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**Comparing Inclusive Education
Teachers' Struggles in Italy and China**

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Declaration

The doctoral thesis is a result of my investigation and research while supervised by Prof Marina Santi, which has never previously been accepted for any degree.

Abstract English

This exploratory study is a cross-cultural comparative analysis of understanding inclusive education in Italy and China. The exploratory study aims to explore teachers' understanding of inclusive in Italian and Chinese context. Given that aim, a historical perspective is employed to understand the historical policy evolution of inclusive education in Italy and China and to carefully examine how inclusive education policy was issued in different history periods and how these inclusive education policies influenced the school practice. Particularly, based on the understanding of inclusive education in government policy and school teachers' day-to-day school practice, the present exploratory study wants to enrich our knowledge of 'how to make education more inclusive' from a cross-cultural comparative perspective. In order to achieve these aims, a qualitative research design is employed, with understanding theory as a theoretical framework and various methods as tools. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data with software—ATLAS.ti—aided.

This cross-cultural comparative exploratory study's results show that a proper understanding of inclusive education should fully consider the 'local flavour' in both Italian and Chinese cultural, historical and political contexts. Considering that, this exploratory study, to some extent, is not 'comparative' because there is no attempt to treat the data from two quite different contexts as comparable, but I wish that various questions and issues which emerge from considering two quite different contexts, Italy and China, will be illuminating and enrich our understanding of how to make education more inclusive.

Given the results of this exploratory study, there is not a single understanding of inclusive education. On the contrary, inclusive education has many faces, for that point, Chinese philosophy of '*he er bu tong*' (harmony but not sameness) provides us some implications.

Abstract Italiano

La ricerca presentata in questa tesi è un'analisi comparativa interculturale volta alla comprensione dell'educazione inclusiva in Italia e Cina. Lo studio mira a esplorare la comprensione degli insegnanti del concetto di inclusione nel contesto italiano e cinese. Alla luce di tale obiettivo, viene utilizzata una prospettiva storica per comprendere l'evoluzione delle politiche scolastiche inclusive in Italia e Cina e per esaminare attentamente come tali politiche si siano evolute in diversi periodi storici e in che modo abbiano influenzato le pratiche scolastiche. In particolare la presente ricerca, basata sulla comprensione dell'educazione inclusiva nelle politiche e nelle pratiche scolastiche quotidiane degli insegnanti, vuole arricchire la nostra conoscenza di "come rendere l'educazione più inclusiva" a partire da una prospettiva comparativa interculturale. Per raggiungere tali obiettivi, viene utilizzata una metodologia di ricerca qualitativa, con alla base la progettazione a ritroso come framework teorico e l'utilizzo di diversi strumenti. Per analizzare i dati di ricerca viene adottata la prospettiva dell'analisi tematica, attraverso l'utilizzo del software ATLAS.ti.

I risultati di questo studio comparativo interculturale mostrano che una corretta comprensione dell'educazione inclusiva dovrebbe tenere pienamente conto del "sapore locale" dei contesti culturali, storici e politici, sia italiani che cinesi. Questo studio non è "comparativo", perché non vi è alcun tentativo di considerare i dati provenienti da due contesti piuttosto diversi, l'Italia e la Cina, come comparabili, ma piuttosto lascia aperte domande e questioni emergenti, al fine di arricchire la nostra comprensione di come rendere l'educazione più inclusiva.

Dati i risultati di questo studio, non esiste un'unica interpretazione dell'educazione inclusiva. Al contrario, l'educazione inclusiva ha molti volti e la filosofia cinese di "*he er bu tong*" (armonia ma non identità) ci fornisce un'utile chiave di lettura.

Abstract Chinese

本课题是一项跨文化比较研究，意在分析全纳教育在意大利和中国是如何被理解的。该项探索性研究旨在探究意大利教师和中国教师是如何理解全纳教育的。考虑到这一研究目的，本研究从历史视角出发深入分析了意大利和中国全纳教育政策的改革和发展历程、不同历史时期两国全纳教育发展特点以及全纳教育政策对学校全纳教育实践活动的影响。尤其需要指出的是，本研究从两国政策文本和学校教师日常教学两个层面出发深入阐释全纳教育是如何被理解的，进而从跨文化比较视角丰富我们对“如何使我们的教育变得更加全纳化？”这一问题的认识。为了实现上述研究目的，本研究采用质性研究范式，以理解理论为理论基础，综合运用访谈法、文献法等研究方法搜集相关数据。数据分析主要采取主题式分析方法，同时为了保证分析的科学性，本研究借助了 ATLAS.ti 软件进行数据处理与分析。

该项跨文化比较研究结果表明，科学合理理解全纳教育的含义必须考虑意大利和中国的文化、历史、政治等社会因素的影响。因此，从某种程度上来说本研究并不是一项“比较研究”，因为来自意大利和中国这两个完全不同的国家的数据，根本难以比较。相反，本研究希望在数据分析过程中提出一些意大利和中国全纳教育发展过程中出现的问题，通过对这些问题的阐释，丰富我们对全纳教育的理解和认识。

从本研究结果来看，并不存在一个单一的全纳教育定义。相反，全纳教育含义丰富，各国均有不同的认识。基于此，研究认为中国的和而不同哲学思想为我们理解全纳教育提供了一些有益的启示。

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List of acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BES	Bisogni Educativi Speciali
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DSA	Disturbi Specifici di Apprendimento
EFA	Education for All
GLHI	Gruppi di lavoro e di studio d'istituto
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICE	International Conference on Education
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairments, Disability and Handicaps
INValSi	Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di Istruzione e di Formazione
LRC	Learning in Regular Classrooms
MIUR	Ministry of Education, University and Research
OSA	Operatore Socio Assistenziale
OSS	Operatore Socio Sanitario
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
WHO	World Health Organization

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Introduction: Comparing inclusive education: Italy and China

As a researcher from China, having received a Chinese academic education for 22 years, and worked as a kindergarten and primary school teacher for 2 years, I am currently studying and living in Italy. This has given me the opportunity to compare two different cultural worlds - the western and eastern culture on a macro level, and the Italian and Chinese culture on a micro level.

As a student and as a teacher, I was in Chinese schools for more than 20 years, and I was involved in special education research for 5 years. I have been wondering about how best to provide an education for students with disabilities for years. It is with this question in mind that I chose Italy as my destination to seek answers because Italy has implemented a fully inclusive education policy, and the country's efforts to promote inclusive education is acknowledged worldwide (Anastasiou, Kauffman, Di Nuovo, 2015; Kanter et al., 2014). In 2018, when I started conducting my fieldwork in Italian schools, I found students with disabilities, foreign students, the children of refugees, etc., all attending regular classes. This was true even of students with serious disabilities, who in China would certainly be educated at special schools. During my interviews and classroom visits, phrases like 'school is a family', 'school is for everyone', 'people with disabilities are normal' frequently emerged in the dialogue. After 13 months of fieldwork in Italian schools, I partly agreed with Italian teachers' conviction that we should educate all students together, regardless of their levels of ability or disability, country of origin, and so on. With plenty of ideas about the Italian approach to inclusive education in mind, I then went back to school in China. During my fieldwork in Chinese regular schools, I shared the Italian schools' practices on inclusion with the teachers I met. The Chinese teachers' responses often revolved around the idea that 'Italy has its Italian context. We have ours, and it's normal for us to have different ways of promoting inclusive education.' In other words, there is no single path that every country should follow, so long as every student receives a proper education and grows up healthy. All roads lead to Rome, as it were. But that does not mean we cannot learn from each other. We have the same aim. We should learn from each other's strengths and overcome our own weaknesses.

Such comments can be summarized in three core points - different contexts, different approaches, and learning from each other – that I drew on in considering my research. My aim

was thus to explore and compare inclusive education in Italy and China, to try to understand how they each strive to make education more inclusive, and to see how they might learn from each other during this process. Understanding inclusion in this process can be like ‘making the familiar strange and the strange familiar’ (Ainscow, Booth, 1998), an approach that can pave the way to further comparative research on inclusive education, especially between two such totally different settings as Italy and China, or western and eastern culture.

In the light of these considerations, current exploratory study is a comparative analysis of inclusive education in Italy and China. Drawing on the data collected in Italian and Chinese school context between the years 2016 and 2019, this exploratory study primarily intends to achieve three aims: firstly, to understand the historical policy evolution of inclusive education in Italy and China; Secondly, to explore teachers’ understanding of inclusive education in Italian and Chinese school context and the third aim is to enrich our knowledge of ‘how to make education more inclusive’ from cross-culture perspectives. Consistent with the aims of the study, three research questions are posed for investigation: 1) how has the policy of inclusive education evolved in Italy and China in the last 70 years? 2) how do a small sample of school teachers in Italy and China understand inclusive education? and 3) what can we learn for the future development of inclusive education from the analysis of inclusive education policies and practice in Italy and China? To achieve these aims and answer these questions, a qualitative research design is developed to guide the study and Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) understanding theory is used as the theoretical framework to facilitate current study to better understand teachers’ understanding of inclusive education in Italy and China.

Significance of this three-year study, or the contribution of current exploratory study to pre-existing researches in terms of inclusive education, can be briefly concluded into three points. Firstly, enrich our understanding of inclusive education. As Lindsay (2003) stated that researching ‘inclusion’ is problematic largely because inclusive education lacks an internationally-accepted unambiguous definition. Numerous studies have been done to define and understand inclusive education by researchers in different countries, however, there is still lacking a clear definition on inclusive education. Therefore, Gåransson and Nilholm (2014) claimed that more researches are needed to define inclusive education more clearly. Given that, the current exploratory study can be considered as a response to researchers’ concern. Secondly, an exploratory inclusive education

comparative study between Italy and China. Current study aims to define and redefine inclusive education from two totally different contexts, which are Italian and Chinese contexts. This research is of particular significance because pre-existing studies on Italian inclusive education have already conducted by worldwide researchers and comparisons between Italy and other countries have already conducted. However, related studies of comparison between Italy and China are still rare. Therefore, current exploratory study tries to fill this research gap. We can connect inclusive education policy and practice between Italy and China. In doing so, we can improve communication and exchange between these two countries and achieve the goal of learning from each other in terms inclusive education development. Last but not least, to further enforce the communication between Western culture and Eastern culture. Both Italy and China can be regarded as a representative of Western culture and Eastern culture respectively. Therefore, this exploratory study can be considered as a good opportunity to open a dialogue between Western culture and Eastern culture, via the dialogue to make two cultures more open and more inclusive.

In the following six chapters, I further specify how inclusive education is understood both in government policy documents and school practices in Italy and China and what we can learn from each other through that cross-culture comparative exploratory study. The first chapter provides a theoretical background in terms of inclusive education. Much of the discussion concerning the differences between integration and inclusive education, the historical development of inclusive education, international interpretation of the concept of interpretation integration and inclusive education and related stakeholders' attitudes towards inclusive education. In addition, related studies that employ the comparative perspective were briefly discussed. Finally based on the aforementioned efforts, the rest of the first chapter mainly locate current study within the context of existing literature in terms of inclusive education and clearly state current study's significance and contribution to understanding the research problems being studied.

Chapter two provides an overview of the Italian and Chinese contextual background for current exploratory study and it examines the historical development of the inclusive education policy in two countries. In order to fully understand the development of inclusive education, related issues are discussed. In Italy, it mainly focuses on the relationship between *integrazione scolastica* and inclusion. While in China, issues like the meaning of 'Learning in Regular Classrooms' (LRC), the LRC is a sub-theme of special education and Challenges for the

implementation of LRC are discussed.

Chapter three primarily concerns the research methodology and methods. At first, the research aims and questions are fully discussed. Based on that, a qualitative research design is chosen for current study. Subsequently, I articulate Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) understanding theory, which is employed as the theoretical framework for understanding inclusive education. Finally, the concrete research methods, sample, fieldwork and data analysis are presented to state how current study is conducted.

In the chapter four and five I make the transition to the empirical research results which emerged from the Italian and Chinese school contexts. Based on the six aspects of Wiggins and McTighe's (2005) understanding theory, which are explanation, application, self-knowledge, empathy, perspective and interpretation, I fully reported how inclusive education is understood by Italian and Chinese school teachers respectively. In order to gain a full picture of teachers' understanding of inclusive education, the organization of these two chapters is divided into six sections, which mainly based on the six aspects of Wiggins and McTighe's understanding theory.

Chapter six mainly re-examine inclusive education and provide some implications on 'how to make education more inclusive' from a comparative perspective between Italy and China. I particularly interested in exploring Italian and Chinese unique differences, histories and practices in terms of inclusive education policy and school practice. In doing so, to raise questions and identify issues which emerge from these two contexts. This chapter, then, to some extent, is not 'comparative' because there is no attempt to treat the data from two quite different contexts as comparable, but I wish that various questions and issues which emerge from considering two quite different contexts, Italy and China, will be illuminating and enrich our understanding of how to make education more inclusive.

The conclusion chapter mainly provides an overview of the current exploratory study and some implications for future study in terms of inclusive education.

Chapter one Inquiring inclusive education

Introduction

This chapter mainly focuses on some main issues in the field of inclusive education and provides a theoretical research background for researching inclusive education. Firstly, I will explore the theoretical models of understanding of disability and its implications for special and inclusive education. Secondly, emphasis will be put on the relationships between integration and inclusive education. From a historical perspective, I review the history of integration movement and inclusive education agenda. In doing so, I distinguish the relationships between integration and inclusive education, and a relatively comprehensive understanding of integration and inclusive education are provided as well. Thirdly, related stakeholders' attitudes towards inclusive education and comparative perspectives on research inclusive education are explored. Finally, based on aforementioned efforts a brief conclusion is made to review the field of inclusive education research and current study's significance to understand the research problems will be stated as well.

1.1 The Models of Disability

Historically speaking, there are various perspectives with regard to interpreting the meaning of disability (Fitzgerald, 2006; Lo Bianco, Sheppard-Jones, 2008). However, over the past half of century, the interpretation with regard to disability is chiefly characterized by totally two different models, which are medical model and social model, each model has its own unique definition in terms of disability based on specific philosophical standpoint and its own opinion about the treatment and arrangements for persons with disabilities (Lo Bianco, Sheppard-Jones, 2008; Terzi, 2005a). Just as Oliver (1990) stated:

As far as disability is concerned, if it is seen as a tragedy, then disabled people will be treated as if they are the victims of some tragic happening or circumstance [...] Alternatively, it logically follows that if disability is defined as social oppression, then disabled people will be seen as the collective victims of an uncaring or unknowing society

rather than as individual victims of circumstance. Such a view will be translated into social policies geared towards alleviating oppression rather than compensating individuals (Oliver, 1990, p. 3)

It is necessary to bear in mind, rather than saying one model sometimes having succeeded another model of disability, however, it should be more proper to say that different models of disability co-exist, or one of model is becoming dominant in particular social-culture context (Devlieger, 2005).

1.1.1 The medical/individual model approach to disability

The main point of medical model is that the disability is regarded as the consequent of impairment of body functions, which is based on a deficient assumption, thus, the cause of disability is within the person per se (Forhan, 2009; Fougeyrollas, Beauregard, 2001; Stiker, 1999; Thomas, 2004). The root of the medical model can be dated back to the 1950s, which appeared in Parsons' work (Barnes, 1997). Following the work of Parsons, Barnes (1997) concluded that in Western developed countries there is a belief that the normal person is regarded as "good health", while the "sickness", usually refers to person who are impairment, are deviant persons. Consequently, this perspective is contributed to the current link which between normal person and disabled person, while the latter category is often considered to be needed some medical treatment (D'Alessio, 2012, p. 46). This legacy has been exerted a profound impact on the development of medical model of disability, which we can find its trace in current policy, practice and culture, across the world. Issued by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1980) in 1980, the International Classification of Impairments, Disability and Handicaps (ICIDH henceforward), which can be regarded as mainly employed the medical model (D'Alessio, 2012, p. 45; Terzi, 2005a). An explicit distinction among impairment, disability and handicap is made in ICIDH, which defines impairment as 'any loss or an abnormality of body structures or functions', disability refers to 'a person, due to impairment, lack or restriction of ability to participate activities which are regarded as normal people can perform ', handicap denotes 'due to impairment or /and disability, which cause some disadvantages for a certain person' (Barnes, 2003, p. 11; Bury, 1996, p. 22). According to the ICIDH's classification and definition, the impairment is closely referred to the deficit of

individual per se, which is considered as deviating from a human being normality; disability, as a result of impairment, lack of ability to participate in some activities or tasks; handicap is a result of impairment or/and disability, which causes some disadvantages for individual (Drake, 1999; Terzi, 2005a). According to that thinking, the disability is mainly attributable to the biological conditions of persons who are impairment, which encourages an understanding that the causes of disability are primarily derive within individual (Terzi, 2005a). Just as D'Alessio (2012) argues that ICIDH contains all medical model's characteristics, and the treatment to disability is focused on medical diagnosis or professional interventions instead of social factors. (Barnes, Mercer, Shakespeare, 1999).

Influenced by medical model of disability, the treatments towards disability are eradicating of the causes which cause the impairment or fixing person's impairment through rehabilitation (Bingham et al., 2013; Forhan, 2009; Thomas, 2002). In practice, the placements for persons with disabilities are professional rehabilitation center or/and special institutional care center (Humpage, 2007). Within educational environment, students with disabilities are usually placed in special schools and segregated classrooms, these treatments, whose purposes are to help students to adopt the society (Hassanein, 2015, p. 26; Palmer, Harley, 2012).

One of critiques of medical model of disability is that ignores the social factors which can cause disability for individual. On the contrast, it only focuses on the deficits within the individual body, is a personal tragedy (Oliver, 1990, p. 32). Adopting this perspective, to some extent, probably cannot find the fact that it is social factors sometimes that create disabilities for individual, thus, miss an opportunity to improve or change the social barriers. Just as Hassanein (2015, p. 26) argued, putting the medical model into the education, when the problem caused by educational context, only focusing on students will loss a chance to improve the situation of educational context. We should recognize that, to some extent, our educational system is not an ideal and it cannot treat equally to every student. Thus, we need to consider how our educational system can be improved to cater for and accommodate to the students' diversity requirements, rather than asking our students to make some changes to accommodate the system (Dyson, 1990).

Additionally, the medical model of disability has been criticized related to the power of decision-making (D'Alessio, 2012, p. 48; Humpage, 2007). There is no doubt that the medical scientists and professionals have expertise regarding the area of diagnosing and curing the

individual impairment. However, as to making decisions related to the person who are disability involves to the housing, education, welfare, transportation and so on, medical personnel maybe not an ideal option. Generally, the medical personnel like a gatekeeper, using their expertise to diagnose the impairment and then to determine which kind of services and benefits the person needed. All seems to be reasonable, however, this process ignores the individual's requirement and will, and the treatment is mainly based on the individual's deficits (Hodge, Haegele, 2016; Humpage, 2007). Consequently, what the labels and disability categories made by medical professionals, there will be little room for individual to choose (Barton, 2009). For that, as to decision-making in terms of individuals with disabilities, we need to hear voice patiently from the litigant, just as the slogan 'nothing about us without us'.

In conclusion, medical model of disability overreliance on the deficit assumption, which ignores the barriers for disability from social oppression, thus, winning critiques from researchers, practitioners and disabled persons. Duo to those persistent problems, therefore, a new paradigmatic conceptual framework concerned disability needed to change the current situation. In special education area, many researchers and practitioners had advocated a new model of disability, named social model, which 'would transcend deficit thinking and promote a more fluid, contextual framework for examining disability, teaching, and learning in special education' (Trent, Artiles, Englert, 1998).

1.1.2 The social model approach to disability

In contrast to medical model of disability, social model insists that the difficulties faced by persons with disabilities are caused by society rather than individual per se (Bingham et al., 2013; Coles, 2001; Oliver, 1996). The works of social model is mainly developed by the UK academics, which is still playing a significant role in current disability studies. The original of social model developed by Paul Hunt (1966) and Vic Finkelstein (1980, 1981), and then associated with the movement in 1970s, named 'Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation' (UPIAS henceforward). Under that perspective, the advocates of social model discourse were Mike Oliver (1990, 1996), Colin Barnes (1991), Shakespeare and Watson (1997), Thomas (1999) and other academics.

The UPIAS document ‘*Fundamental Principles of Disability*’, which presents a detailed definition of social model of disability, can well-represented the main opinion of UK academics (Shakespeare, Watson ,2002):

“... In our view, it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. To understand this it is necessary to grasp the distinction between the physical impairment and the social situation, called ‘disability’, of people with such impairment. Thus we define impairment as lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body and disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities.” (Oliver, 1996, p. 22).

From social model of disability, three key features can be concluded: firstly, a fundamental difference between impairment, which caused by individual condition and disability that is mainly resulting from the social barrier; secondly, an explicit distinction from the individual/medical model, which bases on a personal-deficits assumption; thirdly, the disability which individual faced is coming from the society (D’Alessio, 2012, p. 44). Thus, disability is created by society rather than individual, which suggests that solutions to solve this problem should better focus on society instead of individual. This paradigm shift barriers from individual to environment, as a result, impairment, thus is regarded as a form of diversity that needs to value and celebrate (Roush, Sharby, 2011). Generally, many problems will vanish when people’s attitudes changing and the social policy improving the current situation or removing the barriers that caused by environment (Brittain, 2004).

A new window will open and the situation will totally different, as we applied this model to education. The students’ learning difficulties, regardless of students with or without impairment, are primarily within the educational system instead of students (Hassanein, 2015, p. 27). Instead of making our students to accommodate the classroom, why not rethinking students’ outside environment factors—teaching and learning environment—and improving the current situation, so as to welcome all the children regardless of this diversity backgrounds (Ainscow, 1999). Some proponents contented that, to some extent, the students have learning difficulties is a lie, there just

an existence of teachers' teaching difficulties (Frederickson, Cline, 2002). Departing from that, the philosophy of special education is facing many problems, thus, it will unreasonable hold a priori view that students have learning difficulties should be placed in a special school or a segregated classroom. Just as Barnes (1996) argued that social model of disability requires us to carefully examine the social environment where individual situated, rather than search for reasons just within individual. This approach, to some extent, is significantly contributed to the inclusive education development (Hassanein, 2015, p. 27), which I will revisit this theme in following sessions.

Just as there are some critiques concerning medical model of disability, the social model has its limitation as well. Based on the critique of social model by Terzi (2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2008), there are three main shortcomings: first, over-socialization in terms of disability's causes, which wholly ignores the personal factor, just as the mistake is made by medical model of disability; secondly, due to over-socialization, social model overlooks the complicated aspects of personal impairment and, thus cannot see its influences on everyday activities. For example, some kinds of pains or illnesses do play a role in disabled persons' everyday life and cause some effects, which are totally ignored by social model; thirdly, an untenable conclusion inevitably derives from the social model. How can we define impairment and disability without taking consideration of normality?

Having been taken consideration of medical and social model of disability, it appears clearly that each model has its own certain limitations, to some extent, which confine their applications for practice. With respect to medical/individual model of disability, based on a deficit-assumption, which puts so much emphasizes on individual per se that inevitably overlooks the social factors in constituting disability for individual who has body impairment. Conversely, regarding the social model, due to overreliance on social factors to explain the disability, thus make a mess of impairment and disability, underemphasizing that a person's impairment sometimes does play a vital role leading disability. As far as I am concerned, neither medical model nor social model can put forward as an adequate interpretation between impairment and disability, just as Terzi (2005a) argued, 'two models, both based on the perspective that disability is a generic restriction of activity, this assumption fails to inform the design of inclusive institutional and social schemes', which inevitably leaves a room to find an alternative approach to impairment and disability.

1.2 From Integration to Inclusion: a new language or a shift?

In 1994, the concept of inclusive education as a significant educational idea emerged at the ‘World Conference on Special Needs Education’, which was organized by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO henceforward) in Salamanca (UNESCO, 1994), soon after it has become a global agenda and challenged the existing educational system through the world (Ainscow, Slee, Best, 2019; Piji, Meijer, Hegarty, 1997; Reindal, 2016). After inclusive education explored several decades, there has been numerous studies with respect to inclusive education, which has draw so much scientific attention that few educational topics have been so influential and broadly discussed as it does (Goransson, Nilholm, 2014). However, studying ‘inclusion’ is problematic (Lindsay, 2003) and researchers (Goransson, Nilholm, 2014) are not comfortable with current status of that field, the foremost fact is that there is a lack of an unambiguous concept regarding inclusive education (Lindsay, 2003) and therefore Goransson and Nilholm (2014) claimed in a critical analysis of study regarding inclusive education that ‘new kinds of study are needed to make the definition of inclusive education more explicit’. That account, to some extent, is easier said than done (Florian, 2014). Secondly, the relationship between inclusion and integration is in a tangle, and sometimes the two concepts are used as synonyms, therefore, causing some misunderstandings (Thomas, Walker, Webb, 1998). Especially, in western countries, the notions of inclusive education and integration are frequently mixed, mostly considered as overlapping and without due recognition of the different cores of the two terms after Salamanca (Vislie, 2003).

Taking consideration of unstable past of the development of inclusive education, and thus, making a comprehensive sense of present situation, a historical perspective will be employed in this part to investigate the issue of inclusive education (Dyson, 2001). Just as Dyson (2001) puts forward:

...this view of history as more fruitful than the others that are on offer because it reconnects us with our past. The past is not simply a failed precursor of the present; neither is the present simply a recycling of the failure of the past. Instead, the past is a time in which our counterparts – and ourselves in our earlier incarnations – have faced and responded to precisely the same dilemmas and contradictions which we face now. There are, therefore, things which we can learn from the past. Every resolution that has been

attempted opens up to us a range of possible actions and enables us to see the consequences of those actions. We can take from the past those things which we find positive and avoid repeating what we see as its mistakes (Dyson, 2001, p.26)

Therefore, the content of this part will focus on mapping the previous studies with respect to the meaning of inclusive education. However, we cannot fully understand inclusive education without making a clear distinction between integration and inclusion, just as Sebba and Ainscow (1996, cited in Vislie, 2003, p. 21) reminded us that ‘any definition of inclusion needs to make a clear clarification between inclusion and integration’. According to the emergence of timeline, integration will be discussed firstly.

1.3 Integration movement

Historical speaking, the emergence of integration is a result of the war which combated with the segregation or special education provision. During the period of 1970s, a hot debate occurred in terms of the effectiveness of students who had impairment received their education in special schools/classes (Fox, 2003). Based on the perspectives regarding practice, human rights and effectiveness, some researchers (e.g. Ainscow, 1999; Ainscow et al., 2006; Skrtic, 1991; Slee, 1993, 2006) questioned and challenged the appropriateness of special provision from different angles, which contained the aim, practice and location of the special schools/classes. This debate or disagreement with special school provision, contributed to demanding a reform that aims to make a more just systemic education provision, which included educational policies, school legislation, reconstructed school organization, including general and special schools. Under that social context, the concept of integration emerged in the 1980s, as a mainly alternative of segregated provision, like special schools, the purpose is to place students who have SEN in regular schools. This led to an overhaul and reconstruct regarding mainstream schools’ physical facilities, while with the increase provision in terms of special classrooms and special trained teachers and integrated more students who have impairments into the mainstream schools (Hassanein, 2015, p. 36; Opertti, Belalcazar, 2008; Vislie, 2003).

Thus, with the discussion between international organization and national government regarding promoting the right of people who had impairment, the integration as a main agenda

entered the world (Vislie, 2003). At national level, integration as a principle also appeared in government report, which aimed to integrate more children with SEN into mainstream schools to receive education with their peers. For example, the UK's Warnock Report and 1981 Education Act, which the term of integration was regarded as a part of western nations' 'normalization' movement (Norwich, Avramidis, 2002). Moreover, the 'integration became a topical subject of discussion' in the Warnock Report. Other countries, like Italy and US's law mentioned the principle of integration, too. In US, the Education of All Handicapped Act of 1975 which established the philosophy of 'zero-reject' can be regarded as an action that promote all children, regardless of race, gender, impairment condition, etc., received general education in regular schools.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the integration was regarded as a descriptor with respect to a special policy in western nations. The situation changed as inclusion emerged in 1990s after Salamanca. What the biggest problem is how to draw a line between integration and inclusion, which caused a debate, some argued these two concepts are same while others against (Vislie, 2003). Among these discussions, Vislie (2003) argued that a significant issue is whether or not both integration and inclusion have different cores, that is to say what can be counted as integration and inclusion. Dating back to the history of integration, Vislie (2003) concluded that both notions have its own cores and we could not mix them. Taking consideration of integration, which contains three core foci:

- 1) Rights to schooling and education for disabled children. Although 'all children' at that time were said to have a right to education, there were groups of children in most countries who did not have this right. Due to their disability, they were either provided for in other institutions (social, medical, etc.) or not in any institution at all (by category, excluded as 'not educable');
- 2) Rights to education in local schools for disabled children were originally formulated as an attack on the centralized institutions normally established as special schools for designated categories of disabled pupils (e.g. the separate special school system);
- 3) Total reorganization of the special education system, focusing all aspects of it, from the identification of its clients to the financial issues followed by integration, the internal local school organizational structure, and the handling of teaching and learning,

including special education, in integrated classes (Vislie, 2003, p.19).

Based on the Vislie's (2003) analyzing of integration, we can obtain a deeper understanding of the meaning of integration; however, it also provides us a room for re-examining the integration, especially with the emergence of inclusive education after Salamanca. Considering the right of children with SEN, integration put overemphasis on the children's opportunity of receiving regular education in regular classrooms. Therefore, inevitably ignore the organizational changes of the regular classroom, like the curriculum, teaching methods, learning strategies, etc. The neglect of organizational changes had, in some cases, created a significant obstacle for children to approach the quality education (Ainscow, 1997, 2005; Ainscow, C  sar, 2006; Dyson, Millward, 2000; Freire, C  sar, 2003; Lindsay, 1997). Therefore, to some extent, the integration has become a rhetorical device instead of a real reality in mainstream schools practice; rather than make an overhaul of pre-existing teaching pedagogy and curriculum to cater to children's diversity educational needs, integration just become a physical space changing regarding mainstream classrooms (Operti, Belalcazar, 2008). This situation of integration, just as Meijer, Pijl, and Hegarty (1997) claimed, it is a very placement that only referred to a 'transplantation' of the practice of special school into the general education system without transforming the pre-existing mainstream schooling. As a result, under the umbrella of integration, different forms of special classes, small special schools emerging in mainstream schools to educate the children with SEN, this practice underlines a view that children who categorized as needing special education still need segregated provision, the difference is that segregation happening in mainstream schools (Ainscow, C  sar, 2006). As we continue to dig, we can discover that integration builds on a deficit/individual model of disability—which educational failures are within children per se, loses the chances to overhaul the problematic situation, not least as it draws our mind from the real causes why our current education cannot success to educate children with SEN (Barton, 1987; Trent, Artiles, Englert, 1998). In this respect, the process of integration can be considered as an 'assimilation' phenomenon, whether or not children can be educable depends on what extent children with SEN can assimilate to the pre-existing mainstream education system (Thomas, 1997).

In conclusion, with criticizes from academic researchers, policy-makers and practitioners, which demanding to change the situation of integration. Particularly, this requirement becomes more emergent after Salamanca Statement, influenced by inclusive education's scope, purposes,

and methods, people recognize that the practice of integration only built upon closing special schools, putting students into the mainstream schools, regardless of children's diversified learning needs. Understanding by that way, students who have SEN should adapt to mainstream schools' pre-existing teaching styles and curriculum organization rather than changing the pre-existing mainstream school arrangement. In this respect, there may be an increase of dropout rates among students who have SEN as they just 'inserting' into the mainstream classrooms where they cannot understand what teacher teaching (Operti, Belalcazar, 2008).

1.4 Inclusive education agenda: a historical perspective

In 1994, the world conference regarding Special Needs Education was held in Salamanca, organized by UNESCO, with the followed document *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, the inclusive educative, as a significant educational principle, was firstly appeared in the world through international endeavor (UNESCO, 1994). After Salamanca Statement, the inclusive education has become a global agenda, which draw much more attention than any other educational agendas. However, the result of Salamanca Statement not without former foundation. In fact, numerous efforts had been made aimed to offer education for all prior to Salamanca Statement, which can date back to the creation of UNESCO in 1946 (UNESCO, 1946). At the same time, continuous contribution to providing inclusive education for all after Salamanca Statement has never stopped. In this section, an overview in terms of the long tradition of offering education to all based on the human right perspective under the international actions, which includes law, declaration, rules and conferences, will provide before and after Salamanca Statement.

As one of the vital human rights promoters, defenders and legal scholars, Katarina Tomasevski, who argued that as one of the human fundamental rights, education right whose significance transcends all other human rights, that is, via education, it will be easy for human beings to approach other rights, such as economic, social and cultural rights (Acedo, 2008; Tomasevski, 2006; Torres, 2008). Therefore, ensuring human being's education right is a global agenda supported by various international organizations. We can easily find international community had been put considerable emphasizes on protecting and promoting human being's

education right through laws, rules, conferences, etc. With the foundation of UNESCO in 1946, the *UNESCO CONSTITUTION*, in its preamble clearly states ‘the States Parties to this Constitution, believing in full and equal opportunities for education for all’ as its obligation, which can be considered as the first international action devoted to promoting the human education right (UNESCO, 1946, Preamble). This starting point as a leading seed, grown up step by step and laid a significant historical foundation for the evolution of actions in terms of promoting human education right (Mundy, 2016).

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR henceforward), which was issued by United Nations, in the preamble it argues that ‘the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’ (United Nations, 1948, Preamble). Article 26 of UDHR put considerable attention on education, which states beginning with ‘everyone has the right to education’, following that it argues ‘education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit’ (United Nations, 1948, Article 26). This international document can be regarded as the first international law of protecting human rights. With respect to education right, everyone has the right to access education, although it not particularly mentioned included the persons with disabilities, however, UDHR also not excluded them (Kanter, 2007). After nearly twenty years later, the United Nations issued International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR henceforward) and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR henceforward), in 1966 and 1967 respectively (United Nations, 1966; United Nations, 1967). As to human education right, Article 13 and 14 of ICESCR, which explicitly recognize that ‘The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to education’ (United Nations, 1967, Article 13) and ‘Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to work out and adopt a detailed plan of action for the progressive implementation within a reasonable number of years, to be fixed in the plan, of the principle of compulsory education free of charge for all’ (United Nations, 1967, Article 14). Just as the UDHR, there were no specific articles focus on whether or not persons with disabilities to receive education, however, just as Kanter, Damiani, and Ferri (2014) explicitly argued that both of the ICCPR and ICESCR neither clearly issued

including persons with disabilities nor denied the education right for them. All in all, those former efforts to protect human education right, which made by international communities, have laid a solid foundation and built a good example for the following actions in terms of promoting human education right, both people with (out) disabilities.

In 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC henceforward) was issued by United Nations, which was the first international convention that puts specific attention regarding the education right about children with disabilities (United Nations, 1989). In that important convention, the articles refer to education right for children with disabilities are: Articles 23, which states ‘States Parties shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education’ and Articles 28, which addresses the education right for children with disabilities to primary, secondary and higher education, it argues ‘Make primary education compulsory and available free to all; Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child; Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means’ (United Nations, 1989, Article 23, 28). The CRC has a profound impact on protecting and promoting children with disabilities all over the world. Unfortunately, as to the aims build by CRC, which have not yet reached all (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2013).

In 1990, the World Conference on Education for All was held in Jomtien, Thailand (United Nations, 1990). In that conference, the document of World Declaration on Education for All (EFA henceforward) was presented, which aimed to provide primary education for all children and reduce illiteracy by the year of 2000. Moreover, it also spares no effort to promote the quality of primary education and try to find more cost-effective alternatives to educate the persons with disabilities. Ten years later, the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, issued the Dakar Framework for Action (United Nations, 2000). Evaluation of the EFA goal set in 1990 World Conference on Education for All by 2000 World Education Forum, which concludes that ‘The EFA 2000 Assessment demonstrates that there has been significant progress in many countries. But it is unacceptable in the year 2000 that more than 113 million children have no access to primary education, 880 million adults are illiterate, gender discrimination continues to permeate education systems’ (United Nations, 2000, p. 8). Therefore, the Dakar Framework recognizes that it is necessary to create a new action framework to realize the EFA goal.

Consequently, new goals and strategies set out to establish a Framework for Action that is designed to enable all individuals to realize their right to learn and to fulfill their responsibility to contribute to the development of their society (United Nations, 2000, p.15). Some important goals and strategies are:

Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality; Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes; Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality' (United Nations, 2000, p.15, 16).

The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, issued by United Nations in 1993 (United Nations, 1993). Rule 6 has specifically focused on education for persons with disabilities, in particular, the principle of integration had been adopted, it states 'States should recognize the principle of equal primary, secondary and tertiary educational opportunities for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings; they should ensure that the education of persons with disabilities is an integral part of the educational system' (United Nations, 1993, Rule, 6). The Standard Rules, with its deeper understanding of all facets of persons with disabilities, had exerted a profound influence on raising world's awareness in terms of protecting the rights of the persons with disabilities, education right, as one of the human basic rights also draw society's attention (Kanter, Damiani, Ferri, 2014).

From the creation of UNESCO in 1946, international communities spare no effort in protecting human basic education right and offering education for all have never stopped. Just as mentioned at the beginning of this section, the concept of inclusive education firstly emerged in international document on the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on SEN in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994, organized by United Nations, which includes more than 300 participants representing 92 governments and 25 international organizations (United Nations, 1994). The aim of this conference, just as Salamanca Statement states 'reaffirm our commitment to Education for All , recognizing the necessity and urgency of providing education for children,

youth and adults with SEN within the regular education system' and 'to further the objective of Education for All by considering the fundamental policy shifts required to promote the approach of inclusive education, namely enabling schools to serve all children , particularly those with SEN' (United Nations, 1994, Preface). One of the most significant features of Salamanca Statement is that unlike other international documents, the Salamanca Statement puts its all emphasizes on the issue of SEN and the development of inclusive education (Kanter, Damiani, Ferri, 2014). Additionally, the Salamanca Statement provides different opinions regarding inclusive education within different parts of the world and advices on how to properly address students with disabilities in all levels of education. Particularly, the Salamanca Statement offers a concrete definition in terms of inclusive education, which states:

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

After Salamanca Statement, the inclusive education has dominated the SEN field and is considered as a global descriptor in that field (Vislie, 2003). Following this tradition, which promoting inclusive education through international conference, the 48th International Conference on Education (ICE), held in Geneva, the theme is Inclusive Education: the Way of the Future (UNESCO IBE, 2008). In this conference, a variety of issues in terms of inclusive education were discussed within a big party, which includes ministers of education, researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders from all over the world. Following this conference, in 2009 the Global Conference on Inclusive Education-Confronting the Gap: Rights, Rhetoric, Reality? Return to Salamanca, which was held in Salamanca (Inclusion International, 2009). After fifteen years of Salamanca Statement, this conference reaffirming its support to develop inclusive education of the whole world. Influencing by those significant international conferences and related international documents, the inclusion as a main principle reflects in the global educational reform and will

continue to exert a profound impact on the worldwide inclusive education practice.

In the 21st century, one of most important international convention relates to inclusive education is The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD henceforward), issued by United Nations in 2006 (United Nations, 2006). Art 24 of CRPD aims at education right for persons with disabilities, it restates that all human beings have the basic education right and ‘with a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, States Parties shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning’ (United Nations, 2006, Art. 24). Undoubtedly, the enactment of CRPD has been arisen society’s awareness, built new rules, demanded appropriate inclusive teacher education programmes and respected and valued the disability as a valuable diversity rather than a deficiency, to some extent, the specific Article 24 probably help to promote countries to issue particular laws that guarantee all the people, regardless of having SEN or not, have the inalienable right to all levels of education (Kanter, Damiani, Ferri, 2014).

With the efforts made by international community, the inclusive education as a global agenda (Piji, Meijer, Hegarty, 1997) has been exerted a profound impact on worldwide education practice and reform. Many international organizations, non-government organizations and governments have developed lots of programmes to facilitate inclusive education. Although, most countries agree with developing the inclusive education and effective inclusive education practices have been already documented, however, at a global level, inclusive education remains a controversial issue which needs to further debate and discussion (Ainscow, 2007). One of the most important issues regarding inclusive education is the definition of inclusion, which I will revisit in following part.

1.5 Defining inclusive education

With analyzing of integration and international community’s effort to promoting inclusive education, there is no doubt that the history of inclusion is not very long, it emerged in the early 1990s (Stainback, Stainback, 1992), firstly appeared in the international document Salamanca Statement in 1994 (United Nations, 1994) and as a global agenda captured the special education field from the 1990s (Piji, Meijer, Hegarty, 1997; Vislie, 2003). The emergence of inclusion in

1990s, as a result of dissatisfaction with integration, aimed to educate all children in the mainstream schools. In this respect, just like Farrell (2000, p. 153) describes the ongoing practice in the UK, ten years ago as to placement of children with disabilities, some were segregated in special schools while some of them were integrated into mainstream schools, but there was little or even nothing to do with the quality of the mainstream schools integrated provision. From Farrell's view, the intention of inclusion was regarded as a proper way to provide an appropriate education to respond to students with disabilities as they were placed into mainstream schools. Due to the emergence of inclusion is closely related to the term of integration, a main question is naturally asked by researchers: whether the new terminology of inclusion means only a linguistic shift or a new agenda (Vislie, 2003)?

Voices respond to that can be easily find in numerous literatures, some researchers argue that several issues under the umbrella of inclusion are certainly not new, they can also include in the term of integration (Piji, Meijer, Hegarty, 1997), while others hold the view that they are different and we need to make some distinctions between them (e.g. Ainscow et al., 2006). The new terminology of inclusion not merely means a linguistic shift, but a wholly new agenda, compared to the terminology of integration, the term of inclusion is a broader vision as it covers more new agendas, which cannot find under the integration (Vislie, 2003). Therefore, another intractable question we confronted is: what is the meaning of inclusion?

As we attempt to inquiry the meaning of inclusion, a fact that we need to keep in mind is that although discussions of the term inclusion are legion since 1994, there are various of interpretations of inclusion. However, there is still lacking an agreement regarding a common interpretation of inclusion and attempt to provide an explicit definition is thus still an elusive work (Ainscow, Farrell, Tweddle, 2000; Booth, 1996; Booth, Ainscow, 1998; Dyson, Millward, 2000; Florian, 2014; Goransson, Nilholm, 2014; Hegarty, 2001; McLeskey et al., 2014; Reindal, 2016). Different researchers from different perspectives based on different contexts, carrying out multiple researches try to provide a proper interpretation regarding inclusive education. Therefore, the existing researches not only lay a solid foundation for further research, but also provide a platform for us to reconsider our own research and avoid doing the repeated work. Moreover, to some extent, without a comprehensive understanding of pre-existing research on inclusive education, we cannot have a better understanding of inclusive education in our own research.

Defining or explaining inclusion can begin with different perspectives, especially as people depend on different theoretical frameworks to start their interpretations. Some scholars, like Dyson (1999) instead of talking about inclusion, he prefers to 'inclusions'. And researchers also provide some suggestions when defining inclusion, like Ainscow (2005) draw his experience involving local education authority's attempt to developing a more inclusive policy, based on the education system point and suggested that these who are intending to examine their working definition of inclusion, four key elements need to be considered: (a) Inclusion is a never-ending process; (b) Inclusion is concerning with the identification and removal of barriers; (c) Inclusion is ensuring all the students to participate and achieve their own success; and (d) Inclusion is putting considerable emphasizes on certain types of students who are vulnerable to marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement (Ainscow , 2005).

Bearing those implications in mind, following we will firstly examine the meaning of inclusive education from an overview standpoint and then priority will give concrete interpretations of inclusive education emerging from the literature. Finally, based on analyzing different perspectives of inclusive education, core values of inclusion will be discussed to close the debate.

From an international perspective, as we have already discussed in 'Inclusive education as a global agenda: a historical development perspective' section, many international organizations devoted their efforts to develop and promote inclusive education, however, this action does not come to a shared explanation with respect to the term of inclusive education, the term still has different meanings for different communities, mirroring contrasting theoretical and ideological social-cultural contexts where inclusion is constructed (D'Alessio, Watkins, 2009). However, there are still some common concerns that emerged from the varied researches, although different definitions and interpretations in terms of inclusive education at an international level made by different international communities. As D'Alessio (2011) concludes, there are two chief concerns regarding inclusive education emerging across cultural studies which carried out by various international communities, on the one hand, inclusive education in some countries is about eliminating the segregated educational situation and educating all children in mainstream education regardless of children with or without SEN, while in other countries inclusive education puts emphasis on increasing the amount of students population approaching the basic school

education (UNESCO, 2009). D'Alessio (2011) continues to point out that particularly across the Europe, understanding inclusive education can follow two trajectories: one is about to provide the special provision for the pupils who are classified as having SEN, regardless of pupils in mainstream or special schools, and how those arrangements respond to students' additional needs (Meijer, Soriano, Watkins, 2003a, 2003b, cited in D'Alessio, 2011, p. 25), while another is caring about the agenda of Education For All and how to protect the fundamental right of providing education for all children (UNESCO, 1990, 2000, 2003; cited in D'Alessio, 2011, p. 25).

Other researchers (Forlin et al., 2013) based on examining extensive literatures argue that the definition regarding to inclusive education can be defined according two types: one kind is starting from the principal features of inclusive education to define it (e.g. Berlach, Chambers, 2011), and one is defining inclusive education as eliminating all factors that exclude or hinder children to access the education (e.g. Slee, 2011). Recently, Goransson and Nilholm (2014) re-examined the concept of inclusive education based on a critical analysis of related researches, according to the documented literature the definition of inclusive education can be grouped into four categories: a) placement definition: inclusive education is considered as placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms; b) specified individualised definition: inclusive education is considered as catering to students' social or academic needs, exclusively who are disabled; c) general individualised definition: inclusive education is considered as catering to all students' social or academic needs; d) community definition: inclusive education is considered as creating communities with specific characteristics (Goransson, Nilholm, 2016).

In all, the authors argue that definition of inclusive education needs to be explicitly defined both in reviews and empirical researches and new ways to consider the concept are needed. Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) from their research experience provide a typology to consider inclusion, which includes six ways, inclusion can be considered as: (a) concerning with children who are categorised as having SEN; (b) responding to exclusion due to the disciplinary problem ; (c) relating to all students who are vulnerable to exclusion ; (d) facilitating schools for all children ; (e) equaling the agenda of 'Education for All'; (f) promoting an approach to education and society (Ainscow et al., 2006, p.15).

Meanwhile, the majority of researchers try to give a concrete explanation of inclusive education based on specific perspectives.

From the quality perspective, inclusive education is considered as providing appropriate education to all students rather than only caring about the placement of students with SEN in the mainstream schools. This perspective is, to some extent, a step forward compared with integration whose purpose is just placing students with SEN in mainstream classroom. Just as study argues that the inclusive education in school not only offer ‘inclusive placement (being there)’ but more priority should give to ‘the provision of inclusive learning (learning there)’, this shift based on the belief that inclusive education identifies and concerns each student’s learning needs and preferences (O’Brien, 2001, p. 48). Put simply, inclusive education is regarded as focusing on regular education’s quality instead of only referring to special education per se (Hassanein, 2015, p. 34).

Based on the political and right standpoint, Corbett and Slee (1999) argued that inclusive education can be considered as the result of a large political movement, like disability movement and mainstream in some countries, therefore, inclusion is about to offering educational access for all people, which is unconditional and ‘nor does it speak about partial inclusion’ (Corbett, Slee 1999, p. 134, cited in Hassanein, 2015, p. 32).

With the development of inclusive education practice in different parts of the world, an organizational or system changing perspective regarding to interpretation of inclusion is emerging among the researchers (e.g. Cigman, 2007; Dyson, Millward, 2000; Rouse, Florian, 1996). This tradition of considering inclusive education can date back to the late 1980s, some researchers adopt a new thinking in terms of inclusion and they argued that if we want to achieve inclusive education, we need to shift from the practice of traditional view of developing special education to an approach that concerns developing ‘effective schools for all’ educational system (Ainscow, 1991; Ballard, 1997; Booth, 1995; Slee, 1996). Salamanca Statement, to some extent, following the same tradition and basing the belief that radical changes in organization or educational system will, to some extent, benefit all students (Ainscow, Dyson, Weiner, 2013). In this respect, inclusive education is regarded as ‘the educational principle that aims at changing existing education systems and creating a more equal and just society’, which focuses on all the people and suggests proper ways to transform radical educational and social systems. (D’Alessio, 2012, p. 27). Inclusive education, from that perspective, ‘is not about closing down an unacceptable system of segregated provision and dumping those pupils in an unchanged mainstream system’, it is about to changing pre-existing school systems in terms of teaching methods, curriculum contents,

architectural factors, management styles, etc (Barton, 1998, p. 84; Mittler, 2000).

Increasing participation and decreasing exclusion is another standpoint that researchers try to interpret inclusive education and the participation scope ranges from education to society. In this respect, inclusive education can be regarded as promoting all citizens' participation of all aspects of social life, this is far beyond the education scope (Barton, 1998, pp. 84-85), which can be understood as following. Firstly, the principle of inclusive education is a process of increasing students' participation in and decreasing any forms of exclusion from mainstream education (Booth, 1996; Booth et al., 1998). In this respect, providing general education for all and sparing no effort to increase participation is the main aim of inclusive education. Secondly, with the development of inclusive education, a broader understanding of inclusion has been emerged, named social inclusion. From that point, inclusion, instead of only focusing on educating students with SEN, it also refers to encouraging all citizens to participate all social activities, respecting and valuing every people's participation in social life. In this regard, all parts of society like schools, communities and governments, should remove barriers and increase opportunities for all people to be involved in everyday social activities (Booth, Ainscow, 1998; Hassanein, 2015, p. 33).

