

Policy-Driven Ten-Year Evolution of Inclusive Education in China (2015-2024) - Achievements, Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

This study provides a comprehensive overview of the policy-driven development of Inclusive Education in China from 2015 to 2024. A thorough analysis of the policy texts reveals a shift in the policy goal from the mere presence of school to the imperative of 'suitable integration', accompanied by a synergistic effect arising from the policy tools employed. Drawing upon education statistics, the analysis delves into the past decade's expansion in scale and structural optimisation within the domain of special education. Additionally, it outlines the advancements in practice across four key domains: the dissemination of concepts, the establishment of systems, the allocation of resources, and the training of teachers. The study also highlights the disparity in the quality of education, the inadequacy of support systems, and the disparate development across regions. The study utilises education statistics to analyse the expansion and structural optimisation of special education over the past decade. It elaborates on the progress of practice in the four dimensions of concept dissemination, system construction, resource allocation, and teacher training. The study identifies issues of uneven quality of education, weak support systems, and imbalance of regional development. It also puts forward countermeasures and suggestions for deepening the recognition of the concept, perfecting the policies and regulations, optimising the resource allocation, and reinforcing the teacher training. The objective of the present study is to provide academic support for the high-quality development of Inclusive Education and fair and quality education for children with disabilities.

Keywords: inclusive education, policy drivers, development achievements, issues and challenges, future prospects

1. Introduction

The definition of Inclusive Education was first formally clarified abroad in the Salamanca Declaration and Programme of Action on Special Education adopted at the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education. In China, the concept of inclusive education can be traced back to 1986, when the "Learning in Regular Classrooms" (LRC) model was mentioned in the Opinions on Several Issues Concerning the Implementation of the Compulsory Education Law — forwarded by the General Office of the State Council and issued by the State Education Commission and other departments. The term "Inclusive Education" was formally adopted for the first time in the Special Education Enhancement Plan (2014–2016) in 2014. Inclusive education refers to an educational approach that addresses the needs of all children. Every school must enroll all children within its catchment area, provide necessary conditions to ensure each child receives education tailored to their individual needs, and guarantee educational quality through appropriate curricula, school management, resource utilization, and collaboration with local communities (Zhongjian Zhao, 1996)[1]. Inclusive Education has been formally proposed in China for more than ten years, completing the transformation from practical exploration to conceptual consciousness. The historical process of China's Inclusive Education from scratch, from quantity to quality, and from partial integration to full integration is a natural choice to lead China's special education towards high-quality development in the new era (Yang Wang, Shuo Bai, 2024)[2]. China has made remarkable progress in Inclusive Education in the decade from 2015 to 2024, driven by strong policies, gradually moving from initial exploration to deepening development, and taking solid steps in concept dissemination, system improvement, resource allocation, teacher training, and teaching quality improvement. The development has made remarkable achievements and has entered a critical period of quality improvement, but at the same time it is facing many problems.

2. Policy Compilation and Analysis

2.1 Policy Text Review

The sustained advancement of inclusive education in China has been fundamentally guided and propelled by national policy frameworks. The Special Education Enhancement Plan (2014–2016), issued in 2014, marked the first national-level policy to explicitly articulate the concept of "inclusive education." It mandated proactive development of inclusive practices to deliver equitable, quality education for children with disabilities, formally integrating inclusive education into the national education system and laying the groundwork for subsequent policy refinement (Ministry of Education, 2014). In 2017, the revised Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities legally established developmental objectives for inclusive education, providing higher-tier statutory foundations for its implementation (State Council, 2017). The China Education Modernization 2035 blueprint (2019) designated comprehensive promotion of inclusive education as a cornerstone of educational modernization (CPC Central Committee & State Council, 2019). The 2020 Guidelines on Strengthening Learning in Regular Classrooms for Compulsory-Education-Age Children with Disabilities operationalized inclusive education through concrete measures—including teacher training, scientific assessment, and general-special education integration—offering actionable implementation protocols (Ministry of Education, 2020). Most recently, the 14th Five-Year Special Education Development and Enhancement Action Plan (2021) introduced the "suitable inclusion" paradigm, emphasizing personalized educational support aligned with individual differences among children with disabilities to foster holistic development and effective social integration (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

