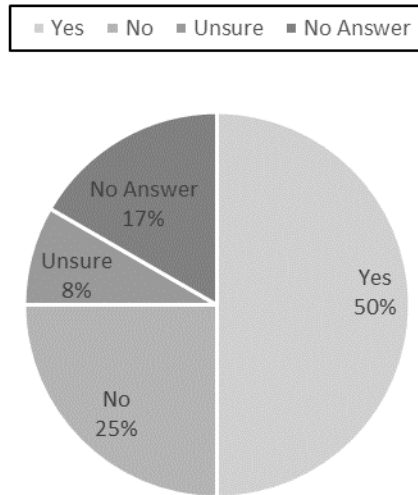


Figure 1. Percentage of teachers who had received at least some training in special education in some way according to responses given on the questionnaire.

Felt Prepared to To Teach a Student with a Disability

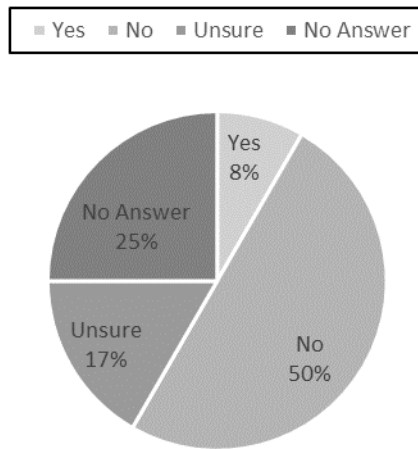


Figure 2. Percentage of teachers who, according to responses given on the questionnaire, felt the training or knowledge they had about special education gave them the necessary skills to teach a student with a disability if one was in their class.



*Want to know how to focus on individual students.* Teachers had a strong desire to learn how they could focus on the needs of each student and incorporate that into their teaching. Ān Hōngbīn said, “The typical Chinese way of teacher is just lecturing,” and expressed how teachers often did not understand how to branch into other methods of teaching. Lǐ Hǎibō made a similar statement about the teaching methods used in classes:

We teach as a whole group. Usually it’s a large group and differentiation is not in our vocabulary. Schools, they may refuse, they may not accept students like this [with disabilities] because their teachers can’t, or they don’t know how to teach them. Or if in a class like that, they are usually just ignored, teacher doesn’t work with them.

These teachers want to understand effective ways to benefit their students and are constantly working to improve their practices. However, even with all the work done, Hú Yǎjìng said, “But I still cannot find very effective ways to help. . . So, wait for she or he keep growing,” expressing the struggle to help their students and sometimes having to wait and hope they improve.

Teachers want to know as much as possible to provide the best education for each of their students.

*Western methods useful if adapted.* While talking to the teachers about what they thought could be done to further improve special education, some expressed the belief that western education methods could be useful in China if those methods were adapted “considering the population, class size, and different things we [Chinese teachers] teach” (Zhēn Ní). Qiáo Shūlán even expressed, “I don’t believe there is much difference from western and China education. I do believe there is difference between good and bad education.” Teachers also aligned Bái Qiàn’s statement of accepting people as they are regardless of disability: “I like the

education like this way to treat everyone equally and be nice to everyone and be helpful and be nice to friends.”

The teachers expressed their hopes and beliefs in the changes that could take place in Chinese education based on the improvements they had seen since they were in school and since they had started teaching. Lǐ Hǎibō said, “I know it takes many, many, many years, but I do hope that we could get there.” Another teacher said they thought given time, China would continue to improve and possibly adopt some western methods with modifications. Kē Bólún stated, “I think it needs time. Because I believe that a lot of people, they think the student has value.” According to teachers, western education methods hold potential in China if adaptations are made and its adoption is progressive.

***Teachers need support.*** One of the biggest components almost every single teacher expressed was the need for support from schools, families, and society. Hú Yǎjìng stated, “So, if you just have your own, even you know a lot, you still cannot work alone.” She went on to explain that even if a teacher has a lot of training and understanding in special education, it is not possible to make a change in school if there is no support from the school or other teachers. When asked if teachers receive enough support Kē Bólún responded, “In Chinese public school, I don’t think. . . We don’t have the special education, it’s not developed it’s not even started, I feel, in China.” Additionally, Ān Hōngbīn voiced, “I think that there’s a lot of bullying going on in Chinese public school [if a student has a disability].” Teachers said they need school support and more resources as keys to better educate students with and without disabilities.

