

*In-Service Expatriate Teachers' Experiences With Inclusive Education in Chinese Private Schools*

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the experiences of in-service expatriate teachers who provide differentiated instruction for students with special educational needs (SEN) in regular classrooms at mainland Chinese private schools. The following central research question guided the study: What are the experiences of in-service expatriate teachers who provide differentiated instruction for students with special educational needs in regular classrooms at mainland Chinese private schools? This study used a theoretical framework of Ajzen's theory of planned behavior by examining the planned behavior of in-service expatriate teachers as influenced by the subjective norms of the surrounding culture and their perceived behavior control for providing differentiated instruction for students with special educational needs. Participants were 12 in-service expatriate teachers at a medium-sized Chinese private school. Data collection consisted of physical artifacts, personal interviews, and focus groups. The major theme derived from the data was a disparity between the culture of the participant's home country and the country they resided in which led to lowered self-efficacy for differentiated instruction. The findings of this study are consistent with the research previously conducted on teacher self-efficacy and inclusive education. Interpretations of the themes had significant interpretations of the cultural dissonance among expatriate teachers in Chinese schools.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Special Educational Needs, Theory of Planned Behavior, China

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## **Introduction**

Despite the widespread global recognition that inclusive education addresses the issues encountered by learners with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities (United Nations, 2015), students' risk for the marginalization of their academic, social, and emotional needs exists (O'Connor & McNabb, 2021). Children with SEN in mainland China are especially vulnerable as opportunities to study in inclusive educational settings remain extremely limited (Cheng et al., 2021). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of in-service expatriate teachers who provide differentiated instruction for students with SEN in regular classrooms at mainland Chinese private schools.

## **Background**

With the implementation of the People's Republic of China's 1994 Learning in Regular Classroom (LRC) initiative, the Chinese education system outlined a policy to increase the number of students with special educational needs (SEN) allowed to attend regular classrooms (Wang & Qi, 2020; Zhu & Mu, 2019). This initiative tasked regular classroom teachers with educating learners of mixed abilities, including SEN, within the same classroom (Xie et al., 2021). However, a long history of societal disregard for people with SEN and disabilities, combined with the inconsistent implementation of the LRC legislation, has meant that LRC has had limited success in providing effective inclusive education for students with SEN and disabilities in Chinese classrooms, despite mainland China's attempt to promote inclusive education (Qu, 2022c; Xie et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2018; Yuan et al., 2022).

Contemporary critics (An et al., 2018, Mu, 2021; Qu, 2019) claim that LRC policies hinder governmental support for inclusive education rather than promote it. Many schools that claim to be inclusive offer only tokenistic inclusion for students with SEN, which results in the continued marginalization and stigmatization of learners with minimal academic support or adjustments for learning (Cheng et al., 2021). As a result, little academic accommodations are regularly available for learners with these educational needs. Many authors have concluded that mainland China must address significant challenges in the implementation of inclusive education before an effective inclusive system can be attained (An et al., 2018; Chao et al., 2018; Deng & Manset, 2000; Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2004; Deng & Poon-McBrayer, 2012; Faragher et al., 2021; Li & Li, 2020; Monteiro et al., 2019; Xie et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2018).

The prevailing negative perceptions of students with SEN in terms of their intelligence, their behavior, and the disruption to classrooms are significant obstacles to total acceptance and adoption of effective inclusive education in China (Jia et al., 2022; Li & Li, 2020). These negative attitudes about inclusion are perhaps the most significant barrier to successful inclusion (Sharma & Sokal, 2016). These societal perceptions also directly influence teachers' treatment of and instruction of students with SEN (Monteiro et al., 2019).

An increasing number of developed countries have embraced inclusive education, and Western countries have provided pre-service and in-service training on special education topics (Lindner & Schwab, 2020). Expatriate teachers who teach in Chinese schools may have had previous experience in differentiated instruction and inclusive education and encounter a social climate and perception of disabilities from the collective Chinese society that may differ from their previous experiences (Jia et al., 2022; Li & Li, 2020). No previous study has examined the impact the societal and cultural context of mainland China has on

expatriate teachers who have been previously trained in their home countries in programs that support inclusive education.