Based on human diversity, inclusive education is a culture that celebrates and values individual differences (Barton, 1998, p. 80; Corbett, 2001), thus, the educational system should respect every student's dignity regardless of students with or without disabilities, rather than reinforcing pre-existing inequalities (Barton, 1998, p. 80). Furthermore, as D'Alessio (2012, p. 29) argues in order to truly achieve the goal of celebrating students' diversity and individual difference, we need to detect and transform this special 'educational resources'. In so doing, a fundamental shift is needed that from a solo process of acceptance and tolerance into a real process of celebration of difference. How can we accomplish this shift? This requires us to consider some critical changes in terms of existing educational system in order to accommodate students' differences, for example teaching methods, curriculum content, assessment process, etc.

Apart from focusing on specific aspect of inclusive education, some researches try to provide a comprehensive understanding of inclusive education, which reflects the majority key elements of inclusion in the above definitions. In this regard, some international documents and researchers' understanding can be a good example.

As we mentioned above, in 1994 the Salamanca Statement provides a definition regarding inclusive education, which states:

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

From Salamanca Statement's definition, inclusive education is: (a) providing education for all in one placement; (b) responding to students' diversity needs; (c) ensuring quality education for all students; (e) accommodating students' needs through changing pre-existing educational system and (f) a never-ending process, with a continuum of provision for students with SEN.

With the inclusive education practice development all over the world, the UNESCO (2009) also gives a definition of inclusive education, which includes multiple aspects of inclusion. As it understanding is:

Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners ... As an overall principle, it should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the fact that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society". Inclusion can be seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth, and adults by increasing their participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular educational system to educate all children (UNESCO 2009, p. 8).

Based on UNESCO's (2009) understanding, inclusive education can be summarized as: (a) is a process; (b) ensuring the educational system to reach out to all students; (c) is a fundamental human right; (e) paving the way for a more fair and equitable society; (f) responding to learners' diversity educational needs; (g) increasing participation and eliminating exclusion and (h) changing pre-existing educational system.

Some researchers based on inclusive practice, also offer a comprehensive understanding of inclusion. For example, Booth and Ainscow (2002) in the index for Inclusion: developing learning and participation in schools argue that inclusion in education involves:

- a) valuing all students and staff equally;
- b) increasing the participation of students in, and reducing their exclusion from, the cultures, curricula and communities of local schools;
- c) restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality;
- d) reducing barriers to learning and participation for all students, not only those with impairments or those who are categorised as 'having SEN';
- e) learning from attempts to overcome barriers to the access and participation of particular students to make changes for the benefit of students more widely;
- f) viewing the difference between students as resources to support learning, rather than problems to be overcome;
- g) acknowledging the right of students to an education in their locality; h) improving schools for staff as well as for students;
- h) emphasising the role of schools in building community and developing values, as well as in increasing achievement;
- i) fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities;
- j) recognising that inclusion in education is one aspect of inclusion in society (p. 3).

All in all, the above mentioned definitions reflect that inclusive education is still a disputable term and the interpretation will still continue. Researchers from different cultures, based on various inclusive practices, thus it is normal that inclusive education means particular things in particular context for particular group. As Ainscow (2008) argues the existence of different explanations partly from a fact that the word inclusion can be constructed in many ways, largely depending on the situated social-cultural context in which this concept is investigated. Undoubtedly, the existence of diversity plausible and insightful interpretations regarding inclusive education is not only accepting but enriching the meaning.

1.6 Complicated attitudes towards inclusive education

As we have already mentioned before, although inclusion has been emerged for several decades there is still lacking a single and unambiguous definition regarding what it means, therefore, the term of inclusion is used and understood in different ways in different contexts by different people (Ainscow et al., 2006; Armstrong, Armstrong, Spandagou, 2011; Dovigo, 2017). Like the complicated situation of inclusion's definition, people's attitudes towards inclusive education also complicated and ranges from against to support. On one hand some against base on the social and academic benefits of separate education for students with SEN, impracticability of inclusion (Kauffman, Hallahan, 2005; Warnock, 2005), while others support inclusion from the perspective of epistemological (e.g. Gallagher, 2004), students' outcomes (e.g. Zigmond, 2003), human right, social justice (e.g. Artiles, 2003) and a need for contemporary life (Thomas, Loxley, 2007). Additionally, based on personal experiences, the voices from school teachers who involved in promoting inclusive education in schools, students with SEN and its parents also express their considerations regarding inclusion, which definitely enrich our understanding of inclusive practice from diversified angles.

Attacks towards inclusion have emerged from different directions, which make inclusive education like an impossibility to achieve. Expressions, like 'inclusion is a nightmare' (CSIE, 2002), 'inclusion is a costly disaster' (Shakespeare, 2005), 'children who had been damaged by inclusion' (Warnock, 2005, p. 35), 'inclusion is disastrous (ibid, p. 22), creating casualties of students (ibid, p. 14)', 'a sorry state of inclusion which characterised by confusion, frustration, guilt and exhaustion' (Allan, 2008, P. 3), 'a horror story' (ibid, p. 16) and 'ruined by inclusion' (Sunday Herald, 2005, p. 1), were used by researchers, parents and teachers to describe the situation of inclusion. Regarding those attacks, a critical question is being asked: why they attack inclusion? Undoubtedly, answers will be different as inclusion is differently understood by different stakeholders.

1.6.1 School teachers

There is no doubt that teacher plays a critical role in transforming the inclusive value into

inclusive practice in their working community. Given that, their experience involved in inclusive practice can be regarded as an indispensable part when we analyzing the inclusion in schools and classrooms, to some extent, without teacher's opinions we cannot acquire a full picture of how inclusion works in practice. As well documented in the literature, teachers are increasingly complaining that achieving inclusion seems a great impossibility and their judgments mainly derive from day-to-day school practice.

The most common concern is that teachers think they are inability or unprepared to deal with inclusion, inclusion can place unnecessary pressures on their current workload (Edmunds, 2003). Based on school educational provision perspective, some teachers express a worry that whether the mainstream school can provide a proper education for students with some kind of SEN, in particular the complex behavioral and emotional needs (Macbeath et al., 2006). For those students, the alternative provision, like special school with professionals and additional support might be a better option for them. For example, the students with the diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which need specific medical treatment and professional support. Taking consideration of that, special school is better than mainstream school.

Concerning the learning environment, some teachers put emphasis on the cost of inclusion for other students, especially disruptive students or those with behavioral problems, who can create problems for the whole classroom and hinder teaching. As one teacher stated that the inclusion's price is too high:

Teachers just cannot spread themselves equally amongst their pupils . . . Classrooms were never about learning, they are about social interaction and building confidence and about pupils becoming 'whole' people. No-one would wish to exclude any child from being part of this experience but at what cost to others when the problems are such that the learning environment is destroyed and everyone pays a price? (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2004, p. 13).

Influenced by the 'standard agenda' and 'culture of accountability', some teachers who were previously supporting inclusive education have begun to alter their ideas as these students with SEN achieve low test scores will exert a negative impact on the whole class level, further it will affect their career (Ferri, Ashby, 2017, p. 25; Harvey-Koelpin, 2006). Just like a teacher argued in Harvey-Koelpin's (2006) study:

Teachers don't want them. If my job depends on their test scores and they are reading at a first- or second-grade level and I am teaching fourth grade . . . I don't want those kids. I do because I am a teacher and went into teaching to help kids. But if my job depends on it . . . my care payments depend on it . . . my apartment payment depends on it . . . I don't want those kids (p. 140).

Based on teaching experience, one teacher expressed her concern in terms of damages caused by inclusion policy for one student with SEN in her class. As the teacher argued that this violent student should not be in the mainstream schools' class, as here is not a proper place for him. This complicated situation sometimes made her cry, she even used the word 'ruined' by inclusion to describe that student:

It's enough to make you cry, and I do cry sometimes. I don't want to see this young boy's life ruined. I don't want him not to get an education but we are losing him in this school. He shouldn't be here. I look at him and wonder if he won't one day kill himself or someone else. I'm scared of him and scared for him. He is so young but he is also so badly mentally disturbed. The policy of inclusion is finishing this child off – not saving him (Sunday Herald, 16 January, 2005, p. 1).

1.6.2 Researchers

Starting from different positions, scholars' understandings and attitudes towards inclusive education is inevitably different. Therefore debates of supporting, partly supporting, or opposing, partly opposing inclusive education have been emerged when it was firstly coming, particularly when we connect the inclusive education with special education. More importantly, with the development of the debate in terms of inclusive education, the taste of that debate 'war' has undergone a critical change. As Allan (2008) argued that inclusion rather than being scholars' debate resource, which 'has become a curious, highly emotive, and somewhat irrational space of confrontation' (p. 12). On one hand, the so-called 'inclusionists' who advocate educating students with SEN in mainstream schools and considering that based on the values of equity, community and respecting of human diversity. While the so-called 'special educationists' support the reservation of the special education and regard that is good for the students with SEN. Moreover,

the 'special educationists' describe the inclusion like 'bandwagon':

Discriminative disability often leads to the creation of bandwagons defined as a cause that attracts an increasing number of adherents, amassing power by its timeliness, showmanship, or momentum. Bandwagons provide a communal sense of purpose, an energizing camaraderie, and a collective voice whose power exceeds its importance. Bandwagons are used to champion a cause, engage in sweeping yet attractive rhetoric, and generally to promise far more than they ever have hope of delivering while simultaneously downplaying or ignoring the negative aspects of their edicts (Kavale, Mostert, 2004, p. 232).

And the 'special educationists' continue to put inclusion into a dangerous situation as inclusion does harm to students:

. . . there is almost no empirical evidence attesting to the efficacy of full inclusion . . . the inclusive bandwagon continues without supportive evidence primarily because it is presumed that morally and ethically "It's the right thing to do" (Kavale, Mostert, 2004, p. 234).

As Allan concludes: "Ideology has become the 'weapon' with which both sides berate each other. The fight, however, resembles a form of handbagging, with one side smacking the other with the accusation that the other is being 'merely' ideological" (2008, p. 12). When one side tries to refer other side's point to an ideological point, that is to say they are both intending to deny the status and worth of each other's position. Similarly, when Thomas and Loxley (2007, p. 116) discuss the state of inclusion: ideology and rhetoric? They quote from Eagleton (1991, p. 2) to argue: 'Nobody would claim that their own thinking was ideological, just as nobody would habitually refer to themselves as Fatso. Ideology, like halitosis, is in this sense what the other person has.' Therefore, the debates will continue if both sides still posit other side as an ideological point, so we should reexamine our own view as well as others' view from a scientific angle and learn from each other.

In 2005, Warnock's 'SEN: A new look' was published by the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (Warnock, 2005), which ignited a strong discussion in terms of inclusive education. In this influential pamphlet, based on a 'body of evidence' (ibid, p.35), Warnock states that efforts towards inclusion was wrong as the students with disabilities' experiences is generally

‘traumatic’ (ibid, p. 43) rather than beneficial when they were in mainstream school. Drawing from the varied forms of exclusion phenomenon in school, particularly in secondary school she argues:

Young children can be very accommodating to the idiosyncracies of others, and teachers tend on the whole to stay with their class, and thus get to know their pupils and be known by them. The environment is simply less daunting than that of the secondary school. In secondary schools, however, the problems become acute. Adolescents form and need strong friendships, from which a Down’s Syndrome girl, for example, who may have been an amiable enough companion when she was younger, will now be excluded; her contemporaries having grown out of her reach. The obsessive eccentricities of the Asperger’s boy will no longer be tolerated and he will be bullied and teased, or at best simply neglected (ibid, p. 35).

Additionally, Warnock against educational inclusion based on the point of ‘even if inclusion is an ideal for society in general, it may not always be an ideal for school’ (ibid, p.43).

Based on the perspective of ideology, Warnock criticizes the damage to ‘SEN children’ (p.40) caused by the ‘ideology of inclusion’ (ibid, p.23):

The fact is that, if educated in mainstream schools, many such children are not included at all. They suffer all the pains of the permanent outsider. No political ideology should impose this on them (ibid, p. 45).

All in all, we can see related stakeholders’ attitudes towards inclusive education is ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, to partly agree, agree and strongly agree, which all based on their own considerations. Undoubtedly, there are a various factors influence people’s attitudes towards inclusive education and their feelings to inclusive education mainly come from their day-to-day practice related to the inclusive education. Therefore, a good way to explore stakeholders’ attitudes and feelings to inclusive education is to approach their day-to-day practice. In doing so, explore their attitudes and feelings towards inclusive education around them.

1.7 Comparative perspective on inclusive education

1.7.1 *Making the strange familiar and the familiar strange*

Even if we did not step outside the borders of our own country, we already possess extensive knowledge of the existence of differences in perspective on issues of inclusion and exclusion between and within schools, between parents and professionals, between disabled people and the creators of legislation about disability, amongst disabled people themselves, within and between a variety of cultural groups and amongst academics and researchers. (Booth, Ainscow, 1998, p. 4)

The cited above comes from the book 'From Them to Us: An International Study of Inclusion in Education', which was edited by Ainscow and Booth in 1998, can be regarded as an excellent academic book in terms of approaching inclusive education across different cultures through comparative perspective. A cross-cultural comparative perspective is a powerful approach as it attempts to take consider of both us and them, which inevitably opens up some new possibilities to look varied societies and cultures. Particularly important is that we can learn from each other. Thus, more possibilities to know more cultures and learning from each other can be considered as two strengths of the comparative study. Historically speaking, there is a long tradition that cross-cultural comparative perspective is employed by academics as a way to research inclusive education. Related studies are well documented in academic books and journals like *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *International journal of special education*, *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, *British Journal of Special Education*, *Chinese Journal of Special Education*, *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, *Support for Learning*, *Journal of Research in SEN* and so on. Here, considering the nature of current study I will focus on the academic books that employed the cross-cultural comparative perspective to investigate the inclusive education and provide a brief review in terms of why those writers used cross-cultural comparative perspective and how they employed that perspective to enrich our understanding of inclusive education. However, we should keep alert in mind that the studies what I will review is just a part of the whole picture in terms of employing cross-cultural comparative perspective in inclusive education field, the choices is primarily based on my personal research reflection and

research relevance to current study.

The first publication I read was the book edited by Meijer, Pijl and Hegarty (1994) which was a product of the background that integration has become one of core issues in the field of special education (p. xi). This book examines integration in six countries: Italy, Denmark, Sweden, United States, England, Wales, and the Netherlands, and through the comparative perspective to provide some pictures of integration practices in different countries and open some new possibilities that help researchers to reflect on their own country's practice and thus can learn from each other's experiences, which is also the goal of this book. Overall this book provides us some valuable information in terms of integration across different countries and inspires some new insights to consider the integration process in our own country.

Three years later, Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997) edited another academic book on inclusive education, as many countries spare no effort in achieving a more inclusive system since the last decade of 20th century, this book try to address the question of what factors influence the implementation of inclusive education? The comparative approach was employed again to examine the inclusive practice in different countries. Unlike traditional comparative research that ends with a detail description of every country's inclusive practice and then each country is a unit of comparison in the book. The comparative perspective in this book, as the authors argued, should enrich our knowledge of inclusive education practice in different countries rather than just a description. Hence, the book's interest is to invite the researchers in different countries to examine the factors relevant in achieving inclusive education and finally reach a theoretical point that 'the development of a theory that focuses on the factors (at various levels) that have a major influence on the success of inclusion' (p. 5) rather than just a simple country's inclusive education description. As inclusive education is becoming a global agenda that book provides a worth reference for teachers, school managers, researcher and policy makers to promote inclusion within their own context.

The next addition to that literature was a book edited by Booth and Ainscow (1998) in 1998, which documents researchers' perspectives in terms of inclusion and exclusion in education within their own national and local cultural context in eight countries. As Booth and Ainscow stated at the introduction, this study comes from 'a dissatisfaction with much of the existing comparative education research' (p. 1) on inclusive education, those existing studies not only ignoring the

problems of interpreting and translating inclusive education as they misunderstand the inclusion processes and practices in a more oversimplification way, but also arguing that there exists a single national point on inclusion without respecting the differences on inclusion among different areas in the country. That book puts more emphases on local cultural context when considering the inclusion practices and tries to challenge the single national view on inclusive education through comparative approach.

As entering the 21st century, Armstrong (2003) published a book focused on exploring the 'relationship between space, place and identity and multiple processes of policy making' (p. 1) in relation to the provision for children and young people with disabilities in England and France. At the beginning of the study the author sets the research to make a comparative research between England and France, two different cultural contexts. However, with the development of the research the author recognizes that it is impossible to compare between two different countries as each country has their own cultural context, to some extent that comparison is meaningless. And then the author changes the traditional thinking on cross-cultural comparative perspective into examining the questions and issues that arise from two countries within their own cultural, historical and political contexts and the aim is to, just as the author stated at the end of the book, 'bring the voices of people from different places into the centre of the research process and the telling of their different stories' (p. 170). In this excellent study, Armstrong persuades us to reconsider what is comparative perspective really means and remind us it is meaningless to compare when the research objects are two totally different countries with their own specific context, what we need to do is to respect every country's specific context and let them to tell their own story.

Later, two academic books one is edited by Mitchell (2005) and another is Barton and Armstrong (2008) both employed the cross-cultural comparative perspective to examine the inclusive education practice over some countries. One big difference from the previous works is that these two works start to give attention to the developing countries' inclusive education. As Mitchell stated in the preface that work arises from his extensive international researches on inclusive education with the teachers, researchers and local policy-makers both in developed and developing countries, tried to provide some research resources for educationists in different countries as they confronting problems in promoting inclusion in their context. Furthermore

author's some personal confusions and reflections in terms of the inclusive education as 'what does inclusive education really mean?', 'who are the "targets" of inclusive education?', 'is it a Western idea that would not work in developing countries?' (Mitchell, 2005, p. xv) were also examined through all the chapters. Barton and Armstrong's work's biggest feature lies on the approach to inclusive education, unlike other works the editors ask each contributor to provide a personal research reflection on their research experience regarding inclusive education. To reflect their own research experience of inclusive education within their cultural, historical and political country contexts and provide a personal story on inclusive education. As we know the researcher's value plays a vital role in social science research, especially in comparative research. Obviously, in comparative study the researcher (s) belong (s) to one of she's /his/their research object's context, how to deal with personal value in the research, is a barrier or facilitator? This book provides a good explanation for those questions.

A similar book like the former two works is edited by Alur and Timmons (2009). In fact, this work cannot be considered as a comparative research on inclusive education, as the editor stated this work is a collection of multiple perspectives in terms of inclusive education practice in some countries, however this work do give us some implications when we conduct the cross-cultural research and a multiple perspectives to approach inclusion.

After 15 years, Norwich (2008) published another work on dilemmas of difference in terms of education and especially to the field of disability (SEN). In 1993 study he conducted the comparison between US and UK (Norwich, 1993), and this time in US , UK and Netherlands to employ comparative approach to examine identification dilemma, curriculum dilemma and location dilemma in relation to special and inclusive education from the school practitioners' perspectives. Unlike other works this work provides a full picture in terms of using comparative perspective on inclusive education and a good example on comparative research design.

In 2010 Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010) together published a work which examines the policy and practice development of inclusive education from a global point. Unlike other comparative studies, rather than focusing on specific countries' comparison, this book employs a comparative thinking to reconsider the inclusive education both in developed and developing countries and the questions we should consider as we transfer inclusive education theory from the North to the South, which is a hot debate faced by inclusive education

development. This book provides us an excellent examination of inclusive education development in the world through a comparative thinking, and specifically what should be considered when conducting inclusive education comparative research between developed and developing countries.

Recently, Fabio (2017) edited a book which provides a brief description in terms of the situation of inclusive education in six countries, which are Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, the UK, and the USA. Fabio reminds us some comparative studies ‘tend to offer a simplistic view that reduces the complexity of school policies and practices to a handful of alleged key factors, usually underestimating both the role played by local environments and cultures, and the variety of differences normally existing within the same national context’ (p. ix). Hence, we must pay attention to country’s local context when we conduct the comparisons and presume we can transfer inclusive practice from one country to another without considering each country’s specific context is a utopia.

Considering of my current research agenda, I provide a brief overview in terms of the researches that employ the comparative perspective study inclusive education. From different angles, these works provide us a good opportunity to understand inclusive education in different countries by employing cross-cultural perspectives, in doing so the authors remind us what should be avoided when conducting comparative research and offer some suggestions when comparing inclusive education practice in different contexts as well.

1.7.2 Export or import: inclusive education between developed and developing world

As we have a look on the comparative study on inclusive education that documented in the journals, reports and academic books, a great majority of these works have focused on developed countries or we can say the North world, less on developing countries (Armstrong, Armstrong, Spandagou, 2010; Booth, Ainscow, 1998; Meijer, Pijl, Hegarty, 1994; Mitchell, 2005; Norwich, 2008; Pijl, Meijer, Hegarty, 1997). However, among various topics of comparative perspective on inclusive education, one specific topic that the export of inclusive education theory from the developed to developing countries is possible or not has been drew significant attention from

global inclusive education field (Armstrong, Armstrong, Spandagou, 2010; Barton, Armstrong, 2008; Mitchell, 2005; Vislie, 2003).

Historically speaking, the educational system in colonial countries was mainly exported the models that developed in colonial powers and during this transplantation little was changed. Therefore many western theorists put their theories to the developing world without taking consideration of local cultural and historical contexts and ignoring the voices and experiences of local people (Armstrong, Armstrong, Spandagou, 2010), this situation just as there is a:

'northernness' to these theories where '[d]ebates among the colonized are ignored and intellectuals of the colonized societies are unreferenced, and social process is analysed in an ethnographic time warp'. There is an arrogance of interpretation where it is assumed that people from very different countries will either experience the world in the same way or that systems developed and working well in the developed world could be easily and successfully replicated in economically, culturally and politically different 'developing systems'. (Connell, 2007, p. 44).

Furthermore this mind that South world can import directly from the first-world which inevitably reinforces developing countries' dependency and what Friere (1972) described as 'the culture of silence'. Therefore Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010) reminded us that the idea that the developed countries can produce models for the developing countries is a fault as there are huge differences between each other.

From a historical perspective, firstly, many years ago the developed countries had already overcome the challenges, namely basic access and participation of education, around the inclusive education, and currently is a big problem faced by some developing countries. Secondly, the special education system was well established in developed countries during the nineteenth and early twentieth countries while there still lacks adequate special education provision among developing countries, not to mention to build a well special education system and the fact is that even the general education system is not well built (Armstrong, Armstrong, Spandagou, 2010). Considering of those two points, we can argue that it is nearly impossible to develop inclusive education as there is lacking the foundational infrastructure which is required to support inclusion. Countries like Indonesia and Laos, it is normal for two teachers to support six classes, and classrooms are dangerous without floors or ceilings (Armstrong, Armstrong, Spandagou, 2010).

Under this situation how can we put western inclusion concept into local context without adaptations? What does inclusive education mean for them? Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2010) argued that there is no doubt that with high-technology and effective communication the western experts can help developing countries to develop inclusive education, but we must keep in mind that there still exists a time lag between the North and the South. Following the globalization the concept of inclusive education spreads from the North to the South, and the meaning inevitably will change considerably as the concept is applied in the South because the contexts of the developing countries are totally different from the developed countries' context where the inclusive education was born. However, that does not mean the North cannot provide anything to the South or the South only can learn from the North. The fact is that both parts can learn from each other through communication. The learning should establish on the foundation of respect and is not about one fix another or one provides a model for another as we either cannot fix the South situation by transplanting the North's method or there is not a model that can apply in all contexts.

“In between” conclusion: where we are and where to go

In this conclusion section, I mainly focus on answering two questions: (a) where we are? and (b) where to go? To fully answer these two questions, this section will be divided into three parts. The first part will give a description in terms of this chapter and to state what I already have done in this chapter, while in doing so the answer to first question will be provided. Subsequently, the two sections will focus on solving the second question, particularly the second section will make a comprehensive review of the my literature review, identify the research gaps in the pre-existing inclusive education research and point that there is still a need for additional research in terms of some topics, like how to properly understand inclusive education, inclusive education comparison between China and Western countries, etc. Finally, the third section will locate my current research within the context of the existing literature and research gaps and briefly articulate my own research project.

This chapter has explored issues in relation to inclusive education which aims to provide a literature context for current research. Firstly, two different theoretical frameworks used to justify

disability – medical model and social model – and inclusive education were briefly discussed and its different implications for education systems development were presented as well. Secondly, the relationship between integration and inclusion was discussed, which is also a critical topic among various topics in current literature review. The first and most significant question is from integration to inclusion: is a new language or a shift? To get a comprehensive answer for that question, from a historical perspective I examined integration movement and inclusive education agenda to clear their relationships. Based on that examination, I argued that integration and inclusion are two totally different concepts and caution should be pay when research these two concepts. Subsequently, considering current research will focus on inclusive education I examined the multiple definitions and core values of inclusive education in the pre-existing literature, which intentionally provide a solid foundation for my next step to approaching inclusive education. Thirdly, I explored related stakeholders attitudes towards inclusive education, in particular mainstream school teachers and researchers. Finally, considering the nature of my research project I briefly reviewed the pre-existing inclusive education researches that employ the comparative perspective to investigate inclusive education practice in various countries. While concerning the topic on export or import inclusive education between developed and developing world, I provide some of my own considerations. In all, the pre-existing research on inclusive education has reached at a rich height and various topics have been already fully discussed by worldwide researchers. However, form the literature there are still some topics on inclusive education field need to be further investigated, which is the topic I will turn.

From the literature review, we can identify some research gaps which still need to explore more. Considering current research focus, the research gaps in pre-existing inclusive education studies can be considered under three broad topics:

- a) The problem of definition on inclusive education;
- b) The different ways of realization of inclusive education both on policy and practice level;
- c) Comparison between China and Western countries on inclusive education policy and practice.

From the literature review, the above research gaps still need further researches to investigate. Given that, the current study is conducted. Employed a comparative perspective, current study mainly aims to explore the policy and practice of inclusive education in Italy and China. This

research is of significance for pre-existing studies on inclusive education. On one hand we can define and redefine inclusive education from two totally different contexts, particularly studies on Italian inclusive education have already conducted by worldwide researchers and comparisons between Italy and other countries have already conducted. However, related studies of comparison between Italy and China is still lacking, therefore current study can fill this research gap. On the other hand, we can connect inclusive education policy and practice between Italy and China. In doing so, we can improve communication and exchange between these two countries and achieve the goal of learning from each other in terms inclusive education development. In addition, both Italy and China as a representative in Western culture and Eastern culture respectively, this study can be regarded as a good opportunity to open a dialogue between Western culture and Eastern culture, via the dialogue to make two cultures more open and more inclusive!

Chapter two Inclusive education policy: Contexts in Italy and China

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to set the scene for the study of teachers' perspectives in terms of understanding inclusive education. It sets out Italy and China's policy and practical aspects in a way that relates issues to the inclusive education examined in current study.

2.1 Inclusive education in Italy

2.1.1 Overview and background of education in Italy

The intention of this section is to provide a overview of educational system in Italy, topics as to how Italian education system is organized, what is the working system of administration and governance at Central and/or Regional Level, what are the main features in terms of national curriculum, assessments, school autonomy and so on, will be briefly examined to offer a contextual background for current study.

Generally, according to the *Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana*, or the Italian Constitution which was proclaimed on December 22, 1947, stated that education is accessible to everyone and that compulsory education is free (art. 34). Currently, at the time in which the research is conducted, compulsory education lasts 10 years (from the age of 6 to 16). At all levels, education is accessible throughout the national territory and the official language of education is Italian.

Briefly, the Italian education system is organized as follows (INDIRE, 2014, p. 7):

- Infant education (scuola dell'infanzia) for children between the ages of 3 and 6;
- Primary education (scuola primaria) lasts for 5 years, for children from 6 to 11 years of age;
- Lower secondary school (scuola secondaria di I grado), lasts 3 years, for ages 11 to 14;

- Upper secondary school (scuola secondaria di II grado), lasts 5 years, for ages 14 to 19;
- Higher education provides by universities, institutes of the Higher Education in Art and Music system (Alta Formazione Artistica e Musicale, AFAM) and Higher Technical Institutes (Istituti Tecnici Superiori, ITS).

Compulsory education is lasting for ten years for children between the ages of six and sixteen, which covers the whole primary school and lower secondary education and the first two years of upper secondary education. In particular, in terms of the last two years of compulsory education, which is the first two years of upper secondary education (from the age 14 to 16), students can attend the state-run upper secondary schools (liceo, technical institute or vocational institute), or a three or four years of vocation education course in the jurisdiction of the Regions (INDIRE, 2014, p. 7). Moreover, parents or guardians have the compulsory responsibility that ensures their children to complete the compulsory education. In addition to that, the local authorities and the school directors also have the shared responsibility for ensuring and supervising local areas school aged children to complete the compulsory education. In terms of the higher education, access only provides to students who have passed the State examination which takes place at the end of the upper secondary school.

Apart from the state run education, there is also private education, which is usually offered by organizations and private individuals that are entitled to establish schools and colleges at no cost to the State (INDIRE, 2014, p. 8).

With regard to administration and governance at the Central level, is the organization of Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), which is mainly responsible for managing national education. At local level, administration contains Provinces and Municipalities (Comuni). Provinces are mainly responsible for upper secondary school education, while Municipalities are mainly for infant, primary, and lower secondary school education. At the same time, through the dedicated educational offices (Assessorati) Provinces and Municipalities together implement the special education-related functions (INDIRE, 2014, p. 11).

After examining the general system organization of Italian education, the rest of the section will focus on national curriculum and assessment. As to the national curriculum, the main reform refers to Autonomy Law in 1999 (Legge Delega n. 59/1997) and issued through the Presidential Decree n. 275 in 1999, which is considered as a significant educational reform that influenced the

whole Italian school education system, and the primary feature of that reform is ‘decentralisation’ of state power to locals. After that, the National Guidelines (i.e. Indicazioni Nazionali) started to replace the former compulsory national curriculum (national programs) and the schools got autonomous power in terms of didactical, pedagogical and organizational aspects. Concretely, regarding to the curriculum, 20% local curriculum can be built by local schools (D’Alessio, 2011, pp. 4-5). However, as D’Alessio (2011, p. 5) stated that even if schools were provided a certain degree of autonomy, schools are still required to follow a series of goals which were set in national curriculum standards, and ‘core’ subjects are required to deliver to students, all that requirements is intend to prepare students to go to the upper secondary schools. Therefore D’Alessio (2011, p. 5) concluded that the educational aims, both for curricular contents and competences, still centrally regulated and mainly followed the national standards.

With regard to students’ assessment, Italy establishes the National Institute for the Evaluation of Education, Training and Teaching, which is known as *INValSi* (Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di Istruzione e di Formazione). The purpose of the INValSi is to assess the national school education system and it started to come to work from the school year 2009/2010.

Briefly, we present a general description in terms of educational system in Italy, subjects like education system organization, education administration and governance, national curriculum, assessment are examined. This short Italian education system’s introduction will provide a context for current research, which inevitably facilitate us to understand inclusive education practice in Italian schools.

2.1.2 The historical legislative path towards inclusive education

From the global prospective, Italy is one of the earliest countries to stipulate laws to develop inclusive education, which can date from the late 1960s. From that time, Italy has stipulated a series of laws to ensure the development of inclusive education. With the development of inclusive education in Italy, which educates the highest percentage of students who have SEN in the mainstream schools (Ianes, Demo, Zambotti, 2013; Santi, 2014). Due to the progress that Italy has achieved on inclusive education, which is considered as a leader and a good example in terms

of inclusive education and other countries should follow (Dovigo, 2017, p. 42; Kanter et al., 2014). Italy cannot achieve this progress without the political and legislative efforts in terms of education reform over the last forty years.

Education as a fundamental right for everyone

Historically speaking, the principal of developing inclusive education can be traced back to the *Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana*, which can be regarded as the first Italy law in terms of declaring to build a more equitable and just society (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 6). The principals and spirits, which the Italian Constitution propagated, were similar as education for all. Both of them contend that education is a fundamental right for everyone and school should open to every student, that is to say, individuals or groups cannot be excluded for reasons based on race, socio-economic status, ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, and physical or intellectual capacities (Acedo, 2008). Therefore the atmosphere toward inclusion over whole Italy society, which Italian Constitution has created, paved a solid foundation for implementing inclusive education since the middle of the 20th century.

With regard to the context of Italian Constitution, beginning with the fundamental right of social dignity and equality, belongs to all citizens, which explicitly express in Art.3:

All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic or social nature which constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country.

On education, Art.33 and Art.34, have clearly express the general rules for education, schools are open to everyone, compulsory education, etc. Detailed said:

The Republic lays down general rules for education and establishes state schools of all branches and grades (Art.33).

Schools are open to everyone.

Primary education, given for at least eight years, is compulsory and free of tuition.

Capable and deserving pupils, including those lacking financial resources, have the right

to attain the highest levels of education.

The Republic renders this right effective through scholarships, allowances to families and other benefits, which shall be assigned through competitive examinations (Art.34).

Specially, the Italian Constitution has also made some rules for students who are disabled and handicapped, the government ensures their right to approach the education:

Disabled and handicapped persons are entitled to receive education and vocational training. Responsibilities under this article are entrusted to entities and institutions established by or supported by the State. (Art.38).

From the content analysis of the Italian Constitution, we can easily find that Italy's willingness of eliminating anti-discrimination and realizing equality, to include rather than exclude was the main melody in Italy. This law was coming after the World War II the Fascism was just come to an end. Since the Fascist dictatorship had denied individual freedom, one of the first targets of the democratic Constitution was to put the dignity of the person and the rights of minorities at the centre of the constitutional charter (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 6). From that point, the Italian Constitution not only achieves this target but also creates a kind of inclusive culture through Italy, which has exerted a profound impact on the growth of inclusive education in Italy.

Making inclusive education as an agenda

Today, Italy educates the highest percent of students who are with SEN in mainstream school classes and with the least special classes and schools all over the world (Giangreco, Doyle, 2012). Changes that takes place in a very brief period, named *integrazione selvaggio*, or “wild integration”, within the period of 1971-1977 (Ferri, 2008; Kanter et al., 2014).

In 1971, Law 188/1971 was promulgated, which was the first law included disabled students into the mainstream schools, except for the most severe cases (Camerini, 2011; D'Alessio, 2011, p. 7). From the content of Art 28, it advocated that students with disabilities to attend the mainstream school to receive education with their peers. Other measures as, in order to provide convenience for students with disabilities, it needs to eliminate the barriers or obstacles and provide free transport to schools for a particular ‘category’ of students. The Law 188/1971 paved a solid

foundation for the *integrazione scolastica*, despite the word *integrazione* did not appear in this law (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 6). Although Law 118/1971 was an important legislative measure which began with the process of mainstreaming (de Anna, 1997), however, in terms of closing the special schools, this law was not mentioned. On the contrary, from the Art 28, this law gives a space for special education to grow (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 7):

Compulsory education must take place in regular schools, in public schools except in those cases in which the subject suffers from severe intellectual deficiency or from physical handicaps so great as to impede or render very difficult the learning processes in the regular classroom. (Booth, 1982, p. 15)

The compulsory education of people with disabilities must happen in mainstream schools, unless the students who have severe physical or intellectual impairments that stop the placement of students into the mainstream schools' classes. From D'Alessio's (2011) view, Law n. 118 tries to 'facilitating' the process of integration rather than do it best to make it compulsory. From that perspective, to some extent, it emphasizes the existence of special schools, and gives regular schools a cause why they cannot accept the disabled students and integrate them as they are severe physical or intellectual impairments. Additionally, The Law n. 118/1971, which issued invalid individuals and physically impaired persons to receive education with their normal peers (D'Alessio, 2011, p.7). This law was considered as a 'functionalist' way to disability (Armstrong, 2007), which do not consider disability from a pedagogical and organizational perspective but from the mind of provision of special services for students with disabilities. This can be regarded as a medical model because they through special service for improvement and, moreover the expression like invalid also indicates that it is their own impairment that make them disabled, and the role of the education system whose duty was to assist civil invalids (D'Alessio, 2011, p.7).

It is important to recognize that solely putting students with disabilities in mainstream schools' classroom is not enough, we need to provide some instructions for them, which needs educational research. In 1975, in order to gain a better understanding of how to integrate students with disabilities into regular class, the senator Franca Falcucci conducted a research across the country. The final report named *Relazione conclusiva della commissione Falcucci concernente i problemi scolastici degli alunni handicappati*, which was the first time to adapt a pedagogical

approach to investigate the principles of *integrazione scolastica* and also the first time when the definition of *integrazione scolastica* was officially used (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 7). From this document, the first step toward *integrazione scolastica* is to transform the whole education system, its methodology and its conceptualization (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 8). Moreover, the role of school was considered as the optimal place for students who have developmental disorders or learning problems. This document begins to consider of transformation of education system and traditional teaching (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 8), which have a profound influence on the later policies about inclusive education.

In 1977, the Law n. 51 was passed by the Italian Parliament, which adopted that all primary and middle school aged children with disabilities (regardless of severity of the student's impairment) should receive education from mainstream school in the mainstream classrooms with their peers in the public school system, considered as the first law to abolish differentiated classes and special schools (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 8; D'Alessio, 2012; Kanter, Damiani, Ferri, 2014). This law adopts to provide additional resources to improve mainstream schools' capability, including training for support teachers, the procedures for education plan, overcoming building buildings, offer transportation needs. In addition, Law 517/1977 gave rise to some changes in mainstream education, such as class size, how many students with disabilities in one classroom. However, the medical model of disability was still constructed in Law n. 517/1977, which thought that individual impairment needed the medical specialist rather than removed the social barriers.

Following this law and other laws, such as Law 270/1982 and Italy's Constitutional Court issued Sentence 2155 in 1987, special schools and classes were gradually abolished and students with disabilities can attend mainstream school include kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and post-secondary school.

Integrazione scolastica: the milestone for achieving inclusive education

In 1992, the Law n. 104 was enacted, named "*Legge Quadro*", which was aiming to abolish barriers of every social aspects for persons with disabilities, can be regarded as a milestone of achieving inclusive education in Italy (D'Alessio, 2007). This law provided a blueprint for how to integrate persons with disabilities into society, including many parts of whole society, such as

labor and employment (Art 18 and Art 19), sporting and traveling (Art 23), elimination of architectural barriers (Art 24), public and individual transport (Art 26 and Art 27) and so on. With regard to education, giving priority to networking among institutional bodies (local education authorities, local health units) and schools, paving the way for the experimentation of new approaches to teaching and learning (such as team teaching and cooperative learning) with actions to be taken in all grades of schools (from infant schools to universities) and all sectors of society (from training centers to employment settings) (D'Alessio, 2011, p. 10). The intention of this law was to ensure all school aged students to receive education and elimination of segregated positions.

Through nearly twenty years development of policy towards inclusion, Law n. 104/1992, to some extent, reflecting a significant shift from the prospective of medical model on disability to a social model (D'Alessio, 2011, p.10; Kanter, 2011; Kanter, Damiani, Ferri, 2014). From the context of that law, measures were taken in all sectors of society, aiming at eliminating obstacles to helping persons with disabilities integrate into society. With regard to education, that law reinforced a social model view to rethink the barriers that hinder students with disabilities to receive education. *Integrazione scolastica* is based on the bedrock that it is a positive force to integrate the students with disabilities into mainstream schools' classrooms, that integration offers a vital chance for all students in a classroom to develop new understandings and new knowledge, from that perspective the disability is considered as an advantage rather than a problem (Canevaro, de Anna, 2010). The central point of *Integrazione scolastica* is as Giancarlo Cottoni said that "child is fine and that it is the school that needs to remediate itself" (Cottoni, interview, Cited in Ferri, 2008). Therefore, Cottoni explained the object of remediation is the classroom, not the child (Cited in Ferri, 2008). As a result, the environment around the learners needs to cater for the needs of learners rather than some 'preordained assumption' or norms (UNESCO, 1994, p. 7).

The significant shift of thinking disability in the Law n. 104/1992 is cultivating a culture of inclusion in whole society. Today, it is a widespread attitude that all children should study together, and the classroom as a family which has the responsibility for full participation (Camerini, 2011; Ferri, 2008). The school practice of inclusion in Italy expresses a faith that it is a basic right for everyone to include and inclusion benefits all (Canevaro, de Anna, 2010; Ferri, 2008).

Inclusive education in the 21st century

Started from the establishment of Italian Constitution on December 22, 1947, the commitment to build a just and equity society, the Law no.118 in 1971 and subsequently the Law no. 517 in 1977, which educate the students with disabilities in mainstream schools and abolish the special schools, in 1992 the milestone of *integrazione scolastica*'s Law no. 104 was issued. Basically, the general framework to develop inclusive education via *integrazione scolastica* is in place during the 20th century, the main events in 21st century focus on refinements and adjustments to the long established *integrazione scolastica* system towards to promoting inclusive education (Giangreco, Doyle, 2012).

In 2003, Italian government issued the Law 53, known as the Moratti Reform, which aims to raise the country's overall education quality. Additionally, the law re-adjusted the school system which contains three cycles: the primary school (5 years), the lower secondary school (3 years) and high school (5 years). In that law, only a part refers to the students with disabilities connect to the *integrazione scolastica*:

The right of integrazione scolastica is guaranteed, by means of adequate interventions, for those students in a condition of handicap, in conformity with the framework Law 104/92 (Section 2.C). (D'Alessio, 2007, p. 61)

In agreement with some Italian academics, D'Alessio (2007, p. 61) argues that the Moratti Reform may 'jeopardise' (p. 61) the *integrazione scolastica* tradition and the country education, as 'hardly any consideration is given to the issues of disabled students' (p.61). On the contrary, the principles like free choice, efficiency and flexibility, are permeating the whole document, which want to give autonomy to the state schools, so that they can re-adjust the national curriculum according to the local context, to meet the students' parental choice and raise the standards, which hurts the students with disabilities' interest and hinders the development of inclusive education.

In 2006, the United Nations issued the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which is 21st century's first human rights treaty to protect the persons with disabilities, basing on a human rights approach to disability (Kanter, 2007). What is important, the CRPD is the first treaty to protect all children and adults with disabilities right to inclusive education

(Kanter, Damiani, Ferri, 2014). In 2007, Italy signed the CRPD. In 2009, Italy ratified both the CRPD and the Optional Protocol, which states the Italy's commitment to protect the right of people with disabilities and promote inclusive education.

In 2010, the government issued the Law n. 170 on *Disturbi Specifici di Apprendimento* (DSA) which is learning difficulties. The DSA refers to the student with specific learning difficulties, that are dyslexia, dysorthography, dysgraphia and dyscalculia. Importantly, within the Italian context students with DSA are not recognized as disabilities. As a result, rather than provide support teachers for students with DSA, the classroom teachers are responsible for those students with DSA. Therefore, this specific situation provides a chance for classroom teachers to receive related training on the DSA (Giangreco, Doyle, 2012). In order to facilitate the Law n. 170, in 2012 the government issued the *Linee guida per il diritto allo studio degli alunni e degli studenti con Disturbi Specifici di Apprendimento*. In that document, the teachers write the *Piano Didattico Individualizzato* for each student who is considered as with DSA. Particularly, this *Piano Didattico Individualizzato* should focus on pedagogical approach to meet students' learning difficulties, instead of depending on the specialists. Another point of that document is that the family, schools and local authorities should work together to respond to the needs of students with DSA.

In 2013 the government issued *Direttiva Ministeriale 27 dicembre 2012 Strumenti d'intervento per alunni con bisogni educativi speciali e organizzazione territoriale per l'inclusione scolastica*, which is famous as *bisogni educativi speciali* (BES) or SEN. The students with BES identified by the teachers considered as having SEN in terms of psychological, physical, cultural, linguistic, social-economic reasons. The BES (SEN) was firstly introduced in Italy by some Italian scholars, mainly borrowed from the Warnock Report (1978) (D'Alessio, 2007, p. 56). As scholars state there is a source of debate regarding to the disabilities and BES, once the BES was issued in the *Direttiva Ministeriale n. 27* in 2012 (Anastasiou, Kauffman, Nuovo, 2015). However, this is also true to the England, as the 'SEN' was firstly issued in Warnock Report (see Cigman, 2007).

Originally, the 'SEN' in Warnock Report (1978) refers to students who do not have a statement but do experience learning difficulties and require individualised intervention. Particularly, the Warnock Report adopted the 'SEN' tried to shift the dominant view to look disability from a medical model to the contextual factors. However, in practice the professional

groups play a critical role in identifying the students with SEN. Attitudes towards this new vocabulary are complicated and its influence on inclusion also mixed. As the Evans (2007, p. 87) argues that there are difficulties to implement inclusion, like inadequacy of resources, some parents object to their own children being studied with the students with disabilities and so on, all these difficulties are created by the vocabulary of ‘SEN’:

But in addition to and underlying all these difficulties are conflicts and inconsistencies created by the vocabulary of SEN, which is based, not on a concept, let alone a presumption, of including pupils with SEN in mainstream schools alongside their peers, but on rules which require that they be identified, distinguished, and treated differently (p.87)

With the extended description of ‘SEN’ situation in England, I want to argue that the introduction of the BES does not produce a positive impact on the inclusion in Italy, on the contrary, it just adds a new label to describe the students, which still adopts a within the person model to view students’ learning difficulties rather than from the contextual perspective. Additionally, instead of putting efforts on responding to students’ needs, the priority is taken up by identifying, distinguishing who has BES and treating them differently.

From the students with disabilities, to students with DSA and now students have BES, the continual of labeling and identifying students’ need and put them into certain categories, under the name of promoting inclusion. From that point, the more labels we identify, the more we focus on a within person approach to view student’s learning difficulties, which will consider the difference as deviation from the normal, highlighting the line between the normal students and students with labels.

2.1.3 The linguistic meaning: between integrazione scolastica and inclusion

Conducting the research cross different cultural context, I come to recognize that language plays a critical role in better understanding of the specific country’s situation. It is well known that Italy is not an English-speaking country. Therefore, you cannot gain a better understanding of Italy

without knowing the Italian language. During my doctoral study in Italy, now I can basically communicate with Italian, however, conducting my research in Italian, for me is difficult, like doing interviews or focus groups with Italian teachers. My mother tongue is Chinese, English is my second language and I conduct a research in a non English-speaking country. So, a phenomenon has been emerged during my research, as I doing my research in Italian local primary or secondary schools, sometimes a translator is needed as some teachers do not speak English. During my field work, the two phrases: inclusive education and *integrazione scolastica* always talking by the teachers and translator, sometimes the translator translate *integrazione scolastica* into inclusive education, sometimes the translator just say to me *integrazione scolastica* like the teachers use in the interview. As we know, the three terms, *integrazione scolastica*, integration and inclusive education, come from different contexts, undoubtedly each term carries a different meaning, related to the specific context in which it is used. Considering that, this part tries to clear the meaning between *integrazione scolastica* and inclusion.

Regarding to the terms of *integrazione scolastica* and inclusion, whether the two terms can use interchangeably, or whether they represent different meanings, there is a debate within Italy academic field (D'Alessio, Watkins, 2009). Some prefer the term of *integrazione*, as that is strongly relate to the Italian's history of civil right for the people with disabilities (Nocera, 2001, p. 214), others hold the view that in Italy people with disabilities belong to the society, so they do not need to be included (Canevaro, de Anna, 2010). D'Alessio (2007, p. 70, 2011, 2012) argues that inclusion stands a point that transfer the whole traditional educational system to respond to the students' diversity needs, however, *integrazione* has yet to achieve that.

Historically speaking, the term inclusion started to emerge in Italy after the Salamanca Statement (1994), however, the word *integrazione* is still being used in the official documents and laws (D'Alessio, 2007, p.57). That is to say, at the beginning the term inclusion is not being used and *integrazione* still common to the government, as well as the academics. Like Canevaro stated:

We prefer to use the term integrazione, because in our language, it acquires a positive meaning when compared with the broader terminology provided by pressing international organisations. The latter insist that the term should be substituted for inclusion, that, in our language, evokes something which is not natural but forced. Although we are aware of the willingness to provide a new linguistic term to describe the new current situation, we

acknowledge that, probably, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive, literary, English translation of integrazione. Consequently, we would like to maintain the term integrazione that means not being outside the social context in order to be included in it afterwards, but already belonging to it (Nocera, 2001, p. 214)

Drawing on the work of D'Alessio (2007, p. 55), that Canevaro seems to argue that the *integrazione* can better convey the specific point that a long Italian tradition of committing to the civil right for persons with disabilities, that specific meaning will disappear as we use the word inclusion.

As noted in the former part, began with the Law no.118 in 1971, the Italy started to educate students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Until now nearly half of a century has passed, with the development of *integrazione* in school context, the meaning of *integrazione* change, shift and evolve, at the same time, some studies try to carefully examine the meaning of inclusion in Italian context, therefore the inclusion starts to gain attention across Italy (D'Alessio, 2007, p. 58). Canevaro (2004) suggests that we can start from an 'inclusive perspective' to look '*integrazione scolastica*', departing from that point, three trends of this 'inclusive perspective' are identified by D'Alessio (2007, p. 59): firstly, promoting *integrazione* from a board structural and contextual level rather than an 'emergency' situation. Secondly, 'specific' provision for students with disabilities should be integrated into the general teaching. Last but not least, *integrazione* should involve a scope, to some extent, not only restricts with schooling but also the whole society.