Family support was also important to the teachers. Some parents are afraid of finding out if their child has a disability, but educators want parents to be willing to discuss the possibilities so they can work together to help the student. Mǎ Lín stated, “So, I think first of all, Chinese

parents, they don't want to admit it that's their children has problems." When talking about the positive effect parents can have, Hú Yǎjìng said, "And they [the parents] are the power, so we make it together so that they will not just affect one person but will be wider." Teachers also said parents sometimes have a mistaken view of education by placing everything on teachers and not acknowledging that other factors can affect a child's education. Mǎ Lín used an analogy to explain this: "So, their parents just think, 'Oh, yeah! We invest in you, of course this flower should bloom!' They will never think about, maybe the seeds has a problem, let's fix the seeds first." When asked if teachers are afraid to bring up disabilities to families and if families may try to hide disabilities, the same teacher responded, "Of course! I really can feel that people are not telling the truth because they don't want to be in trouble...and the problem is, even you tell them, there won't be any use" (Mǎ Lín). When teachers do bring up if a child is struggling in school, the news may elicit mixed responses from parents as explained by Hú Yǎjìng: "Some parents, they are really helpful, they say, 'Ok you say this, I will help.' Give me very good feedback. But some parents, it's so hard, I want to give up." Parents play a large role in a child's life and their education, and numerous times throughout the interviews, teachers pointed out the need for parents' support to give each child the most beneficial education.

The final component teachers talked about needing support from was society at large. Zhū Xīnxīn said, "The classroom teacher, they need support from the school and from the society and from the family." With support from society, acceptance of students with disabilities in school and at work will be more natural. A growing number of people have become more accepting, and teachers hope for change to continue. Mǎ Lín made the remark, "[I] know in Chinese culture, if we cannot see a physical disability, they won't regard a certain child as being disabled," explaining that some people do not think a child has a disability unless it is visible in

some way. Providing more education for the public would aid in increasing the acceptance in society for those with disabilities. With that support, teachers will be able to openly discuss disabilities with families and be able to include students with disabilities in their classes more easily.

### **Discussion**

From the research gathered, multiple implications for the United States and China exist. Previous research had seen the large class sizes in China being at about sixty to seventy students per teacher; however, teachers interviewed in the study have seen a decrease in class sizes to be at about forty students in the elementary classroom (Farland-Smith, 2009). The literature reviewed also indicated that China is promoting inclusion and inquiry-based learning throughout its schools (Lee, Yeung, Tracey, & Barker, 2015; Eleweke & Rodda, 2010; Farland-Smith, 2009). The teachers have seen inclusion in some schools, but not widespread inclusion and were themselves unsure of how to follow such policies and practices. Joseph et al. (2005) found vast improvements being made in China within the realm of educational research, and the interviews revealed that although more research should be done, China has continued to make advances in promoting understanding and acceptance of those with disabilities; previous researchers looked into what China was doing to promote education for those with disabilities, the methods used, and the success of those methods (Brine, 2010; Parmenter, 2014; Chiu, Wei, Lee, Choovanichvong, & Wong, 2011; Farland-Smith, 2009; Lee, Yeung, Tracy, & Baker, 2015), however, little research was found examining how cultural norms and values influence the education of students with disabilities and the methods used in that education. Through this research, a beginning look at how key culture is to the success of special education within a country was found. Multiple implications exist for both the United States and China.

### **Implications for the United States**

Four main implications can be applied in schools within the United States. First, teachers can use this information to be more understanding of the fact that families from China may have different views of disabilities. Second, teachers should value collectivism and the value placed on including all members of a family. A teacher can demonstrate appreciation of this value of collectivism by including the parents, grandparents, and siblings, showing respect to those families, being understanding in hearing out the concerns of the different families members, and being considerate of the impact the actions of the teacher may have on the family.

Third, a teacher should also be willing to genuinely listen to other viewpoints even if there is disagreement, again reflecting a value on the different ideas and beliefs the families may have. In parent teacher conferences, teachers should be willing to genuinely listen to the views of the parents and should work to better understand how and why the parents may feel as they do about different subjects. Teachers could also ask parents and other family members to share their beliefs and have a more open discussion with one another about the views they hold, why they hold them, and answer any questions that the teacher or family may have about each other's views. Although an agreement may not be reached, a teacher should seek to better understand the family and to work as a team with the family to provide what is best for the child.

Last, a teacher should seek to cultivate a classroom environment where questions, both academic and nonacademic, are encouraged. Creating a classroom where students can ask many questions also creates the possibility for many learning opportunities about things learned in class and about the world around each of the students. By creating these opportunities, teachers will teach their students about the many differences and similarities in the world and will cultivate more empathy within their students. By understanding these implications and applying

these recommendations, teachers can create classes where students and families from different cultures feel comfortable and heard even if different views are held.

### **Implications for China**

For China, three implications could be used to inform further educational growth when it comes to educating students with disabilities. First, collectivism can be used to promote the acceptance of those with disabilities. An emphasis on collectivism with respect to people with disabilities can be implemented through the explanations made by school administrators and teachers on how accepting those with disabilities would benefit society through creating classes with more individualized education for students with and without disabilities. By having students in the same classes together, more students would receive an education and they would learn to be more accepting of differences. Additionally, multiple studies have found positive academic and social benefits to having peers tutor one another in the class (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2014). Having more students educated means more people would be able to work and share their ideas within China, and people would be more accepting of differences and using those differences to advance society. Therefore, by using special education, all of society would benefit.

Second, teachers encouraged China to continue enacting more policies that support those with disabilities. The policies China has already enacted are good policies and should be more broadly enforced. If more policies continue to be enacted, more people stand to benefit, and society at large has more of a chance to benefit from including those with disabilities.