## **Related Literature**

In most school systems worldwide, current expectations are that teachers are required or recommended to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of the learners with SEN in their classrooms (Scarparolo & Subban, 2020; Whitley et al., 2019), rather than sending children who exhibit learning difficulties out of the regular classroom or to a separate school to receive support (Ancil, 2006; Gaitas & Martins, 2017). Educators concur that utilizing best instructional practices such as differentiated instruction to increase the participation of students with SEN improves the quality of instruction for all students (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019; Strogilos, 2018). Regular classroom teachers are instrumental in creating classrooms where students with SEN feel comfortable and accepted (McGarrigle et al., 2021; Opoku et al., 2021a). Many countries, including the United States and mainland China, have struggled to implement inclusive education practices (Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019; Opoku et al., 2021a; Qu, 2022b).

Even though teachers may recognize the need for learner support and perceive the importance of differentiated instruction, the actual implementation of differentiated instruction does not always occur (Wilson et al., 2016). The use of differentiation as best practice instruction is new to the Chinese educational system as some teachers in mainland China claim to have never heard of differentiation (Li & Li, 2020). Similarly, since only special schools for children with special needs use individualized educational programs (IEPs), some regular classroom teachers in mainland China schools, claiming to provide inclusive education in Chinese regular schools, reported that they are unfamiliar with the concept of IEPs for students with SEN (Fu et al., 2018; Li & Li, 2020). This lack of knowledge for accommodating indicates a need to understand the various perceptions that teachers, who are required to provide inclusive educational experiences for students with SEN, hold for differentiation, especially in mainland China. Teacher attitudes toward SEN and differentiation, combined with the surrounding cultural perceptions, determine how teachers treat students with SEN in their classrooms and how they make decisions to accommodate different student needs (Gaitas & Martins, 2017; Scarparolo & Subban, 2021). Little research has examined expatriate teachers' experiences of the social pressures surrounding the inclusion of students with SEN in regular classrooms in China.

Examination of teachers' perceptions of inclusion and students with SEN is essential because these attitudes impact the effectiveness of inclusive classrooms and often determine whether teachers differentiate in the classroom and how they provide best-practice instruction and lessons for students with SEN (Desombre et al., 2019; Navarro-Mateu et al., 2019; Nichols et al., 2020; Savolainen et al., 2020). When teachers question the appropriateness of inclusive education (Nilhom, 2021) or base their perceptions of inclusive education solely on the type and severity of disability of the students (Yada & Savolainen, 2019), teacher expectations of students can decline, the instructional rigor is weakened, simplistic materials are offered, and teachers' instructional discussion becomes demotivating (Tomlinson, 2014).

## **Cultural Influences on Attitudes Towards Inclusion**

Perceptions of inclusive education often differ by country (McGarrigle et al., 2021; Saloviita, 2020; Yada & Savolainen, 2019). Teachers' perceptions of inclusive education in non-

Western, developing countries are sometimes less accepting than in Western countries with a long history of inclusive education (Faragher et al., 2021; Yada & Savolainen, 2017). The implementation of inclusive policies heavily depends on local values and the surrounding culture's understanding and acceptance of inclusion (Opoku et al., 2021a; Strogilos, 2018; Van Steen & Wilson, 2020). Cross-cultural studies of inclusive education have found that teacher attitudes differ according to the country where teachers work (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020).

Despite challenges still faced with the implementation of inclusive education in many developed countries, studies from developed countries tend to report positive teacher perception and overall acceptance of inclusive education (George et al., 2018; Jia et al., 2022; McGarrigle et al., 2021; O'Connor & McNabb, 2021; Sokal & Sharma, 2017; You et al., 2019). Generally, teachers in Western countries express positive attitudes toward inclusion (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020), yet findings indicate that cultural and demographic factors can influence perceptions of inclusive education. The level of support each country provides for inclusive education tends to influence teachers directly; countries with adequate support for inclusive education are likely to have a much more positive reception from teachers, while countries with less support reported less positive reception of inclusion (Saloviita, 2020; Van Steen & Wilson, 2020).

Comparative studies of teacher perception of inclusive education in Asian countries compared to Western countries are still somewhat limited (Yada & Savolainen, 2019). In 2021 the People's Republic of China participated in an Asian cross-regional review for the first time, although, admittedly, in-country reviews had previously occurred (Faragher et al., 2021). Most of the previous studies of inclusive education were conducted predominately in special administrative regions like Hong Kong and Macau (Chao et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2018; Monteiro et al., 2019) and Taiwan (Yuan et al., 2022) rather than in the mainland.