Additionally, *integrazione scolastica* and inclusion share a common point that those two are both a never ending and a dynamic process in achieving a more democratic society (D'Alessio, 2007, p. 57). From the integration to inclusion, is a shift from only placing students with disabilities into the mainstream schools without changing anything to challenge and renew the traditional mainstream schooling to respond to every student's personal needs. This is also true for the development of *integrazione scolastica*. At the beginning, *integrazione scolastica* mainly concerns that students with disabilities can attend the mainstream school with their non disabled students peers. After the Law no. 104 in 1992, which starts the second phase of *integrazione scolastica* that not only putting students with disabilities into the mainstream school, but treating students' diversity as valuable resources and provides the proper provision to meet every student's specific needs. In that point, researcher refers to a new 'adult' phase of *integrazione scolastica*

(Pavone, 2003) to describe the process of *integrazione scolastica*.

In conclusion, as we have already noted in the first chapter, inclusion means different things for different people, attempts to find a single common definition of inclusion is a problematic work. In that perspective, the *integrazione scolastica* in Italy is a good example to remind us to understand inclusion in a concrete cultural context, as the inclusion is true inclusion only when we considering inclusion within the concrete practice. From a global perspective, *integrazione scolastica* was the first historical attempt to educate the students with disabilities in mainstream schools, which is historically and culturally rooted in the Italian tradition and can be regarded as the first response to the development of inclusive education. Just as D'Alessio (2007, p. 70) reminds us that the inclusive education cannot be regarded as a new terminology to define *integrazione scolastica*.

2.2 Inclusive education in China

2.2.1 Overview and background of education in China

Like we stated in Italian part, the aim of this part is to provide a general picture of Chinese education system for current study, the themes like Chinese education organization, Chinese education administration, recent Chinese education reforms and four keywords which I consider critical to better understand Chinese education will be briefly presented.

Overall, the Chinese education system is organized as follows:

- Pre-school education for children between the ages of 3 and 6;
- Primary education lasts for 6 years, for children from 6 to 12 years of age;
- Junior secondary school, lasts 3 years, for ages 12 to 15;
- Senior secondary school, lasts 3 years, for ages 15 to 18;
- Higher education provides by academic universities for those who finish the senior secondary schools and pass the college entrance examination or vocational education colleges for these who finish the vocational secondary schools.

In China compulsory education is lasting for nine years for children between the ages of six and fifteen, known as the nine-year compulsory education, which is totally free and funded by the

government. The compulsory education covers primary school education and junior secondary school education. In addition, there are some differences between different provinces in terms of the structure of the compulsory education, like the starting age of primary school education can be six or seven and five years of primary school education but four years of junior secondary school education. Overall the nine-year compulsory education is a must for all citizens. When students finish the nine-year compulsory education, there are some choices they can choose to continue their studies or start to work. Generally speaking, two choices are common for students after junior secondary school: one is to continue senior secondary school education for three years and then attend the college entrance examination to academic universities, while another one is to attend the vocational secondary schools after junior secondary school, three years later students can go to work or continue their studies in vocational education colleges. Anyway, there is not a fixed pathway that every student must follow as currently Chinese education is more flexible students have more choices to complete their studies.

Chinese education is mainly a state-run system of public education and is managed by Ministry of Education, *jiao yu bu* in Chinese, located in Beijing. The Ministry of Education is directly managed by State Council, to spread and implement State Council's decisions and guidelines on education. Under the State Council's management, Ministry of Education is responsible for designing national educational development plans, issuing important educational policies, managing and guiding provinces' educational work. Put simply, Ministry of Education is responsible for nearly all the issues concerning education. Under the Ministry of Education, the province or municipality has its own Department of Education, *jiao yu ting* in Chinese, which spreads and implements Ministry of Education's decisions on education and manages the educational issues within their own province. And then under the province or municipality, each city or district has the Bureau of Education, *jiao yu ju* in Chinese, to manage local education and implement the educational policies from the Ministry of Education and Department of Education. In all, current Chinese education management system is highly controlled by government and each level has its own responsibilities and the higher level should be responsible for the lower level.

In the remainder of this section I will use four keywords to laconically illustrate Chinese education's main characteristics which specially belong to Chinese education system or to better grasp Chinese education through these four critical words, however, it is necessary to remember

that four keywords cannot really catch all the important points of Chinese education as education in China is really a complicated issue. Here, we choose these four keywords mainly because these words are closely related to current research and can help researchers and readers to better understand the LRC in Chinese socio-cultural context, especially for those who are not very familiar with the Chinese education system and LRC programmes. Given that, the four keywords are Confucianism, uneven educational development, high school entrance examination and college entrance examination and '211' and '985' university project.

Confucianism

The first keyword to understand Chinese education is Confucianism that is deeply underpinned in the Chinese culture, which has long been considered as a biggest difference from Western countries and therefore it has not only exerted a profound impact on the feudal dynasties for more than two thousand years but also has penetrated all aspects of both ancient and contemporary Chinese society (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001; Lee, 1995; Mitchell, 2005; Potts, 2000). Influenced by Confucianism, the social relationship is in a hierarchically ordered society and the primary features of Confucianism society contain 'benevolence, harmony among people, respect for authority, obedience to rules, collective identities, and acceptance of one's status within society' (Mitchell, 2005, p. 191). For example social welfare and support instead of education will be offered for persons with disabilities just because of the benevolence. Additionally, the society puts more emphasis on societal interests rather than individualism, which leads to the ingrained thinking that the individuals should adapt to the pre-existing social arrangement as possible as they can, while the society cannot change according to individual needs. Another important characteristic of Confucianism is that individual's ability can be acquired by training and teaching instead of being born with abilities. Therefore individuals should be reached the same standard that is set by the society with due effort. The society believes that individual's success mainly attaches to his/her own effort or diligence while the individual's genetic factor is considered as the secondary. The old saying like 'diligence redeems stupidity' is popular for a long time in Chinese history and is often used by parents and teachers as a stimulus to inspire the children to study harder and harder.

Within that Confucianism influenced society, individuals with disabilities are at the bottom of the social class, even if they are worthy of sympathy. Although a tremendous change has been made since the establishment of The People's Republic of China in 1949, Chinese society is still far from the widely culture in terms of fully accepting the individuals with disabilities. With that low social acceptance of individuals with disabilities, the education of persons with disabilities is still not socially welcomed by the society, in particular the remote rural areas of some parts of China.

Uneven educational development

The second keyword refers to the uneven educational development across China and that fact nearly influences all levels of education. As many studies have well documented that although Chinese economy has increased faster and faster, there is still a long journey to go to achieve a sustainable educational system that can successfully provide equal and qualified education for all students. The fact is that in some developed areas, like eastern coastal cities, school systems are well developed with beautiful schools, high qualified teachers and rich learning resources, etc. While in some western rural areas of China, the school systems are poor with dangerous school buildings, inadequate teachers and limited equipments, some rural areas even cannot ensure all the normal school-aged children to attend the schools, no mention that students with disabilities. Within that unbalanced educational fact, differences inevitably exist among various areas when implementing educational policies from the Minister of Education. Undoubtedly, this is the biggest barrier for achieving the goal of promoting educational equity and quality and much effort need to be done to address that challenge.

High school entrance examination and college entrance examination

The next keyword comes to high school entrance examination, *zhongkao* in Chinese, and college entrance examination, *gaokao* in Chinese, we cannot emphasize the importance of these two examinations for a student and his/her family too much. Influenced by Confucianism thought, the examination culture derives from the imperial examination system is still existing and dominating

contemporary Chinese educational system and the meaning of success for a student, to some extent, just means you can get a high score in various examinations, which can help you to realize your dream and change your family's fate. Therefore, achieving a higher and higher score in every exam is all Chinese students, parents, teachers and head-teachers' goal and all others should make way for that. Among various examinations, high school entrance examination and college entrance examination are the two most important exams during students' stage because if you can pass high school entrance examination with a high score you can go to a distinguished senior secondary school and then you can get a desirable score in college entrance examination for a good university. Put simply, entering a good primary school means you can choose a good junior secondary school, and then you can go to a good senior secondary school, finally a good university where you can realize your dream. This linear thinking is still popular and controlling students, parents, teachers and head-teachers' mind. Therefore, you cannot make any mistakes in each of the schooling stage. Otherwise, you will lose your life. In addition, two facts reinforce that thinking: one is the uneven educational development leads to the good quality schools and universities are limited and almost all high-quality education resources is gathering in some big cities, like Beijing and Shanghai. Therefore, if students from middle cities, especially rural areas, need to pay more efforts to compete a place in these good schools, however, all that depends on your score. While another one is currently the majority of Chinese families have only one child and parents have great expectations of their child as all expect that their child can become a winner in the future. Finally, with large students' population and relatively limited high-quality education resources, which inevitably leads to 'passing examination with a higher score than others' is the only ticket for the bus which drives you to success.

211 and 985 university project

Finally, the fourth keyword is project 211 and project 985 which mainly related to higher education but produce a tremendous indirect impact on primary and secondary school education as well. The Project 211 is the Chinese government endeavor on higher education area aimed at strengthening appropriately 100 universities and key disciplinary areas as a national priority for the 21st century and it was launched in November, 1995 and in all there are 112 universities in the

project 211. The Project 985 is Chinese government another important effort aimed at founding world-class universities in the 21st century, which was launched in May, 1998 and in all there are 39 universities in that project. The government main intention to create these two projects is to improving Chinese higher education quality and to better prepare university students for the 21st century. However, gradually the Project 985 and Project 211 become a label for the universities, which divide Chinese universities into three categories in general: the first level are the universities (the number is 39) that belong to the Project 985, the second level are the universities (the number is 73) belong to the Project 211 but not belong to the Project 985, the third level are other universities that do not belong Project 985 and Project 211. In addition, we need to remember this classification is more in a simpler way as universities among Project 985, Project 211 and others still can divide into different levels. The above mentioned three levels has long been a standard for parents to choose universities for their children, the first choice is Project 985, the second is Project 211 and the last one is others. Some families in order to send their children to the Project 985 universities, they will start to make preparation for their children from the primary school or even kindergarten. If their children fail to enter the Project 985, some parents will allow their children to repeat the last year of senior secondary schools for another college entrance examination, if continue to fail some of them will choose to repeat again until their children get a ticket for the Project 985 universities. The dream to enter a good university has a profound impact on students' pro-university education, with more students' population and relatively limited good universities, we can understand why many families spare their no effort to help their children to go to a good kindergarten, a good primary school, a good junior secondary school, a good senior secondary school, finally 'maybe' a good university. And all that 'goods' depend on your examination score as a good score can help you get a ticket to a good place in high-quality education institutions. The mottos like '*Gaokao* is your whole life', 'learn to die as long as you learn not to die' and 'live for 985', can fully describe that Project 985's impact on students' life.

2.2.2 Special education development before 1980s: a historical view

Early development of special education in China (1848—1948)

The earlier development of special education can date back to the late 19th century, which was founded by U.S and European missionaries. Due to the failure of Opium War against Britain in 1848, western's political, economic, culture and ideology, including educational thought, were imported to China. As we all know, China has a long civilized history for more than 5000 years, the unique culture, traditions, thought, for example Confucianism, was developed within this long history. Under that unique social-culture context, China's traditional culture and Western's ideology, characterized between the movement of *zunkong*, *dujing*, which gives priority to Confucianism, and "Democracy and Science", have dominated the society at that period (Jiang, 1986). Within that unique context, special education emerged in China.

The first special school for students with disabilities was built in the late 19th century by European missionaries. These missionaries brought Western concepts of Braille and sign language to China and drew social attention to the educational and humanitarian rights of children with disabilities (Piao. 1996). The first special school for blind students in China was established in 1874 by William Moore in Beijing, who is a Scottish Presbyterian pastor, named the *Gu shou tong wen guan*. This special school focuses on persons who are blind, which including primary school students and old people. The teaching context in that school contains basic knowledge, living skills and the knowledge of religion (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001). In 1887, U.S. missionaries Charles and Annetta Mills built a special school for blind and deaf students, named *Qi ying xue yuan*, sign language was taught in this school. In addition, they together wrote a textbook for students who are deaf, which was the first book for deaf students in China (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001).

With regard to Chinese people to establish special school, it was not emerging until early 20th century. In 1916, Zhang jiang, a famous industrialist and philanthropist, built a special school for students who are deaf and blind in Nantong, Jiangsu. Before that, in 1912 he has already built a teacher training school for those who want to be a special teacher in the future (Yu, Zhang, 1994). Two kinds of curriculum were required to learn for students, to enable those students with

disabilities to live by themselves. The kind of academic curriculum contained Chinese language, morals, geology and history while farming, sewing, silkworm-breeding, gardening and handcrafting were the main content of the vocational curriculum (Ye, Piao, 1995). From the content of the subjects in this special school, Zhang armed the students with disabilities with basic knowledge and living skills, which significantly embodied the Chinese traditions of self-respect and personal independence (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001).

Influencing by the development of private special schools, the government came to realize the education right for persons with disabilities. From that time, public special schools were established in China, such as Nanjing Municipal School for the blind and deaf. Under that movement, roughly 40 schools for students with disabilities were established before World War Two and some of them were closed in the war (Epstein, 1988). According to the statistics, more than 2000 students who are deaf and blind received special education in 42 special schools in 1948 (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001).

The special education within Mao's era (1949—1977)

After World War Two and The Civil War, there have been happened some tremendous changes in terms of all aspects of society since the founding of new China in 1949. The new government under Mao's leader makes great effort to change the old mechanism of society, which advocates all the poor and laboring people become the masters of the society (Jiang, 1986). Under the reform of Mao, the government put emphasis on special education, building the special schools for students with disabilities. The *Resolution on the Reform of the School System*, which was the government's first effort to develop special education, published in 1951. The law stated:

Government at all levels should establish special schools, such as for the deaf and mute and schools for the blind. They should provide education for children, youth and adults with disabilities (Yang & Wang, 1994, p.95)

With the development of reform and policy, there was a significant influence on students with disabilities enroll in special schools. At that time, there were only 57 special schools, which educated 5312 students with disabilities, however, by the year of 1960, the number of special

schools was increased at 479, which educated 26701 students who are deaf, blind (Year-Book of Education in China 1949-1981, 1984).

In 1958, the movement of “Great Leap Forward” was beginning, which led a sharp growth on special education, however, due to the political instability and an adverse economy, the overall of the development of special education was slowly (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001). With the failure of “Great Leap Forward” and Cultural Revolution, there was a sharp decrease in the number of special schools. During those movements, many schools were forced to close and the number of students decreasing from 1176 before 1966 to 600 by 197 (Yang, Wang, 1994; Ye, Piao, 1995). Even worse, there were no schools for students who are with mental retardation until 1979.

2.2.3 The reforms towards Learning in Regular Classrooms

Chinese modern education system began in 1978, when China began to “reforming and opening” to the world after nearly ten years “closed door” policy. The “reforming and opening” had a tremendous influence on all aspects of society, as well as increased contacts with foreign countries. Under that social atmosphere, the society becomes more flexible, diversity and open, the society began to put emphases on persons with disabilities. In 1980, 33055 students who are blind and deaf were educated in 292 special schools. The special education was considered as a part of public compulsory public education in the law *Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China* (1986) (Chen, 1996), which signified that all children can receive nine years of school education. With the government policy and researches conducted by the educational specialists, students with disabilities were educated in the school districts where they live. This practice, named *sui ban jiu du*, literally translates like “Learning in Regular Classrooms” (LRC), which means students with disabilities receive education in regular classrooms with their normal peers. Essentially, inclusive education which was renamed as LRC has developed as the key approach for students who have SEN (Deng, Harris, 2008). Considering the influence of 1978’s reforming and opening policy on Chinese education ecology and the LRC’s historical development, we will divide the LRC history into four phases which are the origin and spontaneous development of the LRC, the LRC as a national action, the expansion of LRC and the

transformation of LRC: from quantity-orientation to quality-orientation, and furthermore to give a brief description in terms of each phase of LRC in different historical stages. In so doing, this sub-section's intention is to provide a context with regard to historical development of LRC for current research.

The origin and spontaneous development of the LRC (around 1950s-1977)

The emergence of LRC can date back to as early as the 1950s in *Dabashan*, Sichuan province, located in the southwest of China, where is a poor rural area with lower economy development (Hua, 2003; Jia, 2018; Piao, 2004, 2008; Xiao, 2005). The main reason for the origin of LRC is lacking of special schools for local students with disabilities. Therefore, the students with disabilities were placed into the neighbouring regular schools to receive the basic education. Particularly, the original LRC practice was not a governmental action, but a voluntary and spontaneous practice which was undertaken by local primary schools. In the following two decades, LRC practice spontaneously emerged in China's other areas, like Northeast of China, Hebei province, Beijing, etc. And finally the LRC practice was quickly employed by more and more areas to address the problem of lacking special school for students with disabilities. Considering the early LRC practice, two points need to give special attention: one is the fact of lacking special schools, while the other is LRC is a completely spontaneous practice. As we will find later, this two points regarding the origin of LRC still exists in current LRC practice in some areas of China. All in all, the early spontaneous LRC practice as a catalyst, which triggers a revolution of educating students with disabilities in contemporary China, while better addresses the challenge of lacking of special education schools for educating large population of students with disabilities.

The LRC as a national action (1978-1994)

Since 1978, under Deng Xiaoping's reforming and opening policy impact, all aspects of the Chinese society started to a new reform journey. As to the special education, a series of related

policies were issued by the government to establish special schools and develop special education. While at the same time the LRC as a model to reform special education also came to the government educational reform agenda. In 1982 the revised Constitution was published to mandate education and social support for all persons with disabilities, which was also the first policy to mandate special education in Chinese history (Deng, Harris, 2008; Deng, Poon-Mc Brayer, 2012; Jia, 2018; Xu, Cooper, Sin, 2018). Four years later, in 1986 the government promulgated the Compulsory Education Law People's Republic of China, which clearly stated that state needs to build special schools/classes for school-aged children with visual impairment, hearing impairment or intellectual disability (Deng, Harris, 2008). As we find that 1986's Compulsory Education Law mainly focuses on three types of disabilities, while the 1982 newly revised Constitution assures that education and social support should provide all persons with disabilities. Two reasons are responsible for that contradiction, one is that the visual impairment, hearing impairment or intellectual disability account for the majority proportion of the students with disabilities, while another one lies in the fact that in 1980s China's economy was too poor to build adequate special schools/classes for all children with disabilities (Xu, Cooper, Sin, 2018). Despite that contradiction, the 1982 revised Constitution together with 1986 Compulsory Education Law have undoubtedly laid a solid foundation for the following special education system development (Deng, Poon-Mc Brayer, 2012).

Until that time, around the middle of 1980s, special school was still considered as a main provision for students with disabilities (Xu, 2012) and the new 1982 revised Constitution and 1986 Compulsory Education Law, to some extent, reinforce that thinking. Although the LRC was popular among many Chinese areas, however, it did not attach government attention until the 1987. Since 1987, the researcher Xu Bailun initiated the "Golden Key Blind Children Education Plan" in several provinces of China (Xu, 2012), which was the predecessor of 'Learning in Regular Classrooms' (LRC). The main content of this plan was:

To enable blind children to attend classes together with regular students once they have completed fundamental learning, which is in accordance with the requirement of entering the school in the neighborhood. In addition, other than teacher training, there are special requirements for school campuses and facilities (Su, 2010, p. 7)

The experiment of LRC was a success on educating students with disabilities in regular schools, and then this form was accredited by the Disabled Persons' Federation (Xu, 2012). The LRC as a good form to educate students with disabilities started to acquire government acceptance and promote through the whole China.

At the same year, the LRC was firstly issued in the government policy document *The Notice about Printing and Distributing the Draft Teaching Plan for Full-time Intellectual Disabilities Special Schools or Classes* (Ministry of Education, 1987). It was stated that during the process of promoting compulsory education for school-aged children, the local practice in terms of placing children with mild intellectual disabilities into local regular schools to study with their peers in regular classrooms is effective and is a good form for both students with and without disabilities. At same time, this practice can properly address the inadequate education resource in some areas where lack special schools/classes, particularly for some poor rural areas. In order to further promote LRC model for educating students with disabilities, the LRC was issued in the Five-Year (1988–1992) Plan for Persons with Disabilities, to encourage regular schools to accept children with three types of disabilities (mental retardation, and visual and hearing impairments) to learn in their classrooms (State Council, 1988). At the same year, the first national level conference on special education was held by the government and the LRC as an educational tryout to educate students with disabilities was officially identified at that conference (Piao, 2008; Xiao, 2005). After these continuous efforts, finally the LRC model has become the national action to promote and educate students with disabilities and various areas employed that model into their special education reform (Jia, 2018).

With the development of LRC in various areas and some new problems continuous emerged, effective measures needed to be taken to solve these various problems. In 1994, the Conference in terms of students with disabilities Learning in Regular Classrooms, was held by the Chinese state education commission in Yancheng, Jiangsu province. Three kinds of disabilities, deaf, blind and intellectual impairments, were the main subjects who can educate throughout the form of LRC. At the same year, the specific document, *Trial Measures of Implementing Learning in Regular Classrooms for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities* (Ministry of Education, 1994) outlined the main steps and measures for the implementation of LRC programmes. Particularly, to date, this policy is the first and the only one that is specifically for LRC, a series of measures were

issued to improve the LRC, like the LRC targets, professional training, teaching requirements, management issues, etc. All in all, the LRC is a Chinese model for promoting inclusive education, which was formed in response to international inclusive education trends and domestic needs and it can be considered as a Chinese inclusive education model that developed from the Western concept of inclusive education with unique practical considerations of Chinese socio-cultural conditions (Deng, Poon-Mc Brayer, 2004; Feng, 2010; Jia, 2018).

The expansion of LRC (1995- 2010)

After nearly twenty years' effort (1978-1994), the spontaneous LRC finally become a national action, which has spread to nearly all the Chinese provinces and municipalities (Xu, Cooper, Sin, 2018). Entering the late of 1990s, with related policies' support the LRC entered an expansion journey and it was regarded as the main body for students with disabilities to receive education. In 1996, *The Ninth National Implementation Plan of Compulsory Education for Children with Disabilities* was issued by the Ministry of Education and the China Disabled Persons Federation. LRC was highlighted as a universal design to be employed to implement compulsory education for children with disabilities. More particularly, this policy issued that the special classes and the LRC as the main body and separate special schools as the backbone for the future educational provision for students with disabilities (Ministry of Education and the China Disabled Persons Federation, 1996). Subsequently, in 1998 the government issued *The Provisional Regulations of Special Education Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1998), regulated that according related rules more and more students with disabilities can transfer from special schools to regular schools, which fully reflects government's strong determination to develop LRC.

Entering the 21st century, LRC was frequently mentioned in government policies' documents and the main aim is to further place more and more students with disabilities into regular classrooms. In 2001, *Suggestions on Further Advancing Reform and Development of Special Education in the Tenth Five Years* (State Council, 2001) encouraged regular schools to accept more and more students with disabilities, while issues like to improve current LRC management system, and to build resources rooms in regular schools were addressed as well. In 2006, the revised Compulsory Education Act (State Council, 2006) was issued and regular schools should

unconditionally accept the school-aged children with disabilities as long as they are able to study in the regular classrooms, related learning resources should be provided to facilitate students with disabilities' learning. What is particularly of the 2006 revised Compulsory Education Act is that the LRC was firstly written into Chinese law system. Until the 2006 revised Compulsory Education Act published, LRC was mainly conducted in primary schools. Concerning secondary schools, vocational schools and universities, LRC was not common. One of the reasons is there lacking related legation support. This concern was well addressed in 2008 the revision of the *Protection of Disabled Persons*, which clearly stated that LRC covers all school stages, from kindergartens, primary schools to secondary schools, vocational schools and universities (State Council, 2008). After that act LRC started to spread to all Chinese school levels, which fully reflects Chinese government's commitment to educate students with disabilities in regular schools.

Furthermore, in order to better understand the LRC expansion during that period (1995-2010), we can see that trend from the students with disabilities' enrollment rates in regular schools. As statistic indicated in 1992, 129,400 students with disabilities enrolled in school (both special and regular schools) and 28% (36,558 students with disabilities) of them were in regular schools (Deng, Guo 2007, p. 698). In 2004, 371,813 students with disabilities enrolled in school, while 64.0% (237,945 students with disabilities) in regular classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2004). In 2009, 428,100 students with disabilities enrolled in school, while approximately 65.0% students with disabilities in regular classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2011). Given that fact, some scholars (e.g. Deng, Poon-Mc Brayer, Farnsworth, 2001; Jia, 2018; Piao, 2004; Xu, Cooper, Sin, 2018) argued that a new model of providing educational provision for students with disabilities has emerged in Chinese school education ecology, which is adhering to various forms of running schools, gradually forming special schools as the backbone while special classes and the LRC as the main body to deliver educational provision for students with disabilities.

The transformation of LRC: from quantity-orientation to quality-orientation (after 2010)

In 2010, the Chinese government published *The Guidelines for Mid-term and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* (State Council, 2010), which is considered as

the most important education policy since the 2000 and will produce tremendous influences on the whole Chinese education system in the next decade. Within that policy, LRC was mentioned and the priority on LRC is shifting from expanding quantity to improving quality. From aforementioned policies in terms of LRC before 2010, ‘encouraging local areas to place more and more students with disabilities into the regular schools’ is regarded as government special education reform agenda’s priority for a long time and this can be clearly found from the statistic’s changes which we mentioned in the former section. Neglecting the quality of LRC has been long criticized by researchers (Jia, 2018). However, this situation has been started to change from 2010. With more and more students with disabilities is placed into the regular schools, improving the quality of LRC gradually has become government educational reform’s priority. In 2014, the notion of inclusive education was firstly adapted in *The Plan of Special Education Improvement (2014-2016)* (State Council, 2014) and related measures on how to well develop LRC were provided. What is more important is that after these years’ LRC development and researchers’ introduction of inclusive education, to some extent, the opinion of LRC is equal to inclusive education is officially admitted. At the same year, there kinds of special schools’ curriculum standard have issued by Chinese government, including *The Curriculum Standard for the Blind Compulsory Education (2016 edition)*, *The Curriculum Standard for the deaf Compulsory Education (2016 edition)* and *The Curriculum Standard for the Peizhi School Compulsory Education (2016 edition)* (Ministry of Education, 2016). Although these three curriculum standards mainly focus on special schools, however, to some extent, they also provide a reference for how to improve the curriculum quality for students with disabilities who are in the regular schools. More recently, in 2017 *The Second Plan of Special Education Improvement (2017-2020)* (State Council, 2017) and newly revised *Regulations on Education for Persons with Disabilities* (State Council, 2017) were issued, some related measures were suggested to further improve the quality of LRC across the whole school system.

2.2.4 LRC and some related issues

Defining LRC

Students with disabilities have been integrated into regular education settings and receive general education with their peers who are normal, this practice is named *sui ban jiu du* in Chinese social-culture context, literally “learning in a regular classroom” (LRC) (Yu, Su, Liu, 2011). The LRC means “receiving special education in general education classrooms”. LRC can be regarded as a main practical form of inclusive education in China, which is based on drawing experiences from Western’s concept and practice of inclusive education, but is deeply rooted and grown in the Chinese specific socio-culture (Deng, Zhu, 2007; Jia, 2018; Liu, 2008) and developed in Chinese practice, the LRC is considered as a “a successful education experiment, an educational innovation and an effective education approach for providing education for students with disabilities China” (Xiao, 2003, p. 13).

Opinions on the relationship of LRC and inclusive education

Although the LRC is regard as a main practical initiative for promoting inclusive education in China’s socio-culture context, however, there are some other voices. Debates were caused by the relationship between LRC and inclusive education. To date, there are two totally different opinions in terms of that debate. At one hand, the LRC is equal with the Western concept of inclusive education (Chen 1996, 1997; Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001; Mu, Yang, Armfield, 1993; Potts 2000, cited in Deng, Zhu, 2007; Yu, Su, Liu, 2011). From them, the terms of ‘inclusive education’ or ‘inclusion’ are used to describe Chinese LRC. Conversely, other researchers’ argue that there are some significant differences between LRC and the Western concept of inclusive education (Piao, 1992; Xu, Piao, Gargiulo, 1995; Yu, Su, Liu, 2011) and, to some extent, LRC is the “primary stage of inclusion” (Fang, 2006). Drawing from related researches (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001; Deng, Zhu 2007; Li, 2010; Liu, 2008; Yu, Su, Liu, 2011; Zhang, 2010), several crucial differences are concluded as following points. Firstly, although the Western concepts of inclusive education and mainstreaming have been produced a great influence

on the development of LRC, the LRC retains have Soviet Union educational system's characters, which adopts a medical perspective rather than a social model to see students with disabilities. The LRC put emphases on the identification and compensation of incompetence rather than development of competence and personal potential as adopted by inclusive education and mainstreaming. Secondly, the philosophy of equality and diversity are the foundation of inclusive education and the movement of mainstreaming and these concepts draw from a liberal political system and a multicultural context. While LRC origins from the fact that poor rural areas lacked special schools for students with disabilities, therefore these students were spontaneously placed into the local regular schools and gradually admitted by government. After it became a national action, the LRC is growing in a social-culture of traditional Confucian educational philosophy and embodies the political and educational concepts of socialism. Thirdly, the LRC is aiming at offering opportunity to children with disabilities, who had previously been denied a chance to education, to receive education in regular classrooms with their peers. While the goal of inclusive education is to offer appropriate education for all students. Fourthly, there are three kinds of disabled students—deaf, blind and intellectual impairment—can be educated in regular classrooms with their peers, other students with severe disabilities or with other kinds of disabilities are still excluded by the regular classrooms, which is different from the inclusive education.

From the related researches in terms of the relationship between LRC and inclusive education and the history of LRC and inclusive education we discussed in that chapter and chapter one respectively, the main differences between LRC and inclusive education argued by scholars mainly lie in the background of the origin and contextual development of LRC and inclusive education. For that point, we need to admit that there really exist some differences between LRC and inclusive education as LRC in Chinese socio-cultural context while inclusive education originated and developed in Western context. Therefore, these two totally different contexts inevitably produce certain different influences on LRC and inclusive education. Particularly, the differences between LRC and inclusive education is strongly apparent at the earlier development stage. However, with the development of LRC and inclusive education, both of them main intention and final aim is to provide proper education for all the students in the classrooms regardless of the classrooms locate in China, England, Italy, United States or other countries.

Furthermore, the word of inclusive is an adjective word to describe the subject of education, from a longer historical development perspective the inclusive education will finally move towards education without this specific adjective word ‘inclusive’ to remind us that we should provide proper education for all the students as education *per se* is to educate all human beings.

Based on the argument we discussed, we use the terms “LRC” and “inclusive education” interchangeably throughout the current research, however we need to remember that no matter LRC, *integrazione scolastica* in Italian context or inclusive education, finally all of them will move towards education.

LRC is a sub-theme of special education

The third issue I want to mention here refers to LRC, for a long time, is considered as a sub-theme of special education in Chinese social-cultural context. This traditional thinking on the relationships between LRC and special education plays as a significant barrier for promoting LRC in current school context and many reasons lead to that phenomenon which I will explore more in next section. In this section I want to firstly deconstruct that phenomenon from three angles, the parallel development of special education schools and LRC at the same time, the policy of LRC is frequently issued in the special education policy documents and the researchers who research LRC mainly from the special education faculty of universities or special educational institutes, to fully present how this fixed thinking reflects in contemporary Chinese socio-cultural context.

LRC is a sub-theme of special education can firstly fully reflect in parallel development of special education schools and LRC in current Chinese educational practice. From the practice of coexistence of special schools and LRC, we can find that the existence of special schools represents the most typical segregated special education form, while the LRC as the Chinese model of inclusive education, both have been emphasized and developed in China to form a dual special education system (Piao, 2004). Interestingly, debates or complaints regarding the coexistence of special schools and LRC or closing the special schools are seldom emerged across the country, which is totally different from what happened in western countries (Deng, Poon-McBrayer, Farnsworth, 2001; Jenkins, Pious, Jewell, 1990; Poon-Mcbrayer, Lian, 2002). On the contrary, this parallel development system is clearly issued in the government policy and well

developed in practice. The government gives priority to both LRC and special schools and makes efforts to develop both in a parallel way (Deng, Zhu, 2016). We can find this phenomenon almost in every important law in terms of special schools development and LRC expansion, such as *The Ninth Five-Year (1996–2000) Work Programme for Implementing Compulsory Education for Children with Disabilities* (State Council, 1996), which specified that in each city or county with a population of 300, 000 or more there should be established at least one special school to educate children with disabilities. Others like *The Guidelines for Mid-term and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010–2020)* (State Council, 2010), *The Plan of Special Education Improvement (2014-2016)* (State Council, 2014) and *The Second Plan of Special Education Improvement (2017-2020)* (State Council, 2017). Moreover, due to the economic differences among different areas of China, in a certain period and place, developing special schools can be a priority. For example, in 2008 the Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China issued the *Project on Developing Special Schools in Mid-Western Areas of China* (The Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China, 2008), which aims to invest 5.45 billion RMB to build 465 special schools and repair 695 old special schools. In addition, offering teaching and rehabilitation equipments for those special schools (National Development and Reform Commission of People’s Republic of China, 2008). In Italy and other Western countries, the case is totally different, the development of inclusive education results in closing of many special schools (Deng, Zhu, 2016).

The second comes to the fact that the policy of LRC is frequently issued in the special education policy documents, which inevitably spreads the information that LRC is a part of special education to the public. To date, there is only one government policy that specifically focus on LRC, which is *Trial Measures of Implementing Learning in Regular Classrooms for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities* (Ministry of Education, 1994) issued in 1994. Apart from this, there are no specific government policies on LRC. Contrarily, all policies related to LRC are issued in various special education policy documents or in other government education policy documents but under the special education section, all that two cases can easily find in the policy documents in relation to special education and LRC we referred in that chapter.

Finally this ingrained thinking that LRC is a sub-theme of special education is reflecting in the researchers who conduct the related researches in terms of LRC and inclusive education in current Chinese educational research field. Currently, there are three major kinds of researchers

who conduct the researches relate to LRC: the first and most important is the professional researchers from universities' special education faculty, the second refers to the teachers from the special schools and the last kind comes to the Master and PhD students who are belonging to the special education faculty. From these research groups, we can easily find that all those researchers have some relationships with 'special' education or schools. As currently in China the LRC is considered as a sub-area belongs to special education and researchers in other educational research fields rarely conduct LRC related researches. Furthermore, the LRC research papers mainly publish in *Chinese Special Educational Journal*, which is the only one journal that focuses on special education, at the same time concerns LRC researches.

Undoubtedly, the thinking of LRC is a sub-theme of special education is reflecting more than that three aspects which we mentioned above. Here my intention to specifically mention that three representative aspects is to state that thinking and furthermore that thinking's influences on school LRC practice which I will discussed in detail in the result chapter.

Challenges for the implementation of LRC

The final issue relates to LRC I want to highlight here concerns the challenges for further promoting LRC in China. Based on my own research experience and related literature, four challenges facing by LRC will present here.

A dominant examination-oriented culture

The first challenge comes to the high-stakes examination-oriented culture in current Chinese education system. Emphasizing examining culture has a long tradition, like imperial examination system, *ke ju zhi* in Chinese, in Chinese history for more than 1300 years and it was the primary means to select talented persons and recruit elite class for managing feudal systems. Although it was abolished in the year of 1905, however, the examination culture or spirit derives from the imperial examination system is still existing and dominating contemporary Chinese educational system, which leads to the exam scores are considered as the only criteria to certify students' success or failure. One of the biggest distinguishing features of that exam culture is giving more

priority on students' mutual comparison and competition, hence leads to each student needs to live in a constantly nervous and stressed environment as to the selective and exclusive nature. Influencing by that culture, the high scores or academic achievement is the main passport to realize class mobility and personal success in one's life. Particularly, some old sayings like 'One exam will determine your entire life', '*Gaokao* (college entrance examination) decides your future life' and 'No poverty is worse than a poor education' can clearly explain that. In addition, the contradiction between large university-aged students' population and limited university places as we mentioned '985' and '211' projects earlier, to some extent, reinforce the exam culture (Tan, 2102; Xu, Cooper, Sin, 2018). This over-reliance on exam scores inevitably neglects students' personal needs and results in success only belongs to the minority while at expense of the majority of others. Within that examination-oriented school context, the students with disabilities are considered as incompetence and unlikely to survive as teachers do not have time, energy and ability to meet their specific needs because of the pressure of improving the score for normal students, which makes the majority of the students with disabilities is solo sitting rather than learning in regular classrooms. Moreover, one side effect caused by that exam culture is the serious pressure from normal students' parents as they are afraid of putting students with disabilities in their children's classroom will disturb the class and therefore produce a negative impact on their children's learning, which finally leads to their children become a loser in the intense competition. Given that, the normal students' parents can be a big challenge for LRC as well.

The strong development of special education

The second challenge concerns the strong and fast development of special education system in current China educational reform and this trend can easily find in nearly all the current education reform agendas. As we stated early, since 1990s there was a tremendous expansion in terms of LRC programmes, from 129,400 students with disabilities enrolled in school (both special and regular schools) and 28.00% (36,558 students with disabilities) of them were in regular schools in 1992 to the year of 2009 that 428,100 students with disabilities enrolled in school and approximately 65.00% students with disabilities in regular classrooms. However, this is not the

whole story, recent years the rates of students with disabilities who are enrolling in LRC programmes has experienced a decrease after 2010, for example the newest statistic report that 52.52% students with disabilities in regular classrooms, while the special schools/classes has experienced a stable increase (Department of Education, 2017). With strong and fast development of special education system, the special schools/classes come to the first choice for students with disabilities while LRC, to some extent, becomes a second concern.

Inadequate teacher preparation

There is a worldwide consensus that teachers play a pivotal role in moving towards successful inclusive education. Therefore, how to prepare qualified teachers via teacher education has been a tricky problem and it is a high time to consider. Just as the World Report on Disability (2011) states:

The appropriate training of mainstream teachers is crucial if they are to be confident and competent in teaching children with diverse educational needs. The principles of inclusion should be built into teacher training programmes, which should be about attitudes and values not just knowledge and skills (p. 222)

In agree with World Report on Disability, highlighting the proper special education training for all students' teachers is mentioned many times in various Chinese government policy documents, however, until now special education training has not been regarded as an compulsory part for regular pre-service teacher's programmes (Deng, Harris, 2008; Deng, Poon-Mc Brayer, 2012), which inevitably leads to regular school teachers' inadequate preparation for implementing LRC programmes and this is also the third challenge I will focus on this section.

Currently, the parallel development of special teacher education and regular teacher education is the main cause accounts for the inadequate teacher preparation for promoting LRC. Although policies issued that regular teacher education programmes should add the special education content to their training courses, however this is not mandatory. To date, only some regular pre-service teacher education programmes follow that suggestions while the majority of regular pre-service teacher education programmes still do not add anything about special

education (Peng, 2011). With zero or limited training on special education knowledge, these regular teachers need to undertake the responsibility of teaching the students with disabilities in their classrooms, which inevitably affects the quality of teaching for students with disabilities. As a result, many students with disabilities are neglected and just sitting at the regular classrooms because the regular teachers do not have the professional ability to instruct them (Xiao, 2007). With regard to the in-service training and professional development programmes for regular school teachers, some programmes do include the special education courses, however, its courses is too theoretical to help regular teachers instruct students with disabilities in their classrooms. And furthermore, without previous formal training on special education regular teachers find it difficult to fully understand these added courses on special education. Therefore, sometimes this kind of training just becomes a kind of wasting time. All in all, the teacher education programmes should be revised if we want to better promote LRC programmes in the future.

Uneven economic and social developments across China

The last challenge refers to the uneven economic and social development across China, which leads to the special schools arm with well equipments usually locate in big cities, like the capital cities of provinces or east coast cities while for rural areas there are some poor-structured special schools or no special schools at all (Deng, Poon-Mc Brayer, 2012; Yuan, 2008). What worse is that in some areas they just start to implement nine-year compulsory education for normal students, to provide qualified LRC programmes for students with disabilities is nearly impossible. The fact that uneven education development between urban and rural areas and even among individual schools acts as a big barrier for LRC programmes' development that needs Chinese government to take some effective measures to address.

“In between” conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an account of the context in terms of inclusive education policy development in Italy and China. In order to fully understand the inclusive education policy in Italy and China, the background information like the education system organization, recent education reforms and related education issues in two countries are briefly illustrated and discussed. In Italy,

the policy of *integrazione scolastica*, has long been considered as the world's first policy aimed at promoting inclusive education. Since then, a series of related policies in terms of how to provide equal and qualified education for all was issued to promote inclusive education. Due to its specific historical and social-cultural context, the relationship between *integrazione scolastica* and inclusive education is still a debate within Italy academic field as whether the two terms can use interchangeably, or whether they represent different meanings (D'Alessio, Watkins, 2009). Given special cultural influences, in agree with D'Alessio (2007, p. 70), I argue that inclusive education cannot be regarded as a new terminology to define *integrazione scolastica*. In China, because of the poor developed school system in some rural areas in 1950s, local regular schools spontaneously put students with disabilities into the regular classrooms, which is the origin of the LRC. Gradually, spontaneous LRC programme had become a national action to promote education for students with disabilities. After these years expansion, currently the LRC programme is in a transformation era which is from quantity-orientation to quality-orientation. With more than half century's development, the system of special schools as the backbone while special classes and the LRC as the main body to deliver educational provision for students with disabilities has already formed. Put simply, the LRC has already become the main placement for students with disabilities to receive education. However, challenges for future inclusive education development, like inadequate teacher preparation and uneven educational development still need Chinese government to take effective measures to address. Overall, based on Italy and Chinese own unique context, we examine the policy of *integrazione scolastica* and LRC and related issues, respectively. Both of *integrazione scolastica* and LRC have its own characteristics, different development stages and challenges needed to address in the future, while this is not the whole story. A comprehensive understanding of these two specific policies needed to combine with the inclusive education school practice in concrete school context, which is the main research theme I will explore more in the following two chapters.

Chapter three Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This chapter mainly states some considerations regarding the research design in terms of the current research, which will be divided into seven sections. The first section presents research aims and questions of current study. Then, following the principle of '*fitness for purpose*' (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2007, p. 3), the next section will focus on some methodological issues related to the research. Specifically, this section will provide a general picture with regard to different research paradigms and its implication for the current research. Subsequently, the theoretical framework for understanding inclusive education will be discussed. Finally, a brief description in terms of instrument, sampling, fieldwork and data analysis will be provided.

3.1 Research aims and questions

3.1.1 Research aims

Considering the current exploratory research, there are mainly three aims: firstly, to understand the historical policy evolution of inclusive education in Italy and China. This primarily concerns the inclusive education development in two cultures from a historical perspective, to carefully examine how inclusive education policy was issued in different history periods and how these inclusive education policies influenced the school practice. Furthermore the first aim is the start point for the whole research which lays a solid foundation for the following steps. Secondly, to explore sample teachers' understanding of inclusive education in Italian and Chinese school context. In contrast to the first aim, the second aim from the bottom perspective which is school teachers' understanding to construct inclusive education in two cultures' school context. As we discussed earlier teachers play a critical role in making schools more inclusive and it is teacher who transforms the inclusive education policy into inclusive education school practice. Therefore to understand teachers how to construct inclusive education in their day-to-day school practice is an essential step for researcher fully understand inclusive education in practice. Moreover, the first

aim from the policy level and the second aim from the practice level, which inevitably help us to draw a full picture of inclusive education development in two countries. The third aim is to enrich our knowledge of ‘how to make education more inclusive’ from cross-culture perspectives. As current research is conducted in Italy and China, one in western culture and one in eastern culture, which inevitably have different ideas in terms of how to make education more inclusive. Therefore, based on the comparative perspective this aim intends to learn from each other and to contribute our knowledge to understand inclusive education.

3.1.2 Research questions

Based on the current research aims, three research questions are developed:

- a) How has the policy of inclusive education evolved in Italy and China in the last 70 years?
- b) How do a small sample of school teachers in Italy and China understand inclusive education?
- c) What can we learn for the future development of inclusive education from the analysis of inclusive education policies and practice in Italy and China?

3.2 Qualitative research

According to Mears(2012, p. 171), if you are starting to carry out a thesis or academic dissertation, the most emergent thing you need to solve is not to identify a method which will be used in your research, but to clarify the research questions that you want to answer and the purpose you want to achieve. Only as you know your research questions and aims, then you can choose and determine the methods which are proper to your research. Having research purposes and questions in mind, this section is firstly focusing on addressing the question of research paradigms and then following the methodology will be discussed based on the research questions and aims.

3.2.1 Research paradigms

What is the meaning of paradigm is a central and critical step to understand research paradigm. Obviously, Kuhn’s (1962) works play a significant role for us to understand paradigm. Inspired by Kuhn, Cohen and Morrison (2018, p. 8) argue that paradigm is a way to view or research the

social phenomenon, a kind of world view, ‘a view of what counts as accepted or correct scientific knowledge or way of thinking’, an ‘accepted model or pattern’ (Kuhn, 1962, p. 23). Patton (1990) from the scientific research’s ontological, epistemological and methodological standpoints argued that paradigm is a theoretical construct that interprets the nature of the world reality. Denzin, Lincoln (1994, pp. 107-109, quoted from Punch, 2009, p. 16) explained paradigm as:

...a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of ‘the world’, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts...

Considering how to define a specific research paradigm, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argued that answer based on the responses to three fundamental questions: a) *the ontological question*: What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it? b) *The epistemological question*: what is the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known? c) *The methodological question*: how can the inquirer go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?

Put in a simple way, paradigm informs us:

- a) What reality is like (ontology);
- b) What the relationship is between the researcher and that reality (epistemology), and
- c) What methods can be used for studying the reality (methodology) (Denzin, Lincoln, 1994, pp. 107-109, quoted from Punch, 2009, p. 16).

In terms of research paradigms, Lather (2004) identifies four paradigms: prediction (positivism), understanding (interpretive approaches), emancipator (critical theoretical approaches) and deconstruction (post-structuralist). While Lukenchuk (2013) argues there are six paradigms: empirical-analytic, pragmatic, interpretive, critical, post-structuralist and transcendental. In general, three paradigms are common: scientific, interpretive and critical paradigms (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2018; Denzin, Lincoln, 1994; Ernest, 1994). The scientific paradigm derives from the natural sciences, which believes that the ‘objective accounts of the world can be given, and that the function of science is to develop explanations in the form of universal laws, that is, to develop nomothetic knowledge’ (Punch, 2009, p.18). This paradigm was the main approach to social science research in the 1950s and now is still one of the main research approaches which is

employed by the researchers in the social science field. While the interpretive paradigm mainly focus on the meaning that people understand the world reality depends on specific situations (O' Donoghue, 2007, pp. 16-17), reality are local, specific and constructed which are socially and experientially based, and depend on the individuals or groups holding them (Guba, Lincoln, 1994, pp. 109-111). Finally the critical paradigm is mainly perspective and normative and its focus is not only to explain the social reality but to realize a society which is built on equality and democracy. Beside to understand the social reality, the critical paradigm also strives to change the pre-existing system (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2018).

3.2.2 An interpretive paradigm for current study

The current research mainly focuses on how inclusive education is understood and constructed across two cultures: firstly involved the policy level which based on the deeper analysis of the specific state documents that relate to inclusive education in Italy and China, while secondly to understand inclusive education through school teachers' day-to-day teaching practice via their own narrative account, which are inevitably influenced by teachers' own emotions and feelings. Given the main aim of the current research, the interpretive paradigm is considered as the appropriate one.

Based on the definition of interpretive paradigm we discussed earlier, we now turn to examine ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions that underpin the interpretive paradigm. The ontological assumption of interpretive paradigm is that there are multiple realities in the social world. Realities in this way are not given, rather they are socially constructed. Therefore in order to fully understand the complex and intangible realities, researchers need to extend their knowledge in terms of why realities are constructed in this way not others. In this exploring process, as Waring (2012, p. 18) reminds us the knower and the process of knowing cannot be separated from what is known and the facts cannot be separated from values. Concerning the epistemological assumption underpin the interpretive paradigm is that the 'researcher and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds' (Waring, 2012, p. 18), which means researchers build their own understanding of the specific situation in the researching

process. The methodological point of interpretive paradigm is that socially constructed realities can only be understood through interactions between researchers and respondents, in this way data are collected in a natural context. In terms of the data collecting methods, interviews, focus groups, observation are mainly adopted.

Based on the understanding of ontological, epistemological and methodological points that underpin the interpretive paradigm and combining the current research's characteristic, the interpretive orientation of qualitative research will be employed to guide my research design.

Qualitative research, as Denzin and Lincoln (2017) state:

[Qualitative research] consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations... [and] memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things...attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 10)

Having decided to employ qualitative research approach, the next step is to consider the research tools that employ to collect the data.

3.3 Theoretical framework for understanding inclusive education

As Wiggins and McTighe (2005) state that understanding is multidimensional and complicated. There are many different kinds of understanding and different methods of understanding. Considering the complexity of the issue of understanding, Wiggins and McTighe remind us that it is necessary to 'identify different (though overlapping and ideally integrated) aspects of understanding' (2005, p. 84). Given that, Wiggins and McTighe have developed a multifaceted view of what makes up a mature understanding, a six-sided view of the concept, which includes explanation, application, self-knowledge, empathy, perspective and interpretation (2005, pp. 82-104). In order to fully present Wiggins and McTighe's understanding theory, a table is provided to facilitate us to understand the six aspects of the understanding theory (Please see table 3.1).

From the table 1 we can see these six facets fully reflect different connotations of understanding theory, which provides us various indicators of understanding. Therefore, the six

aspects of the understanding theory ‘can guide the selection and design of assessments to elicit understanding’ (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, p. 85) of inclusive education (Camedda, 2016).