2.2 Evolution of Policy Objectives

The policy objectives of inclusive education in China demonstrate an evolutionary trajectory progressing from foundational to advanced dimensions, and from singular to multifaceted approaches. During the preliminary exploration phase (2014–2016), policies prioritized establishing an inclusive-access education system, addressing structural barriers to compulsory education coverage for children with disabilities. Through the institutional design of the *Special Education Enhancement Plan (2014–2016)*, the Learning in Regular Classrooms (LRC) model was formalized as the primary pathway for integrating disabled children into the national education framework. This marked a historic paradigm shift from segregated special education toward inclusive practices, focusing on guaranteed opportunity provision to fulfill the fundamental right to education access, thereby laying institutional foundations for subsequent development (MOE, 2014). The advancement and deepening phase (2017–2020) witnessed a qualitative leap in policy orientation: building upon universal enrollment, the focus transitioned toward precision-tailored quality enhancement. The revised Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities established China's first legal framework for inclusive education quality, driving systemic innovation through three mechanisms: (1) Creating a national network of special education resource centers to achieve intensive resource allocation and efficiency optimization; (2) Institutionalizing a professional "Assessment-Placement-Support" closed-loop system to strengthen Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation; (3) Fostering bidirectional collaboration between mainstream and special education schools to construct synergistic education communities. This strategic transformation from scale expansion to quality construction signaled China's entry into advanced-stage inclusive education development (State Council, 2017; MOE, 2020). In the current high-quality development phase (2021–2024), policy emphasizes achieving contextual suitability within inclusive education. This entails providing precision-targeted support services aligned with individual differences and special needs, promoting holistic development and effective social integration through personalized accommodation plans (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

2.3 Application of Policy Tools

In the process of policy advancement, a variety of policy tools have been utilized in an integrated manner. The legal safeguard tool provides a solid legal foundation for the development of Inclusive Education by amending the Regulations on Education for Persons with Disabilities and other regulations to clarify the legal status and implementation requirements of Inclusive Education (State Council, 2017). Economic incentive tools Increasing financial investment in special education, establishing special subsidies, and raising the standard of per-pupil public funding for special education schools and classroom-based resource classrooms have provided strong support for the resource guarantee of Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education, 2020). Administrative guidance tools Through the issuance of guidance opinions, action plans and other documents, the implementation of Inclusive Education in various regions has been guided and supervised, and the effective implementation of policies has been promoted (Ministry of Education, 2020; General Office of the State Council, 2021). Capacity-building tools Strengthen special education teacher training, promote special education courses in teacher training

colleges and universities, and carry out Inclusive Education teacher training to improve teachers' professionalism and teaching ability (MOE, 2021).

3. Data and Practice Development

Table 1. Core data sheet on special education development in China (2015-2024)

Year	Special education schools (number)	Full-time teachers (Million)	Enrollment (Million)	Enrolled students (Million)	Enrollment in Inclusive Education (Million)	Students enrolled in Inclusive Education (Million)	Percentage of enrollment in special education schools	Delivery of education to home (Million)
2015	2,053	5.03	8.33	44.22	4.48	23.96	-	-
2016	2,080	5.32	9.15	49.17	5.18	27.08	-	-
2017	2,107	5.60	11.08	57.88	5.66	30.40	-	-
2018	2,152	5.87	12.35	66.59	-	32.91	49.41%	11.64
2019	2,192	6.24	14.42	79.46	-	39.05	49.15%	17.08
2020	2,244	6.62	14.90	88.08	-	43.58	49.47%	20.26
2021	2,288	6.94	14.91	91.98	-	-	35.92%	-
2022	2,314	7.27	14.63	91.85	-	-	36.54%	-
2023	2,345	7.70	15.50	91.20	-	-	37.42%	-
2024	2,396	8.13	15.82	91.59	-	-	37.71%	-

Note – Source [7]

Note: Inclusive education (class attendance): data reported directly from 2015-2017, only the percentage (of students enrolled) is published from 2018 onwards, and will not be listed separately from 2021 onwards. Transformation of placements: data on 'home-schooling' was added in 2018, forming three main groups: classroom-based education, special education schools and home-schooling. Missing data: From 2021 onwards, the absolute value of enrolment/students in classroom education is not published, and only the percentage of enrolment in special education schools is retained.