Lastly, more opportunities throughout China for teacher training could be created. Many of the teachers interviewed are eager to grow in their educational abilities and many said they would be willing to teach a student with a disability if they were given the proper training. China already has opportunities for teachers to receive training in certain places. By branching out in

locations and increasing training opportunities, China has the potential to give teachers more knowledge and readiness for educating students with and without disabilities. China has made a great deal of progress in educational practices and continued growth within education is encouraged for the benefit of the students, families, teachers, and society at large.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Multiple limitations in the research exist. While trying to be as unbiased as possible through the process, an important limitation to note is that a researcher raised in a western culture came to an east-Asian culture to conduct qualitative research. The brevity of the research done in country, which was almost two weeks, and the limited locations visited are also important limitations. Although numerous schools were visited, the locations were across three areas in the northeastern part of China. Last, all the participants interviewed spoke English as their second language except for one in which a translator was present. The language barrier present, given the researcher's inability to fluently speak Chinese and English being the second language of the participants, may have impacted the degree to which the teachers were able to convey their thoughts and the researcher was able to understand what they wished to communicate. Given the limitations of bias, time, locations, and language, this research is a starting point in the discussion of special education in eastern countries and further research is encouraged.

For future research within China, more teachers should be interviewed from more schools throughout the southern and western portions of China. In addition to research within China, expanding to look at east-Asian cultures outside of China is highly recommended. Further research in how western special education methods could possibly be adapted for east-Asian cultures is encouraged along with the possibility of new special education methods that could be

developed specifically for east-Asian cultures. Ultimately, numerous avenues of possible research exist and are recommended in special education in east-Asian cultures.

### **Conclusion**

A lack of research on special education within China was evident through the literature review. Qualitative ethnographic research was conducted in China with Chinese teachers on their understanding and views of special education. The two major themes were found to be in the change in view of disabilities in recent years and the need to continue to change through building on the value of collectivism inherent within China. The United States can take this research and use it to foster more understanding in the classroom for people coming from diverse cultures. China can use this research as encouragement to foster continued development in special education. From the research, China was found to be like many countries in that the government is working to improve education to be the best it can for all students. Ultimately, China has worked to improve education for all its students and should continue doing so.



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## Appendices

### Questionnaire

Please write an answer for each question as it applies to you. Circle N/A if you do not have a response or do not wish to give a response.

1. What is your nationality?		N/A
2. How many years have you taught?		N/A
3. What types of schools have you taught in?		N/A
4. On average, how many students are in your class?		N/A
5. How many students with disabilities have you taught?		N/A
6. What types of disabilities have been present in your class?		N/A

Please circle the answer that most applies to you. Circle N/A if you do not have a response or do not wish to give a response.

7. Are you over the age of 18?	Yes	No	N/A
8. Have you taught in more than one school?	Yes	No	N/A
9. Do you have a degree in teaching?	Yes	No	N/A
10. Were you taught methods in teaching students with disabilities?	Yes	No	N/A
11. Have you taught students with disabilities?	Yes	No	N/A
12. Do you feel prepared to teach a student with a disability?	Yes	No	N/A

## Interview Questions

1. What are your thoughts on Chinese culture and its overall view of those with disabilities?
  - a. Could you explain and give your thoughts on the general societal view of persons with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in China?
  - b. Where or what kind of schools do children with disabilities attend in China?
  - c. How do parents react if and when they find out another student in their child's class has a disability?
  - d. How do students react to finding out a peer has a disability?
  - e. Please explain your thoughts on how adults with disabilities are treated.
    - i. Do they have jobs?
    - ii. Are they respected?
    - iii. Where do they live?
2. Please explain your thoughts on how Chinese culture influence Chinese teachers' beliefs and practices with regard to students with disabilities.
  - a. What are your thoughts on the cultural perception of those with disabilities in China?
  - b. What are your personal views of persons with mild, moderate, and severe disabilities in China?
  - c. How is a person with disabilities received and treated in Chinese classrooms?
  - d. What has been your experience with how other teachers react when they find out a student with a disability is in a class?
    - i. How do they treat the other teacher?
    - ii. How do those teachers view the class?
  - e. Please explain your thoughts when you find out a student with disability is in another class.

- i. How do you view the other teacher's workload?
  - ii. How do you view that class's potential for achievement?
3. What is currently provided for students with disabilities in China?
  - a. What are your thoughts on the methods developed in the West for those with disabilities?
  - b. Is there a set process for identifying a student with disabilities?
    - i. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of this process in identifying students with disabilities?
    - ii. How is your class affected if you find out a student in your class has a disability?
  - c. Are there any laws in place for those with disabilities?
    - i. What do those laws require for students with disabilities?
    - ii. What are your thoughts on those laws?
  - d. What education is provided for persons with disabilities?
  - e. Is any of the education provided to those persons required by the government?
  - f. Are accommodations or aids provided for those with disabilities (Assistive technology, teacher aids, modified classroom settings, etc.)?
  - g. Are accommodations or aids required by the government?

What are your thoughts on what is provided for persons with disabilities in China?