Table 1 Understanding theory

Explanation	Can explain	Via generalizations or principles, providing justified and systematic accounts of phenomena, facts, and data; make insightful connections and provide illuminating examples or illustrations.
Application	Can apply	Effectively use and adapt what we know in diverse and real contexts—we can “do” the subject.
Self-knowledge	Have self-knowledge	Show meta-cognitive awareness; perceive the personal style, prejudices, projections, and habits of mind that shape and impede our own understanding; are aware of what we do not understand; reflect on the meaning of learning and experience.
Empathy	Can empathize	Find value in what others might find odd, alien, or implausible; perceive sensitively on the basis of prior direct experience.
Perspective	Have perspective	See and hear points of view through critical eyes and ears; see the big picture.
Interpretation	Can interpret	Tell meaningful stories; offer apt translations; provide a revealing historical or personal dimension to ideas and events; make the object of understanding personal or accessible through images, anecdotes, analogies, and models.

Note: this table mainly based on the Wiggins, G. P., McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (Expanded 2nd Edition), p. 84.

3.4 Research methods

This section mainly focuses on the data collection tools that are employed in current research, which includes semi-structured interview, documentary and fieldwork notes.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interview

The main aim of that study is to investigate teacher’s personal understanding of inclusive education and their experience in dealing with the school’s inclusive practice in two different

cultural contexts, which is a complex and context-based phenomenon. Therefore, considering the nature of the current research the semi-structured qualitative interview was employed to collect data in terms of Italian and Chinese teachers' understanding on inclusive education. The qualitative semi-structured interview, which provides a good platform for researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, a concrete situation, to investigate person's experience and the meaning they make of that specific experience (Merriam, Associates, 2002; Seidman, 2006). Fontana (2002) considers the interview as a collaborative effort between the interviewee (s) and interviewer (s). Mears (2012) argues that interviews are purposeful interactions in which a researcher intends to learn another person's knowledge in terms of a topic, to discover and record what that person has experienced, what she or he thinks and feels about it, and what significance or meaning it might have. I choose the semi-structured interview as it allows the interviewees to express freely, but the researcher also guides the direction of the dialogue around the research topic, which is based on a research design that includes some questions in terms of the current research topic.

As Mears (2012) reminds us that effective interview depends on a well-designed interview guide to ensure that you cover the main themes that you want the participants to address. Therefore, considering research aims and questions and based on Wiggins and McTighe (2005) understanding theory framework which we stated earlier. Six main interview questions (Table 2) were developed to guide the interview, however, this is just a guideline and during the interviewing some related questions will add to acquire rich data.

Table 2 Main interview questions guideline

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explanation: What does inclusive education mean for you? 2. Application: How do you promote the inclusive education in your work? 3. Self-knowledge: What are the facilitators and barriers to implement inclusive education? 4. Empathy: From your schooling experience, please describe the situation of that students being included in your class/school? 5. Perspective: What is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education? 6. Interpretation: What is the general development trend of inclusive education during your working period?
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Conducting the interviews is just the first step of interview-based scientific research. Before

you start to analysis data, you should make sure the trustworthiness of your interview data. In order to protect the trustworthiness of the interview data, the member check is used (Mears, 2012). At end of interviews in each sample school, I talked this with teachers to ask who want to help me to check the interview's transcripts. Finally, in each school I found one or two teachers to help me check the transcripts of their interviews.

3.4.2 Texts and documents

Documentary method is a significant way for educational research (Flick, 2009; McCulloch, 2004; Scott, 1990). Documents, as Wolff (2004, p. 284) argues are 'standardised artifacts, in so far as they typically occur in particular formats, as notes, case reports, contracts, drafts, death certificates, remarks, diaries, statistics, annual reports, certificates, judgments, letters or expert opinions'. In a more dynamic, user-guided direction, Prior (2003, p. 2) defines documents as 'if we are to get to grips with the nature of documents then we have to move away from a consideration of them as stable, static and pre-defined artifacts. Instead we must consider them in terms of fields, frames and networks of action. In fact, the status of things as "documents" depends precisely on the ways which such objects are integrated into fields of action, and documents can only be defined in terms of such fields'. Document as a tool can offer an innovative and unfiltered view in terms of specific topics and therefore 'going beyond the perspectives of members in the field' (Flick, 2009, p. 261). Applying document as a way to approach research, as McCulloch (2012) argues can provide many insights into both personal and public domains and it will be helpful for researchers to combine different kinds of documents to draw a fuller and more comprehensive picture in terms of specific themes.

Another question of applying document as a research method is about how to evaluate the quality of the documents and how to choose the appropriate document to meet your research aims, as there are an enormous range of documents available for researchers. These include diaries, letters, policy texts and so on (McCulloch, 2012). Considering that, Scott (1990, p. 6) provides four standards to assess the documents quality and whether or not the documents are suitable for your current research, which are: (a) authenticity: Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable origin? (b) credibility: Is the evidence free from error and distortion? (c) representativeness: Is the

evidence typical of its kind, and, if not, is the extent of its un-typicality known? (d) meaning: Is the evidence clear and comprehensible?

Given the function and significance of documentary method, I use this method to collect related data to achieve my research aim and answer my research questions. In terms of the state policy level, documents that relate to inclusive education or special education will be collected for further analysis, while during the fieldwork school's public documents, plans, reports in terms of inclusive education or special education will be gathered to facilitate the interviews' analysis.

3.4.3 Field notes

During the fieldwork, I take the field notes as a way to reflect my research, to record the sample schools' information and teacher participants' verbal and nonverbal behaviours, to record my own ideas, feelings, impressions and reflections which were emerged during or after the school fieldwork (Flick, 2009; Maharaj, 2016; Morrow, 2007). As a specific cross-culture study, taking field notes during my fieldwork really provides a platform to reflect inclusive education practice in Italy and China, on one hand those rich field notes can provide additional data as complementary for understanding the meaning of teacher participants' specific words and actions in their own cultural context, while field notes are employed as a bridge between theoretical memos and researcher journals to record researcher's conceptual reasoning and methodological decisions (Flick, 2009; Maharaj, 2016; Montgomery, Bailey, 2007).

Regarding to the forms of field notes, Spradley (1980, pp. 69-72, quoted from Flick, 2009, p. 297) suggests four forms of field notes for documentation: a) the condensed accounts in single words, sentences, quotations from conversations, etc; b) an expanded account of the impressions from interviews and field contacts; c) a fieldwork journal, which like a diary "will contain ... experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems that arise during fieldwork"; d) some notes about analysis and interpretations, which start immediately after the field contacts and extend until finishing the study.

Given Spradley's suggestion, there are mainly three kinds of field notes that were recorded during my fieldwork: a) the accounts of the impressions from the visiting sample schools and interviewing with teacher participants; b) the reflective fieldwork diary which I wrote after

finishing all the teachers' interviews in one sample school and to make summary, as well as my personal reflections during the fieldwork; c) some notes and reflections which were recorded during the process of transcription and analysis of the teacher participants' interview data.

Based on above three kinds of notes, my intention is originally to record my research process in Italy as this is my first time to conduct a project in a foreign country, while with the development of the research I found that those notes really facilitate me to reflect my research design and fieldwork. Finally I decided to take notes as well as during I conducting the fieldwork in China, sometimes maybe just some sentences in terms of the sample school or teachers feelings. After all the fieldwork, when I start to reorganize my field notes I find my personal journey in terms of how to plan the research, how to chose the sample schools and teachers, how to use three languages (Italian, English and Chinese) to conduct the interviews to the confusions, reflections in terms of how to coding and analyzing the interview data. As such, when writing the final results from the documentary and interview, the additional field notes will be the third data source, as well as an indispensable tool to conduct the current research.

3.5 Research sample

Since current research intends to gain a better understanding of inclusive education from teachers' perspectives, so it is important to choose samples from which the most can be learned (Merriam, Associates, 2002). So purposive sampling strategy (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2018) was adopted and the purposive samples are information-rich cases 'which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research' (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Keeping that principle in mind, firstly we select the sample schools and then the teacher participants.

In Italy part, school samples were selected from the province of Padova and Treviso. As my supervisor already involved in the special and inclusive education for many years and is familiar with the inclusive education situation in Italy. Therefore, firstly she suggested some schools which have a good reputation in inclusive education practice. Secondly, we discussed those potent sample schools with three colleges from our faculty whose research interest is special and inclusive education. Finally, 7 schools in the province of Padova which includes 2 secondary schools and 5 primary schools and in the province of Treviso 1 secondary and 4 primary schools

were selected. In all 12 schools were chosen for the research. In terms of the teacher participants, we asked the school director to recommend the teachers who do a good work in terms of inclusive education. At last we have 17 teacher participants in all. Table 3 shows the Italian teacher participants' demographic information.

Table 3 Italian teacher participants' demographic information

Participant	Gender	Age	School Level	Teaching Position	Teaching Experience	Inclusive Education Practice	Students with SEN in Class	Note
IT-1-PB	F	56	Primary		32 years	32 years		School director
IT-2-PB	F	31	Primary	CT	7 years	7 years	1	
IT-3-PB	F	36	Primary	ST	12 years	12 years	3	
IT-4-PB	F	39	Primary	CT	15 years	15 years	2	
IT-5-PB	F	60	Primary	CT	41 years	30 years	2	
IT-6-PB	F	38	Primary	ST	10 years	10 years	2	
IT-7-TR	F	57	Secondary	CT	37 years	37 years		School director
IT-8-TR	F	56	Primary	CT	33 years	33 years	2	V-School director
IT-9-TR	F	54	Primary	ST	23 years	23 years	1	
IT-10-TR	F	40	Primary	ST	16 years	16 years	2	
IT-11-TR	F	58	Secondary	CT	34 years	34 years	2	
IT-12-TR	F	48	Secondary	ST	19 years	19 years	1	
IT-13-TR	F	50	Primary	CT	7 years	7 years	4	
IT-14-SC	F	35	Primary	CT	8 years	8 years	2	
IT-15-SC	F	27	Primary	ST	1 years	1 years	2	
IT-16-SC	F	48	Primary	ST	26 years	26 years	3	
IT-17-SC	F	39	Secondary	ST	3 years	3 years	1	

Note: F: Female; CT: Classroom Teacher; ST: Support Teacher.

In Chinese part, things become a little bit complicated. Firstly we located our research on the city of Chengdu and Chongqing in the Southwest of China, and both areas were approved as good areas in terms of promoting inclusive education practice by Chinese Ministry of Education.

Although these two cities are advanced in developing inclusive education, but it does not mean all the schools can be the potent sample schools as there are still some schools reject students with disabilities. Therefore, secondly we contacted the special and inclusive education professors in the Education Science Faculty of the Southwest University to suggest some regular schools which are good in promoting inclusive education practice. Finally 1 special school, 1 secondary and 6 primary schools in Chengdu and 4 primary schools in Chongqing and in all 12 schools were selected. Regarding to the teacher participants like in Italy we asked the school director to suggest and 25 regular school teachers were recommended. Table 4 shows the Chinese teacher participants' demographic information.

Considering the numbers of sample schools and teacher participants, we try our best to ensure the numbers in Italy and China at the same level. Regarding to sample schools, 12 schools were selected in Italy and China, respectively. However, concerning the numbers of teacher who can participate in current study is beyond research's scope because sample schools have its own arrangement, therefore how many teachers can attend the research mainly depend on the sample schools' directors' decisions. As a researcher, I just provide two points to directors when they choose teachers to attend my research. One is potential sample teachers who are actively involving in school's inclusive education practice, second is current research cannot disturb sample schools' arrangement. As a result, 17 teacher participants in Italy mainstream schools and 25 teacher participants in China regular schools were recommended by sample schools' directors, respectively. Undoubtedly, this difference in terms of the teacher participants' numbers will influence current research. Therefore, further researches need to be carefully considered that sample problems in the research sample design.

Table 4 Chinese teacher participants' demographic information

Participant	Gender	Age	School Level	Teaching Position	Teaching Experience	Inclusive Education Practice	Students with SEN in Class	Note
CH-1-S	F	44	Special School	ST	24 years	11 years		Inclusion Manager
CH-2-S	F	58	Special School	ST	32 years	18 years		School director
CH-3-S	F	29	Special School	ST	3 years	3 years		
CH-4-S	F	29	Special School	ST	7 years	7 years		
CH-5-DS	F	41	Primary	RT	21 years	4 years	3	Resource teacher
CH-6-DS	F	60	Primary	RT	38 years	6 years	2	
CH-7-DS	M	49	Primary	RT	26 years	5 years	2	Inclusion Manager
CH-8-DS	F	30	Primary	RT	4 years	4 years	2	
CH-9-PZ	M	48	Primary	RT	25 years	6 years	2	Inclusion Manager
CH-10-PZ	F	32	Primary	RT	4 years	4 years	1	
CH-11-PZ	F	60	Primary	RT	37 years	6 years	2	
CH-12-PZ	F	29	Primary	RT	3 years	3 years	2	
CH-13-XD	F	48	Primary	RT	29 years	5 years	2	
CH-14-XD	F	30	Primary	RT	8 years	3 years	1	
CH-15-XD	F	29	Primary	RT	3 years	3 years	2	
CH-16-XD	F	34	Primary	RT	13 years	9 years	2	
CH-17-XD	F	50	Secondary	RT	29 years	4 years	2	
CH-18-XD	M	26	Secondary	RT	3 years	3 years	1	
CH-19-SYL	F	42	Primary	RT	23 years	3 years	1	
CH-20-SYL	F	53	Primary	RT	35 years	18 years	2	Inclusion Manager
CH-21-LYC	F	55	Primary	RT	37 years	3 years	1	
CH-22-LYC	F	28	Primary	RT	4 years	4 years	1	
CH-23-LS	M	48	Primary	RT	27 years	10 years	2	School director
CH-24-LS	F	34	Primary	RT	15 years	2 years	2	
CH-25-LS	F	31	Primary	RT	5 years	5 years	1	

Note: F: Female; M: Male; RT: Regular Teacher; ST: Special Teacher.

3.6 Fieldwork

The fieldwork was conducted between May 2017 and July 2018, which June and July of 2017 and May and June of 2018 in China, while May, September, October and November of 2017 and January, February, March and April of 2018 in Italy. Firstly I had a meeting with the sample school director and asked the director to recommend the teacher participants in their schools. Secondly, I used e-mail and phone calls to contact teacher participants to decide the interview time schedule in Italy and China, respectively. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face in teacher participants' schools during the school day and each school offered a meeting room for interviewing.

In terms of the process of interviewing, firstly I explained research purpose and stated that the data will be dealt with confidentially and only be used for research. And then a 5-minute-free-talk with an introduction of current research and some basic information of the teacher participants was adopted. This free discussion provided an opportunity to know each other and created a free atmosphere for the following formal interview as well. Each interview ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes and all the interviews were audio-taped under the consent with the participant.

Apart from the interview, some schools provided opportunities for researcher to make a visit to classes to have a look in terms of how teachers working and how students learning. Finally, with Henning's (Henning, Van Rensburg, Smit, 2004) suggestions in mind, I collect some school documents and reports (e.g. IEPs and school plans) which provided a valuable reference for current research.

3.7 Interview transcription and data analysis

3.7.1 Transcription of interview data

To analyze the data, all the interviews were transcribed verbatim and then detailed reading of the transcripts was conducted to be familiar with the interviews' content (Flick 2009). The transcription of the interview data began after the first interview. In doing so, on one hand I can

re-examine my interview process and to find are there some mistakes, are there spaces I can improve next time, etc. While on the other hand I can get more information about school context and teacher participants' ideas from the transcripts as soon as possible, which inevitably provides more clues for further interviews. In addition, during the transcription of interview data I also made some notes in terms of sample teachers' feeling, speech speed, pause and intonation to fully understand teachers' meaning. After finished all the transcription, before analyzing the data I firstly printed all the data and read this print version of the transcription of interview data. Two reasons persuade me to do that: one is to be familiar with the data and second to take some notes or write what I think during the reading to rich the meaning of the data.

Compared with conducting interviews, the transcription of interview data is definitely a time-consuming process. Finally, the qualitative interviews were transcribed, which constituted about 102,806 words or about 184 pages of single-spaced transcribed interview text, with Italy 91 pages, 30,801 words (in English) and China 93 pages, 72,005 words (in Chinese), respectively.

3.7.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for 'identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data', which intends to construct and deconstruct your research data set in detail (Braun, Clarke, 2006). Boyatzis (1998) argues that thematic analysis can be considered as a translator for the qualitative and quantitative analysis, to help researchers who employ different research methods to communicate with each other. As a qualitative analysis tool, thematic analysis is widely employed for varied epistemologies and research questions and it is also considered as an appropriate qualitative method to analyze the big qualitative data set (Nowell et al., 2017). Another concern regarding the thematic analysis is its theoretical freedom, which can offer a highly flexible approach that can be met the specific needs of varied studies. As Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that because thematic analysis does not need the detailed theoretical and technological background like other qualitative methods, which provides a more accessible and flexible form of data analysis, especially for these who are in their early research career. Therefore, early career researchers who are just beginning their research journey may find that thematic analysis is easily understand, learn and apply, as there are few prescriptions and procedures like other qualitative analysis approaches

(Braun, Clarke, 2006; King, 2004; Nowell et al., 2017).

Having decided to apply the thematic analysis into my current research to analyze the interview data, the next step is how to conduct a rigorous thematic analysis? As Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a rigorous thematic analysis can produce trustworthy and insightful findings. Considering that there is lacking a clear agreement in terms of how researchers rigorously use the thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017), current research will mainly draw the lessons from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) research in terms of how to conduct a step-by-step thematic analysis. However, we should keep in mind that there is not a fixed phase in terms of how to conduct thematic analysis, even if I will employ Braun and Clarke (2006) and Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) research findings there are still some differences when applying into the practice as thematic analysis is a highly flexible approach you can modify it whenever possible to meet your own research specific needs. Additionally, data analysis as one of the most complex steps of the qualitative research (Thorne, 2000), however, qualitative researchers often ignore a detailed description in terms of how analysis process was conducted within the research (Tuckett, 2005; Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers state that research should give a full picture of ‘what they are doing, why they are doing it, and include a clear description of analysis methods’ (Nowell et al., 2017), as if readers cannot understand how researchers analyzed the data and the process of test the trustworthiness of the research will be difficult. Bearing these in mind, following I will present a detailed description in terms of how to employ thematic analysis to approach my interview data.

Overall, there are six steps for using thematic analysis to analyze the interview data, please see the table 5 for a detailed description of the steps of thematic analysis.

Step 1: Familiarizing with the interview data

The first step is to be familiar with the interview data (Flick, 2009). As I conducted all the interviews by myself, so before analysis I already had some understandings in terms of my data. The first and most important to know your data better is the transcription of verbal interview data. The process of transcribing the interview data is time-consuming, frustrating and sometimes even boring, however, this can be considered as a good way to begin familiarizing myself with the

interview data (Riessman, 1993). As Bird (2005, p. 227) argues that the transcription of verbal data is ‘a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology’, while this process can help to making some meaningful understanding of the data rather than just a mechanical act in terms of translating verbal data into words on paper (Lapadat, Lindsay, 1999). In order to use the former interviews to inform the following interview, the transcription was done as soon as possible when I finished the interview. In all there are 296 pages of transcript.

As Braun and Clarke (2006) remind us that the time you spent in transcription is not wasted, as this can help you gain a better understanding of your data through the transcription and some initial ideas will come, all of these will facilitate your next step of coding and analyzing. During the process of transcription, I write some personal ideas and feelings in terms of some teachers’ sentences and words, a pool of ideas regarding the codes and themes was produced in the that process and put all those into my field notes.

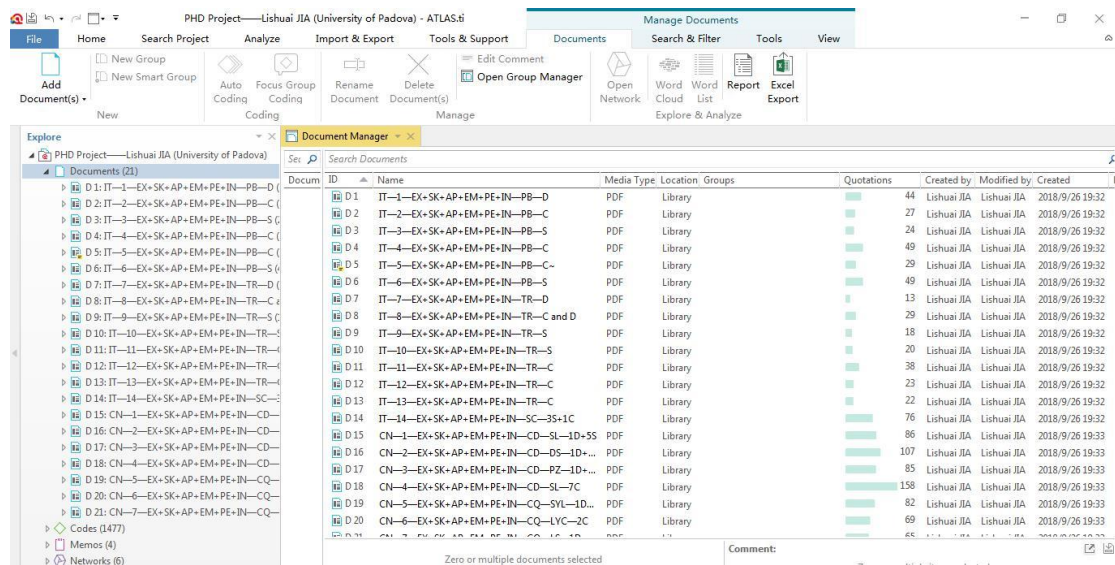
After the transcription of all the verbal interview data, according to the agreement with teachers in the sample schools, I sent the transcript to them to check if I understand their meanings correctly and add something if I miss. Finally, I get the final version of the transcript. Just as King (2004) reminds us that software can help the researcher work efficiently with the large data set and complicated coding process, which inevitably enable researchers have a depth and sophistication of data analysis. Therefore, in order to well-organize the data and have a more systematic analysis of the interview content, ATLAS. ti (8.3.16 version) was employed to help me arrange and code the data (Please see Figure 1). During the process of transcription and organizing the data files, reading and re-reading all the data set was an independent part of everyday work.

Table 5 Step-by-Step of Thematic Analysis

Steps	Description of the step
1. Familiarizing with the interview data	Transcribing data Storing data in well-organized files Using ATLAS.ti software to organize the data Reading and re-reading the data Writing down initial ideas of codes and themes Keeping field notes Member checking
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding the data according to the question across the entire data set Coding as detailed as possible Collecting data relevant to each code. Peer debriefing
3. Identifying themes	Collating codes into potential themes Gathering all data relevant to each potential theme Keeping detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes Peer debriefing
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2) Generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis Peer debriefing
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells Generating clear definitions and names for each theme Peer debriefing
6. Producing the report	Selecting vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts Relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient details Producing a scholarly report of the analysis Peer debriefing

NOTE: This table is built based on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006) and Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017).

Figure 1 The PHD project on ATLAS.ti



Step 2: Generating initial codes

Once I have read and familiarized myself with the interview data and having some thoughts in terms of the data, I start the second step: generating initial codes (Braun, Clarke, 2006). Code means ‘the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). Furthermore, Boyatzis (1998, p. 1) defines that a ‘good code’ means that one can catch the qualitative richness of the research topic. With the research questions in mind, I start to work systematically through the entire interview data set, paying equal attention to every data item, identifying meaningful aspects in terms of the data items which ‘may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set’ (Braun, Clarke, 2006, p. 89), please see table 6 for some examples of codes were applied to some short segments of data. Additionally, in order to make a scientific coding, I follow the Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89) key suggestions for how to code:

- a) Code for as many potential themes/patterns as possible (time permitting) because you never know what might be interesting later;
- b) Code extracts of data inclusively, keep a little of the surrounding data if relevant, a common

criticism of coding is that the context is lost;

- c) Remember that you can code individual extracts of data in as many different ‘themes’ as they fit into, so an extract may be uncoded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant.

As my project has a large data set, so when I stated earlier the ATLAS.ti is employed to facilitate my data arrangement and analysis, please see figure 2 and 3 how ATLAS.ti was applied into the coding process. However, it is necessary to remember that the computer software may be helpful to organize and examine the large set of data, none are able to do the ‘intellectual and conceptualizing processes require to transform data, nor can they make any kind of judgment’ (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 7). Within those in mind, ATLAS.ti is just a technological tool to help me arrange and record the codes, all the meaningful coding work is undertaken by researcher.

Table 6 Codes with data extract

Data extract	Coded for
In our school there are no resource (special) teacher, all is part time and undertake by our general teacher. For example, Our teacher, Zhou, is a math teacher in two classes. She also serves as a resource teacher and undertakes related work in our school.	1) Normal work (general education)plus additional work (inclusive education) 2) Lack fixed places for resource (special) teacher, all is part-time
Inclusive education? I am not familiar with that and I only heard that this relates to special education. As you know, during my pre-service training, no courses related to inclusive education.	1) Unfamiliar with IE and special education 2) Pre-service teacher training policy
No our school is a general school not a special school. Our school is for 99% normal students, not for the students with disabilities, you know only some, the number is small. They should go to the special school and it’s good for them. Not here!	1) General school for 99% normal students 2) Special school is good for students with disabilities 3) General school is not suitable for students with disabilities 4) Small number
In our school, every class has more or less 48 students, no people help me, no special teacher. For normal students, I already have done a lot of work. Now there are 2 students with disabilities, I don’t have time for those only two students, also I really don’t have the abilities to teach them. It’s better to place them in special school, it’s good!	1) One person plays multiple roles 2) Too busy 3) Lack of professional ability 4) lack fixed places for resource (special) teacher, all is part-time 5) Big class size 6) Small number 7) Special school is good for students with disabilities

Figure 2 Coding with ATLAS.ti example 1

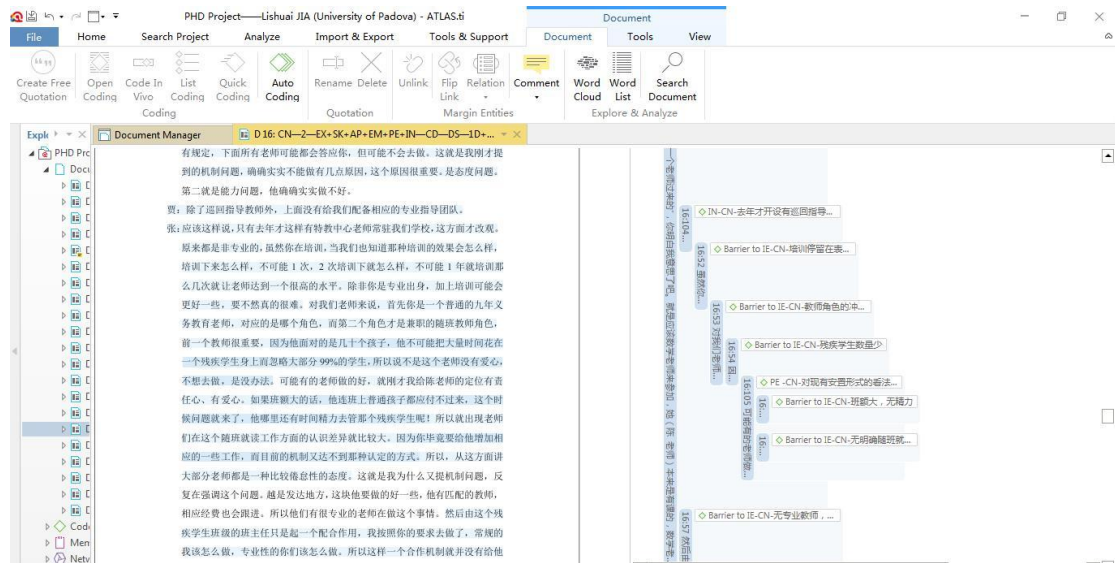
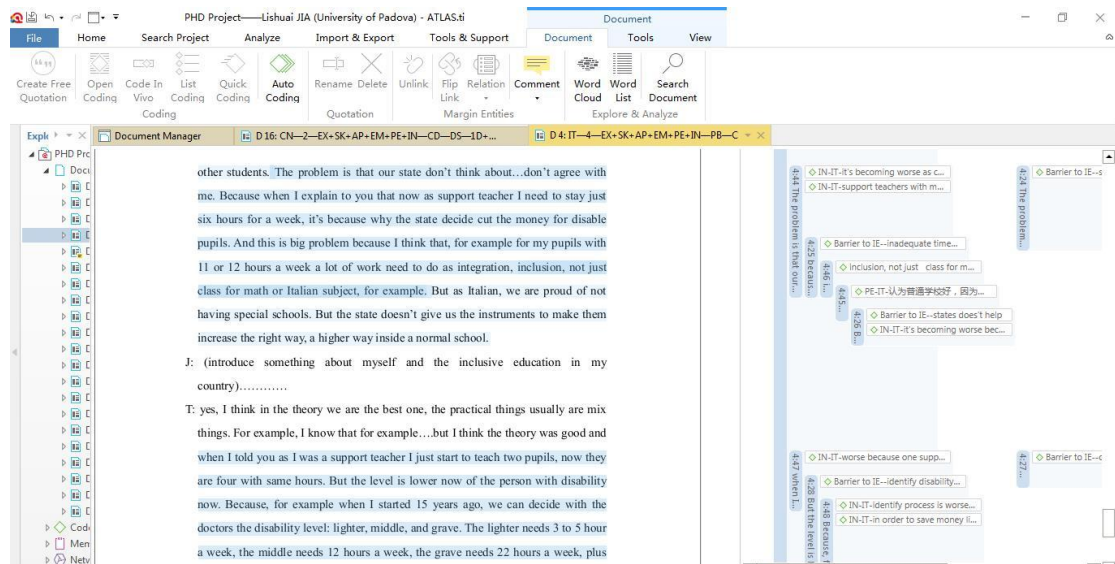


Figure 3 Coding with ATLAS.ti example 2



Step 3: Identifying themes

Finally, I have 1477 codes after coding all the interview data. Then I start to the third step that is identifying the themes which involves sorting the varied and different codes into the potential

themes, collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the related themes (Braun, Clarke, 2006). What is the theme? As DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000, p. 262) define ‘a theme is an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the experience into a meaningful whole’. Braun and Clarke (2006) remind us that whether a theme is a real theme or not, which mainly depends on whether that theme catches something important relates to your research questions rather than assesses it on quantifiable measures.

Particularly, it is necessary and helpful to use visual representations, like tables, code manuals, mind maps, templates or pictures to facilitate you to sort the varied and different codes into the main themes (Braun, Clarke, 2006). During the process of identifying the main themes, I used table to sort different themes, please see table 7.

Step 4: Reviewing themes

When finish identifying the main themes, the next step is the refinement of these main themes which emerged from varied codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In terms of reviewing the themes, I follow the Braun and Clarke (2006) suggestions which include two levels of reviewing and refining the themes: Level one, reviewing the coded data extracts. At this level’s reviewing you need to read and re-read all the collated extracts in terms of all themes, and judge if themes appear to form a coherent pattern. Here are two cases from your judging: one is that all your themes do form a coherent pattern adequately, you move on to the second level, while if you consider some themes do not fit and then you need to find where is the problem, is the theme itself is problematic or some of the data extracts just do fit the theme, in which case, you need to recode this theme, this is the second case. Once you find a problematic theme, you need to create a new theme to replace it and re-examine all the data set. Only when you satisfy that all the themes catch the coded data, you can go to the second level. Level two, concerning the entire data set. At this level you examine the validity of each theme’s relation to the data set, as well as to check whether you themes catch the meanings of the whole data set. The results are like the first level and following the same process until you are satisfied with your results. Additionally, there are two aims in terms of re-reading your data: firstly to examine whether the themes relate to the data set and secondly

to code any additional data under the themes which might be miss in the earlier coding phases. After this two levels' reviewing, you can go to next step.

Table 7 Identifying the themes

Data extract	Coded for
<p>In our school there are no resource (special) teacher, all is part time and undertake by our general teacher. For example, Our teacher, Zhou, is a math teacher in two classes. She also serves as a resource teacher and undertakes related work in our school.</p>	<p>General teacher 1) Normal work (general education)plus additional work (inclusive education) School level 2) Lack fixed places for resource (special) teacher, all is part-time</p>
<p>Inclusive education? I am not familiar with that and I only heard that this relates to special education. As you know, during my pre-service training, no courses related to inclusive education.</p>	<p>General teacher 1) Unfamiliar with IE and special education State policy 2) Pre-service teacher training policy</p>
<p>No our school is a general school not a special school. Our school is for 99% normal students, not for the students with disabilities, you know only some, the number is small. They should go to the special school and it's good for them. Not here!</p>	<p>Culture 1) General school for 99% normal students 2) Special school is good for students with disabilities 3) General school is not suitable for students with disabilities Students with disabilities 4) Small number</p>
<p>In our school, every class has more or less 48 students, no people help me, no special teacher. For normal students, I already have done a lot of work. Now there are 2 students with disabilities, I don't have time for those only two students, also I really don't have the abilities to teach them. It's better to place them in special school, it's good!</p>	<p>General teacher 1) One person plays multiple roles 2) Too busy 3) Lack of professional ability School level 4) lack fixed places for resource (special) teacher, all is part-time 5) Big class size Students with disabilities 6) Small number Culture 7) Special school is good for students with disabilities</p>

Following this two-step reviewing process, I re-examine all the themes and change some when necessary. Finally I get the final version of the theme manual of the interview data. From my experience, it is worth to mention that during this long process of reviewing your entire themes, you may find some new themes which are of interest and relevant to your research questions. For

example, I identify the new theme in terms of what the meaning of inclusive education: additional workload. And then I re-check entire data set to find related codes. Obviously, identifying new themes which are related to your research questions is a good thing. However, ‘as coding data and generating themes could go on *ad infinitum*, it is important not to get over-enthusiastic with endless re-coding’ (Braun, Clarke, 2006, p. 92), even if there is no clear guidelines in terms of when you need to stop coding, as your refinements cannot add anything substantial to the pre-existing themes, please stop.

Step 5: Defining and naming themes

The fifth step is to define and name the data themes, which means researcher needs to give a full and comprehensive description in terms of the each theme: what is the meaning of the theme, what the theme tells us and so on (Braun, Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, the name of the themes needs to be punchy and meaningful and give the readers a clear sense of what the theme is about, please see table 3.7 for the example which is the description of a theme in my research.

Table 8 Themes and its description

Theme	Description
General teacher	General teacher plays a critical role in promoting inclusive education in school practice. Therefore some factors related to general teachers can be a facilitator, as well as a barrier to inclusion. This theme mainly focuses on the barriers to inclusive education that related to general teachers, for example negative attitudes, heavy workload, lack related professional abilities, etc.

As part of defining and naming the themes, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest researchers need to identify whether or not that a theme includes any sub-themes which are themes-within-a-theme. Sub-themes are essential as they can give a clear structure in terms of a large and complicated theme, as well as describing the hierarchy of the meaning within the data set. In the current research, every theme’s sub-themes’ numbers range from three to ten, please see

figure 4 for an example.

Figure 4 Sub-themes within a theme



Step 6: Producing the report

The final step is to write-up the report, considering my research is writing a dissertation. Regarding the producing the final report, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is significant that the final analysis offers a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive interpretation of your research story across the entire themes. Considering reporting your themes, you need to support by providing adequate data extracts which can capture the point of your themes. Therefore direct extract quotes from the participants should be an independent part of the final report (King, 2004). Furthermore, the final report not simply provide data, extracts support the theme should be within an deeper analysis which needs to make an argument relates to your research questions rather than just simply provide superficial description of the data. The final report of the data will mainly appear on the second part of the thesis.

As researchers (Creswell, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017) argue that in qualitative research the process of data collection, data analysis and data reporting is not a clear straight line as they are

often interrelated and occur at one time throughout your whole research process. Therefore, the above step-by-step thematic analysis looks like a linear process, however, in practice there may be some changes as for the research needs. From my experience, I think this is the essence of thematic analysis as every researcher can tailor or change the process according to their specific research, flexible not fixed, should be a principle when you employ this analysis in your research.

“In between” conclusion

In this chapter the methodology chosen for current research and the process regarding analysing empirical were discussed. Firstly, related topics like research aims and questions, why employed a qualitative research tradition and research methods were fully discussed. Considering current research's main aim is to understand teachers' understanding of inclusive education in Italy and China, a qualitative research tradition was employed to reach that aim, while semi-structured interview, documentary and fieldwork notes as three research methods were used to collect data. Secondly, issues related to samples and fieldworks were presented to describe how data was collected. Finally, I reported the transcription of the interview data and the concrete data analysis method, thematic analysis, which will be employed to analyze the data. Considering the complicated processes in terms of the data analysis, clear steps for how to use thematic analysis in analyzing the data was provide to state my analyzing process. In all, this chapter primarily focuses on methodology and related issues like research methods, samples, fieldworks and data analysis were illustrated. In the next two chapters, I will follow the methodology which I stated in this chapter to explore the meaning of inclusive education from policy and practice's perspective in Italy and China.

Chapter four Deconstructing Inclusive Practice in Italian School Context

Introduction

In this chapter I articulate my effort to deconstruct Italian inclusive education from school teachers' account from six aspects, explanation, application, self-knowledge, empathy, perspective and interpretation, which I discussed in the methodology part in terms of the understanding theory. Based on the empirical data mainly from school teachers' interviews, from a bottom perspective, school teachers, this chapter aims to present a different picture of inclusive education that from the top perspective, inclusive education in policy documents.

4.1 Explanation: What does inclusive education mean for you?

In terms of explanation dimension, six main themes were identified regarding the meaning of inclusive education, which are values, subjects, a changing process, additional support, physical placement and the difference between inclusive education and integrated education. In addition, there are some sub-themes under each main theme, for a more detailed description see table 9.

The first main theme refers to *inclusive education is a kind of value* that deserves to pursue and should be applied into day-to-day school practice, which contains six sub-themes: education is for all students, respect students' differences, give the same chance to everyone to learn, a good form of education, respect/discover students' potential and success for everyone. Considering inclusive education as a kind of value is frequently highlighted by Italian school teachers and these various values mainly summarize from their everyday school practice. The first sub-theme is providing education for all students, regardless of students with or without disabilities. For teachers, their responsibility is for all, not some. Therefore, inclusive education is a kind of education that aims to all students. As one teacher said:

Inclusive education means offer education to all the students not only for the students with disabilities, all the students should receive inclusive education, to follow the same courses.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

Table 9 Explanation: what does inclusive education mean for you?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Explanation	Values	Education is for all students
		Respect students' differences
		Give the same chance to everyone to learn
		A good form of education
		Respect/discover students' potential
		Success for everyone
	Subjects: students with SEN	Students with disabilities
		Foreign students
		Refuges
		Other problems: student with single-parent
	A changing process	From contexts to students
		Changing current arrangement
	Additional support	Support teachers
		Related resources
	Physical placement	Just a seat in the class
		From home to school
	Difference between inclusion and integration	Students with SEN adapt the existing class or class accommodates students
		No additional support or provide support

The following two sub-themes come to respect students' differences and give the same chance to everyone to learn, which give priority to difference and chance, respectively. Following that thinking, inclusive education, as teachers argued, respects every student's difference and provide chance for students to grow. Difference, is a valuable resource for the class rather than a barrier, therefore we need to properly use students' differences to facilitate students' grow. Because every student is different, we, as teachers, need to provide proper chance for all students to develop. As teachers reported these views through their interviews:

Inclusive education is to respect students' differences, because we are all different and everyone is good at something so each can contribute his/she's skills and ideas to the group.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

I think inclusive education is very important! Inclusive education means to give the same chances or experiences to children with difficulties as the same we give all the other students.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

The rest of three sub-themes highlight inclusive education as a good form of education, discovering students' potential and ensuring success for all, respectively. Compared with current education, teachers regard inclusive education as a kind of good education because it respects every student's potential and provides platforms for students to develop their potential. Finally, students can get their own successes. Considering this main theme, inclusive education, to some extent, is considered as an ideal education that needs us to spare no effort to pursue. This understanding of inclusive education, to some extent, reflects teachers' un-satisfaction with current education and wants to change.

The second theme refers to *inclusive education mainly concerns providing education for some subjects*, or, we can say students with SEN, which includes students with disabilities, foreign students, refugee children and students with other problems like single-parent's student. Inclusive education, not like teachers stated in the first sub-theme that provide education for all, here inclusive education mainly for certain kinds of students because of their specific individual needs. As there are no special schools in Italy, the majority of Italian sample teachers concern inclusive education as a kind of education for students with disabilities. These students, as teachers argued, need to specific attention because of their individual needs. Like teachers said:

Inclusive education means to provide education to students with disabilities and now there are 35 students with disabilities in this school. There are different because they have some individual needs. Normal students don't have these needs. Teachers do their best to promote inclusive education for those students and this school is the best inclusive school!
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-7)

(the teacher) to make the inclusive education, because in every class they have specific situation, so at least in every class there are three students that have difficulties in DSA or BES or disabled students: disabled in listening or physical disabilities or autism. In this institute, there are more children with autism.
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Apart from considering inclusive education for students with disabilities, some sample teachers mentioned foreign students, refugee children and students with other problems like single-parent's student as the subject of inclusive education. During the fieldwork in Italian schools, sample teachers expressed a view that current Italian schools' students' population is

more complex than before, which makes teaching become a tough thing. Currently, in one Italian school class you can find students with disabilities with certificate, students with DSA, students with BES, foreign students, refugee students and students with other problems. This complex situation produces a huge impact on teachers' teaching. Therefore, inclusive education is a kind of education for these students. We can see that view from some teachers' words:

In this school all classes have one or two students with disabilities, or students are foreigners without knowing Italian language, inclusive education is for them. And also in all classrooms at present there are two or students with DSA.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

The inclusion has different meanings. We are talking about inclusion of disable persons; we can talk inclusion of foreign students. I am responsible for the foreign students.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

The third main theme refers to ***inclusive education is a process of changing***, which includes two sub-themes: from the context to person, and school needs to continue to current arrangement. The changing perspective can be regarded as a historical changing process which reflects that inclusive education in Italy has a long history and teachers involve into this continues changing process and try their best to provide good education for all students, and this historical changing perspective mainly refers to the first and second sub-theme, as some teachers said:

Form context to students

I have been a teacher for more than 30 years. Firstly we just put students with disabilities into the class and without enough caring for them. Later, we started to allocate support teachers to those students, then some other psychological and medical supports for them. Now all students call receive a good education in one class and support teachers facilitate students with difficulties. So inclusive education is a process to improve our system to help students to learn, we know there are still some problems and a lot of things to do.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

Inclusion, as the changing of thinking:

From the inclusion point of view, we change the way of thinking. The starting point is that the class is contains of different students and every single students has different ways of

thinking and have different kind of learning. So, Geluga is just like the other one with special needs like a normal child. And also the class has to change according to Geluga's needs.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

Inclusion can be considered as classes and schools' changing to meet students' needs:

Inclusion is a process, starts from the context and later relates to the person, this is inclusion.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

For me, the Inclusive Education is when he class changes itself to the child with disability, as much it is possible. The class should do something to involve that child and to give opportunities.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

Inclusive education as society's changing:

The law starting from 1992 talks about inclusion and they say that inclusion is something is in changing not only in school but all the society.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

The fourth theme refers to ***inclusive education as providing additional support*** to meet students' special needs, which mainly includes allocating support teachers and offering medical professionals and specific instruments to students with SEN. From this additional support perspective to understand inclusive education is common among Italian teachers and the primary point is that students with SEN have some individual needs, therefore in order to well teach them some kinds of necessary supports are needed to provide. As one support teacher stated:

Inclusive education is about using technology or visual technology. So, we try to make, use different methods, technologies, activities, instruments according to the specific way that the children taking in part of the learning process. For example, if someone is good to recognize the images, they will try to run an activity like this, but the day later they use technology because for example another is better to listen or watch.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

Considering the additional support, the frequently mentioned topic is to provide support teachers to those students with disabilities. As setting support teachers is an effective way to promote inclusive education in Italian schools, therefore many sample teachers considered support teachers' main responsibility is to provide inclusive education for students with SEN in the class. During the fieldwork, support teachers were frequently related to inclusive education by teachers and the main reason is that support teachers have specific professional abilities for teaching students with disabilities, while classroom teachers lack this kind of professional ability. As a result, support teacher is considered as the biggest support for inclusive education. In addition, other related learning resources, like specific instruments, psychologist, medical works, etc., were regarded as important supports for inclusive education by sample teachers.

The fifth theme refers *inclusive education to a physical placement*, two sub-themes were grouped: a seat in the class and from home to school. Historical speaking, integration is more considered as placing students with disabilities into the mainstream school, while without changing the mainstream school's existing arrangement. Inclusive education beyond that, which not only taking care of students' placement but also pay intensively attention to how mainstream school change existing system to meet students' needs. During the fieldwork, some sample teachers considered current school practice as integration rather than inclusion because inclusive education is understood as merely a seat in the class or moving students with disabilities from home to school. Placing students with disabilities into the mainstream schools is the first step, subsequently the mainstream school need to take some necessary measures to help these students to learn well. However, as some teachers said, some mainstream schools do not catch up with the practice, limited resources and teachers' inadequate professional abilities, makes some students with disabilities cannot receive proper education. For these students, inclusive education is a physical placement in mainstream schools. As one director said:

For example, Lenad (a student with disability in wheelchair) he needs a specific location for his needs. The school doesn't have this support for him, like materials. He needs specific classroom with bed, because he gets tired and need sleep. Is impossible, the school with 350 students, is impossible. He needs a specific motor training. In this school, there is one gym pool, when the other student, mana, was in primary school he needs a specific training for developing his language. But, it impossible in this school. There is not specific language training for support teacher. And now he can only speak dad, mama and stop.

Because in the past he exercise language in a training.

But according to the situation now, she said that inclusion is just a seat, a process, your know that start from family, and family put children into school, that is inclusion.

*People think that take students with disabilities into school place are inclusive school, No! Taking child from house to school is not inclusive education, but now there are some cases like that just a seat and a desk!
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)*

The last main theme *considers inclusive education from a comparative perspective* which is the difference between integration and inclusion. As we have already discussed intensively in terms of differences between inclusion and integration, here we do not need to repeat. From sample teachers' perspectives, the differences are mainly two points: students with SEN adapt the existing class or class is changing for students and no additional support or provide additional support for students with disabilities in mainstream schools. As one teacher stated that view:

*So, integration is different from inclusion. She said the integration, you just put the child together with other classmates but you don't care about his activities. Ok. You (students with disabilities) can do some activities in connection with class or not. So the focus is just put in the class. Integration it means, for example we have the normal class is green apples, this is Geluga, so according to the integration's view, Geluga has to come to a green apples like the others, he has to change his behavior in order to reach the common standards of the green apples. From the inclusion point of view, we change the way of thinking. The starting point is that the class is contains of different students and every single students has different ways of thinking and have different kind of learning. So, Geluga is just like the other one with special needs like a normal child. And also the class has to change according to Geluga's needs.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)*

4.2 Application: How do you promote the inclusive education in your work?

In the application dimension, four main themes were identified from Italian teachers' interviews, which are collaboration, inclusive pedagogy, taking outside and functional approach. Furthermore,

following each main theme there are several sub-themes, for more details see table 10.

Table 10 Application: How do you promote the inclusive education in your work?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Application	Collaboration	Student with student
		Support teacher with classroom teacher
		Student's family
		School network
		Experienced teachers with new teaches
		Famous persons with disability
		Teacher's friends
		Medical staff in hospital
		Society
	Inclusive pedagogy	Flexible teaching methods
		Flexible teaching contents
		Flexible assessment
		Varied work choices
	Taking outside	Other programmes for Italian or math
		Meet student's individual needs
		New support teacher's need
	Functional approach	Technological aid
		Reorganize the class

The first theme is about *collaboration*, as well documented in the literature that apply the inclusive education into practice is a complicated process and teachers need to work together with related stakeholders. Analyzing the interviews' data, varied collaborative strategies were employed by teachers to promote inclusive education in their day-to-day school practice, like one support teacher used peer learning to help one student with disability:

And all the other students to help him (Geluga who has a strong disability) understand if he reaching the objectives or no. For example, the objective of number 1 is to keep silence, the classmates ask to Geluga, Geluga, are you keeping in silence today? What do you think the answer or no? Also they help to Geluga to improve his behavior. For example, if Geluga always talking. The mates will say to Geluga: are you reach the objective of keeping silence?