The analysis shows that the scale of special education in China has grown significantly over the period 2015-2024, with the number of students increasing from 442,200 to 915,900, at an average annual growth rate of 8.43 per cent. This growth reflects the national attention and policy support for special education. The development of special education is divided into two phases: a period of high growth from 2015-2019, with the number of students increasing by 79.7 per cent and approaching 800,000 in 2019; and a period of structural adjustment from 2020-2024, with the growth rate slowing down to 3.99 per cent, but the disclosure of data on special education schools shows that about 37 per cent of the students are studying in special education schools, and the remaining 63 per cent are receiving Inclusive Education in ordinary schools. It shows that the special education supply structure is diversifying. (Until 2019, the number of special education students includes students studying with classes in compulsory education, special education classes attached to other schools, and students sent home. [Until 2019, the number of special education students includes students in compulsory education with classes, special education classes attached to other schools, and students sent home])

3.1 Data Analysis

Firstly, the development status of special education schools and their teaching staff is explored. According to the 2015 National Education Development Statistics Bulletin, the number of special education schools in China reached 2,053, and the number of full-time teachers was 50,300. By the time the 2024 National Education Development Statistics Bulletin was released, the number of special education schools had increased to 2,345, an increase of 292 schools compared to 2014, with a growth rate of 14.22 per cent (Ministry of Education, 2013; Ministry of Education, 2024). This data shows that the number of special education schools has increased over the past decade, providing more children with disabilities with a specialised place of education. The increase in the number of special education schools not only reflects the importance the state attaches to the cause of special education, but also society's concern for the educational needs of children with disabilities. With the increase in the number of special education schools comes an increase in the number of full-time teachers, all of whom have received professional training and have accumulated a wealth of teaching experience through practice, and are

committed to providing professional and personalised educational services to students in special education schools. The increase in the number of special education schools and teachers has laid a solid foundation for the full-scale promotion of Inclusive Education, and has made a positive contribution to the realisation of educational equity. Between 2015 and 2024, the number of full-time teachers in special education increased from 50,300 to 81,300, an increase of 31,000, or a growth rate of 71.3 per cent. However, compared to the change in total enrollment from 2015 to 2025, the growth rate in the number of special education teachers was less than half the growth in enrollment, a phenomenon that deserves further attention.

Second, the enrolment and enrolled students in special education are analysed. According to the 2015 National Education Development Statistics Bulletin, a total of 83,300 students were enrolled in special education nationwide, with a total of 442,200 students in school. By the time the 2024 National Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Education was released, the number of special education students enrolled reached 158,200, and the total number of students enrolled in schools increased to 915,900, an increase of 107 per cent compared to 2015 (Ministry of Education (MOE), 2015; Ministry of Education (MOE), 2024). The growth in enrolment and the number of students attending school reflects the increase in the popularity of special education. This growth trend is attributed to the strong support of the national special education policy and the gradual increase in social attention to special education. The growth in enrolment and number of students in special education schools has enabled more and more children with disabilities to have the opportunity to receive special education, which not only helps students grow and progress, but also helps maintain social harmony and stability. The significant growth in enrolment and student numbers also highlights the continuous improvement in the quality and effectiveness of special education schools, which has prompted more families with disabilities to choose to send their children to special education schools. Of course, the significant growth in enrolment and number of students will also further strengthen and professionalise the special education talent pool, thus ensuring the sustained, healthy and rapid development of the special education cause.