In the years since mainland China established the LRC policy, students with autism (Mu, 2019; Xie et al., 2022), learning and physical disabilities, such as visual and hearing impairments (Mu, 2019), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and emotional and behavioral disorders (Xie et al., 2022), have become increasingly visible in regular classrooms in China. The strict social hierarchy supported by Confucianism views learners with SEN or disabilities in lower social positions and unequal social relationships with peers (Qu, 2022b). While it is expected that collectivist cultures might be more inclusive (Van Steen & Wilson, 2020), in actuality, collectivist educational equality exhibited in Chinese schools is viewed as treating all students equally and providing identical support for every student (Qu, 2019; Su et al., 2020). To achieve collective equality, teachers do not view learners as individuals; therefore, they may not provide additional support for learners with SEN nor provide curriculum adjustments and activities that benefit student learning abilities (Qu, 2022b; Su et al., 2020). Teachers in mainland Chinese schools tend to regard inclusion as simply physically allowing learners with SEN in the classroom without extending any special accommodations in terms of the actual teaching or classroom management for these learners to prosper in the classroom (Liu et al., 2020; Qu, 2019). Consequently, the poor academic performance of learners with SEN is attributed to students' ineffective effort and lack of ability rather than poor educational support (Mu, 2021; Qu, 2022b; Xu & Cooper, 2020). The cultural and institutional practice of providing children with one-size-fits-all programs without differentiation or accommodations hinders individual teachers from considering the differing needs of the learners in the classroom, resulting in teachers adapting

curriculum on a discretionary basis with little systematic support or ignoring students' differences altogether (Jia et al., 2022; Xu et al., 2018).

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Education**

Previous research has identified a relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their self-efficacy in teaching students with SEN (Chao et al., 2017; Sokal & Sharma, 2017; Yada & Savolainen, 2017; You et al., 2019). Self-efficacy involves not only belief in oneself but also the perceived behavior control and the ability to organize and take the actions necessary for success (Nichols et al., 2020). Self-efficacy for teaching influences all teacher decisions for planning, organization, adaptability, and performance in the classroom (Davies et al., 2018).

### **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative research design to describe the experiences of teachers providing differentiated instruction for students with SEN in regular classrooms at mainland Chinese private schools. In seeking to understand the expatriate teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction and their perceived behavior control, this qualitative study captured the constructs individuals make about their experiences and perceptions (Patton, 2015) and allowed individuals to describe the shared experience of the phenomenon of teaching students with SEN in mainland China (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

This study used Ajzen's (1991, 2002, 2020) theory of planned behavior (TPB) as the theoretical framework for examining general education teachers' perceptions of including students with SEN in regular classrooms and the cultural influences surrounding teachers at Chinese private schools. Ajzen's (1991) TPB found that intentions are influenced by subjective norms that define an individual's evaluation of the importance of the behavior based on their personal beliefs and the perceptions of others (Trafimow, 2009). Ajzen's (1991) TPB allows researchers to understand teacher preconceptions and beliefs about students with SEN in inclusive classrooms, the subjective or societal norms that influence those perceptions, and the confidence teachers feel and exhibit when implementing differentiated instruction (Opoku et al., 2021a).

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this study was to describe teachers' usage of differentiated instruction and the impact of the surrounding subjective norms on the teachers' self-efficacy for providing inclusive education to students with SEN. The central research question: *What are the experiences of in-service expatriate teachers who provide differentiated instruction for students with special educational needs in regular classrooms at mainland Chinese private schools?* and the subquestion *What subjective norms (societal expectations) do in-service expatriate teachers experience in dealing with students who have special educational needs in their regular classrooms?* guided this study.

## **Participants**

The participants for this study came from a well-recognized private school in a large urban city in mainland China. While the school states openly that students with SEN do not receive academic accommodations (X School, 2022), several students with diagnosed and undiagnosed SEN have attended the school, and teacher professional development in the past year has introduced differentiated instruction (X School, 2022). Like other private schools, the international division of the school employs expatriate teachers from around the world who teach classes in English and local Chinese teachers who teach Chinese language classes (X School, 2022). Expatriate teachers also teach in English for selected classes in the Chinese division.

The participants were selected from a range of nationalities and countries and were teachers with more than two years of experience in classroom teaching. An attempt was made to include participants with a variety of backgrounds and nationalities, a variety of ages, and a variety of teaching experiences with students with SEN. Due to the diversity of expatriate teachers hired at Chinese schools, the participants ranged in age from their mid-twenties to sixty years old, but all participants were fluent in English and all interviews were conducted in English.