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

Another classroom teacher from the knowledge perspective to explain how she applied the collaboration between students and students. As an experienced teacher she noticed that it is critical for other class mates to know disability or special education needs and this is the first step

to apply inclusive education, because if other students have no sense of disability they will compare them with the “abnormal student” around them:

I think we should start to do inclusion from the knowledge of the person from the class. Because usually children can't understand that special mates has disabilities and they will compare with those abnormal students, and then it will be a bid barrier to implement inclusive education. For example, I think it's important to make other students understand they (students with disabilities) can talk, they can involve in the simple game. So, I used to start in this way, just with knowledge. And with some moments during break time usually when they can play together. Because it not for pupil that has a low intelligence level usually try to stay by themselves or with teacher, but is boring always stay with teacher. It's more funny to stay with classmates. I think children at this age have a lot of researches (18:12), and there are very creative try to motivate, to involve children like them. So, I think this is the desired step for inclusion.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

Classroom teacher and support teacher working together is another common strategy under the collaboration dimension, as to the concrete collaborative methods employed by them is varied according to different situations, for example common lesson-planning, exchanging teaching subjects, doing teaching activities together and so on:

In general that a common teacher has 22 hours per week of teaching and 2 hours per week for planning. So, during the 2 hours per week, I argued with the support teacher and we make an update about what we are doing. So we are collaborating as to the activities they are going to plan.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

But I think in some situations, I know, you have just to decide if I am support teacher and you are class teacher. For example, I know better the history, so we can change it's not a problem and you (support teacher) can teach the class and I (class teacher) can stay with the student with disability. No problem, it's possible. But that means you want to feel like someone else.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

I also had to take a look for other three or four children (students with DSA) who don't get the certification of the disability but they need to help. I had to take a look of them. And also for all the class. I did some activities to teach children to control their bread, to control their movements, to know their feelings, to be able to behave in base of their feelings. The children used to fight with each other with their body, but also with their

mouths. So I tried, with all the other classroom teachers to do some activities to help them, to resolve this kind of problems.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

Currently, parents play a significant role in school development. During the interviews, collaboration with students' family, in particular students with disabilities' families, is highlighted by sample teachers. Among various collaboration forms, establishing a trust relationship between family and teachers was frequently mentioned and reconsidered as a premise for teachers to implement related measures to teach students with disabilities. Only when parents trust you, related measures can be applied, otherwise it will be difficult to work. As one classroom teacher said:

Some family problems, like your parents may influence you, your thinking. The important thing is that teacher here should have a good relationship with family, the family trusts teacher. And then it's possible to work. If there are problems with parents, it's impossible to work. The trust is important.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

Beyond the former three kinds of collaboration which happen within a school, using a school network to promote inclusive education was employed. Regarding that network, schools in one school district together to organize seminars and training courses on inclusive education and special education to exchange ideas. This kind of collaboration was stated by one school director:

We build a social net work between schools, so we can share recourses and training course. For example, some schools near here have organizing a training course for Autism for all the teachers. There was an expert leading this training course. Others organizing course for inclusive education. We also organizing course for other disabilities.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

One innovative perspective of collaboration strategy is to work together with famous persons with disabilities, to some extent, these famous persons can act as good models for students with disabilities and to encourage students build confidence for the life, like one director said:

In teacher group, the students with disabilities, organizational meeting with famous person

with disabilities. For example, Francesco Canere (a famous person with disability) is an artist, he paintings pictures in Italy. He does not have legs and arms, he has only body and he paints with mouth. Another person, in this year in March, Andrea Divecere (a famous person with disability) is a cycling man, is a champion. He does not have one leg, and has paralysis. He had an accident 17 years ago and he meets all secondary students in the classroom.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Other collaborative strategies were employed by teachers to promote inclusive education include invite their friends for a common teaching to open students' vision, new support teachers working together with an experienced teacher to teach students with disabilities, teachers work together with medical professionals for specific programmes. And finally, teachers express the concern that we should work with the whole society to promote inclusion rather than only our teachers fight against this battle:

The school should open to different experiences of people from different cities. For example, she used to invite, for example, Marco, her son studies on the geography, for example he comes to the school for two hours to teach geography to the students. She's grandmother comes from PELU (a country name), she invites she's grandmother to school to speak about PELU. For example, someone has been in GOVENIS (a country name), a friend of mine, he as a volunteer to the school to speak one hour about his experiences abroad. So, children here in school has involved in different activities, because the world is composed with different persons, activities and so on.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

For the first one, the disability was he was in a wheelchair and in the second one the child with a lot of emotional problems. I think that they were my prize in that period and now there are my prizes, because with this support teacher I understand how to enter a relationship with them first, that's why the first year I talked with them in a special class for 11 hours one week.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

Twice a year, for example in this class one child with disability, we create a group of all the teachers, together we go to the hospital and then we find specific doctors, they told us how is going and changing. The child in the problem in charge of school, but all society should, also hospital makes intervention of this with specific measures.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

The second main theme from the interview can be summarized as ***inclusive pedagogy*** which

means ‘a shift in teaching and learning from an approach that works for most learners existing alongside something ‘additional’ or ‘different’ for those (some) who experience difficulties, towards one that involves the development of a rich learning community characterised by learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone, so that all learners are able to participate in classroom life’ (Florian, Linklater, 2009). Sub-themes under this perspective mainly contain flexible teaching methods, contents, assessments, community activities and varied work choices.

Just as Florian (2007) reminds us that inclusive pedagogy is that ordinarily available in teacher’s day-to-day classroom practice, the frequent response for promoting inclusive education throughout teachers’ interviews is adopting flexible teaching methods, which all come from teachers’ daily teaching practice:

Yes, absolutely, it’s necessary because sometimes they know some topics are difficult for them. And because usually.....sometimes they don’t care about what we are talking about. So it’s important for me to involve them into my class. Ask them for some questions, for example, ask their experience, asking their previous knowledge.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

The ADHD student is very clever and he wants to learn as much as he can. So when I ask him I see you have a little bit trouble with your behavior, do you want to go outside to calm yourself, to study outside or to do other things? He answers me yes and then he asks me that he wants to go back to the classroom. When I talking with him, think about your intelligence, think about the fact you want to learn a lot of things, what do you prefer, go outside miss the lessons or prefer to go inside the classroom to follow the teacher’s lessons. So we are always coming back here!
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

To create different teaching methods to accommodate students’ SEN is not only beneficial for students, but also good for teacher’s professional development:

For example, I follow a student that have problem (IPOVEDEHTE). I develop a specific teaching way to help him. With computer to help him to study. I study the way to help my student. It’s also good for me!
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

From those quotations, some different kinds of teaching methods were well developed by teachers and what significantly is that some of them are classroom teachers, which means they never receive the special teacher education, however, still can meet students' SEN. That has some implications for inclusive teacher education.

Another sub-theme is designing appropriate teaching contents according to students' needs. For Italian school teachers, they consider all students can reach a success and what we need to do is to provide a proper platform that students can develop their potentials. Therefore, in order to offer a good opportunity for all students, teachers design and arrange teaching contents based on students' individual needs. As teachers said:

I think about an activity where every child has a specific role, they must make a big paper, about animal. The first student takes care about the project, the second student takes care about the search of the material, every student has a different function in that activity. The third is a painter, another one is the speaker. For example, a group has 20 students so I have 5 groups. Every child has specific functions and responsibilities according to their abilities and skills. You are good at painting, you will be a painter. If you are good at manage, you will be a good project manager. If you are good at speak, you will be a good speaker. If you are good at to do one thing in this group you will be responsible for that thing.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

F: Geluga needs to know how the day will run? What he will going to do in the all day? So, they have a special calendar, in which every morning at 8' clock, she will say to Geluga what the plan of the day, so in the morning we will do, for example, math, Italian, then we have lunch.

J: only for Geluga?

F: yes. But it also for other students, because they are following the same subjects. Ok, so the other students will help Geluga to discover the planning of the day, and also to work in the progressive number, for example today is 22nd, yesterday is 21st, tomorrow is 23rd. Close the calendar he has a trip. So, he has stripes in which it is divide into four parts that corresponding four objectives or tasks: keep silence, to work, to go to the toilet and to eat. For each of those tasks, he can reach the objectives or no, if he can reach, he will do fine, he will gain one, if he collect four like this, he will choose one activity that he prefers to do, but this activity specific for him. Not all students with disabilities have all of the objectives, this planning just for Geluga. Geluga has strong attraction with the stripes divided in four parts, because he always looking the stripe to see if he reaches the objective or no. (F is a translator who translated Italian into English for some Italian interviews)

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

Given students' SEN, adjusting existing assessment methods is critical to evaluate students' learning and as well as for setting following study schedules. Therefore, employing a flexible evaluation method is a common strategy to assess the progress of students with SEN in Italian teachers' school practice:

INVALSI is for all students. But, for DSA students, they have 15 minutes more for INVALSI test with the same text. And they has possibilities to use hear-phone or computer to complete the text. For people cannot see, there are special charter, content is same. But the letter is big. For BES person, are the same test, no more time, is the same. For student with disability is not same, but only test is made based on personal specific disability. Mana (a student with disability), they do not have the exam like INVALSI. Because they don't know the text. There are specific object for those students. And text INVALSI is specific difficult for those disabilities. The support teachers make the text according to the student's specific situation. And valued by support teachers.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

They do the same test but in different times. Sometimes you need to go outside to read the text for some students, like DSA they have difficulties in reading. So the teacher needs read for them.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)

The fourth sub-theme under inclusive pedagogy is creating various work choices or learning activities to meet students with SEN. As students' needs are different from one to one, therefore traditional one-size-fit-all method like teacher-lead lecture cannot work well for all students, especially for students with disabilities. Considering students' various needs, the work choice is transforming from pre-existing one-size-fit-all teaching method to creating multiple learning choices for students. And a variety of choices are developed by support and classroom teachers during their everyday classroom practice, which include learning games, community activities, workshops, laboratories, etc.

Various activities for students with disabilities:

I had to take a look of them. And also for all the class. I did some activities to teach children to control their bread, to control their movements, to know their feelings, to be able to behave in base of their feelings. The children used to fight with each other with

their body, but also with their mouths. So I tried, with all the other classroom teachers to do some activities to help them, to resolve this kind of problems.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

Community activities for all the students:

In the morning beginning, they put a circle there are teacher and 5 students together. For example, they say a topic and they change. What you're feeling to good to and every student will spend their thinking. Anyway, they will ask what you're afraid? What you're not good to do? And the discuss together in this circle time. In this circle time the students reflect the topics and how they can create empathy. So other students hear about the problems of others and help him in some ways. This not only make for students with disabilities but also for all the students. All students are part of those things. In this group, students will help each other!

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

A variety of workshops for all the students:

In this school we have a lot of workshops and that's why usually, sorry not usually, every Thursday afternoon they can change the way to stay at school and even if they have some problems, like writing disabilities, something like that. They can try to paint or play instruments. For example, like that we create a school newspaper, but you change the way you are teacher and they change the way they are, because they just choose the workshops relate to what they prefer and not what they are able to do, they can teach and for example they can act. Ok, so I think in this way they can experiment the way to be different and they show to their mates that they have other abilities. For example, in some sport activities some are better than others. So I think this is the best way to include all of them because you give them lots of different situations.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

Different kinds of laboratories:

There is a project named the Open-laboratory. The support teachers take part one of the activities, for example lecture laboratory, city history laboratory, sport, yoga..... Different activities. The students with disabilities with support teacher and some other students, they are work outside the class. And they meet other students from other classes, other schools. They work together about some projects, some activities, some programmes. Three or four lessons they work together with other classes. In past, they had many laboratories, they can cooking. They together make some kinds of foods, like jar. This is good not only for students with disabilities but also other students.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

The next main theme refers to *taking students outside the classroom* to promote inclusive education, which is widely employed by support teachers in Italian school practice. From a historical point special schools were abolished in 1977 and all students were placed and educated in mainstream schools. For that specific cause, teachers under the age of 40 stated that they even had no sense of special school education, so for them taking students with disabilities outside the classroom was regarded as a good way to promote inclusive education, even if this phenomenon has been already criticized by some Italian scholars (D'Alessio, 2011, 2012; Ianes, Demo, Zambotti, 2014; Nes, Demo, Ianes, 2018). However, we should realize that it is the teacher who practices inclusive education in their day-to-day classroom practice, therefore we should permit them to express their voices and concerns in terms of taking students outside for improving inclusion. The frequent response to promote inclusive education under this theme is taking some students with disabilities outside for other programmes in terms of Italian or math, while for other subjects they (former outside students) still inside the classroom like other normal students:

The one with physical disability in class because he hasn't problems with the learning, the other one with Down Syndrome (DS) we go outside to do Italian or math because he has another programme. But like other subjects we stay at classroom like music, physical education, geography, art, English.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

But they has some difficulties in math and Italian, so during those lessons we used go out. The two children and I, we used to work together with some topics.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

I do Italian and Maths outside because this child has an other programme to follow, different from the class. The class do some things and this child does other things, in another way.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

Another sub-theme is to meet student's individual needs like medical need, learning environment requirement, not disturb other students and so on. This sub-theme mainly concerns students' specific personal needs and taking outside is regarded as an appropriate form to

accommodate students' needs. Furthermore, as some teachers stated that some students, particularly these with disabilities, need to go outside as they really cannot stay inside because some needs a quiet environment, or some need to go outside to calm down. Concerning these situations, if you force them continue to stay inside classroom, it is not a respect for them and also they have right to go outside. Some teachers stated that concern:

And, as to the question is the useful that a child with disability stay most at class. But it depends. For me, if the disabled child doesn't want to stay in the class, you need to bring him/her out. For example, you need to a balance between a time that disabled child can stay in the class with other classmates and he/she's right to go out. Because he/she needs specific activities outside, because she/he cannot with other children more. For example, a person here she cannot stay at class for half an hour. And she does her activity, makes relationships with classmates, but sometimes she just makes some @#\$/^& ¥%& (noise), so you don't have to force her to stay in the class with other mates. Because it is not respect for her if she wants to go out, for the other students here someone crying and they don't develop a positive attitude with her. It's better for her going out.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

She needs to stay at class with the Autism students as they make scream aloud. Sometime they outside and take the students back to the class. Because the students need some time to quiet.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

A little bit in class and a little bit outside: in the library, in the gym, in the garden...Normally, the time spent outside is equal to the time spent in class. It depends on the child's mood. This child sometimes needs to go outside because he can't resist in the class.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

She needs her space and her boxes for her learning. Something specific for her, like computer, not for other students. Specific materials for her learning! She moves a lot! For me sometimes she needs psychology and therapy and it's better outside the classroom. Swimming pool, I think it's very good for her. Going out to the shops, do other activities for her.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

Yes, sometimes outside the classroom. She also works the student with strong Autism and sometimes she must take the student outside the classroom. In order to better the student. Also the mood of the student is strange. Some noises is very strong.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

The last sub-theme under taking outside is new support teacher's teaching need. As the new support teacher is not familiar with the new support work. Therefore, taking students outside to educate them is their way to promote inclusion:

As a support teacher. At the beginning, I was taking the students with disabilities outside the classroom. In the beginning when I started to work as I didn't know how to teach them inside. Step-by-step I start to work more with my students inside the classroom.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

The fourth main theme is **using functional approach** to promote inclusive education, which is not a common approach among teachers. This mainly focuses on employing technology and reorganizing the class as ways to promote inclusion. Particularly, what is interested for us is that responses primarily come from classroom teacher not support teachers. The reasons partly lie on classroom teachers inadequate preparation for teaching students with SEN like support teachers. Therefore they prefer to employ some technologies to facilitate their teaching. For using technologies, we can see from some classroom teachers' responses:

You can do it! In the classroom by using the whiteboard when you explain lessons. You have to change the tools that explain the same topic. First of all, you can use the whiteboard. Then, you can do some group activities. Then, at the end you can try other teaching methods to involve all the children.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

First changing the desk. Every month they change the desk. You know students sit down at the desk. For all the students in the class. Because it's important, for social for all the students. for good relationship, for the interaction, also for the different. Maybe some two students don't like each other; but they must to learn how to stay with each other.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

The perfect solution could be create a class with 20 students with high academic level, with good students, with good family background. And inside put one student with disability. One or two students with disabilities. But the other students must be good students, with high academic level. In this situation, the integration is good. One or two in the good class. But if I have one class with many problems, it's really difficult for me to

teach.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

4.3 Self-knowledge: What are the barriers and facilitators to implement inclusive education?

In terms of the self-knowledge dimension which is the most complicated one as there are so much information that teachers want to share with the researcher when they were asked what are the barriers and facilitators to improve inclusive education during their day-to-day classroom teaching, which inevitably makes the answer more fragmented and then difficult to identify the main themes. In order to fully and clearly describe the picture of teachers' opinions on this dimension, the barriers and facilitators will report separately.

4.3.1 Barriers to inclusive education

As the barrier to inclusive education in Italy is concerned, six main themes were identified from the teachers' interviews, which are classroom teacher, normal student, students with SEN, school-level factors, support teacher and government. Under each main theme, there are some sub-themes, please see Table 11 for a detailed description.

The first main theme relates to *classroom teacher* and six sub-themes were indentified under this theme: lack of related teaching abilities, negative attitudes towards students with SEN, pre-existing teaching habit, clear division of responsibility, asking support teacher outside and fear to make mistakes.

Lacking of related teaching abilities for students with SEN, especially for students with disabilities are frequently mentioned by classroom teachers. The majority of the classroom teachers stated that they only received limited training on inclusive education and special education during their pre-service teacher courses. At the same time those courses were mainly focus on theoretical introduction level which gives few guides on how to deal with students with specific disabilities in the classroom practice, as one classroom teacher said:

I don't learn specific competence for teaching disabilities. Yes, I really don't know how to deal with the situation with student with disability in my classroom. However, the support teacher is in class and they are learning to teach disability children.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

Table 11 Self-knowledge: Barriers to inclusive education

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Self-knowledge: Barriers to inclusive education	Classroom teacher	Lack of related teaching abilities
		Negative attitudes towards students with SEN
		Asking support teacher outside
		Clear division of responsibility
		Pre-existing teaching habit
		Fear to make mistakes
	Students with SEN	Negative behaviors
		High-level disability
		The number is too small
		Family's un-collaboration
		Cannot adapt to the difficult subjects
		Individual specific needs
	Support teacher	Negative feeling
		Frequently changing
		Lack specific professionals
		Only focus on students with disabilities
	School	Lack related resources (money, space, etc)
		School class is too big
		School's complicated student population
	Government	Cutting money for the support teacher
Normal student	Misunderstanding of students with SEN	

Some support teachers also expressed the opinion that certain classroom teachers do not like students with disabilities maybe because they have limited ideas on how to teach those students:

The schoolmates accept very good these children with disability. As I said earlier, children are better than general teachers, who don't like very much children with disability. Maybe, they don't know strategies to face with disability, so they prefer to leave them to the us support teachers.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

Next sub-theme is primarily expressed by support teachers which is classroom teachers hold negative attitudes towards students with SEN, specifically for the students with disabilities. From the support teachers' perspective, some classroom teachers do not like students with disabilities:

Many classroom teachers don't want to have students with disabilities in their classroom.

They don't like students with disabilities and they are afraid that those students may disturb their class teaching.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

Classroom teachers' negative attitudes towards students with disabilities leads to the next barrier to inclusive education, which is asking support teacher outside with students with disabilities, the reasons lie on the teaching content is difficult for students with disabilities or they may disturb the class teaching:

Teacher: I mean some like some don't like it! Some classroom teachers like to work with him but some of them no.

Researcher: why?

Teacher: because they feel (us) like a disturbance in the class, because when I teach him I need to talk with him to explain what to do, try to keep his attention on the task, so I need to talk. Sometimes some teachers don't want this noise to happen in the classroom. They want to silence, so sometimes it is difficult. We were asked to go outside

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

Some classroom teachers directly reject students with disabilities inside the class based on the reason that the lesson is difficult for them, therefore, ask support teachers to take them outside:

Sometimes I think they (students with disabilities) should go outside. Because there are some days when there were difficult activities or boring activities that I prefer they go outside with special teacher.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

Next sub-theme is clear division of responsibility between classroom teacher and support teacher. During the interviews, we can easily find that some classroom teachers play a dominant role in the relationship between them and support teachers, therefore they always handover students with disabilities to support teacher because it is support teachers' responsibility to teach students with disabilities. This view frequently stated by support teachers:

They see the class and these children (students with disabilities) seem to be not in the class. They are only the children of the support teacher and only the support teacher has to care about them. Yes, they don't care about these children with disability because there is the support teacher who does this. This is the idea.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

This clear division of responsibility reflects classroom teachers' pre-existing teaching habit, which is the fifth sub-theme. Classroom teachers' pre-existing teaching habit was regarded as a big barrier to improving inclusion, for example without changing the teaching methods even if there are some students with disabilities or just neglecting those students with disabilities in their classes:

The problem was that I think in this class there was not habit to make special children work with the class. The classroom teacher doesn't change her teaching methods and this student (with disability) nearly cannot catch up the lesson, it's too fast for him. But the classroom teacher doesn't care about that, just teach as before.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

The last sub-theme comes to classroom teacher's fear to make mistakes in front of support teacher, which is expressed by an experienced support teacher for more than ten years and now is a classroom teacher. During her more than 10 years' support teacher's career, she met and collaborated with different classroom teachers and now is a classroom teacher for nearly 4 years, she summarized that some classroom teachers do not like support teacher and students with disabilities inside the class just because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of support teacher and they do not want to show their inabilities to others, particularly support teachers. As that support teacher stated:

But it not just relates to the relationship and it also relates to how do you think that it's important to make the pupils to stay inside the classroom, all the pupils. And I think that it relates to how sure you are about your work because if you know that it's not a problem to show that if you make some mistakes to the class in front of someone else. It's not a problem to the support teacher inside the classroom. But if you are afraid of to be criticized, maybe it's better for the support teacher outside the classroom. I think things are like that.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

The second main theme refers to *students with SEN* as a barrier to promoting inclusive education, which includes six sub-themes as the number is too small, negative behaviors, family's

un-collaboration, high-level disability, cannot adapt to the difficult subjects and individual specific needs. As we discussed in the explain dimension, teachers define inclusive education mainly from the social model of the disability, however, when mentioned the school inclusive practice teachers' responses reflect a apparent medical or individual model, which was fully reflected in their interviews.

Firstly, both classroom teachers and support teachers highlight that the students with SEN's negative/bad behavior is one of the biggest barriers to developing inclusion. Because these negative behaviors can disturb the whole class teaching or produce a bad impact on other students' learning. As some teachers reported these problems:

For other situation, it was not possible. Because, for example three years ago my last year to be the support teacher, I had a situation that in which the girl can't stay with her classmates. We were in the room part for three or four hours every day. And there were just some little moments when I can take her with class. Because she has a very low level of intelligence, for her noise, voices were problems. Because it not so easy for us to stay with the group and her loud noise can disturb other students' learning.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

Sometimes it's a problem because they produce noise and the noise can interrupt my teaching. But if the children is quiet, it's not a problem. If they continue to behave like this, it's impossible!

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

Following is the sub-theme of students with high-level disability. Teachers expressed the view that for students' disability level between lighter and middle they can teach, but for some students with high level of disability they have no idea to teach as they have limited training for teaching these students. As teacher said:

But you know sometimes the disabilities were so severe, so it was not easy to relate with them.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

In another sense, for student that have very high level of disability, it quite hard to stay 22 hours. As I did in the class just a person that usually doesn't speak, can't understand what we are talking about. It's not so easy for she to stay here!

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

According to the teacher, compared with the 99 % of normal students, the students with disabilities only taking account for less than 1%, therefore a small number is regarded as another barrier to inclusion. Some teachers mentioned that in one class there are one or two students with disabilities and sometimes those students will be ignored:

Or they think that, as the biggest number is the number of “normal” students, the don't mind about one or two.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

From the government perspective, one classroom teacher stated that because of the small number of students with disabilities, and therefore our government cuts the money for them, which inevitably hinders school inclusive practice. As that teacher said:

We are always cutting the money for disable pupils because they are not so many. So our government cuts the money for disable pupils.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

Another barrier relates to students with SEN is their parents un-collaboration with school. As we discussed in the literature review, parents play a critical role in school inclusive education practice, they can be a facilitator or a barrier in school's inclusive education journey. Some teachers stated that parents' un-collaboration hinders the school inclusive education practice. For example, parents do not trust support teachers, do not want to work together with schools to help their children, etc. Like one teacher said:

But I think the school cannot do everything alone because we need families. I am sure about it! I think sometimes, I talk about one of my classes, if the family can't understand that there is something that makes the pupil outside the group. If the family cannot change things, for example, someone that not help from the family, I am talking about this situation now, the school cannot do the part of the family. That is a quite very big limit, and the limit from family to the children. So it's impossible for the school to do everything if we don't have the family that can collaborate with us. There is a problem, your children are growing now and he needs a lot of instruments. If the family and the school cannot do everything that he/she needs, it's not a problem that someone asks and can help you. For

example, another situation, we ask parents to go to make some texts, because we were not sure the pupil were right. And they told us, no thank you, we don't believe this doctor or this person. But the school has to get instruments to do everything, I am not psychologist, linguist, therapist, I am just a teacher.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

Students with disabilities cannot adapt to the difficult subjects is mainly held by classroom teachers, and therefore they successfully transfer the teaching responsibility to support teachers. From the data, some classroom teachers argued that some difficult topics, like Italian and math, are not suitable to students with disabilities and it is better these students go outside for alternative programmes, otherwise sitting at classroom is wasting time. With this cause, classroom teachers successfully transfer the teaching responsibility of students with disabilities to support teachers. Compared with their understanding of inclusive education as various values, their classroom practice is more exclusive, with limited or without consideration of students with disabilities in their teaching. One classroom teacher's response can fully describe that point:

Yes, I think the normal teaching content is difficult for some students with disabilities in our school. They really cannot understand it and in this way I will ask support teachers with them go outside for other programmes.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

The last sub-theme comes to students with disabilities' individual needs which make them cannot be included in the classroom teaching. From teachers' account, individual needs include many aspects like students' medical needs, students' right, students' need for specific materials, etc. Rather than considering students' individual needs as a platform to promote inclusion, teachers prefer to take them outside. As one director said:

The problem is every child has different characters, maybe some children with disabilities cannot concentrate, some maybe need specific materials outside the classroom, some just don't want to stay at class. It's difficult to meet those students' needs.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-7)

Form this main theme we can find some teachers still hold the medical or individual model of disability thinking during their day-to-day school teaching, which inevitably hinders the

development of inclusive education. Therefore it is necessary for pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher education to stress teachers' deficit or fixed thinking on students with SEN, which we will discuss in the last part of the thesis.

The third main theme refers to *support teachers*. As we have already discussed in the literature review and the inclusive education policy in Italy, the support teachers do play a critical role in promoting inclusive education practice in various aspects, however, from the sample school teachers' interview that support teachers sometimes can act as a barrier to inclusive education in school practice, which contains the following sub-themes: negative feeling, frequently changing, lack of specific professionals and only focus on students with disabilities. The first sub-theme relates to support teachers is its negative feeling towards the inclusive education practice. And this mainly results from the poor collaboration between support and classroom teacher, which leads to support teachers form a wrong self-identity and feel like a 'second class teacher', this phenomenon had been already researched by some Italian scholars (Devecchi et al., 2012) and from my fieldwork it is still common in school practice. Like support teachers stated that situation:

I think. It depends on the person, it doesn't depends on the school. I don't know I can explain to you, but in some classes, I used to arrive and they (classroom teachers) waiting for me, and told: 'ok, you can work outside, because inside my class is very difficult for you and your students (with disabilities)'. Why? I am also a teacher of this class, not only for these two students with disabilities! This year was very difficult for me and my feeling to inclusive education is not good. That's why I am quite angry to decide to leave my work or job as the support teacher because I am not in condition in the best way for my work, it doesn't give me satisfaction, so I decide to leave.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

For example in 2016 the first day of the school, the teacher said in front of the class and we were in three A, B and C, I am the C. We were in front of the class and teacher A said this year me and teacher B will be your teachers. Where is me?

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

From the above extracts, we can find that the poor relationship with classroom teacher makes this support teacher has a negative feeling towards the inclusive education and even makes her decided to give up her support teacher's job and changed into a classroom teacher. From this sample teacher's account, we can find that classroom teachers always dominant the relationship

between them and support teachers, which produces an unhealthy relationship that primarily harms the support teachers.

The following sub-theme refers to support teachers are frequently changing into classroom teachers. Many reasons are responsible for that changing, like we mentioned before unhappy with support teacher's job, the law allows to change, some general teacher vacancies and so on, however, no matter what reasons for this changing, the result is that changing has become more and more popular and acts as a main barrier to inclusive education practice. The frequent changing sometimes leads to schools lack support teacher to certain students with disabilities, or frequent changing makes students with disabilities always need to adapt to the new support teacher and this is bad for students' development. As support teachers said:

T: first barrier is support teacher, they are no support teacher always here, they continue to change. It's not a good thing of that.

J: Why?

T: because the support teacher continues to change, it's not good things to the students, for the class, for the other (classroom) teachers. Everybody affected by that (support teacher always changing).

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

The support teachers may change between different schools. In the past, the same support teacher follows the same student for long time, but now the situation is changing. Maybe for one year, they will change. They school gives the students to the support teacher, but they (support teachers) continue to change. This is not good to students with disabilities, not good to inclusive education.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

This changing phenomenon is frequently mentioned by teachers and has produced a bad impact on students with disabilities' psychological and academic development, therefore schools and government should take some measures to address that, which is highlighted by the sample teachers as well.

Lacking related specific professionals for students with disabilities is the third sub-theme. As sample teachers reported that support teachers can help and teach students with lighter or middle level disabilities can teach, while is difficult for teaching students with serious disabilities. Students with serious disabilities need some kinds of specific treatment that regular schools cannot

provide or support teachers lack this specific professional ability, which inevitably leads to some students with specific disabilities cannot receive proper guideline. In addition, some teachers stated that currently the decreasing of training time in terms of becoming a support teacher also needs to be responsible for support teacher's inability for teaching students with serious disabilities. Some teachers' responses can state that:

When he was child (a third-year student with disability), he got assistance from a special person that taught him how to develop language skills. But the support teacher, according to our university doesn't give us this kind of training. Like me, if I want to be a support teacher, I just attend one year course.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

The school is changing, you know that teacher makes special profession for students with disabilities is not enough, is not the same level like before. In before, the preparation for support teachers was high. For example, if you want to be a special teacher you need to four years. You need to learn specific skills, make many exams, it's not simple! Now, is changing, because now you only have one exam in university. Yes, the preparation for the teacher is not good enough like before.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

Different reasons account for support teachers' inability to teach students with disabilities, like less training than before, the student with disability's level is high or the pre-service teacher education programme's content is not suitable for current changing school landscape, all of these need to be taken into consideration and solutions should be provided.

The last sub-theme highlights support teachers only focus on students with disabilities, to some extent, support teachers together with their clients who are with disabilities, re-opening a special school in general school. This barrier is also related to the classroom teachers' clear division of responsibility, which we discussed before. In Italian school ecosystem, an apparent division is that classroom teachers are responsible for students without disabilities and students with disabilities are support teachers' responsibility. Undoubtedly, this clear division has become a serious barrier to inclusion in Italian school context (Cristina et al., 2012). Support teachers only concern students with disabilities are frequently mentioned:

Support teachers are only for disabilities children, ok. No for DSA, no for foreigners, only

for disability.
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

I care about the integration of children with disabilities. I do Italian and Maths outside because this child has another programme to follow, different from the class. The class does some things and this child does other things, in another way.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

The fourth main theme is related to *school level factors*, as school is the main battlefield where inclusive education is taking place, therefore related factors within school can act as barriers and facilitators, which need to be carefully examined. Based on the data, three sub-themes in relation to school act as barriers were identified: lack related resource, school class is big and school's complicated student population.

As students with diverse needs, therefore teachers need to employ some specific materials to meet students' needs, at that point there is a barrier to inclusion at school level is lacking related materials, particularly when mentioned students with disabilities. Not like a special school where specific instruments, equipments and specific space's area can meet the needs of students with different kind of disabilities, in general schools where I surveyed lacking necessary learning materials for educating students with disabilities is a serious problem. Lacking specific materials, enough spaces and money for inclusive education is highlighted by sample teachers in my interviews, many teachers expressed the fact that they want to provide a good education to students with disabilities, however, sometimes a lacking of related materials hinders them. As some teachers described this problem:

For example, Lenad (a student with disability in wheelchair) he needs a specific location for his needs. The school doesn't have this support for him, like materials. He needs specific classroom with bed, because he gets tired and need sleep. It is impossible, the school with 350 students, is impossible. He needs a specific motor training. In this school, there is one gym pool, when the other student, mana, was in primary school he needs a specific training for developing his language. But, it impossible in this school. There is not specific language training for support teacher. And now he can only speak dad, mama and stop. Because in the past he exercise language in a training.
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Second, it's space, it's place! Not enough place to work. Ok. For instruments to work (the

space is small)
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

There are spaces, but it is not enough. The gym is very small and small garden, next year we will not have library because the limited space. In some schools, there are no spaces for them. So it is quite impossible to do the things for them.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

Finding found for this activity for students with disabilities. We need to find money to pay for this things, it is not simple, money is not enough.
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Particularly we need to recognize that beside what I mentioned the list of materials which schools lack, there should be other lists of things that school are struggling for. Therefore how to provide proper materials for general schools to meet students' needs should be an important of school schedule and government reform agenda.

The second sub-theme is related to the number of school students. As a researcher from China, I am shocked by the small class size when I first entered the Italian school while in China the average class size is around 45 students, some even more than 50 students. Here in Italy, the class size ranges from 20 to 25. As we have different cultural backgrounds, I was confused when sample teachers mentioned that the big school class size is a barrier to inclusive education, however, this is highlighted by many teachers:

Because a class with 20 or more pupils, a lot of work need to do. The class size is bigger than before and is difficult for include students with disabilities.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

The difficult of disabled child is much, and one teacher, one general teacher, 20 or 25 children in a class.
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Also the class is bigger than before, so in this situation the students with disabilities have big problem.
(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

As for this barrier I exchanged my idea with these teachers, while I shared some pictures in

terms of Chinese class size with these teachers. Later, all the teachers have one same question: how can one teacher support so many students in a classroom? My response is about our culture, as our culture tells us you need to be quiet and listening the teacher during the class teaching. However, there were still some teachers cannot understand the class situation in China just like I cannot understand why Italian teacher consider 20 or 25 class size is a big class size for inclusion! Considering that, we find it is necessary to conduct a comparative study to understand other culture's inclusive education practice, and then to learn from others and reflect ours.

The last sub-theme at school level refers to school's complicated student population. At first I cannot understand this barrier very well until nearly I finished the whole fieldwork in Italy sample schools, I continue to consider that. Like one sample teacher told me: in general, we can identify normal students, students with BES, students with DSA, students with disabilities, foreign students, refugee students, students with other problems, like orphan, with single parent, whose parents divorced and so on. I cannot image that teachers put different labels on students and consider that these as problems to inclusion. Following this thinking, the differences between students is not a resource for class teaching where teachers stated in explanation dimension, however, is a serious barrier for class teaching. As some teachers said:

It is difficult, because in the class the students start to change, students with problems. In the class, there are some students with problems, in general. For example, there are some students they are never smile in the elementary school. The number of students are sad and no happy is grow up. That some students are sad and have problems to manage the feeling, also with the people around them. The children with disability have problems to integrate into the class.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

There are not only students with disabilities but also students with problems of family, father alcohol addiction. There are other students that maybe doesn't have mental disabilities but are DSA or BES, ok for those students teacher also support them, maybe they cannot read the text more easier, the teacher helps them because they know there are difficult situation. They also need help, maybe they don't have the support teachers. As you can see now the school is a mess with so many different kinds of students.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

In the past, the situation was more comfortable, it was simple to integrate students with disabilities into the classroom. But now, as you know, there are many kinds of disabilities

there are other problems, like there are not only Italian students, there are students come from other countries. So the teaching becomes a tough things. Many students has problems with their families, many many problems, students are more active. Now in the class is not simple to follow the integration, to follow the lesson together. The idea is good, but now the practice is very difficult! It is a good idea, but to teach is another thing. In this moment, because the class situation is different now it not likes before. Now, there are new problems, new things to happen in the classroom. So, in this case students with disabilities come into the class is not a good thing.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

From these extend extracts, I want to show a phenomenon which Tomlinson (1985, 2012) defined it as ‘SEN industry’. As Tomlinson argues that those years there witnessed an increase in identifying students’ SEN, the categories of SEN has developed fast in the past century. Here we can find this trend from teachers’ account in terms of labeling students with various needs, however, teachers this response, to some extent, clearly reflect state inclusive education policy. As we discussed before, in 2013 the label like students with BES and DSA were issued in the government policy document, which inevitably influences teachers’ views on students’ needs. Therefore, even if the inclusive education is the main trend of global educational reform, the special education fixed thinking is still strong in countries’ government policy document, which acts a barrier to promoting inclusive education. Therefore it is necessary to call on governments to obey the inclusive education principle which stated in various international documents, like Salamanca Statement (1994) and CRPD (2006).

The fifth main theme comes to **government level barrier**, which includes cutting money and unpractical standard of identification of disability. The government’s influence on inclusive education primarily through the policy level, Italy is famous for its effort to promoting inclusive education which various policies play a pivot role in achieving the full inclusive education. However, when asked the barriers to inclusion, the majority of sample teacher referred to the cutting money as the main problem to inclusion at government level:

Ok, the money from the Ministry of Education, as she told you before, is going to be decreased.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

In the past there was money, now in the school they don’t have enough money for support

teacher. This document (BES) could be positive or negative, is more political. Because in the past, there was more money it's easy to take support teacher but now there is no money. So the government says to the general teacher takes care of them (the students with SEN but without disability certificate).

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

I think it relates to the money that's why children with disability have support teachers, students with BES and DSA don't have support teachers. Not related to their needs.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

And state government has less money to spend to the school, to the support teachers. Because the state government cuts the money that it should give to the school.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

Just for money, there are no other reasons to understand. So we are always cutting for disable pupils because they are not so much. The family are 20(percent) in total, but there are not so many families and so we cut. It's stupid, I think! In Italy it works like that. Here, every year with less instruments, less money.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

I choose some typical sample teachers' views on cutting money here to state the fact that this is a very common barrier among almost all sample schools. In terms of why government cuts the money is a complex question and some teachers think the reason is the number of students with disabilities is small and *their families only account for 20 percent* (a sample teacher's words), while considering the economy situation in Italy which may be also influences government's decision on cutting money for education. However, the problem is not about government cuts the money on education, while the problem is the government cuts the money on inclusive education, or we can say the money refers to students with disabilities. The first result is about there are less and less support teachers, and then one support teacher with more students with disabilities, which inevitably produces a negative impact on support teachers' teaching schedule for students with disabilities as they need to take care more students than before. A series of bad impacts on school inclusive education practice were identified by nearly all the sample teachers. Furthermore, students with BES and DSA without official support teachers, therefore classroom teachers need to be responsible for them. Why not allocate support teachers to those students, just as one teacher stated:

Because in some cases the lower level of certification, now if I have to look a certification for the disability pupils I can find a cross through lighter, middle and heavy situation. Now it's very rare to have a light situation. Ten years ago, it's possible, five years ago it was possible, possibly like this situation. But now they cut, you don't need! Why ?

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

Those new situations emerge from school practice should be consider by the government when issues the new inclusive education policy. From that phenomenon we can find that inclusive education is not solely an educational problem, to some extent, is also a political issue (Booth, 2005).

Finally, the theme refers to *normal students*. This theme is not very common, however, it reflects a serious problem in terms of the peer influence. From our schooling experiences, the classmates is the person we always stay together, longer than anyone. Therefore, we cannot ignore classmates' influences on ones' personality and future development. During the interviews, some sample teachers argued that classmates misunderstanding students with disabilities' special needs is a main barrier to inclusive education in their classrooms, especially for the students with lighter disabilities. Therefore it is necessary for teachers to explain the classmates' SEN to other students in the same class, even in the same school. As one teacher stated that problem:

The first the boy sometimes screaming, the other students also have the problems to understand him. It is more simpler in the class to integrate students with strong disabilities in the class instead of maybe another student with soft disability because other students don't understand him/her very well. Because they don't understand the student with soft disability. If the other students don't understand it will be difficult to integrate the student with disability. Because, for example, the teacher makes the text, the problem is the teacher makes a specific text for him/her with disability, but other students don't understand why she/he has s simpler text than them. They (normal students) may ask why she/he has simple text. Because the teacher doesn't speak that to other students that she/he has a disability.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

4.3.2 Facilitators to inclusive education

In terms of the facilitators to inclusive education, things become more complicated as Italy has a

long history in promoting inclusive education, which inevitably accumulates various facilitators to make schools more inclusive. According to sample teachers' interviews, seven main themes were identified, which are support teacher, classroom teacher, taking outside, school, students with SEN, normal students and inclusive culture. Regarding each main theme, several sub-themes were identified and please see Table 12 for a detailed description.

Table 12 Self-knowledge: Facilitators to inclusive education

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Self-knowledge: Facilitators to inclusive education	Support teacher	Positive attitudes
		Good relationship with disabilities' parents
		High level of inclusive education knowledge
		Using inclusive pedagogy
		Qualified teacher education
	Classroom teacher	Positive attitudes
		Using inclusive pedagogy
		A good collaboration with support teacher
		Had been a support teacher before
		Scientific understanding of inclusive education
	Taking outside	Students' individual needs
		Have another programme
		New support teacher's need
	School	Inclusive education is a normal part of whole school agenda
		Specific school-level professionals/groups for inclusion
		School-level programmes for inclusion
	Students with SEN	Putting together as earlier as possible
		Strong parents' support
	Normal student	Understanding and helping students with SEN
	Inclusive Culture	School is a family/ school is for all/ high acceptance
Religion influence		

Firstly, *support teachers* are considered as the main facilitator to inclusion, various aspects are related to that theme which includes positive attitudes, good relationship with SENs' parents, high level of inclusive education knowledge, using inclusive pedagogy and qualified teacher education. As well documented in the literature, teachers' attitudes play a critical role in promoting inclusion as attitudes can exert a profound influence on one's behaviors and actions. Therefore, holding a positive attitude towards students with disabilities is frequently stressed by support teachers as one of the important facilitators to inclusive education:

I think they are afraid, I can say this because they have a student with Autism and a lot of teachers here tell me how can you stay with that boy, aren't you afraid of that boy. And I tell them no, I stay with the boy and he gives me the kiss. For me I tell myself, you don't need to be afraid and he is a child she can communicate by speaking, so try to communicate with her using other methods and that is the key to keep a good relationship with her. I was very surprised when other teachers told me I couldn't do what you do. Just be positive to that boy and it's easy.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

As this teacher mentioned some teachers still hold a negative attitude towards students with disabilities as we discussed in the part of barrier to inclusion. Therefore it is necessary for schools to take some measures to stress this problem to help teachers build a positive attitude toward students with disabilities as this is the first step to implement inclusive education. Only when teachers emotionally accept or desire to teach students with disabilities, inclusive education can realize.

The second sub-theme in relation to having a good relationship with students with disabilities' parents, as a strong support from family will undoubtedly help teachers take some measures to help students with disabilities. Compared to classroom teachers, support teachers stay more time with students with disabilities, therefore, a good relationship with those students' parents is necessary and is regarded as a significant facilitator to inclusion, as one support teacher said:

I know that I have a good relationship with the parents. We collaborate a lot. With the disabled pupil, parents have to believe in what we do every day, because they know that the treatment is very difficult. As you have to put a little break for their son or daughter. It is very important.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

From this teacher's account and other teachers, we can find that students with disabilities' parents' support mainly concerns the scientific understanding of support teachers' work rather than provides some technological aids to help support teachers work because support teachers sometimes need to take their children outside for additional teaching or other programmes, this action should be correctly understood by parents, otherwise they may consider that as a kind of discrimination. Therefore it is better for support teachers to build a good relationship with students with disabilities' parents, in that way they can understand support teachers' work, which was a

critical point frequently mentioned by many support teachers during the fieldwork.

Possessing a high level of inclusive education knowledge is another sub-theme in relation to support teachers. Compared to sample Chinese teachers' lack of inclusive education knowledge, Italian teachers have a good command of inclusion education and special education knowledge. Particularly, this facilitator is not directly mentioned by Italian sample teachers and it mainly comes from my research experiences in both countries' school fieldwork. During the interview, when asked inclusive education Italian support teachers have a good understanding of the related policy development history and some even can provide related inclusive education theory and researchers. As some teachers reported:

So, at the beginning of 70's there were special schools, for example school for blind, deaf.....but start from 1977, we had the integration about students with disabilities in the normal classes. They stay all together and there are support teachers. So 99% they stay together. This just for primary school. For other secondary or high school, starting at 1988.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

Before 70's there were special schools, later than 70's the general school become to everyone. The school is for all grades of disabilities, but for sure it needs time and depends on the grades of the disabilities. Sometimes is difficult. Also support teachers spend many hours on them.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

Now is changing, is not the same like before. The disability is a resource for the class. Because we are all different. And we are from integration to inclusion. I like a lot of Andrea Cavevaro, do you know him? He is a famous special education researcher. From his books, inclusive education is a part, membership. Everyone can give the group his/she's skills, ideas. There are good at doing something, so they can contribute to the group. They can be together and acknowledge each one.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

Considering current study, teachers are familiar with state inclusive education policy and related theory of inclusive education and special education is a main facilitator to inclusion. Like the positive attitudes towards inclusion and students with disabilities, the high level knowledge of inclusive education can influence teachers' thinking which can guide one's attitudes and behaviors and that can be considered as a prerequisite for achieving inclusive education.

The fourth sub-theme refers to inclusive pedagogy's using during classroom teaching, which includes flexible teaching methods and assessment methods. As we discussed earlier, instead of focusing on approach that works for most students in classroom, the inclusive pedagogy concerns an approach that are available to everyone in the classroom. As nowadays the classroom has become more and more diversity, teachers need to employ different teaching pedagogies to meet students' needs. In Italian schools, various innovative pedagogies were created by both support and classroom teachers to help students' learning, as teachers said:

INVALSI is for all students. But, for DSA students, they have 15 minutes more for INVALSI test with the same text. And they has possibilities to use hear-phone or computer to complete the text. For people cannot see, there are special charter, content is same. But the letter is big. For BES person, are the same test, no more time, is the same. For student with disability is not same, but only test is made based on personal specific disability. Mana (a student with disability), they do not have the exam like INVALSI. Because they don't know the text. There are specific object for those students. And text INVALSI is specific difficult for those disabilities. The support teachers make the text according to the student's specific situation. And valued by support teachers.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Sometimes I used to take out others from the class for three or four mates and we used to work in a small group together. Because it was easier for children to study together.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

The above mentioned is only two methods in terms of inclusive pedagogy that were employed by support teachers to include students with SEN. However, during our interview there were still other methods used by support teachers, for a detailed description, please see the application dimension where gives a detailed explanation in terms of inclusive pedagogy that are employed by teachers.

The last sub-theme is about qualified pre-service teacher education training, which ensures that support teachers obtain a good knowledge in terms of inclusive education. In classroom practice, support teachers can provide a appropriate education for meeting students' individual needs, furthermore to collaborate with classroom teachers to teacher the whole class. Particularly, this facilitator was highlighted by classroom teachers:

*That the support teacher at course here had a strong and great background, so they are good experts, they know how to manage those things, how to collaborate with other teachers. From my experiences, they had a good teacher training.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)*

In fact, according to the existing research (e.g. Florian, 2012; Florian, Young, Rouse, 2010), a good teacher training is a vital prerequisite for implementing inclusive education as its intention is to prepare qualified teachers who are directly responsible for inclusive education practice. And this again reflects that it is necessary to change pre-existing teacher education programme which bases on dual system training system that are special and general teacher education into a single teacher training, which is teacher education for inclusion as is advocated by European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2014).

The next main theme comes to *classroom teachers*, which includes five sub-themes: positive attitudes, using inclusive pedagogy, had been a support teacher before, a good collaboration with support teacher and scientific understanding of inclusive education. As for the first sub-theme, positive attitude here again was mentioned by classroom teachers as a main facilitator to inclusion. Particularly, beside the classroom teachers' own account this point was also frequently highlighted by support teachers. Particularly, sometimes classroom teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education can exert a big impact on support teachers' feeling about the inclusive education.

In addition, rather than stating they have a positive attitude towards inclusive education, classroom teachers' positive attitude towards inclusive education mainly recognize from their teaching practice to students with disabilities. For example we can conclude a positive attitude from one classroom teacher' account in terms of how she educated a student with disability:

*This student integrates very well in the class, he has a support teacher and he has 5 hours in one week. 5 hours (with support teacher) of the 40 (one week school hours) in one week. In this case, he has problems to learn. I also work with him, I make text, other things for him. I am keen to want to learn a lot and she changes a little about the lesson for others but she always taking him in the part. I am happy do those for him!
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)*

At the same time, the inclusive pedagogy was also pointed by classroom teachers as a

facilitator like support teacher:

Yes, yes! I try to. Sometimes, when the two children in the classroom, I try to involve them with exercises in order to make them to understand in a better way. Also I am trying to explain in different ways.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

However, from the sample school practice we can recognized that the meaning of inclusive pedagogy are different: for support teachers, the most times they mentioned inclusive pedagogy like an additional methods to meet students with SENs' needs as pre-existing methods in not available to those students but suitable to other students. In this meaning support teacher acts as a special teacher to create some special methods for certain kinds of students with SEN rather than for all the students. On the other hand, when we apply the inclusive pedagogy to classroom teachers' classroom practice which means in order to meet the specific needs of students with SEN, the classroom teacher adjust pre-existing teaching methods which are only available to normal students to a new approach that not only available for students with SEN but also normal students. Therefore we should distinguish those two versions of inclusive pedagogy.