Finally, the development status of class-attendance and Inclusive Education is explored. The 2015 National Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Education pointed out that 44,800 students were enrolled in regular primary and junior high schools and attached special education classes, with 239,600 students enrolled, accounting for 53.78 per cent and 54.18 per cent of the total number of students enrolled and enrolled in special education, respectively. From 2018 onwards, only data on the percentage of students enrolled in schools will be published, while data on classroom enrolment and attached special education classes will no longer be listed separately from 2021 onwards. However, extrapolating from the data in the 2024 National Statistical Bulletin on the Development of Education, which shows that there were 345,400 students enrolled in special education schools, accounting for 37.71 per cent of the proportion of students enrolled in special education, the total number of students enrolled in all forms of special education in 2024 was about 570,500, which compared to the 239,600 students enrolled in classroom-attached and special education classes in ordinary primary and junior high schools in 2015, an This represents an increase of 330,900 students, a growth rate of 138 per cent (MOE, 2015; MOE, 2024). This indicates that since the concept of Inclusive Education was first clarified in China in 2014, the scale of Inclusive Education has gained significant growth in China over the past decade, and class-attached schooling has become one of the most important forms of special education, with more and more children with disabilities receiving education in ordinary schools. The popularity of the study-with-class model is the result of national policy guidance and the updating of educational concepts. Studying with classes helps children with disabilities to integrate into society and enhance their social skills and self-esteem, while making ordinary students more understanding and supportive of their peers with disabilities, and fostering a culture of inclusiveness and diversity in society. In addition, studying with classes also helps to relieve some of the pressure on special education schools, making the use of special education resources more rational and the allocation of resources more scientific. However, there are some problems, such as how to maintain the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom, and how well the individual differences of students with disabilities fit into the classroom, etc. These problems call for further improvement of the classroom model and its supporting policies and mechanisms, as well as improvement of the professionalism and teacher quality of teachers who work in the classroom, so as to provide better teaching and learning services for children with disabilities.

3.2 Practice Development

First, Conceptual Dissemination and Social Acceptance. The propagation and internalization of inclusive education concepts in China have undergone profound processes of institutional construction and social mobilization. Through policy instruments such as the Special Education Enhancement Plan, educational authorities elevated inclusive education to the status of a national educational imperative, establishing a tripartite linkage mechanism spanning provincial, municipal, and school levels that solidified robust institutional legitimacy. Within

school ecosystems, organizational transformation progressed from passive compliance to proactive innovation. In national pilot zones for inclusive education, 92% of mainstream schools established tripartite support teams comprising resource teachers + homeroom teachers + special education specialists, collectively developing over 100,000 differentiated instructional modules (China Special Education Development Report, 2023). At the societal level, leveraging media campaigns during the National Disability Assistance Day and community outreach by disability federations, public acceptance rates surged from 63.8% at the end of the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2015) to 86.5% by the conclusion of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2020), reflecting qualitative leaps in cultural acceptance (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2022). Concrete measures driving this shift include: Schools conducting professional development workshops to enhance educators' competencies in inclusive pedagogy; Parent seminars demystifying disability inclusion and fostering home-school collaboration; Public awareness initiatives through multimedia platforms and community dialogues. These efforts collectively cultivated a supportive societal ecosystem for inclusive education advancement (Jianhui Huang and Yirong, Chen, 2023)[3].

Secondly, institutional development and improvement. With the impetus of its policies, China has initially established an institutional system for Inclusive Education. With regard to the enrolment assessment and placement system, a mechanism for assessing the enrolment of children with disabilities has been set up to comprehensively assess their physical condition, ability to receive education and adapt to school life, providing a basis for the scientific and reasonable placement of children with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2020). With regard to the resource support system, the construction of special education resource centres has been strengthened to provide special education resource support and professional guidance to ordinary schools. At the same time, schools are encouraged to set up resource classrooms equipped with the necessary teaching and rehabilitation equipment to provide individualised educational support for children with disabilities (General Office of the State Council, 2021). In developing teaching faculty, China focuses on building a comprehensive capacity system for inclusive education that spans both pre-service training and in-service development. On the one hand, it systematically enhances the professional preparation of special education teachers through optimizing teacher preparation programs, strengthening practical coursework, and implementing special education teaching certification. On the other hand, inclusive education competencies have been integrated into mandatory training for all mainstream school teachers, establishing tiered training mechanisms that prioritize applied competencies in student assessment, differentiated instruction, and classroom management—ensuring all teachers possess the professional readiness to implement inclusive education.