Participants in this study were expatriate teachers who held a passport other than from the People's Republic of China, were current in-service teachers at a private school in mainland China, taught in a private school in mainland China, and spoke English proficiently enough to conduct an interview and participate in a focus group. Twelve teachers were recruited for this study. Participants came from three different geographic regions of the world and held passports from six different countries. None of the participants held passports from PR China. The participant pool included seven males (58%) and five females (42%). Three of the participants have bachelor's degrees, eight participants have master's degrees, and one participant has a doctorate. All participants had experience teaching in their home countries and were expected to provide differentiated instruction for students with special educational needs (SEN) who had been admitted into the regular classroom. Five participants also had experience teaching in a country besides China and their home country. All participants currently teach in mainland China. The median teaching experience for participants was 13 years. The median teaching experience in mainland China was six and a half years. The participants teach in different levels of a K-12 school including four high school teachers, six middle school teachers, and two elementary school teachers. Seven participants (58%) taught science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, and five participants (42%) taught humanities subjects. Several of the participants have experience working with the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB) in addition to the American curriculum currently used at the school site. Pseudonyms ensured the confidentiality of the participants, and general geographical regions were used instead of specific home countries to maintain participant confidentiality.

## **Data Collection**

The data collection included written artifacts of teachers' lesson plans or assignment sheets showing their intention to differentiate instruction for students, personal interviews and focus groups. Focus groups were assigned. Three focus groups included four participants each to facilitate discussions of teachers' shared experiences providing differentiated instruction for students with SEN in regular classrooms and grouped participants of diverse backgrounds

and disciplines. Data from the physical artifacts, personal interviews, and focus groups were used to cross-validate and triangulate the data (Patton, 2015) and to generate connections between themes or threads of thought from the participants’ experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

## Discussions

The major theme revealed by the data was a dissonance between their home countries and China in cultural views of SEN and differentiated instruction.

Teacher Participant	Years Taught	Years Taught in China	Home Country Region	Highest Degree Earned	Content Area	Grade Level
Adam	14	9	North America	Doctorate	STEM	High school
Brenda	6.5	6.5	Asia	Masters	STEM	High school
Darrien	3.5	3.5	Asia	Masters	STEM	Middle school
Carla	33	12	Asia	Masters	STEM	Middle school
Deborah	10	7	North America	Masters	Humanities	High school
Robert	12	7	North America	Bachelors	STEM	High school
Franklin	16	6	North America	Masters	STEM	Elementary school
Greg	16	11	North America	Masters	Humanities	Middle school
Jason	5	4	North America	Bachelors	Humanities	Middle school
Edwin	16	9	North America	Masters	Humanities	High school
Maria	15	3	Latin America	Masters	STEM	Elementary school
Hillary	9	3	North America	Bachelors	Humanities	Middle school

**Table 1:** *Teacher Participant Demographics*

## Findings

All participants described how their experiences teaching in Chinese schools differed from inclusive education in their home countries. Participants from North and Latin America and one Asian country shared about well-established support systems for inclusive education and modifications for learners with SEN in other countries. In describing their home countries’ inclusive education, participants recalled positive experiences with descriptions like “very focused and targeted on individual students” and “super prepared.” Participants described their prior experiences as “great,” “very rich,” and “awesome.”

The paradigm difference between cultures in approaching inclusive education and supporting students with SEN was apparent. All of the participants expressed frustration with the cultural environment in Chinese society regarding inclusive education. Robert remarked that the lack of recognizing SEN is “an Asian culture thing. That there’s a stigma around special education that is damaging to students.” The participants commented on what they viewed as unwillingness in Chinese society to accept or acknowledge SEN. One participant compared the cultural environment in China to what she had experienced at a school in the Middle East, “just like in China, they [the Middle East] are in denial or they don’t actually acknowledge, you know, their kids having special needs problems.” Jason remarked “Most of the time, there is no room for special educational needs.” Robert explained the surrounding culture by noting the impact of the collective mindset, “I would say that it just kind of the mindset of the individual versus the collective. China is very much - they embrace collectivism.” This collectivism, he perceived, led to the unacceptance of individualism and especially individualized instruction in the classroom. While a couple of participants noted China’s recent attempt to increase cultural awareness of special needs, overall participants expressed that the cultural environment seemed unwelcoming to students with SEN, all participants remarked on the Chinese stigmatization of SEN that contrasted with the experiences in their home countries or other countries where they had worked.