The third sub-theme is classroom teachers have a good collaboration with support teachers, when decide this sub-theme is a complicated process as this facilitator relates to both classroom teacher and support teacher and the difficulty lies on where I should put this sub-theme and what reasons should support my argument. From the sample teachers' interviews we can find that in most cases this sub-theme was mentioned by support teachers and from their accounts that it is the classroom teachers who are always dominating the relationship between their relationships with support teachers. For example, expressions like 'dominate', 'lead', 'control', etc, which were employed by some support teachers when mentioned their relationships with classroom teachers. Given that, I consider a good collaboration between classroom and support teacher belongs to the theme of classroom teachers because of their dominance. Form one support teacher' words, we can see that:

The general teacher is one that leading lesson, but she stays with Geluga for the part that he is not good to do alone, for the part that Geluga needs her help. But when Geluga can do the activity alone, she goes the class in circle and tries to help other students and just

take a look what other students doing. Sometimes, she also conducts or leads a part of the school lessons.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

The fourth sub-theme is classroom teacher was a support teacher in the past. This view is not very common among the sample teachers, however, it reflected a fact that pre-service teacher education on special and inclusive education plays a critical role in helping teachers to promote inclusive education. As we discussed before, a lack of specific professional abilities to teach students with SEN is held by most classroom teachers as they received limited training on special and inclusive education during their pre-service teacher training programme. And if you want to be a support teacher you need to attend one year more to learn related courses in terms of special and inclusive education. This pre-service teacher training system inevitably leads to classroom teachers lack related abilities when they teaching the students with SEN. However, if you had already been a support teacher and then changed into a classroom teacher which means you can teach students with SEN as you have related teacher training and support teacher's working experiences and this make us re-consider the phenomenon regarding the changing from support teachers to classroom teachers. As one classroom teacher said her pervious support teacher's working experiences as a facilitator in helping students with disabilities:

T: Ai.....I don't know. I love to be a support teacher. But you know my dream was to be a classroom teacher, so when I had to decide, I decide to be a mainstream teacher. That doesn't mean I. you know I mean a mainstream teacher has also to be a support teacher. Because when you were in the class you have to be open-minded, you have to try your best to help children who has some difficulties. So, if you has experiences as support teacher you can help them in a better way. Because you know more strategies, I think that when you are a teacher, you had to be creative and support teacher has more creative than mainstream teacher. You always need to find ways to make your children to understand something. So, sometimes the traditional way isn't right for them.

J: So you have both experiences, support teacher and classroom teacher. So, this is a good way to teach all of the children.

T: Yes, maybe.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

The last sub-theme refers to classroom teacher is the scientific understanding of inclusive education. How people understand one thing will determine one's attitudes and the following

actions. As for the inclusive education, teachers' scientific understanding is particularly crucial because he/she's understanding will influence his/her reactions to the policy and practice of inclusive education. For example, how to see a student with SEN in your class, is a kind of valuable resource or just a disturbance? Different understandings will produce totally different results, if the teacher sees inclusive education as a desirable value worth to pursue and considers student with SEN as a resource for class diversity, therefore the teacher will spare no efforts to practice that idea, or, if teacher regards the student with SEN as a disturbance to the class teaching and considers inclusive education is difficult to achieve, the teacher may be will do little or nothing to inclusive education. Therefore, understanding inclusive education scientifically is the first step to implement inclusive education. As the following classroom teacher's scientific understanding makes her take related measures to promoting inclusion in her class:

That the most difficulty is the teacher to realize the inclusion. About all the general teachers. Because that you need to have a proper attitude and a specific awareness about the high context of inclusion, the objective of the inclusion. I mean that you need to do inclusion with works. You can see someone to do inclusion because she is believing. A teacher making inclusion because he trusts. You cannot force them to follow the line of inclusion, because if you are blaming those teachers, you can see that it a fake, it not something that from your heart. For example, when there is meeting with teachers and parents, if you say that activities are going none, but there are something in you class make....but there are some difficulties that depend on how teacher says. The school is good, but we have some activities that are getting low. Automatically, the parents are making the connection between the new foreign students that come from other countries, so the activities are getting low. So they make the connection with foreign student and the activities are getting low. So, it doesn't work like that.

Teacher needs to show she/he is trying to do best in order she/he can realize the integration and the activities are getting better regarding everybody. For example, if I am a teacher, you arriving at my class. It's natural that I need to give you extra time and extra focus on you in order to teach Italian. So my work will be bigger. And that is to say that what the consequence of this? That you don't have the same time for the rest of other students. But what I am going to you, what I am doing to you is something very important to inclusion, is something beautiful, something good. So when I meet the parents, I don't have to say if I trust inclusion principles. I don't have to say that the situation is getting lower because he has arrived and he is Chinese and he needs extra time. I don't need to say this because I need to say activities are keeping going on. And we have a new student that could be rich for us because he can teach us useful things from China. Can you understand different kinds of attitudes that teacher can promote or hinder the inclusion in class. The teacher can introduce you like a problem because you are getting low my

activities, or I can show you to the parents like a positive thing could be rich for everybody.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

From that extend extract we can clearly find that classroom teacher's understanding will directly determine how she/he sees the student with SEN for the whole class: *a problem* or *a positive thing* (Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5), which will lead different explanations to parents and then influences parents' opinions on that student. From this point we again return the topic that is how to well prepare classroom teachers to build a scientific understanding of inclusive education, which needs to address properly during the pre-service teacher education programmes.

The third theme is ***taking outside*** which covers three sub-themes: students' individual needs, have another programme, new support teacher's needs. The phenomenon of taking students with SEN outside is widely recognized by Italian scholars (D'Alessio, 2011, 2012; Ianes, Demo, Zambotti, 2016) and even considers as a barrier to inclusive education in Italian school practice. From the sample teachers' interviews, nearly all the teachers, both classroom teachers and support teachers, consider that taking outside based on various reasons as a necessary step to achieve inclusive education. Considering its common in Italian school practice and frequently highlighted by sample teachers, therefore, I separate it alone and consider it as a main theme to make a detailed account to explore why sample teachers highlighted it as an important facilitator to inclusive education.

Taking outside as students' individual needs frequently emerged in teachers' interviews and three kinds of needs of students with SEN were identified: academic, physical and medical need. Academic needs concern helping students with SEN, especially for students with disabilities to better understand the lessons and to learn in different ways as these students cannot understand or catch up the classroom teachers' lessons, therefore support teachers take these students outside in *Sostegno di aula* (a separate unit) to teach them. Physical needs mainly focus on students with disabilities' specific needs like to free mood, to relax body or just to calm down, and this is really critical from sample teachers' view that if you continue to let these students to stay inside, it will be dangerous for both themselves and other students. Medical needs refers to need additional resources like medical instruments or professionals to meet the specific medical needs of students with disabilities, like some sample teachers mentioned the psychologist and specific therapy for

students with disabilities. For a more detailed account, we can see from some teachers' interviews:

For academic needs:

If you have disabilities, its difficulties for you to learn with other normal children. Or you can learn same things but in different ways. So, sometimes the I took them out the class, in another small class to teach them the same things what we were learn in the classroom, but in different ways. For example, with games in concrete ways, to help them understand the lessons.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

According to the specific needs of the child, for example, if you learn better you can stay at group all the time, otherwise, if, for example we have some sorts of disabilities need to take out and learning one by one. It's according to his specific situation.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

For physical needs:

She needs to stay at class with the Autism students as they make scream aloud. Sometime they outside and take the students back to the class. Because the students need some time to quiet.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

I think it's better to stay inside the class, but when the child has a bad mood it's better to take him outside and work individually.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)

I also work with the student with strong Autism and sometimes I must take the student outside the classroom. In order to better the student. Also the mood of the student is strange. Some noises are very strong.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

For medical needs:

For me sometimes she needs psychology and therapy and it's better outside the classroom. Swimming pool, I think it's very good for her. Going out to the shops, do other activities for her.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

The second sub-theme refers to students with SEN have another programme, therefore they need to be taken outside by support teachers. For the meaning of another programme, some teachers just said for programmes and do not give further information for these programmes, while some teachers related the programme to the math and Italian as the existing lessons for students with disabilities is difficult, therefore, they need to go outside for specific programmes in terms of math and Italian. Like some teachers said:

Sometimes only few minutes the students with disabilities inside the classroom because they have another programme.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)

The other one with Down Syndrome (DS) we go outside to do Italian or math because he has another programme.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

I had two children, one has a mental disease and one was Autistic boy. They were in the same class, so sometimes we stay in same class with the other children. But they have some difficulties in math and Italian, so during those lessons we used go out for another programme.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

The difficult teaching content, particularly for math and Italian, is the main reason for going outside for another programme, which reflects that math and Italian teachers still employ the existing teaching methods and without changing when there are some students with specific needs in the class. In this way like some support teachers stated 'I am here for math and Italian' as some students with SEN cannot catch up the normal class and support teachers become math and Italian teachers.

The next sub-theme is not related to students but refers to support teachers, especially for the new or first-year support teaches, as they just begin to work with students with SEN and lack of related experiences, therefore they need to take students outside to teach them. From that point of taking outside, is to meet support teachers' needs not relate to students' needs. Like some support teachers stated:

At the beginning, I was taking the students with disabilities outside the classroom. In the beginning when I started to work and I didn't know how to it. Because I need to create some specific aims for this student outside the classroom.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

Some colleges decide that me and my support students teach inside the special class, but I think that was my first experience, that first year was necessary for me to understand how they could work because inside the class both of them change, one becomes very shy and the other one creates problems, a lot of problems, behavior problems. That's why I have to stay a place where they can feel at home. And, yes that's why I could pass the classroom in their fourth year. As I remember they cannot do the work like the other students (normal student) but we try to teach some topics in some subjects to do something very similar and when it was possible make them work in a group. And it was possible for little things but it was possible. And in their fifth the last year we stayed almost all the time inside the class. We outside just when they were very tired and to stop have a rest.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

From that two examples we can find support teachers lack related experiences is the main reason for going outside and this make us re-consider the pre-service teacher education programme and new teachers' induction practice and policy. From teachers interviews, pre-existing teacher education programme still have some space to improve, particularly for how to help new teachers change their roles and adapt to the new school context as a new comer.

The fourth main theme highlights *school level facilitators* to inclusive education and three sub-themes were identified as inclusive education is a normal part of whole school agenda, specific school-level professionals/groups for inclusive education and school-level programmes for inclusive education. As the school is the main battlefield where inclusive education practice is taking place and its importance is highlighted by almost all the sample teachers. As a outsider from China, when I firstly entered the Italian school and I found students with disabilities with other students play together, all that give me a feeling that inclusive education is a normal part of school agenda, not an additional part, which is the first sub-theme of school-level facilitators. This sub-theme mainly from my feeling and observation during the time when I was conducting fieldwork in the sample schools, particularly when you communicating with the teachers, like one teacher said:

We have a meeting every month. First, they speak about all the documentation of students

*with disabilities, they take this documentation from the programme. A programme that relates to the Treviso government, from local government. They see together some points, to share the documents together. This programme for 2 years, started from 2016. They update the programme in the school. The environmental factor, a part of this programme, could be helpful. For example, this programme, ICF is important. Inside this school, there is a protocol to document the activities in the school. (Introduction to a document) this document includes different steps to develop inclusive education in the school. The students share with teachers, families, doctors and so on.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)*

From this teacher's word I can feel that inclusive education work is just a part of school whole agenda, like other works and this is particularly remarkable when I compared with inclusive education agenda in my country's school context where inclusive education is an additional part of the school plan.

The next sub-theme refers to specific school-level professionals/groups for inclusive education, which includes Pedagogist, Psychologist, GLHI (Gruppi di lavoro e di studio d'istituto), OSS (Operatore Socio Sanitario) and OSA (Operatore Socio Assistenziale). Specific professionals and groups that are responsible for inclusive education programme were frequently highlighted by nearly all the sample teachers. These professionals and groups create activities, documents and plans at school level to improve inclusive education, provide specific supports or advices for support teachers to meet students with SEN's needs. As some teachers mentioned in their interviews:

T: For the psychology support, yes! There are special workers, professional doctor. Ok, this person takes support in pedagogy, one in kindergarten, one in elementary, one secondary. They give support to the teachers, to the students to the family in terms of psychological problems or other problems. They suggest some strategies to teachers how to teach, give help and support to the school. The link family to teacher, teacher to teacher, teacher to student to follow this topic.

J: what the name of that worker?

*T: pedagogist. It's a special person, is graduated from the psychology on pedagogy.
(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)*

Maximum but there is a possibility depends on the disability to have another person, it's not a teacher and it's an assistant. We call it OSS. And it not for the teaching part and it's just for the physical needs, like help students to go to the toilet, to eat or in the classroom but usually the OSS do not decide what to do and just follow. The OSS doesn't have the

possibility of the work, how the school works and it just to make the pupils to stay with the person for him. If the students need more than 22 hours.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

There are three main groups in our school for inclusive education: the first group is comprised of teacher Paola which is responsible for the intercultural dialogue project; and then there is another group which takes care about the disabilities with all school system and the other one is best.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

The last sub-theme is various school-level programmes/activities are organized to promote inclusive education, which includes go hiking, sport activities, communication with famous persons with disabilities and some laboratories. All those activities are opening for all students and within these activities students can build skills like cooperation, taking care of other persons, friendship, etc., and those lived experiences can make all students feel being included, which is definitely good to students' development. As some teachers said:

There are many outside activities, they organize many laboratories. Outside the period of school time. Outside and inside. And that programmes, activities, the students with disabilities participate them. For example, bicycle, painting..... different activities to involve the students to integrate into the group.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

The work they make in couple, two students work together in a small group. when we go out of the school, take photos together. Some activities outside the school, making video for that. They organize the work for develop every students' skill, ability. Every one gives the contribution to the group work. Build their skill, their ability. Every one, every student gives the contribution to the project. For example, you're good at paint, you are painting. They together do a project. Everybody has its own level, not important you are good at all. It does not matter! You must give your contribution to the work, to this project together. This really good because teach the students also because the works of each one is important to reach the final project, to final goal, to final aim.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

The fifth main theme refers to **students with SEN** which covers putting together as earlier as possible and strong parents' support. As students with SEN is one the main objects of the inclusive education, therefore factors in relation to them are also critical for inclusion and some teachers

highlighted the importance of putting students with SEN into mainstream schools as earlier as possible, which can provide a good platform that students with SEN and normal students can build a good relationship with each other from the beginning of the school years. For a child world, there is no idea of disability which is a word that is constructed by our adults. Putting together as earlier as possible, on the one hand can help students with SEN make more friends, to be fully included into the student's community, while on the other hand for other students they will see students with SEN as normal and fully accept them, which will influence their following school and society life, as one teacher said:

So it's better to put them together as early as possible. Also in the kindergarten the kids don't see the other kids with disabilities as different, they don't know they have disabilities. For them is normal, in the kindergarten the kids see some differences but they don't see them as disabilities. For them is normal, when they grow up if they have the opportunity to learn is good for them. Because it's also some problems from the middle school, some kids don't develop this sensitivity. And has problems to relate with persons with disabilities. It's like your brother with disability, you have totally different feel. The school is really important in this process because all the students learn that.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

In terms of when is a proper time to put students with SEN together with normal students, there is not a fixed rule as different student has different specific situation and may be for some is from the kindergarten or for others it is better to start at primary school. From sample teachers' view, the majority of them argued that kindergarten is a stage that we can put them together to learn and will benefit both of students with SEN and other students for the following years.

The second sub-theme comes to the strong support from the parents of students with SEN, as inclusive education practice involves multiple stakeholders and students' parents is one of important stakeholders among this community. Therefore, parents, particularly parents of students with SEN were frequently stated by the majority of sample teachers in various situations, like understand support teachers' teaching methods, cooperation with family, provide related information in terms of their kid's behaviors or actions at home, all of those were highlighted by teachers as these supports an information can help teachers to make scientific decisions for students with SEN.

Next main theme comes to *normal students*, as nearly the most important partners of the

students with SEN, normal students' attitudes, understanding and reaction to students with SEN directly influences whether or not the schools can achieve the inclusive education. Like the support from parents of students with SEN, normal students' understand and help is reflected in many sample teachers' interviews. For example, to help students with SEN keep in good behaviors, take books or pencils, understand and accept students with SEN's strange actions were considered as significant facilitators to include students with SEN into the class. Like one teacher addressed:

And all the other students to help him understand if he reaching the objectives or no. For example, the objective of number 1 is to keep silence, the classmates ask to Geluga, Geluga, are you keeping in silence today? What do you think the answer or no? Also they help to Geluga to improve his behavior. For example, if Geluga always talking. The mates will say to Geluga: are you reach the objective of keeping silence?

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

It is my intention to put the theme of *inclusive culture* as the last one to report because this theme was fully reflected in all facilitators we mentioned above and it is better to summarize at end. As a researcher from China, a different cultural context, when I firstly entered the sample schools, my talk with directors, teachers, students, and my classroom observations, all these interactions gave me a feeling that the school is a family, school is for all, disability is normal, teachers and students' high acceptance and students with SEN are happy to stay in the school, etc. After my fieldwork in Italian school context, during the transcription of the interviews, the analysis of the data and finally report the findings, one phase emerging in my mind: belief system, which I want to put all my feelings under the umbrella of that meaningful phase. This belief system is a kind of inclusive culture that spreads in Italian school context, is a kind of moral commitment or moral power that drives Italy to choose the road of inclusive education. Undoubtedly, a long history of the effort to develop inclusive education lays a solid foundation to that belief system and conversely this belief system facilitates the development of inclusive education in Italy. Furthermore, some teachers mentioned that the religion is an important factor that produces a positive impact on the development of inclusive education in Italy, as one teacher said:

That in Italy we have interests about those things. Also could be help from religion.

*Because the religion tells us to stay together, to help each other.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)*

4.4 Empathy: From your schooling experience, please describe the situation of students with SEN being included in your class/school?

Regarding the empathy dimension, the concern primarily focuses on teachers' feeling of the situation of the students with SEN who are included in the classes/schools. Therefore, in order to get a full picture of students with SEN' situation in the school from a historical perspective, I asked sample teachers to recall their experiences as a student in kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university and to think if there were some classmates with SEN in their classes/schools, and if there were, what about their classmates' situation. Therefore, this dimension is divided into two parts:

- a) When you was a student in kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university, please describe the situation of students with SEN being included in your class/school?
- b) Currently as a teacher, please describe the situation of students with SEN being included in your class/school?

In terms of the part a), one theme was indentified: in a bad situation. For part b), three main themes emerged which are sitting without learning, a changing process and sitting and learning, and under each main theme some sub-themes are grouped, for detailed information, please see table 13.

For the part a) when you was a student in kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university, please describe the situation of students with SEN being included in your class/school? One theme was identified: *in a bad situation*, which includes two sub-themes, all in the same special class and without support teachers. Two points need to state clearly before we explain more about the part a): one is not all the sample teachers have the class/school mates when they were students, 10 sample teachers mentioned that they had that experience and particularly during their primary schooling; and another one is that the sub-theme 'all in the same special class' was mainly referred by teachers whose age is over 50 and 'without support teachers' was mentioned by

teachers who are less than 50. Regarding to that two points, I will explain more in the following section.

Table 13 Empathy: The situation of students with SEN being included in your class/school?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Empathy	As a student	
	In a bad situation	All in the same special class (old teacher)
		Without support teacher (young teacher)
	As a teacher	
	Sitting without learning	Sitting like a vegetable
		Disturbing the class teaching
		Lacking related resources for students with SEN: learning materials and professionals (support teachers cannot meet students' needs)
		Taking outside for meeting individual needs
	A changing process	From a disturbance to a friend
		Students with less support hours
		Some students with SEN do not have support teachers
	Sitting and learning	Well personal development
A good relationship with others		

As for the first sub-theme 'all in the same special class' frequently emerged in sample teachers' responses whose age is over 50. As we have already discussed that started from 1971 students with disabilities were placed into mainstream schools and from 1977 all special schools were abolished. In current study, one sample teacher's age is 56 and she attended the primary school between 1968 and 1973. In her response, she highlighted that all the students with disabilities were put together in the same special class and their situation is bad:

*Before 1970s, there was no inclusion. All students with disabilities in one room, nobody care about them. Started for 1975, it starts a new process of inclusion process. So the students before that nobody care now start take into care, started in 1975.
(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)*

No. Because I studied many years ago. When I attended the first class in primary school, in our class there are not students with disabilities. But, in that years there was one special class disability students. Students were all disabilities, students with problems all in this class, in this specific class. Students big, 6 years old, but the other students are 10 or bigger. This class just judged by the students with disabilities, all together regardless their age. The students are 6 or 10, the common things is that they have problems. I remember that class is not good. My personal feeling is that students are not good.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

The same information was offered by other sample teachers, for example one is 57 and she received the primary school education from 1967 to 1972, another one is 56 and between 1968 and 1973 she attended the primary school. However, there are some special cases emerged during the fieldwork, like one sample teacher's age is 31 and she received the primary school education from 1994 to 1999. During her primary schooling, there were some students with disabilities in her school, but all these students with disabilities were put together in one class not being included into the general classrooms, as she said:

T: well, there were some children had SEN. But not in my classroom. But in the school, there is, yes. They were in the same class, they all in together.

J: when? When you were in kindergarten or in primary school?

T: in primary school.

J: they all in the same class.

T: yes, children who have some disabilities were in same class.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

Since from 1977, all students with disabilities started to be placed into the mainstream schools and being educated in the general classrooms together with other students. Why students with disabilities were still in the same class not in the general classroom during 1990s when after more than twenty years' of the Policy of *Integrazione Scolastica*? And for that question more will explore at end of this section.

The next sub-theme is students with disabilities without support teachers in mainstream schools and this concern was chiefly mentioned by young teachers who are below 50. Setting support teacher is widely considered as an effective measure to promote inclusive education, which was issued by Italian government in 1977. And nearly all the sample teachers considered the support teachers play a critical role in promoting school inclusive education, and furthermore the significance of support teachers' role in inclusive education development is also researched by international scholars (e.g. D'Alessio, 2007, 2011; Devecchi et al., 2012). However, during the field work some sample teachers reported that there were no support teachers in their schools and students with disabilities in a bad situation. Like one teacher is 48 and she attended the primary

school from 1980 to 1983, as she stated:

*When I followed the elementary school, there was a student with disabilities in the classroom, but there were no programmes, no support teachers.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)*

After analyzing the data and reporting the results in terms of part a, three questions or confusions emerged in my mind:

- a) Where were the students with disabilities?
- b) Why some areas' students with disabilities still in the same special class during 1990s?
- c) Why some areas' students with disabilities did not have support teachers after 1977?

As for the first confusions, nearly half of the sample teachers stated that they did not meet students with disabilities during their schooling and those teachers age between 29 and 60. As indicated in the policy, teachers below 50 should have classmates with disabilities as these teachers received primary school education from 1980 to 2000. That situation may be partly because there were no children with disabilities in that area at that time, or partly because these teachers just did not meet the students with disabilities and students with disabilities were educated in other schools. However, this should explore and I will discuss that in the conclusion part. In terms of confusions two and three, which are clearly reported in the earlier section and more interpretations need to explore to address these confusions.

As for the part b 'currently as a teacher, please describe the situation of students with SEN being included in your class/school' and three main themes were identified: sitting without learning, a changing process and sitting and learning. From sample teachers' views, the situation of students with SEN is in a changing process rather than static. Therefore, in this section we based on the sample teachers' changing process view to arrange the main themes' sequence to report the results. However, we should remind that this sequence just reflects a general process and some different cases still exist in various school contexts.

The first main theme refers to *sitting without learning*, which covers sitting like a vegetable, disturbing the class teaching, lacking related resources for students with SEN and taking outside for meeting individual needs. Particularly, from sample teachers' opinions this theme mainly concerns students with SEN who are just starting the schooling life or a new grade and students'

with high level of disabilities. Firstly, the situation of sitting like a vegetable is frequently relates to students with disabilities who are at the beginning of the school life. From home to school, a fully new environment with ‘strangers’, new classmates, teachers and other persons, which definitely will influence the new students’ feeling, especially for students with SEN. Therefore, these new comers just sitting here *like vegetable (one sample teacher’s words)*, as sample teachers said:

*At the beginning of the school year, this was a big problem. The students with disabilities in my class, they are just sitting here and without learning.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)*

T: the problem was that the girl I stayed was in a very heavy situation and when I talked with her the first two days, I went home and cried all those two days because for me it was very difficult to stay with her alone inside the special class her and me, me and her.

J: only you and her?

T: yes. Because she didn’t talk and she used to talk or repeat some words a lot of times. Or asked me when is going to arrive my mom since 08:30 until 13:00. But I have to say that I was lucky because there was psychologist that worked with her previous summer and helps me to understand her world. And to stay with her enjoying the time. But it was not so easy at the beginning.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

The next sub-theme refers to disturbing the class teaching, which closely relates to the former one. As for the new comers or students with massive disabilities, it is difficult for them to sit quietly in the classroom. As some sample teachers reported that the new students with disabilities or students with massive disabilities cannot always sit at chair and they need to move or create some not nice behaviors, which inevitably influence the class teaching, as teachers stated:

The serious Autism student tries to find physical contact, he needs physical contact. She needs physical relation and so she touches other students, to have a hug with other students. Sometimes this happens during the class, other students can’t learn well.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

For example, I have student that blind, only make loud voice. It is better to put in the special school and I think only high level of disability may have problems to stay in the class.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

The third sub-theme is lacking related resources for students with SEN, which primarily happens to students with high level of disabilities. As a result, they are sitting in the classroom with limited development as school lacks specific learning materials for these students, limited school spaces or support teachers do not have the ability to teach this specific disability, all of that make students with high level of disabilities in a bad situation and without learning in the mainstream schools. As teachers expressed:

For example, Lenad (a student with disability in wheelchair) he needs a specific location for his needs. The school doesn't have this support for him, like materials. He needs specific classroom with bed, because he gets tired and need sleep. Is impossible, the school with 350 students, is impossible. He needs a specific motor training. In this school, there is one gym pool, when the other student, mana, was in primary school he needs a specific training for developing his language. But, it impossible in this school. There is not specific language training for support teacher. And now he can only speak dad, mama and stop. Because in the past he exercise language in a training.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

I think that it could be very useful to have a psychologist to help her and us in the right way. It was not so easy now for us to teach her as we all don't have that professional ability.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

When students with disabilities, new comers or students with massive disabilities, creating some disturbance to the class teaching, producing some strange behaviors, school and teachers cannot meet students' needs, the common way to address these situations is in the name of taking outside to meet these students' individual needs, which was the fourth sub-theme mentioned by sample teachers. The case of taking students with special needs outside the classroom to meet those students' need is still a hot debate among international scholars (e.g D'Alessio, 2011, 2012; Devecchi et al., 2012; Dovigo, 2017; Santi, 2014) , while what happens here is does taking outside really work for students with disabilities or just protect others' interests? Answers to that concern are beyond this section's aim, while I will readdress this question in the conclusion part. However, for majority teachers they consider that situation is a proper or good way to students

with or without disabilities:

Like student with DS, it is better for him to stay outside the classroom. Because he works better outside the class alone, for example, when we do Italian or math, we need more explanations, speak loudly, so it is better for him to go out. Yes, for the classmates are well and he does not disturb others. For him it is better to go out.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

The second main theme refers to **a changing process** of students with SEN' situation, which includes from a disturbance to a friend, students with disabilities with less support hours and some students with SEN do not have support teachers. As we stated earlier in this section, the situation of students with SEN is not static, however, is a changing process, particularly for the new students as more longer time in school and more familiar with surrounding environment, their situation will change. Beside students' themselves, the external environment's changing can produce a significant on students' situation as well.

From a disturbance to a friend is the first sub-theme highlighted by sample teachers, especially for the earlier mentioned new students as they start to be familiar with their classmates, general teachers, support teachers and surrounding environment. Furthermore, with related support and help from teachers and other students, the students with disabilities start to have relationship with his/her teachers and classmates. All that new situations contribute to students with disabilities' changing, which is becoming better and better. Like some teachers said:

For me I see this like this child (student with disability) stay here, he is completely lost, he cannot relate with other schoolmates, he is very violent, he throws everything. We do some work for him to improve his collaboration with others. And now I see he is happy. Because he starts to keep relationships with others, starts to talk better to make others understand him well, so I see and feel him happier than before. So I think we are going to include him into the classroom, into the society. Because I think we should see in the future. The question is are he is be able to relate to the society or work, we start to teach him how to do that.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

The next sub-theme refers to students with disabilities with less support hours and this changing situation mainly mentioned by some teachers whose age is more than 55. For these

teachers, the situation of students with disabilities closely relates to support teachers' situation. Recent years the changing of support teachers' supply has produced a profound influence on students with disabilities' situation. For example, frequently changing government and cutting money to schools lead to the decreasing number of support teachers to mainstream school, which inevitably causes one support teacher with more students with disabilities than before. Therefore, students with disabilities receive less and less support hours year by year, which puts these students in a dangerous situation. As one teacher reported:

The children with disabilities have problems to integrate into the class. There are some specific activities doing in the small group to include students with disabilities by support teachers. What's happen? The time for doing that becoming shorter. In the past the time was more linger, now is become shorter because there are not enough support teachers.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

The decreasing of support teachers' supply, which directly results in some students with SEN without support teachers, however, we should remind that these students had support teachers in the past. Particularly for the policy regarding DSA and BES, as a result the teaching responsibility of some students with SEN, like DSA and BES are transformed from the hand of support teachers to the general teachers, all these are highlighted by sample teachers:

In the past there was money, now in the school they don't have enough money for support teacher, this document (document about BES, DAS) could be positive or negative, I think is more political. Because in the past, there was more money it's easy to take support teacher but now there is no money. So the government says to the general teachers take care of them (the students with SEN but without disability certificate). So it's not good for them (the students with SEN but without disability certificate).
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

When I told you as I was a support teacher I just start to teach two pupils, now they are four with same hours. Because, for example when I started 15 years ago, we can decide with the doctors the disability level: lighter, middle, and grave. The lighter needs 3 to 5 hour a week, the middle needs 12 hours a week, the grave needs 22 hours a week, plus other hours. Now, you don't have the first level. So, if someone has problems with intelligence or something else, but there are not so grave. Ok, don't worry! You don't need support teachers. It's stupid! Why 15 years ago pupil needs the support teacher, now no! Just for money, there are no other reasons to understand. So we are always cutting money

*for disable pupils because they are not so much.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)*

The third and last main theme is ***sitting and learning***, which includes two sub-themes: well personal development and a good relationship with others. This theme chiefly refers to students with disabilities who have already come to mainstream schools for one year or more and also the disability level is not massive. The sub-theme of well personal development includes knowledge and social aspects. On the one hand, after being familiar with the environment students with SEN start to learn the lessons with the support teachers' guidance, on the other hand is that during this familiar process with environment, which definitely will improve students social skills development, like communication, respect, understanding, etc. And these developments were mentioned by sample teachers regularly:

*For her (student with disability) is better to stay in the general school. Because they have make a conversation for the child. And she is happy when she is staying with other children. She makes some actions, for example, a gaze, a smiling. She makes this simple symbol tells us that she likes stay in this situation like this kind of. She loves to listen to other children to talking, to speaking. That is the reason why the teacher for the next year they are planning to make her to come here in the morning as well. Morning and afternoon, like the other children always stay at school, because she loves to stay at school. We cannot talk about leaning with her. We cannot teach the alphabet, how to read, to write, because she cannot move. So, here in the school she has an opportunity to develop relation to stay with the social system with others.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)*

*Is good for them because they have the opportunity to relate the other children that have the same age. And children who live in the same town, so when they are in the school, they are out they can meet each other. For example, they go out for walk. Sometimes, they can meet the same children with the same age. So for this reason that is a good thing for children with disabilities or special needs.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)*

And this well personal development will enable them to have a good relationship with their classmates, teachers and other persons around them:

I had a child with the problem of moving. It is good because the other kids they play with

*him, they joking, laughing and playing together.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)*

*The other students kiss her (student with disability) like she/his sister! Because sometimes she has problems and they take a paper and pen for her and take care of her like their sister. So they really help her! And they have a good relationship with each other.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)*

Above we report three main themes in terms of the students with SEN being include in the mainstream schools, as we stated earlier some teachers report students situation from a more general view which is difficult to group. However, these views are also important for us to get a full picture of the situation of students with SEN in the mainstream schools. Here we can put a teacher's view to enrich our understanding. For example, compared with her passed working experience in special school, from a general sense one sample support teacher considered that the situation of students with disabilities being included in mainstream schools is better than before. Because in the special school, as she said:

*I also taught in the special school that students with disabilities. In that special school, there is no development. They are static. For example, fixed time the time is fixed and the activities are fixed, 30 minutes for one activity, 30 minutes another, that continues to a period of time, one months, two months, even one year. 20 minutes for an activity and break, 20 minutes for the activity and break, they are in fixed arrangement, 20 minutes for activities and then break. Every day, for months the same activities, for example, at 8:00 there is an activity, at 8:20 they finish and have a break. 20 minutes for activities, 20 minutes for break, always in the same things without changing. The disability level is really high. Now we put all the students in the general school. It's good or no? It's better for all the students. All the students need to have an assurance.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)*

4.5 Perspective: What is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education?

Considering the perspective dimension three main themes were identified, which includes placement in mainstream school plus taking outside for a while, placement in special school/class

and others, while there are some sub-themes under each main theme. For more information, please see table 14.

Table 14 Perspective: What is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Perspective	Placement in mainstream school plus taking outside for a while	Mainstream school
		Students can have a well-personal development
		There are no special schools
		Without development in special school
		Taking outside for a while
		To meet students' individual needs
		For not disturbing other students
		Other programmes of Italian and math
		Classroom teachers' demand
		New support teacher's teaching need
	<i>Sostegno di aula</i> with related learning resources	
	Placement in special school	Students with strong disabilities
		General schools' professionals and learning resources are limited
		Special school with more professionals and learning resources
		Mainstream classes already have many problems
		Students with different kinds of disabilities
	Others	To learn job skills for the future
It depends on students' disability level		
	Good students plus one or two students with disabilities	

The first refers to *placement in mainstream school plus taking outside for a while* and this theme is nearly highlighted by all the sample teachers during the fieldwork. However, as we carefully analyze that theme, the placement in mainstream school plus taking outside for a while, which actually contains two aspects: one is mainstream school while another is taking outside for a while. This is true in our interviews, as sample teachers response to that question, firstly they support the idea that the best place for students to receive inclusive education is in mainstream schools, while at the time same they will add an additional sentence '*sometimes you need to taking them (students with SEN) outside for a while to meet their individual needs*' (sample teachers' words). Although this is only an additional sentence but acting as a key to understand this main theme. Ignoring this aspect cannot fully understand the frequently mentioned placement in terms of mainstream school plus taking outside for a while by sample teachers. Given that, this theme

will divide into two parts to explain sample teachers' opinion, however, these two parts must understand together and ignore any part cannot gain a full picture of this main theme.

The first part comes to placing students with SEN in mainstream schools and three reasons are provided to support that view which are students can have a well-personal development, there are no special schools and without development in special school. In particular, teachers answer the question 'what is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education?' without any hesitation and mainstream school is their first response. At first, sample teachers' reason is students can have a well-personal development in mainstream schools. Considering students which not only includes students with SEN but these without SEN, while the well-personal development primarily covers learning subject knowledge, developing social skills, tolerance, respect and so on. For teachers, mainstream school likes a society and it is normal for all students to study here, within that small society students with (out) SEN all can develop well. Some sample teacher's view can fully reflect that point:

Students with SEN can have a well-personal development:

The school (mainstream school) is good for disabilities. Because here they can develop social skills, they learn to stay together, they honor differences.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

I think it's better to go the general schools! Because my opinion is that everyone, even if there are some problems with them, has a lot of possibilities in general school. We should create the possibilities to treat them in the similar manner like others.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)

For students without SEN:

Yes, I totally agree with the programme that people with disability go to the school with other students without disabilities. She said that the other students can become more rich with the opportunity to stay with the students with disabilities because they improve themselves with learn something, the students with disabilities can teach some other important things that could be help for other students in their life. This experience will influence the students following life. This is good to the other students for grow up because they (normal students) learn how to take care of other people.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

In the diversity we learn more. When we put disabled students in the general class, is good for both. Other student can compare and learn from them. From the diversity they learn more.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-7)

The second view offered by teacher to educate students with SEN in mainstream schools is there are no special schools and students can only attend the mainstream schools. This view is not very common among the sample teachers, but some teachers considered that as a main reason why place all the students in mainstream schools. Particularly, many teachers referred that the Italian law had already abolished the special schools in 1970s. Therefore they expressed the idea that there are only mainstream schools for students with SEN. Furthermore, as a researcher from China, some sample teachers asked the Chinese government practice in terms of how to educate the students with SEN and my response is that some students with strong disabilities are placed into special schools. After hearing that, the Italian sample teachers will make a comparison between Italy and China, and therefore no special schools only mainstream schools was provided by some sample teachers:

Here aren't special schools. I think special schools in the seventies. Obviously, I don't have those experiences with them, but I think it more motivate for them here (mainstream schools) to stay with other students.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

In Italy only general school. In China special school and general school. It's a big difference! And we can only put the students with disabilities into general schools.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

And after my statement of our special education school practice, one teacher even considered that special education school practice is wrong and regarded Italian practice as an example:

J: in China, we put some students with disabilities in the class and others in the special class or special school.

T: I thinks this is wrong. In Italy we do well we put all the students in mainstream schools and it's an example.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

The last reason is about students with SEN without development in special schools, which chiefly mentioned by teachers who were special school teachers in special schools in the past. From their special school working experiences, they strongly support the view that we should educate all the students together, no matter students with or without SEN, because ‘*students with disabilities in special schools without development*’ (sample teacher’s words). Like one teacher who worked in special school in the past to express the view that special schools are bad for students with disabilities’ development and it is better to put all students in mainstream schools:

I also taught in the special school that students with disabilities. In that special school, there is no development. They are static. For example, fixed time the time is fixed and the activities are fixed, 30 minutes for one activity, 30 minutes another, that continues to a period of time, one months, two months, even one year. 20 minutes for an activity and break, 20 minutes for the activity and break, they are in fixed arrangement, 20 minutes for activities and then break. Every day, for months the same activities, for example, at 8:00 there is an activity, at 8:20 they finish and have a break. 20 minutes for activities, 20 minutes for break, always in the same things without changing. The disability level is really high. Now we put all the students in the general school. It’s good or no? It’s better for all the students. All the students need to have an assurance.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

And one sample teacher firstly compared the mainstream school and special school, after that she preferred mainstream schools rather than special schools to educate students with disabilities:

J: ok, let change, for students with disabilities where is better to put them?

T: ok, I am not for special school. I think general school is good, is perfect!

J: like this school! Why? Better for what?

T: there because they can develop some abilities, for example just imitating some classmates. In special school, they could be too much limited. I saw children increasing their abilities just because they need to stay with mates. I am not so sure in a special school it would be so possible.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

However, this is not the end of the story. After stating the fact that place students with SEN into the mainstream schools, teachers will add one more sentence which is “*sometimes you need to taking them (students with SEN) outside for a while to meet their individual needs*’ (sample teachers’ words).’ As we ask more in terms of taking outside for a while, a series of complicated

ideas were provided to seek reasonable ground for that action. In all six reasons were identified from sample teachers' various responses: to meet students' individual needs, for not disturbing other students, other programmes of Italian and math, classroom teachers' demand, new support teacher's teaching need and *sostegno di aula* with related learning resources.

The first reason for taking out for a while lies in to meet students with SEN' individual needs, which include physical, psychological, study environment requirement and other needs. From the teachers' responses, we can conclude that all sample teachers mentioned that as a reason why students with SEN, particularly students with disabilities, should be taken outside for a while. Phrases like 'to better understand lessons', 'to make them comfortable', 'to have a rest', 'to meet their medical needs', etc. We can see all those based on the ground that taking outside is good for students with disabilities, so we need, or must, do that, or it will be bad for students with disabilities if we ask them to continue to stay at classroom. As to the negative aspects of taking students with disabilities outside, teachers rarely consider it. On the contrary, all teachers see that taking outside from a positive angle, like some sample teachers said:

*I think it's better to stay inside the class, but when the child has a bad mood it's better to take him outside and work individually.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)*

*Not too much outside. One hour every day. Because students with disabilities have problems stay inside the classroom, she/he needs go outside as she/he needs comfort.
(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)*

*Normally, the time spent outside is equal to the time spent in class. It depends on the child's mood. This child sometimes needs to go outside because he can't resist in the class.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)*

*Sometimes. Not every day, not in every situation, but to do some tests. Because the students not so faster as other students, they need help outside the classroom with support teacher. It's useful for the students (with disabilities) outside the classroom to learn something.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)*

*75% in the classroom. For some activities he needs repeat louder with voice. Because the voice is louder, so we go outside.
(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)*

As nearly all the teachers give their own reasons for taking outside, therefore we put five extracts to fully present sample teachers' view. However, we need to remember that some teachers maybe just mentioned one reason, some teachers maybe state two or more, and what we present here is the frequently emerged topics mentioned by sample teachers. The next reason is about for not disturbing other students and the other students mainly refer to students without disabilities. As some students with disabilities will make some noises, louder sound or other strange behaviors, which produces a negative impact on other students or teacher's teaching. When this is happening, the most effective method employed by support teachers is taking the student who makes strange behaviors outside the class, in order to protect the class teaching. To protect the majority of other students' interest is the dominant mind when addressing students with disabilities' strange behaviors. Like some sample teachers expressed the view:

And she (student with disability) does her activity, makes relationships with classmates, but sometimes she just makes some @#\$%^& ¥%& (noise), and this is bad for other students, so you don't have to force her to stay in the class with other mates. Because it is not respect for her if she wants to go out, for the other students here someone crying and they don't develop a positive attitude with her. It's better for her going out.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

Because, for example three years ago my last year to be the support teacher, I had a situation that in which the girl can't stay with her classmates. We were in the room part for three or four hours every day. And there were just some little moments when I can take her with class. Because she has a very low level of intelligence, her noise, voices were problems for other students. Because it not so easy for us to stay with the group.
(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

The next is taking outside for other programmes of Italian and math, which is the most clear reason referred by sample teachers. Specifically this concern mainly comes from support teachers' responses, and therefore, to some extent, support teachers are Italian and math teachers exclusively for certain students with disabilities. Like some support teachers stated:

I do Italian and Maths outside because this child has a other programme to follow, different from the class. The classes do some things and this child does other things, in a other way.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-15)

I had two children, one has a mental disease and one was Autistic boy. They were in the same class, so sometimes we stay in same class with the other children. But they have some difficulties in math and Italian, so during those lessons we used go out. The two children and I, we used to work together with some topics.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-2)

I care about the integration of children, I teach them Math, Italian and other subjects. A little bit in class and a little bit outside: in the library, in the gym, in the garden...

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-16)

The fourth reason for taking outside refers to classroom teachers' demand, and like the former one, this is mainly mentioned by support teachers as well. For support teachers, they considered that taking students with disabilities outside is *easy for classroom teachers' teaching* (sample teacher's words) or *some classroom teachers are afraid of students with disabilities* (sample teacher's words). Under classroom teachers' pressure, support teachers can only follow and take students with disabilities outside the classroom. As to what to do outside the classroom, support teachers did not mention that. Like some sample teacher reported:

In this school, I work as a support teacher with disable pupils and work in different situations, different classes with different teachers. And it quite different, I think. It depends on the person, it doesn't depends on the school. I don't know I can explain to you, but in the some classes it was easy for me to feel as a class teacher and to make my children to stay inside and to work just simple works, for example topics and worksheets. In another situation, I used to arrive and they (classroom teachers) waiting for me, and told: 'ok, you can work outside, because inside it was very difficult for them'. So it depends from the teachers.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

I think from my experience is yes. But I know some teachers who prefer to let the support teacher take the students outside the classroom. So they don't disturb the class. I think they are afraid and they don't know how to teach those students. I think they are afraid, I can say this because they have a student with Autism and a lot of teachers here tell me how can you stay with that boy, aren't you afraid of that boy.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)

The last two causes, new support teacher's teaching need and *Sostegno di aula* with related

learning resources were not frequently mentioned, however, all these two points from the experienced support teachers' working experiences, both of them has been a support teacher for more than ten years. Therefore, I want to present here to ensure we can get all the important points that expressed by sample teachers. In one sample teacher's response, she referred these two points at the same time, as she stated:

T: In this class there were all disabilities materials, there were books, games, whatever they can use. And then when in fourth class, I started to work with them inside the class.

J: sorry, a class. What do you mean about this class?

T: There has something about special class.

J: inside the general school?

T: si, inside the school.

J: what's about that room? Can you tell me more about that room?

T: si, sostegno di aula. Some colleges decide that me and my support college teach inside the special class, but I think that was my first experience, that first year was necessary for me to understand how they could work because inside the class both of them change, one becomes very shy and the other one creates problems, a lot of problems, behavior problems. That's why I have to stay a place where they can feel at home.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

Another teacher mentioned the point of new support teacher's teaching need, which made her decide to take student with disability outside the classroom to teach:

I am a support teacher. At the beginning, I was taking the students with disabilities outside the classroom. In the beginning when I started to work. Because I needed to create some specific aims for this student outside the classroom.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-10)

The second main theme comes to **placement in special schools**, which covers six sub-themes: students with strong disabilities, general schools' professionals and learning resources are limited, special school with more professionals and learning resources, mainstream classes already have many problems, students with different kinds of disabilities and to learn life skills for the future. Before we approaching that main theme and its sub-themes, two considerably critical points are needed to make clearly: on the one hand this main theme is not common like the first main theme and only mentioned by 6 sample teachers, which inevitably one sample teacher's response probably includes more than one sub-theme, therefore the frequencies of sub-themes is low. While

on the other hand all those sample teachers mentioned in this main theme have a common characteristic: well knowledge about special school education. For example, some had been a special school teacher in the past, some are older and there were still special education schools when they were students in primary schools, some are with a good command of special education knowledge. All that make these six teachers see the proper placement for students with SEN to receive inclusive education from a non-dominant perspective. However, although these six teachers support to place students with SEN into the special schools to receive inclusive education, which does not mean they against current Italian school inclusive education practice and some of them even strongly support current school placement practice.

The first three reasons, students with strong disabilities, general schools' professionals and learning resources are limited and special school with more professionals and learning resources, are interconnected with each other and were mentioned by sample teachers at the same time. Two sample teachers' responses, one was a special school teachers in the past and one is a school director who had experience of special education schools when she was a student, mainly concern these three reasons. Their logical thinking is some students with strong disabilities cannot develop well in mainstream schools as here lacking related learning resources and professionals to meet these students specific needs, therefore it is better to put them into the special education schools as there has related learning resources and professionals, which can well meet these students' needs, as they said:

T: I worked in a special school in the Vicenza. There were a lot of children with strong disabilities. I think for them it was better because stay together, they can know each other, they can meet children with same disabilities and try to communicate, if with normal students it is impossible! And there are therapy, swimming pool, big gym, a lot of activities for them, it is very good experiences for them.

J: in general school?

T: no, there are not many activities for the students with disabilities. There are spaces, but it is not enough. The gym is very small and small garden, next year we will not have library because the limited space. In some schools, there are no spaces for them. So it is quite impossible to do the things for them.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-14)

T: For example, Lenad (a student with disability in wheelchair) he needs a specific location for his needs. The school doesn't have this support for him, like materials. He

needs specific classroom with bed, because he gets tired and need sleep. Is impossible, the school with 350 students, is impossible. He needs a specific motor training. In this school, there is one gym pool, when the other student, mana, was in primary school he needs a specific training for developing his language. But, it impossible in this school. There is not specific language training for support teacher. And now he can only speak dad, mama and stop. Because in the past he exercise language in a training. When he was child, he got assistance from a special person that taught him how to develop language skills. But the support teacher, according to our university doesn't give us this kind of training.

J: So, how can we do to address that?

T: This school is not for this student. I think the school is very important for inclusive students to develop social skills, but for disability students very massive is not a place to develop. It's better to special school.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

From that two extended extracts, we can see the first three concerns clear and here we need to ask two more questions: because the majority of sample teachers do not have the experiences of special education school, therefore their answer to that perspective dimension is to place students with SEN into mainstream schools plus taking outside, what we want to ask is if they have the special education experience, will they change their answers? And furthermore, taking outside, to some extent, can be considered as re-opening a small special school/class inside the mainstream school or not? All these needed us to explore more, which I will discuss in the latter section of the research.