Again, resource allocation and optimisation. The construction of special education resource centres has been vigorously strengthened at the national and local levels, and a special education resource support network covering the whole country has gradually been formed. For example, special education resource centres have been commonly established in various places to provide resource support and professional guidance to ordinary schools. These resource centres have played an important role in teacher training, curriculum development, and teaching guidance, providing strong support for ordinary schools to carry out Inclusive Education (Ministry of Education, 2020). Ordinary schools have actively improved school conditions to create a good learning and living environment for children with disabilities. Many schools have set up resource classrooms equipped with teaching materials, teaching aids and rehabilitation equipment suitable for the characteristics of children with disabilities, providing individualised educational support for children with disabilities (General Office of the State Council, 2021).

Finally, teacher training and enhancement. Over the past decade, China has made significant breakthroughs in building the special education teaching workforce, laying a solid talent foundation for advancing inclusive education. According to official statistics, the number of full-time teachers in national special education schools was 50,300 in 2015. By 2024, this figure had increased to 81,300, representing a net gain of 31,000 full-time teachers over ten years—a growth rate of 61.6%, with an average annual increase exceeding 3,000 teachers. This growth trend highlights the dual effectiveness of national policy guidance and institutional collaboration: (1) Quantitative Leap: The total number of teachers expanded from the 50,000 level to over 80,000, marking a historic increase in the reserve of special education professionals. This has effectively alleviated the bottleneck of professional manpower shortages in inclusive education practice; (2) Structural Optimization: Teacher training colleges have progressively established a comprehensive training system for cultivating versatile teachers. This system covers core competencies like assessment and intervention, Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, and resource room operation. Achievements include adding special education majors, expanding targeted enrollment programs, and strengthening cross-disciplinary courses in "rehabilitation + education." Notably, starting in 2020, China introduced a new undergraduate major in Inclusive Education. Guided by

Marxism, this major aims to cultivate specialized professionals with a firm political orientation, noble moral character, and solid theoretical and practical skills in inclusive education. These graduates can work in various educational institutions, including regular schools, special education schools, resource centers (classrooms), and inclusive education centers. Their roles encompass teaching, itinerant guidance, management, and research, contributing to the modernization of education. In 2021, Central China Normal University enrolled its first cohort of students in the Inclusive Education major. According to the Ministry of Education's Sunshine College Entrance Examination Platform, four institutions in China currently offer this major. This injects new vitality into building the inclusive education teaching workforce, providing strong talent support at the source for the high-quality development of inclusive education. These specialized teachers play a crucial role in inclusive education practice. They not only possess the teaching capabilities required for children with disabilities but can also provide professional guidance and support to regular teachers, helping them improve their inclusive education teaching proficiency (Ministry of Education, 2021).

At the same time, the theoretical level and practical ability of teachers in Inclusive Education have been improved through multi-level and multi-form teacher training activities. For example, many places regularly organise teachers to participate in specialised training on Inclusive Education, inviting experts to give lectures and share the latest theories and practical experiences in Inclusive Education. Teachers pay more attention to the individual differences of children with disabilities in education and teaching, and adopt diversified teaching methods and strategies to meet the learning needs of children with different disabilities (Jianhui Huang and Yirong, Chen). [3]

4. Problems and Responses

4.1 Problems

4.1.1 There is a Relative Lack of Inclusive Education Literacy Among Regular Teachers

Significant Deficiencies Exist in Inclusive Education Competency Among General Teachers. Although national-level regulations and policy documents—such as the Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities of the People's Republic of China (2017 Revision), the Second Phase Special Education Enhancement Plan (2017–2020), and the National Teaching Quality Standards for Undergraduate Programs in Regular Higher Education Institutions—explicitly mandate "the inclusion of special education courses in general teacher training programs," to "equip pre-service general teachers with the ability to instruct and educate students with disabilities," implementation in practice remains suboptimal. According to the author's sampling survey of teacher training curricula across multiple normal universities, the overall proportion of compulsory or core courses specifically dedicated to inclusive education remains low. Notably, a substantial number of local teacher-training colleges have yet to systematically integrate inclusive education concepts and practical skills into their pre-service teacher development programs. This gap in curriculum design directly contributes to a widespread lack of essential inclusive education knowledge and core competencies among future general teachers, leaving them inadequately prepared to address the heterogeneous learning needs within inclusive classrooms. A survey of 137 teacher training colleges and universities in China that offer special education courses found that only 19 colleges and universities offer compulsory and elective courses in special education, accounting for 13.9% of the total number of respondents, and these colleges and universities occasionally offer or used to offer these courses (HaiPing Wang, 2006). [4] The establishment of an Inclusive Education course in the general teacher training programme will become an important content and an inevitable requirement for the construction and improvement of teacher training specialties in the future. The introduction of a course on Inclusive Education in the general teacher education programme will become an important content and inevitable requirement for the construction and improvement of the future teacher education programme, and it is an effective strategy for solving the problem of the relative lack of Inclusive Education literacy of general teachers (Yajing Feng and Yan Wang, 2020)[5].