Because of the cultural stigma of SEN, many participants noted that there was a parental disinclination to seek diagnosis or treatment or to report a diagnosis to the school. Participants shared numerous experiences of parents of past and current students who resisted seeking a diagnosis for their child due to the cultural stigma toward learning disabilities. Participants described experiences of mentioning the possibility of a child having SEN or learning disabilities to parents. Often the parents were unwilling to seek out diagnoses for their child or were unwilling to report a diagnosis to the school, when one had been made, to avoid labeling the child with SEN. The parental refusal to acknowledge SEN frustrated all the participants who shared that this refusal to report special needs created classroom environments where teachers felt they had to guess what the students’ needs were and how to support learning.

The cultural impact is apparent in school policy where the participants teach. Robert noted, “I would say that [in] our school currently there’s too much of a stigma around special education.” Franklin spoke of the school’s resistance to officially recognize SEN. One participant from North America bluntly stated, “Our school’s not designed for it [inclusion]. They [students with SEN] need to go to a school that is.” As expatriate teachers, the participants viewed Chinese attitudes toward inclusion to be non-accepting of inclusive education and averse to accepting SEN. Even though all participants expressed general acceptance of the basic concepts of special needs education and differentiation in the classroom, participants also made isolated negative comments about SEN in the context of talking about students with SEN in Chinese schools.

All participants expressed frustration with their current school’s unwillingness to acknowledge that students with SEN are currently enrolled and the school’s repeated claims that students with SEN have not been admitted to the school or placed in regular classes. In describing the school’s policy for accommodating students with SEN, participants used words like “unarticulated,” “vastly underwhelming,” “not, not adequate,” and “very unprepared.” One commented, “It’s quite heartbreaking when you see our students [struggle].” The participants spoke of different ways in which they felt the school was unprepared to include students with SEN in regular classrooms. Carla, who has taught at the



school the longest of all the participants, commented on the changes she has experienced in the student body, “For the longest time at [school name redacted] we didn’t have problems of students like these, but recently for the past two or three years we have an increasing number of students that show this kind of behavior.” Adam agreed, “This system that we have here is so unprepared for that [inclusion].” Deborah claimed that the school’s lack of acknowledgment of the presence of students with SEN in the classrooms and the need for additional support for these students had caused considerable frustration among the staff. Deborah explained,

If you have a school that kind of ignores them [students with SEN] like, yeah, we have some kids, but we don’t talk or think about it. That can be detrimental if you have a school that doesn’t have institutional support. So we know the kids are falling through the cracks, but we can’t do anything about it. That creates a lot of cognitive dissonance. That’s really tough for teachers.

This type of cultural dissonance was apparent in all participants’ responses.

Many participants spoke of the teachers’ efforts to help struggling students by tutoring after school, trying to reteach material, and providing scaffolding; however, all of the participants were disheartened at the school’s reluctance to recognize or provide a clear policy for providing accommodations for students with SEN. “There are no school policies,” commented Adam. Robert remarked that the school needed to think about inclusion more “because it’s really easy to brush this stuff under the rug and there’s kind of a culture of doing so.” The unclear policy at the school of whether teachers can or cannot provide accommodations and what accommodations are acceptable has created tension in the participants. Deborah summarized the frustration expatriate teachers often experience trying to differentiate their classroom instruction in China,

It’s a really hard balance to strike, but I think that is a very important element as well because teachers- like you absorb that stuff [cultural norms] by osmosis. And if you’re in a place, if you’re in a place that doesn’t value that kind of thing, you will over time, find yourself with the best of intentions taking in some of that.

Participants commented on the cultural pressure felt from parents and the school culture which diminishes the importance or even the existence of SEN and expressed their perceptions that societal expectations resulted in demotivation and discouragement in teachers and sometimes increased a sense of apathy when it came to providing differentiated instruction for students with SEN in their classrooms.

Low efficacy for providing differentiated instruction to students in the class was apparent in nearly every participant in this study. Most of the participants had to be encouraged to provide an artifact of differentiated instruction because many claimed that they didn’t regularly differentiate lessons for their classes. Despite having attended a variety of professional development sessions provided by the school to train teachers in differentiated instruction, most of the teachers claimed that their ability to implement differentiated instruction into their curriculum and to use differentiated strategies in class was weak. However, throughout the interviews and discussion, participants could all describe times in their classes when they had provided whole-class adjustments for students. Overall, the participants expressed low self-efficacy for using differentiated instruction as individualized instruction for students with SEN. The findings align with current literature on the self-

efficacy of teachers who provide inclusive education for students with SEN. Previous research has examined influences on teacher self-efficacy (Chao et al., 2017; George et al., 2018; Monteiro et al., 2019), yet only a few studies (Opoku et al., 2021a; Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020) discussed the impact of the surrounding culture or subjective norms on teacher self-efficacy.