The fourth reason mentioned by sample teachers is about mainstream classes already have many problems, like some students with family problems, some students never smile in the class and other problems. Given that, some sample teaches expressed the view that currently put students with disabilities in the mainstream schools is not a good thinking as it bad for both students with or without disabilities. As one teacher said:

Because in the class the students start to change, students with problems. In the class, there are some students with problems, in general. For example, there are some students they are never smile in the elementary school. The number of students are sad and no happy is grow up. That some students are sad and have problems to manage the feeling, also with the people around them. The children with disability have problems to integrate into the class.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

In relation to that reason is the fifth which refers to students with different kinds of disabilities, which means current mainstream schools' students already have many problems like we mentioned in the fourth theme, if we continue to place students with different kind of disabilities into the mainstream schools, it will be make the current situation worse than before. Furthermore with pre-existing problems, it will be difficult for including students with disabilities into the mainstream schools, as one sample teacher said:

In the past, the situation was more comfortable, it was simple to integrate students with disabilities into the classroom. But now, as you know, there are other problems, like there are not only Italian students, there are students come from other countries. So the teaching becomes a tough things. Many students has problems with their families, many many problems, students are more active. Now in the class is not simple to follow the integration, to follow the lesson together. The idea is good, but now the practice is very difficult! It is a good idea, but to teach is another thing. In this moment, because the class situation is different now it not likes before. Now, there are new problems, new things to happen in the classroom. So, in this case students with disabilities come into the class is not a good thing. It's better to go to special schools.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

The last cause is about to students with disabilities learn job skills for the future in professional schools, and this sample teacher mainly focus on secondary school students, whose age is about 13 or 14. She expressed the view that some students with disabilities can attend the training schools where they can learn some practical job skills, like making Pasta, cake and other things, which will benefit for their future, while in mainstream they cannot learn these life skills. As she said:

Also the school takes care about the project of life for those students with disabilities. Because the teacher takes care about during the year of the school but also the period moving for the life. Taking contact with social services. Some kids when they are 13 they finish the middle school and from the 14 the kids with high level of disability problems going to special professional training school. For critical disability, there are special schools take care about them, but for critical disability (29:39). She said that the project flowing down, before 13 the child with strong disability you put them into the class with other students. But at 14, the kids with will don't follow the high school. But some yes it depends on the level of the disabilities. There is an example of the girl with disorder, she finishes the middle school and also with the help of the support teacher she will go to the high school (training school) where they produce the pasta, cake...School (training school)

for making bread, cake. There are professional schools, because you go to this school you learn a job skill. And in this school there are many students with disabilities, have special programme to take many teachers to do that.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

Finally, it comes to *others* which mean these placements are provided by small part of teachers and two were identified: the placement depends on students' disability level and good students plus one or two students with disabilities in one class. Given the various understandings of inclusive education and different practices to develop school inclusive education practice, therefore we should respect and consider seriously teachers' idea in terms of how to realize the inclusive education, and what more significantly is that less persons' idea does not mean it less important than the majority's views. The first concerns students' disability level, which means teachers do not give a concrete placement in terms of inclusive education, but it depends on student's disability level, as some sample teachers said:

Yes. It depends which level of the disability. It not easy to give a answer.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

But I think that it's difficult to talk about the work about the support teachers. Because it depends on a lot of things on the disabilities. Some situations are possible to stay inside the classroom even during the different lessons. In another situation, it will be some problems for the pupils and the classroom, so I think that it depends.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

The second and also the last placement is good students plus one or two students with disabilities in one class, which means normal students in one class are well students without problems from family, parents and others, and then we can put one or two students with disabilities into this class. Only in this arrangement, can all students have a well-personal development, as the sample teacher stated:

The perfect solution could be create a class with 20 students with high academic level, with good students, with good family background. And inside put one student with disability. One or two students with disabilities. But the other students must be good students, with high academic level. In this situation, the integration is good. One or two in the good class. But if I have one class with many problems, it's really difficult for me to

teach.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

4.6 Interpretation: What is the general development trend of inclusive education during your schooling and working period?

As to the interpretation dimension, the main concern is to examine the historical development trend of inclusive education from school teachers' perspective, to investigate teachers' opinions and feelings in terms of the situation of inclusive education within their schools. In doing so, on the one hand the bottom perspective, which is basing on school teachers' day-to-day practice, is employed to understand schools' inclusive education development, on the other hand comparing the inclusive education development between teachers' perspective and the government's perspective which we discussed in the chapter four, to see these two narratives regarding to the development of inclusive education. Furthermore to investigate are there some differences between these two perspectives. In particular, in order to draw a full picture of the historical development of inclusive education, we ask teachers to recall their school education experience about the situation of inclusive education in their own schools, to provide some information in terms of the inclusive education development from their kindergarten until they finished their studies. Finally we combine teachers' schooling education and working period to present a picture of Italian teachers' account on inclusive education development history, distinguishing from the official inclusive education development history which stated in the various policies. Additionally, we need to keep in mind that what we present here is the view that expressed by the majority of sample teachers, which means there are still some different opinions among teachers. Therefore, these different views will present as well, to enrich our understanding of the historical development of inclusive education in Italian school context.

Based on sample teachers' interviews, three main themes were identified which are worse: before 1977, better and better: 1977 to around 2000 and worse than before: around 2000 to current, and within each main themes some sub-themes are grouped, for a detailed description, see table 15.

Table 15 Interpretation: What is the general development trend of inclusive education during your schooling and working period?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Interpretation	Worse: before 1977	Students with disabilities in special schools or classes
		Students with disabilities in mainstream schools without support teachers
	Better and better: 1977 to around 2000	All the students study together
		More policies focuses on inclusive education
		Allocating support teachers to students with disabilities
		Related programmes/instruments/specific groups were built for students with disabilities
	Worse than before: around 2000 to current	A strong atmosphere for inclusive education
		Cutting money for students with disabilities
		Reducing support teachers' allocation
		Support teachers' frequently changing

The first main theme comes to *worse: before 1977*, which means before the year of 1977 the inclusive education in school context is in a worse situation and two sub-themes can fully explain that: students with disabilities in special schools or classes and students with disabilities in mainstream schools without support teachers. This theme is mainly provided by the older teachers who received primary school education during this period and their schooling education experiences offer us rich information regarding the situation of inclusive education during that time. The first sub-theme refers to students with disabilities in special schools or classes and they are in a worse situation. According to sample teachers' view, the majority of students with disabilities were placed in the special schools and some students with disabilities received education in mainstream schools, however, these students were grouped together in a special class within the mainstream school and only some were placed in the mainstream classes. One sample teacher whose age is 57 and received the primary school education during this period (primary school: 1968-1972) and she's words fully tells us about that:

T: Because I studied many years ago. When I attended the first class in primary school, in our class there are not students with disabilities. But, in that years there was one special class disability students. Students were all disabilities, students with problems all in this class, in this specific class. Students big, 6 years old, but the other students are 10 or

bigger. This class just judged by the students with disabilities, all together regardless their age. The students are 6 or 10, the common things is that they have problems. I remember that class is not good. My personal feeling is that students are not good.

J: sorry, can you remember which year?

T:1968. That class is lasting until 1977.

(Director, primary and secondary school, IT-1)

Another sample teacher is 58 years old and she was a primary school student in that period (primary school: 1969-1973), as she said:

In the past, there was no this programme. They (children with disabilities) stay at home, at special school. Because the law starts at 1977. They start to put students with disabilities in the general school. Before that the students with disabilities outside the school.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

The second sub-theme comes to students with disabilities in mainstream schools without support teachers, special programmes for students with disabilities and lacking related resources. Briefly, students with disabilities mainly sitting at the mainstream classes without related measures were taken for them during that period. Lacking support teachers, compared to the situation after 1977, was frequently highlighted by sample teachers. One sample teacher's age is 54 and there were no support teachers for her classmates with disabilities during she's primary school education period (primary school: 1964-1967):

I understand that in my class there were some students with disabilities later. Because when I followed the primary school, there wasn't support teacher, because the first law was in 1975. During this period there was no support teacher. I remember that in my class there were some students cannot pass the school year, they must repeat to pass the year. In the class, there were also students with social problems.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

In all, before 1977 the inclusive education in Italian school context was in a worse situation, on the one hand students with disabilities were placed in special schools or special classes within the mainstream schools, while on the other hand students with disabilities in the mainstream classes without related support, particularly no support teacher for them, which were fully reflected in sample teachers' personal schooling education experiences.

The second main theme is *better and better: 1977 to around 2000*, which means starting from 1977 the school inclusive education development is becoming better and better and this development trend stopped at around 2000. Particularly, this view was shared by the majority of sample teachers. According to sample teachers' interviews, various indicators can tell this 'better and better development trend': more policies were issued in terms of inclusive education, related programmes were established for caring students with disabilities in mainstream schools, more and more instruments were provided, mainstream schools' high acceptance of students with disabilities, while the most frequently mentioned indicator was the allocation of support teachers to mainstream schools to help students with disabilities. Here we can draw a sample teacher's view, she is 60 and being a teacher for 41 years, to better understand that new situation as this teacher started to work from 1977:

Ok, if we talk about disability, it starts from 1977 in which I started to work like a teacher. Starting from that year you have the feeling that things about inclusion are getting better year by year. The government, the institutions are sensitive to the disable people. Every year they were taking care more and more about the disabled people. Starting with the support teachers at the beginning, there were not so many support teachers. Passing the years during the time, they have increased.
Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

In all, this main theme covers five sub-themes, which are all the students study together, more policies focuses on inclusive education, allocating support teachers to students with disabilities, related programmes/instruments/specific groups were built for students with disabilities and a strong atmosphere for inclusive education.

Firstly sample teachers refers to all students study together from 1977 and special schools were abolished, at the same time more and more students with disabilities were put into mainstream classes to study with other students. Although there were some differences among various areas in terms of the speed of closing special schools and putting students with disabilities into the mainstream schools, but overall started from 1977 all students studying together was a dominant trend for the inclusive education reform and development. As one sample teacher stated the phenomenon of all students studying together in mainstream schools:

So, at the beginning of 70's there were special schools, for example school for blind, deaf.....but start from 1977, we had the integration about students with disabilities in the normal classes. They stay all together and there are support teachers. So 99% they stay together. This just for primary school. For other secondary or high school, starting at 1988.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-3)

Secondly comes to more policies focuses on inclusive education were issued by the government to promote school inclusive education practice and this sub-theme was mentioned by the majority of sample teacher, related policies for training support teachers, for the allocation of support teacher to students with disabilities, to include students with disabilities in secondary schools, etc. In a word, compared to the years before 1977, many policies that aimed at different aspects of school inclusive education were issued by government.

The third relates to allocating support teachers to students with disabilities in mainstream schools, as we stated earlier, this sub-theme was highly mentioned by all the sample teachers. For a long time, the setting of support teachers has been considered as an effective measure to promote inclusive education in Italy (D'Alessio, 2011, 2012; Devecchi et al., 2012) and this view was shared by the Italian school teachers in my current research as well. The support teachers can, to some extent, work together with classroom teachers to teach students with disabilities, create specific programmes for students with disabilities, teach normal students, etc. Put simply, various roles are played by support teachers in promoting school inclusive education practice. As some sample teachers stated that view:

From 1977 the inclusive education becomes better than before, there were good tutor, society, school, some studies, psychologists, teachers that they works focus on that things (students with disabilities). Particularly, there are some support teachers, workers that focus on those things.

(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)

Starting (the year of 1977) with the support teachers at the beginning, there were not so many support teachers. Passing the years during the time, they have increased.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

However, as we stated earlier in this section, there are some differences among various areas

in terms of the speed of taking measures to improve inclusive education. From the government policy which we discussed in chapter four and the majority of sample teachers' interviews, allocating support teachers to primary schools was starting from 1977. In my research, one sample teacher's age is 48 and she received primary school education between 1980 and 1983, from 1983 to 1988 she was in low secondary school. As she stated that during her primary schooling education, there were students with disabilities in her class, but without support teachers. While in the secondary school, her classmate with disability had support teacher. From that teacher's schooling experience, we can infer that there were some differences among various areas in developing inclusive education, however, the overall trend is the same which is becoming better and better. As this sample teacher said:

*When I followed the elementary school, there was a student with disabilities in the classroom, but there were no programmes, no support teachers. In the middle school, there was one student with disabilities with support teacher.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)*

The next sub-theme is related programmes/instruments/specific groups were built for students with disabilities in mainstream schools, which helps students to learn at mainstream schools. With these various measures were taken by the government and mainstream schools, students with disabilities' situation was changing from just sitting like the years before 1977, to learning at classes. Here we can draw one sample teacher's interview to present how school's various programmes help students with disabilities to learn well:

*In the previous job, another school I worked in a project named is the Open-laboratory. The support teachers take part one of the activities, for example lecture laboratory, city history laboratory, sport, yoga..... Different activities. The students with disabilities with support teacher and some other students, they are work outside the class. And they meet other students from other classes, other schools. They work together about some projects, some activities, some programmes. Three or four lessons they work together with other classes. In past, they had many laboratories, they can cooking. They together make some kinds of foods, like jar. This is good not only for students with disabilities but also other students.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-11)*

Finally, is coming to the strong atmosphere for inclusive education in the society, mainstream schools, classrooms, and everywhere. According to sample teachers' view that with many related measures were taken to develop school inclusive education, a strong atmosphere in terms of welcoming and accepting students with disabilities was formed in the society and schools, which inevitably facilitates the development of inclusive education in Italy. For that atmosphere, we can see from one sample teacher's words:

Ok, if we talk about disability, it starts from 1977 in which I started to work like a teacher. Starting from that year you have the feeling that things about inclusion are getting better year by year. The government, the institutions are sensitive to the disable people. Every year they were taking care more and more about the disabled people. Starting with the support teachers at the beginning, there were not so many support teachers. Passing the years during the time, they have increased.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

However, this well-developed inclusive education trend started to change around the year of 2000, in order to fully present this change, here we present a extend interview extract between researcher and one sample teacher who is 48 and has become a teacher for 19 years from 1999, while within her 19-year teacher career, from 1999 to 2005 she was a support teacher and from 2005 to current she is a classroom teacher:

T: it's good. They pay attention to that topic. With the development of those years, they give fewer hours to support teachers to work, less time than before. From 1980 to 2000, the support teachers work many hours, look all the Europe the integration in Italy is a good example.

J: so in this period the support teachers work many hours with students with disabilities?

T: more support teachers more hours. There were more workers more teachers in that time.

J: and then?

F: later, later than 2000. The numbers of the support teachers is decline.

J: why?

T: because it's decided by the government. They often change the government, different governments make different policies. There is no stability.

J: so in this situation, the support teacher is not like the before?

T: yes, the student number of the class becomes more high, with more students. There are less hours for students with disabilities with support teachers. Also with the development of the society, it changes a lot these years. And state government has less money to spend to the school, to the support teachers. Because the state government cuts the money that it

should give to the school.
(Classroom teacher, secondary school, IT-12)

From that extend extract, we can find that various aspects in terms of inclusive education have been changed in these years, while this sample teachers specifically focuses on the changes of support teachers to judge the situation of inclusive education in Italian schools. And this judgment was common shared by nearly all the sample teachers, which is the third main theme in terms of the development of inclusive education in Italy: **worse than before: around 2000 to current**. Before fully present this main theme, two points need to clarify: one is the year of 2000 as a boundary to divide worse years and better years of inclusive education development. As we stated earlier, some differences do exist among various areas, which inevitably leads to some areas' inclusive education well-developed while other areas' less-developed. Therefore, the year of 2000 cannot apply to all Italian school contexts and careful considerations should be re-considered when employ this year as boundary to judge the inclusive education development history in whole Italy. Employed the year of 2000 as a boundary in current research mainly based on the majority of sample teachers' views, however, employing that does not mean to deny other sample teachers' view, although in a small numbers. On the contrary, different views on which year should be the boundary well illustrate the differences among various school areas, which we stated many times in this section. Another point we need to keep in mind is current research mainly concerns the worse aspects in terms of development of inclusive education in Italian school context after the year of 2000, which was the common view shared by the majority of teachers. While this does not mean we ignore other sample teachers' views in terms of the trend of inclusive education development after the year of 2000. On the contrary, we treat all sample teachers' views equally without putting one higher than another one. As to the theme of worse than before: around 2000 to current, which covers four sub-themes: cutting money for students with disabilities, reducing support teachers' allocation, support teachers' frequently changing and the principle of allocating support teachers is from students' needs to money.

The first sub-theme refers to cutting money for students with disabilities, which is the mostly frequent topic that highlighted by nearly all the sample teachers. The decrease of investing money into the area of inclusive education has been produced some bad impacts on schools' inclusive

education ecology, like less and less support teachers for students with disabilities and some programmes for students with disabilities were cancelled, which definitely hinder the development of inclusive education. Some sample teachers' words clearly illustrate the view of cutting money for students with disabilities:

T: But nowadays, she said she had the feeling that inclusion topic and disabled topic is going back, is doing one step behind as the level before.

J: why?

T: because she said the public system is worry about the cost. Taking care about the disabled people has high cost. The support teacher is expensive for the state. So the publication are back one step behind, so they don't take care about this topic like the past. That's her feeling.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-5)

Just for money, there are no other reasons to understand. So we are always cutting money for disable pupils because they are not so much. The family are 20(percent) in total, but there are not so many families and so we cut. It's stupid, I think! In Italy it works like that. Here, every year with less instruments, less money, less teachers.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

The cutting money for developing inclusive education produces many negatives as we stated earlier, one of the biggest influences is reducing support teachers' allocation for students with disabilities in mainstream schools, which is considered as the main reason why inclusive education development is becoming worse than before by the sample teachers. The decline of support teachers' allocation to mainstream schools leads to one support teacher needs to be responsible for more students with disabilities than before, which inevitably results in less supporting hours for each of the student with disability than before. In addition, lacking of support teachers makes some specific programmes for students with disabilities had been stopped. And sample teachers' words can fully describe that situation:

Now, here in Veneto, the situation is changing because I start to the support teacher of the disable pupil, I study in the university, I study the special courses. I used to work with my students in my 22 hours. Now, in 22 hours, you have to work all with one boy or girl that has very very low level of intelligence, usually they even have physical problems. Or if there are not so, the situation is not so hard, you have to teach with 4 students. It means that for each of them you just see them just 6 hours one week. In 6 hours there is no

relation, you have to go in the classroom try to make them understand some simple things, usually to write or to count aims. And then you go outside to change for another student. I think that you don't have good time to do what a teacher for disable pupil needs to do, try to make them stay with class, try to know them, to protect them sometimes, because they need to have a tutor to help them to stay with others. But if you have just six or five in a week, it impossible.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-6)

From her teaching experience, one sample support teacher stated that reducing support teachers' allocation has produced some negative impacts on the programmes for students with disabilities:

T: And then the inclusive activities become bad, not good. In the year become bad.

J: why?

T: The time for doing that becoming shorter. In the past the time was more longer, now is become shorter.

J: but why the time is becoming shorter?

T: because the central government decides to reduce the support teachers. For example, every day every morning, she is busy. She is here, all the students around the circle. The students say what they like, how they feel. One example of that activity, they work in a couple, two students together. But, when there are more students. She has to monitor activity with more students, the time is too short.

J: how many students?

T: four or five

J: in the past, only one?

T: two.

J: now is four or five.

T: because the time for start to do some is limited, because there are more students. And they cannot finish the work and they cut. You know the group with four five students to finish takes a lot of time. No problem, she does this activity. The government shorter this time. The Ministry of education shorter this time for this kind of activities. Support teachers need to be for more students.

(Support teacher, primary school, IT-9)

The third sub-theme refers to support teachers' frequently changing their roles to become a classroom teacher when support teachers complete the five-year support teacher contract. What is worthy to mention is that in current research six teacher participants were support teachers in the past, later they changed into classroom teachers. The topics of support teachers frequently change to classroom teachers are well researched by some scholars (e.g. D'Alessio, 2011, 2012;

Devecchi et al., 2012) and this frequently changing has produced a seriously negative impact on students with disabilities, as one sample teacher said:

T: The teachers may change between different schools.

J: is the support teachers or classroom teachers?

T: it's the support teacher. In the past, the same teacher follows the same student for long time, but now the situation is changing. Maybe for one year, they will change. The school gives the students to the support teacher, but they continue to change.

(Director and classroom teacher, primary school, IT-8)

The last sub-theme is the principle of allocating support teachers is changing from students' needs to money and this particularly relates to students with DSA or lighter level of disabilities. In the past, students like that can have support teachers, but now there are no support teachers for them as government cuts the money. In fact, this view is not common among sample teachers, however, it can be considered as a representative view as that idea is provided by two experienced teachers, one was for a support teacher for 13 years and changed into a classroom teacher at 2016, while another one is a classroom teacher for 22 years from 1997. From their working experience with students with disabilities during these years, they provide a good narrative for detailed that view:

Because, for example when I started 15 years ago, we can decide with the doctors the disability level: lighter, middle, and grave. The lighter needs 3 to 5 hour a week, the middle needs 12 hours a week, the grave needs 22 hours a week, plus other hours. Now, you don't have the first level. So, if someone has problems with intelligence or something else, but there are not so deep. Ok, don't worry! You don't need support teachers. It's stupid! Why 15 years ago pupil needs the support teacher, now no! I think it relates to the money that's why children with disability have support teachers. Not related to their needs.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-4)

T: if it is in a good way, it's work, it's ok. But sometimes some students don't have problems, they give this BES, something like a excuse. The document of the students, the teacher they speak together, they know the situation of the student's family. They could give him a text more simpler.

J: do you think we should also give them the support teachers?

T: yes.

J: but now in practice no support teachers for them. Who should be responsible for them?

T: the general teacher.

J: Is difficult?

T: in the past there was money, now in the school they don't have enough money for support teacher. This document (policy document in terms of BES) could be positive or negative, she think is more political. Because in the past, there was more money it's easy to take support teacher but now there is no money. So the government says to the (general) teacher takes care of them (the students with SEN but without disability certificate), no support teachers for them.

(Classroom teacher, primary school, IT-13)

“In between” conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the inclusive education policy came to be understood by Italian school teachers, various topics emerged during the process of analyzing the empirical data, which undoubtedly facilitate us to have a comprehensive understanding regarding how inclusive education is going on in Italian school practice. Furthermore, based on sample teachers' rich account, a comparison between inclusive education in school practice and inclusive education in policy documents is made. Generally speaking, the policy has a good intention which aims to facilitate the practice development, like various inclusive education policy issued by Italian government to develop school inclusive education practice. However, when policy document is leaving the government office to the local school context, the good intention sometimes can do bad things on practice and produce some negative impacts, for example setting support teacher in mainstream schools is an effective measure to improve school inclusive education practice, but that also has some negative side effects like a bad relationship between support teachers and general teachers, support teacher takes students with disabilities outside the classroom can be regarded a kind of segregation, all that poses various challenges for further developing school inclusive education. This phenomenon makes us reconsider the inclusive education policy and how to issue better policy in the future. Undoubtedly, there are still some cases like that, however to further discuss that will beyond that chapter's scope, while a full discussion of that will provide in the following compared chapter.

Chapter five Deconstructing Inclusive Practice in Chinese School Context

Introduction

As in previous chapter, this chapter will focus on deconstructing Chinese inclusive education from regular school teachers' account based on the following six questions:

Explanation: What does inclusive education mean for you?

Application: How do you promote the inclusive education in your work?

Self-knowledge: What are the facilitators and barriers to implement inclusive education?

Empathy: From your schooling experience, please describe the situation of that students being included in your class/school?

Perspective: What is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education?

Interpretation: What is the general development trend of inclusive education during your working period?

Drawing from the empirical data from teachers' interviews, the intention of that chapter is to examine inclusive education from Chinese regular school teachers' day-to-day school practice.

5.1 Explanation: What does inclusive education mean for you?

Considering the meaning of inclusive education, a total of seven main themes were identified, which are value, safe and quiet, self-development, transformation, specific treatment, placement and subject. Regarding each main theme, some sub-themes were grouped to fully present the theme. For a detailed description, please see table 16.

The first main theme considers *inclusive education as a kind of value*, which includes four sub-themes: an ideal education for all students, a good education for students with disabilities, a kind of education without discrimination and emphasizing students' strengths. Particularly, considering inclusive education as a kind of value is not common among regular teachers, as the majority of regular teachers have limited or zero knowledge of inclusive education, therefore most

of regular teacher understand inclusive education from a more practical perspective. From teachers' interviews, we can see this understanding of inclusive education:

Table 16 Explanation: what does inclusive education mean for you?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Explanation	Value	A good education for students with disabilities
		A humanistic education
		A kind of education without discrimination
		Emphasizing student's strengths
	Safe and quiet	Students with disabilities stay safely in the regular class
		Students with disabilities do not create dangerous things for other students
		Students with disabilities without disturbing teachers' teaching
	Self-development	Regular schools lack related special services
		Regular teachers lack related professional abilities
		Regular teachers are busy with other (normal) students
	A transformation process	Teachers need to change (attitudes, teaching methods) to meet students' needs
		Students with disabilities also need to change themselves to adapt the regular classroom
	Additional support	Special teachers
		Special school
	Physical placement	Find a seat for students in regular classroom
	Subject	Provide education for students with disabilities in the regular classroom

Inclusive education is an ideal education form for all the students, regardless you are regular or with disabilities. Every student can receive a proper education under the inclusive education idea and is a fair and just educational form for all students.

(Special teacher, special school, CH-3)

Inclusive education means to offer a good education for students with disabilities in the regular class, and general teacher need to work with special teacher together to meet those students' needs.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-15)

Inclusive education means we cannot only focus on students' weaknesses, like students with disabilities cannot do anything as they have disabilities. Under the inclusive education, we focus on students' strengths and try our best to discover their strengths and develop it and even students with disabilities also have strengths.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-11)

However, it is worth to note two points regarding this value perspective. Firstly, after expressing these values teachers also add one sentence that is '*nowadays it is very difficult to realize that in our schools, may be in the future we can achieve it*' which reflects teachers' complex concerns on inclusive education. And secondly, teachers who concern inclusive education from the value perspective are at two extremes that one is the young teachers (n=3) range from 28 to 35, another is the teachers (n=2) nearly retired. The younger teacher is just starting to teach and full of ambitions and the nearly retired teachers have a long teaching experience and realize the core of the inclusive education. While between the younger and older is the middle one who bears great pressures from school leader, colleges, students' scores and family, so they consider less about inclusive education.

The second theme comes to see *inclusive education as safe and quiet*, which means students with disabilities stay safely and quietly in the regular classrooms without disturbing other students' study and teachers' teaching. Under that theme, three sub-themes were grouped: students with disabilities stay safely in the regular classrooms, students with disabilities do not create dangerous things for other students and students with disabilities without disturbing teachers' teaching. Currently, students' safety is the most important education agenda in school development. Therefore, the schools' reforms need to give priority to students' safety and to ensure students have safe and happy school life is the reforms' start point. The first sub-theme highlights students with disabilities stay safely in the regular classrooms. For regular school teachers, the students with disabilities are someone who has some personal problems. Therefore, regular teachers stated that when putting students with disabilities into their classrooms, they consider the first and most thing is to ensure students with disabilities to stay safely in the classrooms, to some extent, inclusive education is to keep students with disabilities in a safe and good situation. As one teacher said:

Nowadays, students' safety is the first priority of our school. When the school director put one him (a student with disability) into my classroom, the director told me the first thing is to keep him in a safe situation. Yes, students like him actually need to stay at special schools, now you move to our school to receive inclusive education. What is inclusive education? Ok, you stay safely in my classroom without creating problems for us is ok. Yes,

*I can say just safety in my classroom, this is inclusive education.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-17)*

The second sub-theme is students with disabilities do not create dangerous things for other students, mainly refers to normal students. Keeping normal students in a safe situation is also an important work of regular teachers. Many regular teachers reported that normal students in their classrooms are more dangers than before because there are some 'new comers'. Undoubtedly, a person with disability is a person has some strange behaviour that needs to be fixed is still a common understanding of disability in current Chinese social context. Therefore, when students with disabilities are coming to the regular classrooms, to some extent, is considered as dangerous resource for other students, to some extent, normal students. As a result, keeping safety concerns both students with disabilities and not. This sub-theme is frequently mentioned by many regular teachers, like one teacher reported:

*Yes, inclusive education not only for students with disabilities but also for normal students. We need to keep students with disabilities in a safe situation, we also need to keep normal students in good and safe situation. You know sometimes students with disabilities can create some dangerous for other students, this is a serious problem. Before, we never had this kind of problem. Now, yes, because of these new comers, students with disabilities. So, we need to keep normal students in a safe situation and also manage students with disabilities' dangerous behaviors.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)*

The third sub-theme considers inclusive education as students with disabilities without disturbing teachers' teaching, which mainly concerns regular teachers. Many regular teachers are afraid that placing students with disabilities in their classrooms will disturb their class teaching, which inevitably influence students' score. As we discussed earlier, teachers have a big pressure to improve students' score. Therefore, if there something will decrease students' score, it is a serious problem for regular teachers. Given that, regular teachers see inclusive education as students with disabilities not disturb their class teaching. As one teacher stated that view:

Unfortunately, there is an Autism student in my class. Ok, as you know I have a lot of work to do and also I even do not know anything about Autism. So inclusive education for me is this Autism student stay safely and quietly in my class and it is better she does not create

problems for my class. Anyway, the important thing is she stays here safely and quietly and without bringing problems to my class.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-25)

The third main theme considers *inclusive education as students with disabilities' self-development* and this understanding mainly results in regular schools lack related special education services. Currently, there are no fixed professional special/resource teachers in regular schools, the only special education service at school level is the help form local special schools. However, with more and more students with disabilities are coming to regular schools, only one local special schools cannot meet local regular schools needs. Therefore, some regular schools even cannot receive this only special education service, which undoubtedly makes some students with disabilities cannot receive any professional help. Therefore, inclusive education is merely self-development by students with disabilities themselves.

The second and third sub-theme relate to regular teachers, on one hand they lack related professional abilities to teach students with disabilities, on the other hand they are busy with other normal students. Regular teachers lacking of professional abilities to teach students with disabilities is a main barrier for school to promoting inclusive education, which is highlighted by many Chinese scholars. This fact, to some extent, influences teachers' perspectives on inclusive education. For many regular teachers, they see inclusive education as putting students with disabilities into the regular classrooms and develop by themselves. Particularly, this thinking will be reinforced by the fact of big class size with around 50 normal students. Under the pressure for so many normal students, regular teachers cannot separate additional energy and time for students with disabilities in their classrooms. Therefore, students with disabilities need to develop by themselves. The follow two teachers' interviews reflect that two points in terms of regular teachers:

Now inclusive education is about placing students with disabilities into the class, but we can only do very few things for them. As you know, we do not know how to cope with that situation. So they just develop by themselves, learn by themselves. Yes, this is the inclusive education.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

Hahaha..... Inclusive education is very good, but now I think we just put students with disabilities into the regular class without pay enough attention, they can develop by themselves and learn by themselves, that is inclusive education. You also a student in our school, you know every class there are more or less fifty students, now you put one or two students with disabilities in the class. Oh, 我的天啊 (wo di tian a)! We really do not have time for them, you know only one or two students, and those students will occupy you a lot! We really want to help them but we do not have time. Yes, inclusive education for now is they develop by themselves.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

The fourth theme from *a transformative perspective to define inclusive education*, which includes two sub-themes teachers need to change (attitudes, teaching methods) to meet students' needs and students with disabilities also need to change themselves to adapt the regular classroom. This perspective, to some extent, reflects we need to change pre-existing school arrangement to develop inclusive education. However, unlike in western countries' view that regular schools pre-existing system need a overhauling, regular teacher in current study mainly concern themselves need to change with limited thinking on changing the pre-existing regular school system. The changing aspects in terms regular teacher mainly concern attitudes and teaching methods. For them inclusive education is to change themselves to develop inclusive education. Changing attitudes towards students with disabilities is the first step to implement inclusive education. Among the interviews, not all the teachers had a positive attitude towards students with disabilities and some teachers even had a negative attitude towards those "difficult students" as they always disturb their class and interrupt their teaching. And there are some teachers express the idea that inclusive education is transferring teachers' attitudes from negative into positive, as positive attitudes towards students with disabilities is inclusive education:

As you know now in our country some people hold a negative attitude towards persons with disability. Actually, this situation is also very common in our school, some teachers don't like students with disabilities and when director wants to place one or two students with disabilities into their class, they are unhappy for that. So, currently for me I think inclusive education is changing teachers' attitudes towards students with disabilities, from negative to positive. Yes this is inclusive education!

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

In addition, they also express the view that inclusive education means teachers need to

consider students with disabilities' needs when considering the teaching content and changing the teaching methods, as one teacher said:

You cannot simply put students with disabilities into the regular class and give them only a seat, general teachers should take care about them, changing traditional teaching mind and try to teach something to them. For example, using group working to involve them, using peer-tutor to help students with disabilities. Anyway, the general teachers cannot let them stay alone and do nothing in the regular class.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

The second sub-theme concerns students with disabilities also need to change themselves to adapt the regular classroom. For regular teacher, to develop inclusive education students with disabilities also need to change to adapt regular classrooms. Many teachers stated that as a regular school our main responsibility is for normal students, therefore all school arrangements were designed for normal students. Nowadays, we place students with disabilities into regular schools to study is a good thing for all of students, however, we need to recognize that it is impossible for regular schools to change all at once. For making regular schools to meet students with disabilities' specific needs, like teacher training, teaching methods, assessments, etc., more time and effort is needed to make that happen. Given that, regular teachers considers that students with disabilities should change themselves to adapt the regular class as well, as one special teacher said:

Inclusive education is not only focusing on teachers which definitely they should change, but also inclusive education means students with disabilities need to change themselves to adapt the new situation. You should remember, it is student from special school to regular school to receive education not the teacher from regular school to special school. So, students with disabilities need to change themselves something according to the new settings. That is inclusive education.
(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

The fifth theme is the view that ***inclusive education means to provide additional support*** to students with disabilities, which is frequently highlighted by nearly all the teachers. As we stated earlier, regular schools lack necessary special education services and regular teachers do not have the professional abilities to teach students with disabilities. As a result, some students with disabilities are sitting rather than learning at regular classrooms. Given that, regular teachers do

not consider current practice is inclusive education. Therefore, regular teachers expressed the view that inclusive education is we provide additional support to help students with disabilities to study. For additional support, special schools and special education teachers are two frequently mentioned topics, to some extent, this also reflects a traditional thinking that is special school is good for students with disabilities which I will explore more in barrier aspect.

The sixth theme is to see *inclusive education as physical placement* in regular classrooms, which means to find a seat for student with disabilities in the regular classroom. This is a common and popular understanding of inclusive education among teachers and many reasons are responsible for this kind of thinking: lacking school-level special education service, lacking fixed professional special/resource teachers, regular teachers lack related professional abilities, big class size. Therefore, some students with disabilities were just put into the regular classrooms and sit here, but with limited or zero study. As one teacher expressed that view:

Inclusive education is to place students with disabilities into the regular classrooms and study with other regular students. We give them a seat in the classroom, but it is difficult both for students with disabilities and me, as I never receive the inclusive education training.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The seventh and last theme is *inclusive education is about providing education for students with disabilities*. In fact, this thinking originally comes from government policy documents. As we stated in the context part, currently the inclusive education is a sub-theme of special education, which is clearly present nearly in all special education policy documents. Particularly, regular teachers consider special education is equal to inclusive education. The terms inclusive education and special education were used as synonyms nearly by all teachers. Like one teacher said:

Inclusive education is to provide education for students with disabilities, like deaf students, students who loss hearing or other kinds of disabilities. You know nowadays students with disabilities can receive education in special schools or general schools but in the past they did not have the chance to receive education. They (students with disabilities) should thank to the inclusive education.

(Resource teacher, primary school, CH-5)

Another teacher stated that:

Inclusive education means we need to give education to students with disabilities in the regular school, but as a general teacher I do not have the ability to teach them, so they just sit in the seat.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-8)

5.2 Application: How do you promote the inclusive education in your work?

According to current policy and practice in terms of inclusive education in China, there are two points that we should bear in mind before considering how Chinese regular school teachers promote inclusive education in their classrooms. One point is that there are no fixed professional support (resource) teachers in regular schools and regular teachers are responsible for those students who with SEN, another one is that there are lacking inclusive education and special education courses in pre-service teacher education programmes, which means the regular school teachers never receive the training in terms of inclusive education or special education during their pre-service teacher education programme. Bearing those two points in mind, we are now turning to the application dimension. Three main themes were identified regarding to how sample Chinese regular school teachers promote inclusive education, which are moral approach, collaboration and inclusive pedagogy. Under each main theme, there are some sub-themes (see Table 17).

The first theme is *moral approach* which was frequently employed by regular school teachers to promote inclusive education during their day-to-day teaching practice. Under moral approach which includes five concrete sub-themes: more care, more responsibility, more attention, more encourage and allocate good and experienced teachers to students with SEN. As we mentioned earlier, due to lacking of support (resource) teachers in regular schools and related training courses of inclusive education and special education during pre-service teacher education programmes, many regular school teachers have nothing to provide but only to use moral approach to help students with SEN in their classes. Therefore, from a moral level, giving students with disabilities more care, attention and encourage were frequently employed by regular

school teachers to promote inclusive education:

Table 17 Application: How do you promote the inclusive education in your work?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Application	Moral approach	More care
		More responsibility
		More attention
		More encourage
		Allocate good and experienced teacher
	Collaboration	Peer support
		Teacher with normal students' parents
		Teacher with students with disabilities' parents
		Teacher with special school teachers
	Inclusive pedagogy	Flexible assessment
		Flexible teaching aim
		Teaching according to student's interest

I don't know special education and specific teaching methods for students with disabilities. What I can do to promote inclusive education is to give her more attention and care during the class. Furthermore, when she got a progress, no matter is big or small, I will give her a prize in front of the class and I think this is good way to encourage her to study. Yes, this is my way to promote inclusion, if you ask me to summarize some methods. Sorry I can't because I really don't know. But only give her more care, love, attention and encourage.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

In my opinion, the most important way to promote inclusive education is to love students with disabilities, to accept this student. As you know we don't have training for teaching students with disabilities, so more love, care and attention is critical for inclusion.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-8)

There is one student with disability in my class, I always give more attention and love to her than other students. And I tell her Helen Keller's story and encourage her that you need to smile to your life even if you have a disability. Yes, I use Helen Keller to encourage her to establish a strong desire for study and life. This is my way to include her in my class and if you want me to tell you some other scientific special teaching methods, sorry I don't know.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)

Some school inclusion managers mentioned that because there are no special teachers in our school and regular teachers do not have inclusive education and special education training, so our approach to promote inclusive education is to provide good and experienced regular teachers to

students with disabilities:

Yes, no special teacher in our school. And when students with disabilities are coming to our school, I will choose a good and experienced teacher to take care of him/her. Students with disabilities in those teachers' classes can receive more love, attention.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

Chen is a good and experienced teacher in our school and student with disability in her class is very good. Chen always pays more attention and responsibility to this student with disability. Yes, she is a nice teacher and we place students with disabilities into her class.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

The second main theme is **collaboration**. Teachers collaborate with different stakeholders to promote inclusive education, which mainly contains normal students, normal students' parents, students with disabilities' parents and special school teachers. Peer-support was frequently employed by regular teachers to promote inclusive education, which is to allocate one good student to help the student with disability:

When she (student with disability) came to my class, I allocated a good normal student to her and let this good student to help and play with her. As you know there are more or less 50 students in my class and I don't have enough time to take care of her, so give her a good student is an effective way to include her in our class.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-14)

I ask some good students in our class to play with her (student with disability) and take care of her, they help her to take dishes for lunch, they help her clean the desk and classroom's floor. In this way, she feels in a love family and everybody pay attention to her.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

During the interview peer-support is widely used by teachers, however, we should realize there are two critical points in terms of this method: one is teachers try to transform their responsibility for educating students with disabilities into normal students, as 'I don't have time to take care of the student with disability' is a cause always accompany with this method and teachers employ normal students, mainly good students, to work for themselves and in this way they do not need to consider students with disabilities when designing teaching, curriculum and so

on. So we should consider whether this method's intention is to promote inclusive education or not? Another point regarding the peer-support is does student with disability learn academic knowledge or not? Undoubtedly students can learn from each other, especially for social and emotional development aspect, however, what about academic aspect? Those two points I will discuss deeper in the third part of the thesis.

The second sub-theme refers to collaborating with normal students' parents. As we can see in the literature review, parents play a critical role in promoting inclusive education, especially the parents of students with SEN. However, there is a big difference between China and Western countries, as in China many sample teachers mentioned that collaboration with normal students' parents is critical for implementing inclusive education. The main reason is normal students' parents account for the majority, while students with disabilities' parents only account for a small part, therefore it will difficult for regular schools to implement inclusive education polity if normal students' parents against inclusive education. Considering that, regular school teachers need to frequently communicate with normal students' parents to report students with disabilities' situation to gain normal students' parents' understanding and support. As one regular school teacher said:

You must inform normal students' parents that the students with disabilities in the class are going well and do not disturb the class and other students' learning. Yes this is very important for promoting inclusion. I always send messages in terms of students with disabilities' learning progress to normal students' parents and just let them know the situation of students with disabilities in our class is good and they (normal students' parents) don't need to worry about their students. If you don't keep a good relationship with normal students' parents and inform them the situation of students with disabilities, maybe they will together against to place students with disabilities into their sons/daughters' class because the students with disabilities maybe disturb others study.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

Collaborating with students with disabilities' parents is uncommon during regular teachers' interview, many regular school teachers mentioned that students with disabilities come from working class and their parents are busy with their working and do not have time to take care of them, while other teachers hold the view that the parents of students with disabilities just consider the regular school like a place to take care of their children and they do not care about their kind's

study. However, there were still some students with disabilities' parents actively collaborated with regular school teachers, which help their kids well being included. During the interviews, one regular school teacher mentioned that one student with disability's father always attend the class activities and collaborate well with normal students' parents as well to help her daughter to include into the regular classroom:

Her (a student with disability) father is very good and other students with disabilities' parents should learn from her father. Not like other students with disabilities' parents in our school, her father is very nice and always come my class to ask her daughter's situation in the class and ask me to give him some suggestions to help his daughter to learn at home. As you know I am busy with a lot of staff as there are too many students in my class, but her father's care and love makes me want to help her.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

Considering the fact that the lack of support (resource) teachers in regular schools and then inviting special schools' teachers to co-teaching and planning for students with disabilities is a common method employed by regular school teachers to develop inclusive education practice. According to the recent laws in terms of special education, special schools are still the main institution to host the students with disabilities, which inevitably require more special teachers to undertake the work for educating students with disabilities in special schools. And that is the reason why there are no fixed professional special teachers in regular schools. Therefore regular schools' teachers are seeking for collaborating with special school teachers has become a significant way to promote inclusive education:

I don't have the knowledge of special education and disability, so I cooperate with special school teachers to co-teaching the students with disabilities in my class. Every week there are two or three special teachers come to our school to guide and teach us how to teach students with disabilities. You know, they (special teachers) are professional as they have already received the specific training for educating the students with disabilities, we never learn that. I cannot image without special teachers' help and cooperation, how can I deal with the students with disabilities in my class.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

Currently collaborating with special schools' teacher can be considered as an effective way to promote inclusion, however, this approach is not the final solution. In order to make school more

inclusive, the government should issue related policies to improve the inclusive education in regular schools. Given the situation from the fieldwork, the first and most important thing is to set fixed professional special teachers in regular schools and add courses in terms of inclusive education and special education in existing pre-service teacher education programmes, which I will discuss more in the third part of the thesis.

The third main theme is *inclusive pedagogy*, which includes flexible assessments, flexible teaching aims and teaching according to students' interests. Regarding that theme we should realize that all sub-themes in this family are summarized by regular school teachers during their day-to-day teaching practice without receiving related teacher training. Particularly these strategies were only employed by some regular school teachers while the majority of teachers still have nothing to do with the students with disabilities in their classes. One inclusion manager used flexible assessments to promote inclusion in her school:

There are seven students with disabilities in our school. Some of them can attend the regular test and some of them cannot as the test is too difficult for some. Considering that situation, we ask related teachers to rewrite a test according to students with disabilities' specific development character. Yes, you cannot use one paper test to assess all students, you need to change. According to our practice, we find flexible assessment is a good way to include students with disabilities into our study plan.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

During interviews, one experienced teacher's approach to promote inclusive education is teaching according to students' interests. As an experienced teacher she (Chen) uses this method to teach students with disabilities in her class, which was regarded as an example to spread in *Shuangliu* school district:

She (a student with disability) is very good at remembering something. I think she has a good memory even if she has a disability. When we together to learn a poem Yongliu, she remembered this poem faster than other students and then in my class I will give her some poems or other texts to learn. Now she can remember many poems. For math, she is poor. She cannot catch up with us in the math class, I am sorry for that as I really don't know how to teach her math. But for Chinese lessons, she is good.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

Chen is good and experienced teacher in our school district, she is full of love, care and responsibility. Yes, the students with disabilities in her class develop very well. What most important is that she can find students' interest and tailor teaching according to student's interest. This is a good way to include students with disabilities in the class and other teachers should learn from her teaching method.
(Special teacher, special school, CH-3)

5.3 Self-knowledge: What are the barriers and facilitators to implement inclusive education?

The self-knowledge dimension mainly concerns the barriers and facilitators to inclusive education, following the way that we analyzed this dimension in Italian school context, here we also analyze the barriers and facilitators separately.

5.3.1 Barriers to inclusive education

Compared with facilitators to inclusive education, there are more barriers to hinder the development of inclusive education in Chinese regular school context from sample teachers' opinion, which seven main themes were identified: regular teachers, school level factors, students with disabilities, culture, leadership, state policy environment and normal students. To better understand each theme, some sub-themes were grouped to fully explain sample teachers' views (please see Table 18 for more details).

The first theme comes to *regular teachers* which include eight sub-themes: too busy with normal students, normal work plus additional workload, limited knowledge of inclusive education, lack of related teaching ability, one person plays multiple roles, first time meet students with disabilities, high physical and psychological pressure and negative attitudes. As we stated earlier, currently there are no resources or special teachers in Chinese regular schools, therefore all the work both in relation to normal students and students with disabilities are undertaken by regular teachers alone. Undoubtedly, they play a significant role in improving inclusive education in current school practice. However, due to many reasons they also act as a main barrier to the journey of inclusive education. As regular teachers alone undertake nearly all the workload related

inclusive education, during the interviews all sample teachers complained for the difficulty to inclusion and this complain emerged as well as in teachers' responses to other interview questions. Therefore this theme is more complex, which has the longest transcription and also various mess sub-themes. In order to draw a full picture of that theme, I distinguish clearly between different sub-themes under the regular teacher theme. However, there may be some overlaps in terms of different sub-themes because of too many trivial responses to that question. Finally nine sub-themes are considered as related to that theme, which can provide a detailed description regarding to the barriers to inclusive education in relation to regular teachers.

Table 18 Self-knowledge: Barriers to inclusive education

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Self-knowledge: Barriers to inclusive education	Regular teacher	Too busy with normal students
		Normal work (GE) plus additional work (IE)
		Limited knowledge of inclusive education
		Lack of related teaching ability
		One person plays multiple roles
		First time meet student with disability
		High physical and psychological pressure
		Negative attitudes
	School level	Lack school-level resources' teacher
		IE is an additional school agenda
		Unclear IE workload identification standard
		Big classroom size
		Limited space
		Fixed assessment standard
	Students with disabilities	Negative behaviors
		Cannot understand the teaching content
		A small number
		Parents' un-collaboration
		Without certificate of disability
	State policy	Teacher education system
		Lack of related support policies
		Examination-oriented education system
	School leader	Limited knowledge on inclusive education
	Normal students	Parents' opposition
Traditional culture	Regular school is for 99% normal students	
	Special school is good for students with disabilities	

Too busy with normal students is the first barrier to inclusive education relates to regular teachers. As China has the largest population in the world, which inevitably requires us to build an adequate large education system to educate our children. Normally, in the primary school the class

size ranges from 40 to 50, some areas even more than 50. With this big class size, regular teachers have a lot of things to do every day: teaching lessons, checking student homework, attending related school meetings and so on. All those make regular teachers busy all the day, therefore many teachers expressed the view that they are busy with normal students and there is no time and energy for students with disabilities:

There are 46 students in my class and every day I have two or three lessons. Beside that during morning (7:30-8:30), noon (12:00-13:30) and afternoon (15:00-16:00) I need to tutor some students who cannot understand the class very well. And then I also need to examine all students' homework. And there are also some school meetings we need to attend. You can find I cannot find a period for these two students with disabilities, really too busy.

(Regular teacher, secondary school, CH-18)

Extracts like that we can find nearly in all sample teachers' interviews, too busy becomes a cause and also a barrier to taking care of students with disabilities. This reflects a fact that for regular teachers the normal work is related to normal students, for students with disabilities is an additional part of work, which is also the second sub-theme that highlighted by sample teachers. Sample teachers express a view that as we are regular schools our main work is for normal students, special schools should be responsible for students with disabilities. Therefore, many regular teachers consider the work for students with disabilities is an additional part and this thinking inevitably influences their attitudes and actions towards students with disabilities, like one teacher said:

I already have a lot of work to do. Now you put students with disabilities in my class, sure it add my workload, is an additional part of the work. If they don't come, I don't need to do this part. For example, sometimes during the lessons the students with disabilities are running out of the class, as the regular teacher I need to look for them, which means I need to stop my current work. You know this is also not fair to other students.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

The fixed thinking that the work in terms of students with disabilities is an additional workload is a result of limited knowledge about inclusive education, which is the third sub-theme. Currently, pre-service teacher education programmes include limited courses on inclusive

education, therefore many regular teachers have no sense of inclusive education at all, no mention the older regular teachers. Regular school teachers are not familiar with country's inclusive education policy, some sample teachers even did not know their own school's related measures and policies on students with disabilities. For example, some sample schools have already built the resource centre for students with disabilities, however, some regular teachers did not know this resource centre when I mentioned during the interview. Following extracts take from teachers' interviews reflect this sub-theme:

Some regular teachers don't know inclusive education, they cannot understand why we put students with disabilities into the regular schools not special schools. If they cannot understand, they will not support that and some even reject that.
(Director, special school, CH-2)

What inclusive education, can you tell me how to write it?
(Regular teacher, secondary school, CH-17)

What is the resource centre? I don't know. You mean in our school there is a resource centre!!!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

Lacking of related knowledge of inclusive education is an important barrier that leads to regular teachers keep pre-existing thinking on students with disabilities and hinder the promotion of inclusive education practice. However, we also should admit that when put a student with disability into the regular class and this will inevitably add regular teacher's workload, which is particularly serious in Chinese regular school context as there are no resource or special teachers to provide professional support. Even in this serious situation, many sample teachers argued that they never give up one student and try their best to teach these students with disabilities in their own class. For example, changing teaching methods, assessment tools, pay more attention to these students, etc. However, we need to alert that all the regular teachers are part-time, which means they are not professional and do not have the necessary ability to teach students with disabilities. During our interviews, all teachers stated that fact that they do not and never give up any students with disabilities, however:

I really don't know how to do with him (a student with disability) and nobody teach me how to teach him. You know I really want to teach him, as a teacher it is my responsibility my work and I also want to teach something to him from my heart. But, I can't do anything, I don't know. I am afraid to do something wrong for him and then his parents will quarrel with me, with our director. It's a trouble!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

My god! I think as a teacher everyone wants to teach her students. For me, I also want to teach him (a student with disability), but I don't know how to teach, also I am afraid if I do something wrong with him, you know my intention is good, but if something is wrong, you know it will be a big trouble. A big trouble!
(Director, primary school, CH-23)

As a regular teacher I never receive related professional training for teaching students with disabilities, this is a big problem. More and more students with disabilities are coming, the problem is bigger and bigger because regular teachers don't have the ability to teach them. In our school our director pay a lot of attention on that thing, but we lacking related teaching abilities, only caring doesn't work. You need professional methods and strategies to education them.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

Teaching, actually is a good thing to help students to learn and grow, however, teaching will become complex when refers to students with disabilities, particularly when teachers have never received related training. From teachers' perspectives, may be sometimes good intentions will do bad things, which leads to a series of troubles, especially the troubles from the parents of students with disabilities. Therefore, it is necessary to help regular teachers acquire related knowledge in terms of special education and inclusive education.