4.1.2 Quality of Inclusive Education Varies

Current inclusive education quality exhibits significant regional and inter-school disparities. While China has made substantial progress in scaling inclusive education and accelerating its development pace, quality advancement has failed to keep pace. This gap manifests in two structural deficiencies: First, a nationally unified quality assessment system for inclusive education remains underdeveloped, lacking scientific and multi-dimensional monitoring indicators. Second, a pronounced implementation gap exists at the grassroots level—many mainstream schools demonstrate insufficient recognition of inclusive education's strategic value. They have neither established systematic philosophies of inclusion nor developed pedagogical methodologies tailored to diverse learners. More critically, numerous teachers maintain a superficial understanding of inclusive education, failing to address the individualized developmental needs of students with disabilities. This oversight results in practical blind spots regarding critical classroom adaptations and differentiated instruction. Such asynchronous development between

scale and quality objectively impedes the holistic enhancement of inclusive education effectiveness. The phenomenon of 'sitting with the class' exists in the teaching process, and the learning effects and quality of education for children with disabilities are not effectively safeguarded. In addition, due to large class sizes and limited teaching resources, some schools have difficulty in meeting the individualised educational needs of children with disabilities (Jianhui Huang and Yirong, Chen). [3]

4.1.3 Teacher-Student Ratio Further Deteriorates, Quality Concerns Under Scale Expansion

The structural imbalance in the student-teacher ratio within special education has intensified amid rapid enrollment expansion. Over the past decade, China's special education sector has achieved significant progress in scaling access, yet this quantitative growth has simultaneously intensified underlying resource allocation challenges. The core issue stems from a severe disconnect between student population growth and teacher supply capacity: From 2015 to 2024, the national enrollment of special education students surged from 447,200 to 915,900—a 107% increase that nearly doubled the beneficiary cohort. During the same period, the number of full-time teachers only grew from 50,300 to 81,300, representing a markedly lower growth rate of 61.6%. This difference in growth rates led to a deterioration in the student-teacher ratio from 1:8.8 to 1:11.3, implying a 28.4 per cent increase in the average number of students burdened per teacher (Ministry of Education, 2015-2024). Particularly alarming is the persistent deterioration of the student-teacher ratio despite achieving the policy target of 95% enrollment rate for children with disabilities by 2020. By 2024, China's national special education student-teacher ratio reached 1:11.3—exceeding the International Special Education Association (ISEA) recommended threshold for students with moderate-to-severe disabilities (1:8) by 41.3 percentage points. This acute contradiction exposes a structural misalignment between quantity-oriented policies and quality assurance mechanisms. As policy priorities undergo a paradigm shift from "securing educational access" to "enhancing educational quality," reconstructing teacher allocation logic through tripartite systemic reforms becomes imperative: Establishing dynamic staffing allocation mechanisms that implement disability-type-and-severity-differentiated ratio standards; Mandating resource teacher deployment in mainstream schools to ensure professional support in every institution accommodating students in regular classrooms; Optimizing itinerant teaching service models by creating "teacher + therapist" dual-professional teams to improve home-based education effectiveness. These three initiatives may constitute critical pathways for resolving core contradictions during China's inclusive education quality enhancement phase. (Full-time special education teachers include full-time special education teachers in special education schools and other schools with special education classes attached to them.)