## **Conclusion**

There is a cultural dissonance between expatriate teachers and the surrounding culture encountered while working in mainland China. Many of the participant's home countries had structured educational systems with special education teachers helping regular classroom teachers find resources and supplementing class instruction. Teachers' experiences included co-teaching with special education specialists or resource teachers, which greatly facilitated the implementation of effective differentiated instruction and teacher collaboration.

In contrast, while teaching in China, the participants have encountered negative perceptions of learning disabilities from the collective Chinese society that often continues to stigmatize students with SEN. This subjective norm differs from many of the participants' previous experiences in their home countries. The cultural perception of SEN in China has also been identified by other researchers (Jia et al., 2022; Qu, 2022c; Xu et al., 2018). Students with SEN in Chinese society still face discrimination and marginalization (Alduais & Deng, 2022; Jia et al., 2022; Qu, 2022a, 2022b; Yuan et al., 2022). Learners' unreported learning difficulties and special educational/behavior needs often become apparent after a child has gained admittance to school.

Additionally, this cultural dissonance impacts the instruction in the classroom. Parental refusal to seek a diagnosis for suspected SEN or disclose diagnoses with the school creates undue pressure on the teacher and the school. Teachers feel pressured by parents and the school to provide the same instruction for all students and to keep academics "equal," regardless of the challenges a child with SEN or learning differences might encounter in a regular classroom. The collective attitude in China that all students should be treated equally has even influenced some of the participants who felt that offering accommodations to a student with SEN was "unfair." The societal expectation of having every child learn equally without accommodations or additional support unduly burdens students with SEN who often struggle through classes. The expectation of equality creates a dissonance in teachers between their previous experiences and the surrounding cultural environment in Chinese private schools. The pressure often leads to frustration and sometimes apathy.

This study's findings agree with previous research that the cultural stigma toward SEN has hindered the acceptance and adoption of inclusive education in China (Li et al., 2022; Schalock et al., 2018). This study's findings support a need for greater cultural awareness to improve the general perception of students with SEN in the regular classroom environment (Alduais & Deng, 2022), especially in Chinese private schools, and a need for policy changes in K-12 schools regarding inclusive education.

Unsupportive school culture can lower self-efficacy for inclusive education (Opoku et al., 2021b). The cultural environment in China still shows a hesitancy to embrace inclusive education (Huang et al., 2021; Jia et al., 2022; Mu, 2021; Xie et al., 2022). This cultural disregard for SEN has created a dissonance in participants, many of whom had experienced effective inclusive education in former schools in their home countries. While previous

studies have examined the cultural environment surrounding the Chinese acceptance of inclusion and the remaining stigma in receiving a diagnosis of SEN, little research has described the clash of cultures expatriates often feel while teaching in a country unlike their own. Having been conducted in English, this study is unique in that very few international studies have been conducted in English in mainland China to describe the country's implementation of inclusive education (Faragher et al., 2021; Han & Cumming, 2022) making it accessible to a wider global audience.

This study's limitations should be acknowledged. First, there were only 12 participants, which is a relatively small sample of expatriate teachers in mainland China. This study occurred at a single K-12 school in one urban city in mainland China. Secondly, many factors and variables, such as the teachers' prior experiences and education level, can influence teacher self-efficacy for differentiated instruction in inclusive environments. Participants were limited to English-speaking teachers because of the researcher's language abilities. The participation of Chinese-speaking teachers might have given more variety of responses.

Further research is suggested to discover the experiences of a more diverse group of educators. Research that includes more teachers and additional locations would be advisable to generate more representative findings. Most of the participants in this study were experienced teachers who had taught for more than five years and lived in China for several years. Further studies to describe the experiences of teachers, perhaps in their first or second year of teaching in China, would broaden the perspective of the experiences of expatriate teachers. The examination of school systems in more rural areas and smaller cities is needed to gather more comprehensive data, especially in schools that employ expatriate teachers. Further research could include Chinese-speaking teachers to compare their experiences and perceptions with the experiences of the expatriate teachers. Examining the attitudes of administrators, supervising teachers, and school management would also generate research on school-wide impressions of SEN and inclusive education.

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