4.1.4 Support and Guarantee System to be Improved

The promotion of Inclusive Education requires sound policies and regulations, adequate funding, professional teachers and an effective social support system. At present, China still has some shortcomings in these areas. The advancement of inclusive education currently faces three systemic constraints: First, systematized development of legal frameworks lags behind, where existing regulations such as the Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities lack specialized implementation rules and standardized operational guidelines for inclusive education. This results in grassroots practitioners facing an "unenforceable legislation" dilemma. Second, fiscal support mechanisms suffer dual-dimensional deficiencies in both scale and structure. Investment in special education funding remains inadequate in both absolute terms and proportional allocation, failing to meet foundational needs for resource room construction, specialized equipment procurement, and teacher training required by inclusive education. Third, a collaborative social ecosystem remains underdeveloped. Low family engagement, weak community support networks, and insufficient professional capacity among social organizations collectively hinder the formation of a multi-stakeholder governance framework (Jianhui Shen and Peifeng Wang, 2023)[6]. Resolving these triple constraints necessitates integrated governance approaches including legislative refinement, dynamic funding growth mechanisms, and social capacity-building initiatives.

Finally, regional coordinated development faces structural challenges. Influenced profoundly by disparities in economic development levels and educational foundations across regions, China's inclusive education advancement exhibits significant spatial disparities. Notably, eastern and economically developed regions demonstrate systemic advantages in implementation: Resource allocation exhibits stronger adequacy and sustainability, with relatively complete special education infrastructure and professional teaching aids; Teaching workforce professionalism shows higher overall compliance rates, featuring a significantly larger proportion of qualified inclusive education practitioners; Quality assurance mechanisms operate at relative maturity, having established well-developed support systems for students with special educational needs. On the other hand, the development of Inclusive Education in the central and western regions and less economically developed regions is relatively lagging behind, with a lack of special education resources, a shortage of teachers, and a greater difficulty in advancing Inclusive Education (Jianhui Huang and Yirong, Chen, 2023). [3]

4.2 Development Proposals

Firstly, strengthen the concept of publicity and training. Further strengthen the publicity of the concept of Inclusive Education, which is a new kind of education established on the basis of people's pursuit of equality, respect, tolerance and harmony, and which holds people's expectations for the pursuit of a better life, and which contains: (1) All children have the right to receive education on an equal footing (2) Every child with SEN should be provided with a high-quality and appropriate education (3) The realisation of Inclusive Education (3) the realisation of IE requires the collaborative efforts of all parties involved (4) the building of an inclusive society through IE (Deng Mang and Li Fang, 2023). To further strengthen the training of all parties involved in IE, and to raise the awareness and understanding of IE among education administrations, school administrators, teachers, as well as parents and the general public. Through organising special lectures, training seminars, case sharing and other activities, in-depth interpretation of the connotation, objectives and implementation strategies of Inclusive Education has been carried out to create a favourable atmosphere in which the whole society cares about and supports Inclusive Education (Jianhui Huang and Yirong, Chen, 2023)[3].

Secondly, improve the policy and regulation system. Accelerate the formulation and improvement of laws, regulations and policy documents on Inclusive Education, and clarify the responsibilities and obligations of governments at all levels, education administrative departments, schools and all parties in society in Inclusive Education, so as to provide stronger legal protection for the development of Inclusive Education. At the same time, specific implementation rules and operational guidelines are formulated to strengthen the guidance and supervision of the Inclusive Education policy and ensure the effective implementation of the policy (Jianhui Shen and Peifeng Wang, 2023)[6].

Third, optimizing resource allocation requires focused resolution of regional supply imbalances. Key priorities include: (1) Strengthening targeted investment mechanisms for central/western and economically underdeveloped regions, utilizing policy instruments such as central fiscal transfers to tangibly alleviate concurrent shortages in total resource volume and structural inadequacies in special education; (2) Systematically advancing special education resource center development through scientific spatial planning, establishing a tiered support network of "Resource Centers ↔ Mainstream School Resource Classrooms"; (3) Enhancing resource utilization efficiency by prioritizing equipment allocation of essential teaching and rehabilitation devices in disadvantaged areas, achieving qualitative enhancement from basic availability to optimized effectiveness of critical resources. Encourage social forces to participate in Inclusive Education, broaden funding channels, and provide more adequate resource support for Inclusive Education (Jianhui Huang and Yirong Chen, 2023)[3].

Fourthly, Strengthen the Faculty Development for Inclusive Education and Enhance Teachers' Professional Competencies. Strengthen the training of special education faculty to enhance teachers' professional competencies and teaching abilities. Support qualified higher education institutions in establishing inclusive education programs, increase the proportion of government-funded normal students specializing in inclusive education, and attract more outstanding talent to engage in inclusive education. Integrate special education-related courses into teacher education programs, with a focus on cultivating teachers equipped with inclusive education concepts and pedagogical skills. Simultaneously, organize multi-level and diverse forms of teacher training to continuously improve teachers' instructional capabilities in inclusive education. Furthermore, establish professional development incentive mechanisms to encourage teachers to actively participate in inclusive education practice and research (Jianhui Huang and Yirong Chen, 2023)[3].

The In-Depth Development of Inclusive Education in China requires a set of systematic, interconnected, and collaboratively advanced strategies. These four core strategies collectively form an organic framework supporting the high-quality development of inclusive education: First, Deepening Conceptual Understanding and Fostering Social Awareness Serve as the Cornerstone. Through sustained, multi-dimensional, and wide-reaching publicity campaigns and specialized training on inclusive education concepts, the aim is to comprehensively enhance the understanding, recognition, and support for the value of inclusive education among all sectors of society (including educational administrators, general teachers, students' parents, and the public). This lays a solid ideological foundation for policy implementation and resource investment. Second, A Robust Policy and Legal Framework Provides the Fundamental Safeguard. Efforts must focus on formulating and refining laws, regulations, and supporting policies covering all aspects of inclusive education. This involves clarifying responsibilities and accountabilities, standardizing operational procedures, and creating a stable, fair, and predictable legal environment for the comprehensive rollout of inclusive education. This ensures the effective implementation and execution of all policy measures. Third, Optimizing Resource Allocation and Promoting Equitable Development Are Key Links. Addressing the current imbalanced distribution of special education resources (such as dedicated funds, specialized equipment, barrier-free facilities, support services, etc.) necessitates scientific planning and

targeted investment. Resources must be prioritized for under-resourced regions and schools to fundamentally resolve resource shortfalls. This provides a solid material foundation for enhancing the overall quality and equity of inclusive education. Fourth, Strengthening the Teaching Workforce Constitutes the Core Driving Force. Teachers' professional competence and pedagogical skills directly determine the effectiveness of inclusive education implementation. Therefore, it is imperative to continuously enhance teachers' conceptual alignment, knowledge base, and practical skills in delivering inclusive education through comprehensive measures. These include: Strengthening pre-service training (e.g., integrating special education courses into teacher education programs, expanding enrollment for inclusive education specializations). Improving multi-tiered, post-service training systems. Establishing professional development incentive mechanisms. This empowers teachers to become the backbone force propelling the high-quality development of inclusive education.

In conclusion, government education authorities, schools at all levels, and all societal stakeholders must profoundly recognize the inherent unity and synergistic necessity of these four strategies. By forming a cohesive force and actively implementing the measures, and only by concurrently advancing conceptual guidance, institutional support, resource provisioning, and teacher empowerment, can development challenges be effectively addressed. Together, we can propel China's inclusive education endeavor towards a new stage characterized by higher quality, greater equity, and enhanced sustainability.

5. Conclusion

Driven by proactive policies, China's inclusive education has achieved remarkable breakthroughs from 2015 to 2024. The field has established a solid foundation through deeper theoretical understanding, innovative practical models, strengthened institutional frameworks, and enhanced resource guarantees. Looking ahead, China's inclusive education development must persistently tackle hard challenges and resolve deep-seated contradictions. Further efforts should focus on: Deepening educational reform, Improving support service systems, Elevating educational quality. We remain steadfast in creating equitable, high-quality educational opportunities for every child with disabilities, allowing the flower of inclusive education to blossom across China with renewed vitality and epochal brilliance.

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