The fifth sub-theme refers to one regular teacher plays multiple roles and this is common in the sample schools. From the survey we find that one regular teacher: needs to teach math, needs to manage school resource centre and act as a resource teacher for the whole school, is an associate deputy of the second grade, which means this teacher is a math teacher, at the same time he is also a resource centre manager (inclusion manager), a resource teacher, a manager for the second grade. Therefore, he needs to play four roles at one time and this phenomenon frequently emerged during the fieldwork. Undoubtedly, that will make regular teachers undertake lots of workload and even worse conflicts between different roles frequently happen:

For us regular teachers, firstly I am a regular teacher for normal students, and secondly I am a part-time resource teacher for students with disabilities. As a teacher I know I need to be responsible for all the students, both normal students and students with disabilities. But sometimes I need to make a decision that who are important? Most times I think the 99% percent normal students are important as I am regular teacher, you can't put a lot of time on students with disabilities. That doesn't mean I don't want to teach them, just because I am a regular teacher and I need to teach normal students.
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

Cases like that are numerous and this also reflects a serious problem in school-level which is the lack of regular teachers that I will explore more at school level barriers section. The next sub-theme is regular teachers' first time to meet students with disabilities and some teachers are even afraid of these students. From current special education and inclusive education policy, special schools rather than regular schools are the main places for students with disabilities to receive education, and during the fieldwork some sample teachers stated that this is the first time to meet students with disabilities in regular school. Like some teachers said:

As I will retire soon and the school give me a student with disability, it's ok no problem. As you know, I have been a teacher for 37 years and this is my first time to teach student with disabilities. At first, I am a little bit afraid of that.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

When I was a student from primary school until university, I never met students with disabilities, both in my school and outside the school. I am wondering where are they? As I start to work in this school and I start to meet students with disabilities in the school. Oh, it's my first time to see and communicate with students with disabilities. Now I am 34, in the past more than 30 years I never meet and now I meet all!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

Heavy workload, lack of related professional ability plus first time to meet students with disabilities, all these combine together lead both regular teachers and students with(out) disabilities at a dangerous situation. For normal students, their study may be will influence by students with disabilities because of their strange behaviors and specific individual needs; for students with disabilities, the majority of their time in regular class is just sitting here without learning as regular teachers do not have time and ability for them. For regular teachers, as a teacher they are responsible for all the students, however, they are regular teachers which mean

they are mainly for normal students based on the current state law. This conflict combines with high workload pressure, lack of professional ability and no related teaching experiences, which together makes regular teachers burden a high physical and psychological pressure from school director, students, parents and their own family, which is seventh sub-theme. As one teacher said:

*For us regular teachers, to have a student with disability in your class you have both physical and psychological pressure. You need to do more work for this student with disability, if there is no this kind of student you don't need to do that work. Also the biggest pressure from the normal students' parents and they are afraid of that the student with disability will influence their own students. As you know, my work is difficult.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)*

As this regular teacher stated, apart from the pressure from students with disabilities, the most psychological pressure is come from normal students' parents. Currently examination-oriented education system still dominates our education culture, which means if you want to win you need to get a higher score than others. We need to recognize that not every class every school has students with disabilities. Therefore normal students' parents will worry about whether the student with disability in their child's class will produce a negative impact on their own child's study, which inevitably increase regular teachers' pressure. Normal students' parents play a critical role in including students with disabilities into the mainstream schools, which I will discuss more in normal student's barrier part.

Finally, what I mentioned the eighth sub-theme in relation to regular teachers hold a negative attitude towards students with disabilities in their classes. It is not difficult to image that some regular teachers have a negative attitude towards students with disabilities in current Chinese regular school context as there are so many barriers which we mentioned earlier refers to regular teachers that hinder them to implement inclusive education. This sub-theme emerged in many regular teachers' interviews.

The second main theme highlights the *school-level barriers* to inclusive education and seven sub-themes are identified: lack school-level resource teachers, inclusive education is an additional school agenda, unclear inclusive education workload identification standard, big classroom size, limited space, lack of regular teachers, fixed assessment standard. Like the theme of regular teacher, the identification of school-level theme's sub-themes is also complex as there are many

barriers to inclusive education at school level emerged in sample teachers' interviews. One of the main reasons for that is coming from the current state policy that the development of special education is still a priority of government education agenda for students with disabilities, which leads to lacking clear inclusive education policies for regular schools in terms of how to promote inclusive education. Given that, I identify seven sub-themes which are considered as most challengeable for current Chinese regular schools to develop inclusive education.

The first sub-theme is lacking school-level resource teachers who are responsible for inclusive education, particularly for students with disabilities. In fact, we have already discussed this in the first theme of regular teacher where we stated that all the regular teachers are part-time resource teachers because there are no fixed professional resource teachers in regular schools. It is my intention to mention that again at school level as this barrier mainly in relation to school level. Regular teachers are part-time resource teachers is just a result and the cause is there are no fixed places for resource teachers at school level. If we go further, this is a result of state special education policies' influence, because current all the professional special education teachers are in the special schools where mainly for students with disabilities. Therefore, there are no places for special teachers in regular schools. Lacking resource teachers mentioned by all sample teachers, as we can see in teachers' interviews:

This is not inclusive education, students with disabilities just sitting in the class without learning. We are all part-time without special professionals for teaching them. There is no one professional resource teacher, there should be one, at least one!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

I think currently the lack of professional resource teachers is the biggest barrier to inclusive education in our school. Yes, you can't rely on us as we don't know how to teach!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

Expressions like that can find everywhere in the transcription of sample teachers' interview. Some sample teachers stated that because of lacking of professional resource teachers in the school, many advanced and expensive equipments in the resource centre were unused because no regular teacher can use it and also regular teachers are afraid of incorrect using will produce some bad impact on students with disabilities, which is 'good intention do bad things' that I mentioned

before:

In our school we spent a big part of money on buying specific equipments for students with disabilities. However, until now no one use it as no one can use it. The equipment just stay here. If you ask some teachers use it, they are afraid of producing something bad on students with disabilities.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-8)

This school term we buy some equipment for students with disabilities, it's very expensive! But the biggest problem is no teacher can use it, all is part-time! If you use the equipment and do something wrong with students with disabilities, there will be troubles. We need a professional resource teacher to operate it.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

The second sub-theme comes to the idea or fix thinking at school level that inclusive education is an additional school agenda, which is corresponding to inclusive education work in an additional part of regular teachers' workload. This sub-theme reflects fully on the school arrangement, like few specific school meetings for students with disabilities, limited school-level measures for promoting inclusive education and some sample school directors even did not know there are some students with disabilities in their own schools. Like teachers said:

Nowadays, there are many things school need to do. The things related to students with disabilities are not big things are little things, is an additional part.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-11)

Many teachers think the education for students with disabilities is not their normal work, is a work that adds from outside, it's an additional workload for them, for school as well.

(Special teacher, special school, CH-4)

This additional work or agenda thinking is related to the third sub-theme which is unclear inclusive education workload identification standard. As the inclusive education practice in Italy, the support teachers and regular teachers together to educate students with SEN and both of them can get salary for their work. However, during my interviews, some sample schools pay an additional part of salary for regular teachers whose classes have students with disabilities, while some sample schools without related regulations and regular teachers are volunteers for that. This

is highlighted by some sample teachers, particularly for these whose classes has two students with disabilities without additional salary as they really undertake a lot of work compared with other regular teacher whose classes do not have students with disabilities. Undoubtedly, having students with disabilities in class will definitely increase regular teachers' workload and this is becoming serious in current Chinese school context as there are no professional resource teachers, all the work is undertaken by regular teachers alone. This school-level unclear inclusive education work identification, to some extent, decreases regular teachers' emotion and influences their attitudes towards students with disabilities, like one sample teachers argued:

Currently, there is no regulation in terms of identifying inclusive education workload and so you can't add this work into the teacher assessment. This is not good, as some teachers, particularly teacher of the classes have students with disabilities, they really work more than others. However, now no identification standard.
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

Particularly, there is a regular teacher who taught one student with disability in her class for four years and paid a lot of attention on that student, however, school director never mentioned that and no related school-level measures for supporting this teacher and student with disability. During our interview, she was crying and she really appreciated my interview because in the past four years no one asked her related things, As a researcher, I am the first person who ask her related support she did for this student with disability in the past four years, as she said:

Nobody ask me this thing, our school no identification for this kind of work. Four years, I really did a lot for this student and all teachers see, but our school managers never see it. You are the first person ask me this kind of thing, I really thank you!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

Big class size is the fourth sub-theme refers to the school-level factors and this is very clear as my country has the biggest population in the world. Currently, the primary and secondary school class size ranges from 45 to 55, some areas' class size even 60 or more. With already so many normal students in the class, if you put one or two students with disabilities into the class, which inevitably influences both teacher's teaching and students with (out) disabilities. However, the problem of big class size is not easy to solve as there is limited space in regular schools, which

is also the fifth sub-theme. For each of my sample school, there are more or less 2 500 students, however, currently every year there are still more and more rural areas' students enrolling. Therefore, the pre-existing school space is not adequate for such a large student population. As a result, the class size will continue to increase which undoubtedly influences regular teachers' teaching and students' learning. As one teacher said:

Now all the students in the class, you see our school is big. But later you will find after class when all the students are coming outside for activities, the space is not enough and everywhere is narrowly. Another thing is our resource centre is in the fifth floor, this is not good for some students with disabilities. But there are really no classrooms for that, so we can only choose a small room in the fifth floor as our resource centre. Also the class size is bigger than before. In this situation, you put some students with disabilities in the school, in the classes and it will be a big challenge.
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

The sixth sub-theme is the fixed assessment standard for teachers at school-level. Currently, the teacher assessment plays a critical role in teachers' development, professional promotion, salary, etc.. Therefore all teachers care a lot about the result of assessment and pay more attention on how to improve the result of her/his assessment. Currently, the students' average score is one of the most important factors influences teachers' assessment result, so improve students' average score is considered as the biggest agenda for all the teachers. Currently, Chinese primary school students' average score is around 90 and some developed areas' schools, *Beijing, Shanghai and Jiangsu province*, can achieve 95. With that climate, when you put students with disabilities into the mainstream schools, especially the students with intellectual problems, which inevitably will decrease class students' average score. Finally, the lower students' average score will exert a bad impact on teacher's assessment result. As teachers said:

Our test score is 100, normally our class average is 90 or 93. But she's (a student with disability) test score is only 6 or 7 and we have 46 normal students in this class. In that case the class average score will decrease more less 2 because of her. But currently in our school we assess teachers mainly based on class average score. You can see, if your class has students with disabilities which will influence your assessment result, furthermore this will influence your career development and salary. Unfortunately, now our school has the one standard to assess teacher's work. We need to take students with disabilities into consideration when we assess teachers!

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

Now we assess teachers mainly based on the subject of Math, English and Literature and the work of inclusive education only take up a little little part. Yes, you do a lot of work for students with disabilities, but this can't consider when assess you.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

The third main theme is *students with disabilities* and five sub-themes were identified: negative behaviors, cannot understand the teaching content, small number, parents' un-collaboration and with or without the certificate of disability. During my fieldwork, I can feel that a medical or individual model of disability is still common in regular school context and both teachers and directors consider students with disabilities as a serious barrier to inclusive education, which we can also find from the teachers' understanding of inclusive education in the explanation dimension.

The first sub-theme comes to negative behaviors of students with disabilities, which is mentioned by all the sample teachers more than twice and frequently emerged in the conversations. Negative behaviors include making noise in the classroom, sleeping in the class time, walking around the classroom during teacher's teaching, running out of the classroom during the class, all these negative behaviors referred by sample teachers will disturb other students' learning and teachers' teaching. Furthermore, some students with strong disabilities will hurt other students by hands and mouth and some accidents mentioned by teachers were serious and even needed to send to hospital. As teachers said:

The student with disability in my class influences my class a lot and brings a lot of troubles to me and other students. Sometimes, he running out of the classroom during teacher's teaching and then you need you stop your teaching and go outside to search him, because may be he will hurt himself or others.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

Yes, he (student with disability) is a big problem for our class, making noises, walking around or running out of the classroom during the class time. If you try to manage him, he will crazy!!!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-12)

Expressions like that can easily find in teachers' interviews, and many sample teachers did not have any measures for dealing with that as they have no related knowledge or ability of teaching and managing students with disabilities. Next sub-theme is students with disabilities cannot understand teaching content and then they will choose to make strange behaviors, walk around the class, sleep or go outside. These four responses used by students with disabilities were frequently referred by sample teachers, which also will influence class going. As one teacher said:

Now we are in fourth grade, she (student with disability) completely can't catch up with the class. She can only recognize and write one or two words. She is running around when she can't understand the teaching. If I don't allow her to run, she will sleep!!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

The extract from teacher's interview is a typical individual model of disability and is widely held by teachers. On the one hand is that teachers really do not know how to teach students with disabilities as lacking professional ability, while on the other hand this reflects a fixed thinking or culture that 'I am a regular teacher and I am for the 99% normal students' (most sample teachers' words) which I will explore later in this section. Here I want to highlight the third sub-theme that relates to this thinking or culture which is a small number of students with disabilities. This barrier to inclusive education was also mentioned by Italian school teachers, however, in Chinese school context this barrier is more serious as there is one or two students with disabilities in one classroom while there are more or less 50 normal students. Because of that fact, many sample teachers argued that they cannot change the teaching arrangement or put much time on only one or two students with disabilities as that is unfair to other majority normal students. Furthermore, behind that is the pressure from the normal students' parents' against which I will discuss later in this section. As we can see one barrier relates to another barrier which means you cannot address barriers independently and a whole reform is needed to change current situation. This we can see from teachers' interviews:

In our school only two students with disabilities and school doesn't take measures for them because is too small. If there are more, maybe school will manage.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-22)

As mainstream schools, they don't have the energy for these small number students with disabilities and it's better to send them to the special school.

(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

The fourth sub-theme is students with disabilities' parents' un-collaboration with schools and teachers. As well-documented in numerous researches that parents, particularly parents of students with disabilities, play a significant role in helping their children to receive inclusive education. For example, to provide their children's situations to schools to help teachers make related decisions in terms of teaching or attend school's meetings regarding to their children's individual education plan, all these are valuable for schools to take measures to promote inclusive education practice. However, during my fieldwork many sample teachers expressed the same point that parents' un-collaboration with schools and some causes for this un-collaboration were identified: parents also have personal problems or disabilities, busy with working, children bring up by grandparents, coming from low-income working class. As some sample teachers said:

Some parents of students with disabilities don't admit that their children have problems, but actually their children really have the problems and we ask their parents to go the hospital to have a check and to identify the problems and then we can take some focus measures to deal with it. However, their parents don't want to go.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-22)

Teachers in our school communicated with some parents of students with disabilities many times to ask them to go the hospital to have a check. Because we need to take some measures to help these students, however, their parents don't collaborate with us and think their kids are fine. And some even told us as long as their kids can stay at school is fine. In terms of learning, it's not a problem!

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

She's (student with disability) busy with working. Every morning, as she was sleeping she's mother has already gone to the work and while she's mother finished the work arrived at home, she has already slept. How can you find a time to communicate with the kid??

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

He is very dirty and always with dirty cloths. No students want to play with him as he is dirty. His family is poor and his mother also has the problems, may be also a kind of disability. His father's brain has the problem. They never want to collaborate with school and it's also doesn't know how to do.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The fifth sub-theme refers to the students with disabilities without or with the certificate of disability and this is a common phenomenon in sample school context. For students without certificate of disability, the main reason for that is parents of students with disabilities do not admit that their kids have the problems and therefore do not take their kid to hospital. As a result, students with disabilities without certificate of disability cannot receive related specific measures that focus on students who have the certificate of disabilities. And furthermore, because of the fixed school level teacher assessment standard some sample schools consider the score of students with disabilities who without certificate of disability into the teacher assessment, which makes some regular teachers form a negative attitude towards students with disabilities without certificate. Because of that, students with disabilities without certificate are considered as a burden or troublesome by some regular teachers and this reflects a fact that some teachers put their own interests higher than students. However, for students with certificate of disability, the situation is still serious. As some sample teachers mentioned, if the students with certificates and their score will not consider into class average score and therefore teachers will pay less attention on these students with certificates. As a result, students with certificates are chiefly sitting at the desk without learning. Both of these two situations put students with disabilities at a dangerous situation. This can find from teachers' interviews:

His (student with disability) parents don't take him go to the hospital and he doesn't have the certificate. As a result his score will consider into our class assessment and will decrease our class' average score!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-22)

Oh, it's fine. He (student with disability) has the certificate issued by the hospital, so his score doesn't need to consider into my class assessment. That is good as that will not influence my final assessment.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The fourth main theme is **state policy**, which covers three sub-themes: teacher education system, lack of related support policies and examination-oriented education system. This theme chiefly from the national education system to see the development of inclusive education, to

examine how external policy environment influences regular schools' practices towards inclusive education. The first sub-theme is about the teacher education system which actually mentioned certain times earlier in this part. From the above barriers we recognize that lacking of fixed professional resource teachers in regular schools is a barrier to inclusion and because of this barrier that leads to a series of other barriers to school inclusive education practice. We put here want to emphasize a fact that the problem lies on national education system, particularly national pre-service teacher education system. As separately develop special and regular education, therefore the pre-service teacher education also separates with each other. This separate pre-service teacher education system makes limited connection between regular teacher education programme and special teacher education programme, which inevitably leads to pre-service regular teachers lacking of related training in terms of special education and inclusive education. Under the inclusive education agenda, more and more students with disabilities are placed into mainstream schools, however, the regular teachers cannot teach these new comers who were previous educated in special schools. And this makes that two separate pre-service teacher education systems attract many criticisms and regarded as a serious barrier to inclusive education. As teachers stated:

From the whole country's teacher education system, it's problematic! Our mainstream schools' directors and teachers are mainly from the regular teacher education programme. As you know, our regular teacher education programme doesn't pay attention on special education and inclusive education content and therefore this leads to our directors and teachers have limited or no knowledge of special education. For example, Beijing Normal University, our best normal university, the regular teacher education programme only has very limited courses of special education, and it's not compulsory! Therefore, the regular teachers lack of the responsibilities for students with disabilities.
(Director, special school, CH-2)

Next year we want to require one special teacher because of more and more students with disabilities in our school, especially the Autism. Our regular teacher knows limited or nothing about the Autism and cannot do anything to these students because they never receive related training.
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

The second sub-theme comes to the lack of related policies to support school inclusive

education practices, which means current policies cannot catch up with the school inclusive education. Like the separate pre-service teacher education system we just mentioned earlier, the landscape of regular schools have been changed for years, however, related support policies are lagging for years as well. This lagging creates numerous barriers to the promotion of inclusive education, for example, regular teachers doing related work in terms of students with disabilities without pay, fixed teacher assessment without consider the students with disabilities' specific situation, without setting a resource or special teachers' places in mainstream schools as more and more students with disabilities are coming and so on, all of these problems result in lacking related support policies, which were mentioned frequently by sample teachers:

Now in regular schools there are no special teachers' places! Like our school, more and more students with disabilities are coming, there no one special teacher. It's difficult for us to employ a special teacher as there is no related policy: how can you pay for the special teacher? No money!! We are school not company and we don't have money for special teacher. The government should issue related policies!
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

Like students with disabilities without certificate, their score will consider into class average score until third grade. Actually their score cannot add into the class score from the first grade because they really don't know anything and get a low score and will influence teachers' assessment. No way! There is no policy to support and you need to consider their score!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

Finally, the third sub-theme refers to the examination-oriented education system which has a long history in our culture and can date to Confucius '学而优则仕'(who learn better who become ruler). Currently, there are two cases can well describe the examination-oriented education, which also in relation to the inclusive education: one is High-school entrance examination, which takes place at the age of 14 or 15 from the low-secondary to high-secondary school and we call it '中考' (Zhongkao), the second is university or college entrance examination which is famous for '高考' (Gaokao) takes place at 19 or 20 from high-secondary school to university. These two examinations mainly influence all national education policies, especially the *Gaokao*, which has been described as 'one exam decides you forever' and much emphasis was paid on that exam. Under the examination climate, the agenda like 'standard test', 'school improvement',

‘competing’, ‘efficiency’, ‘learning for test/score’, ‘score is everything’ and so on, which decide policy-makers decisions, guide school directors’ school plan, teachers’ teaching methods, parents’ choices and actions. During the fieldwork, many sample teachers expressed the view that the national examination-oriented education acts as a strong barrier to inclusive education. Following are some examples.

Conflicts between inclusive education and examination-oriented education:

I heard some areas’ school teachers rejected the inclusive education, they didn’t want to students with disabilities in their classes. There is a big conflict between inclusive education and our examination-oriented education, we can say is our regular education. Inclusive education considers students different needs and provide an appropriate education to meet students’ needs, however, regular education is not in this way, sorry regular education is average score that is competing with each other, ranking students’ score! Regular education don’t consider students with disabilities’ needs, just considers the students and classes’ average score. So we can say, inclusive education is a kind of humanism’s education, while regular education is strict and with many fixed rules that you cannot change but adapt to that, like average score. Yes, these two educations’ ideas are totally different and full of conflicts.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

Learning for test/score:

What is the purpose of the education? What is the real purpose of our education? It’s to meet every test, and then use those tests and students’ score to assess teachers, to assess you are a good teacher or not! In our city, especially our school district, we pay much attention on testing! We all say children should play and learn in a happy way, no, it’s not like that! You have a lot of homework to do, you have many tests in front of you! At end of the term, if your class’ average score is low, how can you fact that! Students should live in a happy way, however, so many homework and tests are waiting for them, how can they happy?

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

Serious pressure from the Zhongkao and Gaokao:

The class size is big and there is a lot of pressure from Middle Entrance Examination and College Entrance Examination, you know this pressure mainly from normal students’ parents because they all want their kids go to a good secondary school and good ranking university in the future. In this way, students with disabilities in regular classroom cannot

receive enough attention, sometimes they just sitting here without learning.
(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

The fifth main theme is *school leader* and two sub-themes were identified: limited knowledge on inclusive education and negative attitudes towards inclusive education work. Numerous studies have already emphasized the significance of school leader's critical role in school's development. To some extent, a school's culture is a school leader's culture. Therefore school leader's knowledge in terms of inclusive education will decide one school's effort that will put on inclusive education. Like regular teachers lack related training on inclusive education during their pre-service teacher education programme, school leaders lack training on inclusive education as well. Furthermore in Chinese regular school context before being a school leader, she/he has been a regular teacher for many years. Therefore, the majority of school leaders are more than forty years old and few of them have a good command of inclusive education, which inevitably influences their decisions on school's inclusive education practice. In addition, under the pressure of Zhongkao and Gaokao, school leaders' are directly responsible for their own schools' students test score, as well as the pressure from the students' parents. All of these pressures plus limited knowledge of inclusive education lead school leader acts as a barrier to inclusive education:

There is a big difference between our school leaders and western countries' school leaders. I know western countries' school leaders have the knowledge of inclusive education and special education, but in our country I can say the majority of school leaders don't have the knowledge of inclusive education and special education, many of them learn those knowledge after there are some students with disabilities in their own schools. You know if the school leader doesn't know, he may be think this is not a good thing and doesn't support it. If school leader doesn't support it, it will be very difficult for teachers develop inclusive education.
(Director, special school, CH-2)

In our school we have one school leader who is responsible for inclusive education. But she is a part-time and doesn't know a lot about inclusive education.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

Some sample teachers stated that because of school leader's limited knowledge of inclusive

education, high pressure from Zhongkao, Gaokao and normal students' parents, some leaders' attitudes towards students with disabilities is negative and do not support regular teachers' work in relation to inclusive education:

You know our main aim is the education of 99% normal students, not the less 1% students with disabilities. You need to spend a lot of time on education students with disabilities. The school leader is not happy with that as he has a lot of pressures on improving normal students' score.

(Resource teacher, primary school, CH-5)

Considered the current situation, it is necessary for government to take some effective measures to improve school leaders' knowledge and awareness in terms of inclusive education as their significant function in promoting inclusive education.

The next theme refers to **normal students** which includes one sub-theme: normal students' parents. In China the living cost for bring up a child is higher and higher, therefore many families nowadays only have one child even if our government encourage parents to have two kids. Undoubtedly this only one child is a focus in one family and parents pay nearly all the attention on this child, all parents want to their kids go to a good primary school, a good secondary school and then a high level university, finally find a good job, which is a traditional thinking and still popular and common among Chinese families. As a result, they pay more and more attention on their kid's school education and if there is something influences their kids' study, they will against that until eliminating it. Hence in Chinese school context, currently parents play an important role in school education development, just like a sample teacher said '*nowadays I need to spend 80% school time to resolve related problems from students' parents*'. Particularly, when put a student with disability into a regular class, the main barrier is not others but normal students' parents and the only reason is: this student influences my kid's study. Therefore 'the student with disability cannot influence my kid's study' is a conditional item when schools develop inclusive education, otherwise normal students' parents will together against that student with disability. Like some teachers said:

We need to responsible for normal students' parents and their parents pay a lot of attention on their kids' study, they care about their kids' future, you can't influence their kids' study!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

Nowadays, more and more students with disabilities are coming to our school, if these students with disabilities are not in my kid's class, parents will say we need to care about these students and give them more attention, however if you put these students with disabilities into their kids' class, they will worry whether these students influence my kid or not. If they influence, it's better to take them outside.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

Next year we will be at third grade and some normal students' parents ask me can school take the student with disability outside this school if all of them sign the names to against. You know, you can't influence their kids' study.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The last theme is **traditional culture** and it is also my intention to report it at last as I did in Italy part. Culture influences people's thinking, minds and actions. The cultural aspect mainly comes from my feeling during the fieldwork in sample schools and reflects sample teachers' ideas, thoughts, attitudes and actions in terms of inclusive education, or how they perceive the practice that is putting students with disabilities into mainstream schools. After fully check and re-check the interview transcription, two sub-themes were identified: regular school is for 99% normal students and special school is good for students with disabilities. Firstly, the regular school is for 99% regular students is a fixed thinking and frequently emerged in sample teachers' interview. What interestingly, after that sentence is 'I (regular teacher) am chiefly for normal students'. Like teachers said:

Our main aim is for 99% normal students, not for less than 1% students with disabilities.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-8)

Our school is mainly for 99.99% normal students and may be pay limited attention on students with disabilities. At least we can make sure that they are safe at class, on study we don't have time and energy for that.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The regular school is for 99% normal students and the solution that teachers suggest is that special school is good for students with disabilities or it is better to send them to receive education

at special schools. Subsequently, a list of reasons was identified by these teachers: we are lacking related professional ability, we are busy, special schools have professional teachers, specific resources and state policy support. The thinking of special school is good for students with disabilities cannot separate from these regular teachers' schooling experiences as there are no students with disabilities around them from kindergarten to university, which inevitably leads regular teachers form this kind of fixed thinking. As teachers stated:

Like this student (with disability) in my class is wasting his time and life! He cannot learn anything. It's better for him to go to the special school and he can learn some basic life skills in special school.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-22)

So in my view it's better to send these students with disabilities into the special schools and they can learn something in special schools. As I was a teacher in another school, they put all students with disabilities in a room and to teach them. I think this is a good way. Now in regular school is not a good for them.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)

5.3.2 Facilitators to inclusive education

Regarding to the facilitators to regular school inclusive education practice, five main themes were indentified, which are regular school-level, regular teachers, students with disabilities, normal students and state policy. Concerning each theme, some sub-themes were summarized to fully describe the main theme (please see table 19). Placing students with disabilities into regular classroom to receive education in China has long history, which can date back to the middle of twenty century in some rural areas and the mainly reason for that is the lack of special schools in these areas, therefore put these students into regular schools, which chiefly considers the fact of limited school resources. In terms of how to better educate these students, different schools have different methods and the education quality of students with disabilities in regular schools is different as well. As we stated earlier, the inclusive education was first mentioned in national level policy at 2014, and then inclusive education is frequently stated at different levels' policy documents. Considering the short history of inclusive education in Chinese regular school context,

many facilitators to inclusive education in regular schools are particularly specific, which means a factor in this school is a facilitator may acts as a barrier in another school. Therefore, the facilitators what we will discuss should consider regular school’s specific context and cannot transform directly from one school to another school.

Table 19 Self-knowledge: Facilitators to inclusive education

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Self-knowledge: facilitators to inclusive education	Regular school-level	School leader strong support
		Collaborate with professional institutions
		A clear standard to assess inclusive education work
		Inclusive education is a normal part of school work
		School network collaboration
	regular teachers	Positive attitude/strong responsibility
		Inclusive pedagogy
		Older and nearly retired teacher
	Students with disabilities	Not disturb other students’ learning
		Parent’s collaboration
	Normal students	Normal students’ parent support
		Understanding and helping
	State policy	Related policy support
Local education authority’s support		

The first comes to the *regular school-level facilitators*, which covers six sub-themes: school leader’s strong support, collaborate with professional institutions, a clear standard to assess inclusive education work, inclusive education as a normal part of school work and school network communication.

The first sub-theme is school leader’s strong support for school inclusive education practice and the support can be in different forms which contain school leader refers to inclusive education in school-level important meetings, directly manage the inclusive education, asking for specific policy from local educational department, searching social organizations’ support for students with disabilities, etc. The school leaders’ support mentioned above was heightened by sample teachers and most of them see school leaders’ support as a core to develop inclusive education and some even expressed the view that school leader’s strong support is the only facilitator to develop inclusive education in their schools. We can see the school leader’s role in sample teachers’ interviews:

Before I worked in another school and school leader didn't pay attention on the work relates to students with disabilities. However, in this school the inclusive education is very good because our school leader pays a lot of attention on inclusive education work and the leader directly manage this work and always mentions inclusive education in our school-level's important meetings. I think this is why inclusive education in our school is better than others.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

Our school leader always goes outside to ask for supporting from social organizations and taking measures to promote inclusive education in our school. As long as there is in-service teacher training on special education or inclusive education, our leader will ask us to attend to improve our abilities.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

From teachers' views we can recognize that the importance of school leader's role in school inclusive education practice and this is particularly true in Chinese regular school context as school director is the person who mainly manages the school development and sometimes its influence even bigger than state policy's impact, like one regular teacher said '*one school's culture is the school leader's culture*'.

The second sub-theme refers to collaborating with professional institutions, like Special Education Faculty of local universities and special education schools, this collaboration can provide professional support for regular schools, help regular schools to train regular teachers in terms of how to teach students with disabilities. Currently, as there are no fixed professional resource or special teachers in regular schools, therefore the need of professional support is a serious question for regular schools if they want to develop inclusive education. Facing that problem, some regular schools seek to opportunities to collaborate with local universities and special education schools where they can find professional staffs who have a good command of special education and inclusive education. Some regular teachers mentioned that in their interviews:

We collaborate with Special Education Faculty of Chongqing Normal University, you know they have some professors and master students whose major is special education and inclusive education. Working with them really helps us a lot as all of the teachers in our school don't know how to teach and manage students with disabilities. Next step we want

to ask them to help us to train our regular teachers, to help them know special education and inclusive education.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

Currently, special schools play an important role in developing inclusive education in China. In the past when students with disabilities entered the mainstream schools, the schools may reject these students. But now the mainstream schools undertake their responsibility for educating these students, particularly they try to collaborate with us special schools as we have professionals. Yes this is good way to develop inclusive education.

(Director, special school, CH-2)

The third sub-theme comes to a clear standard to assess school's inclusive education work, like a clear standard to assess teacher's inclusive education workload and a clear and flexible standard to assess students with disabilities' learning progress. Particularly, this facilitator was frequently mentioned by some sample schools where inclusive education is well developed. As we discussed before, a barrier to inclusive education is regular schools without a clear inclusive education work identification standard, therefore leads to regular teachers' work relates to inclusive education is neglected by school leader, no school-level actions for promoting inclusive education and students with disabilities sitting in the classrooms with limited learning. Compared with that, some regular schools which inclusive education are well developed all have a clear standard to assess inclusive education work. For example, teachers' inclusive education work are well organized, students with disabilities' learning progress are well evaluated and assessment feedbacks are at once provided for further improving school's related works in terms of inclusive education. All these ideas are well reflected in sample teachers' interviews:

A clear identification for teachers' work on inclusive education:

I can accept students with disabilities in my classroom and I will try my best to teach them, as long as my colleagues know I don't give up these students. It's very important and I need my colleagues know my heart.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-25)

In our school, we have a clear standard to assess teachers' work on inclusive education. At end of school term, we will assess teachers' work on inclusive education: the regular teacher whose class has students with disabilities need to write a report to state your work

for these students in this term; the subject teachers also should submit a report to state what they did for these students in this term. For example, if you are a music teacher, you need to report how many songs you taught and how many songs your students (with disabilities) can sing. Yes, we assess teachers. And then all teachers' work will assess and 3000 Yuan will as a promotion to these teachers.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

A clear students' assessment:

Not just putting students with disabilities in the classroom without caring about them! They are the same as other students and we are responsible for them. Furthermore, we will assess the learning progress of these students with disabilities, like the basic manners, communication skills, basic knowledge on math, literature, etc. We not just put here, we also examine!

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

The fourth sub-theme refers to inclusive education is a normal part of school work rather than an additional school agenda which imports from outside. From current state policy environment, special education school is still considered as the main place for educating students with disabilities and this traditional thinking is highlighted by some Chinese researchers (e.g. Jia, 2018), which leads to some regular teachers regard inclusive education as an additional part of work that imports from special education schools. Compared with this thinking, some regular schools with a good reputation for inclusive education development, considering the work relates to students with disabilities as a normal school agenda like other school agendas. Particularly, all these well developed inclusive education regular schools have a long history of receiving students with disabilities from 20 to 30 years. Besides that, all these well developed schools have some school-level specific measures to support inclusive education practice. All that makes inclusive education as a normal part of whole school work, like teachers said:

Now in our school we have students with different kinds of disabilities. We don't reject them like other schools we accept them and we think it normal for our school. Our school, our school leader, our teachers all accept them and all think that is a normal work for us. They are like normal students!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

In our school we have teachers mainly manage inclusive education and it's a regular part of our whole school work. We have meetings for that and in some important school-level meetings our school director will mention that just like other works. Every year there is meeting to conclude the inclusive education.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

The fifth sub-theme is school network collaboration which mentioned by a special education school's inclusion manager. Currently, the special education school acts as a critical role in helping regular schools to promote inclusive education in one school district as they have professionals and specific materials for students with disabilities. Therefore they organize different activities to help local regular schools to educate students with disabilities as we mentioned in the second sub-theme. Besides that, this another form of school network collaboration between local special education school and regular schools. In one school district of Chengdu, a well school network was established between local special education school and local regular schools. Based on that network, a series of meetings, surveys, seminars and school visits were regularly organized to exchange and communicate how to develop inclusive education. Particularly, the local special education school is in the center of that network, mainly provide related advices and supports for local regular schools. With five years' development, currently this network acts as a platform to help regular schools to learn from each other, as this special school's inclusion manager said:

As a special school, we organize a school network and every year we have some meetings to sit together and to communicate with each other. You know, in this network all schools can exchange their ideas on inclusive education practice. And every year there is an annual meeting to conclude this years' work and later we have a report for that meeting. A lot of good inclusive education practices were identified and reported and then schools can learn from that report. It's really a good way to help schools to develop inclusive education.

(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

The second main theme relates to **regular teacher** which covers positive attitude, inclusive pedagogy and older and nearly retired teacher. Compared with Italy, there are no fixed professional resource teachers in Chinese regular schools, and therefore all work relates to inclusive education is undertaken by regular teachers. Although we stated earlier that regular teachers can act as a big barrier to inclusive education because of various reasons, however, this

lacking of fixed professional resource teachers inevitably makes regular teachers play a critical role in inclusive education development.

The first sub-theme is their positive attitudes towards students with disabilities in their classrooms, which is highlighted by the majority of sample teachers. Undoubtedly, the teachers' professional ability is vital for teaching students with disabilities, but we cannot underestimate regular teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education and particularly in current Chinese regular school context as regular teachers undertake nearly all the work refers to students with disabilities. With a positive attitude, regular teachers will consider students with disabilities' needs when designing the class teaching plan, give more attention to students with disabilities after class, frequent communication with students' parents, etc. All these measures are critical for improving the situation of students with disabilities in regular classrooms, in particular there are no fixed professional resource teachers. Hence, some regular teachers even considered that positive attitude is the most important factor for inclusion:

*For me I think the most important thing to include this student with disability in my class is to love her, to have a positive attitude to her. As we all don't know how to teach these students, if you don't have a love heart for her, how does she sit in the classroom.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)*

*You know for us this student with disability is just one of the students in this big class, is one fifth. But for his family, he is all, he is 100%. As a teacher you only teaching him for some years, but for her parents need to accompany with her for the whole life. So as a teacher we must love these students with disabilities and we cannot help them to learn a lot, but we can help them happy in our school. This is important!
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)*

Lacking of professional skills to teach students with disabilities makes some regular teachers consider that having a love, a good heart and a positive attitude is significant for including students with disabilities in their classrooms.

The second sub-theme refers to inclusive pedagogy, some teachers during their day-to-day teaching practice by creating some new methods to educate the students with disabilities in their classrooms, like teaching in a small community, one-to-one helping group, changing teaching content according to students' needs and new assessment standard. Like teachers stated:

He (student with disability) can't write, so I don't arrange the written homework to him, but I ask him to read, to say as he can talk like us. I don't give him much homework, just some within his ability. But I encourage him to read more, talk more. In this way, his development is well.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

I ask good students in my class to make friends with her (student with disability) and let them play together. Now after class, she will go to find some other students and join them to play. This is a good way to include her in my classroom.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

The last sub-theme refers to older and nearly retired regular teacher. On the one hand these teachers have rich teaching experiences as they have more or less thirty years of teaching history, most innovative teaching methods mentioned in the interviews were developed by these teachers, on the other hand because of this teacher group's specific characteristic which needs to understand in Chinese regular school context. As young regular teachers have various pressures from family (to earn more money), kids (spend more time with them), promotion (to get a teacher professional promotion) and so on, while all these pressures will be decided by teachers' assessment result. Currently, the classroom student's average score mainly decides teacher's assessment result. Given that, when putting students with disabilities into young teachers' classrooms, which definitely cause these young teachers' against because these students will decrease the classroom students's average score. Compared with young teacher, the older and nearly retired teachers have less pressure as they have already acquired what they want. In addition, in Chinese culture, we say '五十知天命' (when people fifty they start to understand what they real meaning of life), so people after fifty will believe what they meet is fate arrangement. With this thinking, when they meet students with disabilities in their later career, they will try their best to teach and care about these kids. Like some older and nearly retired teachers said:

I know this is god arrangement and I must face it. I am more than fifty and I know life is not perfect. When school put this student with disability in my class and I know there will add my regular workload. But I think this is my fate and I need to face it. I will try my best to teach and care about this student.

(Regular teacher, secondary school, CH-17)

I am nearly retired and school put a student with disability in my classroom. You know after finishing this year I will retire, so it's ok for me. I am not like the young teachers because they have many many pressures, like family, kids, promotion and many many. I pay attention on this student and I teach her as much as possible.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

The third theme relates to *students with disabilities*, which includes not disturb other students' learning and parents' collaboration. As we discussed in the barrier part, one of the cultures still common for regular school teachers is that special education school is good for students with disabilities as these students have some specific individual needs and some even have bad behaviors which can disturb other students' learning. Therefore, another fixed thinking relates to that is regular school is not a proper place for students with disabilities, particularly these students with serious disabilities. Do not disturb other students' learning is considered as a premise to include these students, particularly when we consider that practice under the high pressure from Middle school entrance examination and College entrance examination. Therefore, students with disabilities do not disturb other students were frequently highlighted by sample teachers as a facilitator:

If the students with disabilities don't influence other students' study, we can put them into regular classroom, like some students with physical disabilities. But if the students with disabilities disturb the class and influence other students' learning, it's not good to put them here. As a regular school we need to be responsible for other students' parents.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

When she (student with disability) firstly came to my class, she always disturbed other students and the parents of other students together wanted to ask her to leave this class. Later she received some treatments in our local special education school and now is ok, at least she doesn't influence other students. During the class teaching, she will draw picture if she can't understand the class. What important is that she doesn't disturb other students.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

From these two extracts we can find that regular teachers' priority is on other students, the majority of normal students, not the smaller number of students with disabilities. Starting from this point, regular teachers see normal students' interest higher than students with disabilities

because of normal students' parents' big pressure and this logical thinking is still common among Chinese regular schools. Compared with normal students' parents' care, students with disabilities' parents show less attention to their kids' study. However, in some inclusive education well developed regular schools, students with disabilities' parents' positive collaboration was regarded as a facilitator to school inclusive education practice by teachers. For example, participating class activities and frequently communicating with regular teachers. Furthermore, normal students' parents will have a good impression on students with disabilities' parents if they collaborating well with regular teachers. Therefore, students with disabilities' parents can acquire normal students' parents' strong support. Like some sample teachers stated:

Her (student with disability) father is good father, he always comes to my class to help me. You know he will not help his daughter but help other students and he wants his daughter be independently. Every year's class spring travel and autumn travel, she's father will attend and help me. I think this is why she can develop very well in my class.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

If the students with disabilities can't do something by themselves, like eating or controlling their own behaviors, their parents should accompany with their kids in the classroom. Like the student with disability in my class, his parent is very good and collaborates with me and sometimes if I find he is in a bad situation, I will ask his parents come and accompany with him in the class. Now is good!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

The fourth theme is **normal student** and two sub-themes were identified: normal students' parents' support and normal students' understanding and helping. As students with disabilities' important partner, normal students act as a significant factor in including students with disabilities in regular schools. However, this factor can be positive or negative, which is mainly influenced by normal students' parents' opinion. As we mentioned many times, nowadays normal students' parents play a more and more important role in school education and actively participate school's development. With more and more students with disabilities are placed into regular schools, which inevitably will influence pre-existing regular school's ecology. One of the changes is normal students' learning environment will become complex when puts some students with disabilities into the regular classroom and this practice, to some extent, can disturb or benefit the pre-existing

classroom, which directly relates to other students learning environment. From the sample teachers' view that students with disabilities can be both a facilitator and a barrier, which chiefly depends on normal students' parents' responses: if normal parents support and understand this practice, the students with disabilities will develop better and better without creating problems, even if there are some problems at the beginning of this practice. However, if normal students' parents do not understand and support this practice and only considering this practice will hinder their kids' study, which will be difficult for putting students with disabilities into the regular classroom. Therefore, most teachers highlighted the importance of normal students' parents' support and understanding in developing school inclusive education practice:

The normal students' parents can understand this student with disability in my classroom and they support this practice. In this way our work will easily carry out. I know in some schools, normal students' parents don't support to put students with disabilities into their kids' classes and then it will be difficult for schools to take measures because you need to always spend time with those parents.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-15)

Beside parents' support, normal students' understanding and support of their classmates with disabilities is also critical, as normal students will report this situation to their parents. If the normal students cannot understand their classmates and consider them as a disturbance, undoubtedly the normal students will transfer this information to their parents, which definitely lead to their parents' against. Therefore, many sample teachers highlighted the significance of understanding and support from normal students:

In my class I educate the class to accept her (student with disability) and help her. Now in my class she is in a good situation and everyone helps her, they are in a good relationship! And the normal students will tell their parents that they have a good relationship with her, so the normal students' parents support that practice.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)

The last and fifth main theme comes to **state policy** which covers related state policy support and local education authority's support. In China, the inclusive education firstly emerged in state policy in 2014 *The Plan of Special Education Improvement (2014-2016)* (State Council, 2014) and

subsequently, in 2017 *Phase II Special Education Promotion Program* (State Council, 2017) and *Regulations on the Education of Disabled Persons* (State Council, 2017) were issued, while the developing of inclusive education was considered as one of priorities in national educational reform agenda. Undoubtedly, this state policy laid a friendly environment for promoting inclusive education in China, therefore more and more students with disabilities who were previous educated in special education schools are transformed into regular schools step by step, like one director said:

Now is better than before, some years ago the mainstream schools can reject students with disabilities. But now they can't! Now we have The Plan of Special Education Improvement (2014-2016), Phase II Special Education Promotion Program and Regulations on the Education of Disabled Persons. All those policies encourage place students with disabilities into mainstream schools. This is a good news for them.
(Director, special school, CH-2)

Furthermore, this director pointed out another critical facilitator that is the local education authority's strong support for inclusive education. In current Chinese school context, the local education authority plays a central role in schools' development as the state educational policy is mainly explained and implemented by local educational authority. Therefore the local educational authority's understanding of state policy will directly decide policies' influences. During the fieldwork, this director stated the local educational authority's critical function in local schools' inclusive education development:

We can say the state policy is a facilitator to inclusive education, but this is only one aspect. What most important is you need local educational authority's support because they implement the policy and their understanding of policy is important for us to develop inclusive education. Without their support, it's difficult for us to get related resources, fund and other supports. Like now the local education authority invites me attend some meeting relates to special education and inclusive education, this is a good thing. In this way I can explain my idea and get their support. This in our country is very important!
(Director, special school, CH-2)

5.4 Empathy: From your schooling experience, please describe the situation of that students being included in your class/school?

Considering the empathy dimension in Chinese context, we also divide that dimension into two parts as we did in Italian context, in order to get a full picture of students with disabilities' situation in the regular school from a historical perspective, which are:

- a) When you was a student in kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university, please describe the situation of students with disabilities being included in your class/school?
- b) Currently as a teacher, please describe the situation of students with disabilities being included in your class/school?

However, when I interviewed with the sample teachers, only two sample teachers mentioned that they had the classmates with disabilities during their schooling. For the majority of sample teachers, they did not meet students with disabilities until they are working as a teacher in the regular schools. For the two teachers who had the schooling experience in terms of classmates with disabilities, one only remembered that she had a classmate with disability and as to the situation of that classmate, she forgot. As that teacher said:

*Yes, I had a classmate who cannot see when I was in primary school. Yes this student was in my class, but I don't remember his situation because he only stayed for a short time and then leaved. I don't know where he went.
(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)*

For another teacher, she stated that when she was in primary school there was a student with intellectual problems and always stayed in the same class without going to upper class. In addition, this student was bullied by other normal students. In terms of the regular teacher's attitudes, she didn't mention. As this sample teacher said:

In my school, there was a student with disability. It looks like this student has some intellectual problems. This student and my brother were in the same class, however, as my brother went to the upper grade, this students was still in the same class. And then me and this student were in the same class. When I finished this grade went to the upper grade, this student still in the same class without changing. When we were in the same class, this student was always bullied by other students and this student always crying in the corner

of the class.
(Special teacher, special school, CH-4)

Only these two sample teachers' views cannot group into a theme. Therefore in terms of the part a, we just report these two regular teachers' views without building a theme independently like part b as the inadequate data.

For the part b), three main themes were identified which are sitting without learning, a changing process and sitting and learning, each main theme includes some sub-themes. For a detailed description, please see table 20.

Table 20 Empathy: The situation of that students being included in your class/school?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Empathy	As a teacher	
	Sitting without learning	Disturbing the class teaching
		As a dangerous resource
		Sitting, sleeping and eating
		Alone without friends
		Being bullied by other students
		Lacking related resources for students with disabilities
	A changing process	From a disturbance to a friend
	Sitting and learning	Well personal development
A good relationship with others		

The first theme is *sitting without learning*, which covers six sub-themes: disturbing the class teaching, as a dangerous resource, sitting, sleeping and eating, alone without friends, being bullied by other students and lacking related resources for students with disabilities. The first sub-theme refers to the disturbing the class teaching. Many sample teachers mentioned that the situation of students with disabilities in their classrooms is in a bad situation with limited learning. The word 'disturbing' was frequently highlighted by regular teachers and the students with disabilities were considered as a disturbance to the whole class. For example, during class teaching these students will make some strange behaviors, loud noise and walking around the class, some even running outside. Undoubtedly, these behaviors can interrupt and disturb teacher's class teaching plan because the regular teacher needs to stop the lesson and to manage that situation. Therefore, those students' existences pose a big challenge for classroom teaching, as some teachers said:

She (student with disability) always makes some strange behaviors during the class teaching, you know this will influence other students' learning and teacher's teaching. For example, sometimes she takes off her shoes and socks in front of the classroom, sometimes even takes off her pant. This really disturbs our class going.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

You know he (student with disability) cannot control himself during the class. So sometimes he runs around the classroom during teacher's teaching. And then teacher needs to stop teaching to manage him. Also he cannot write and when other students writing, he running around the classroom or outside. If he likes someone's things, he will just take it without saying anything. Sometimes, if he plays something very happy he will make some loud sound. You can see these strange behaviors hinder our teaching!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

Examples like that can easily find in teachers' interviews and the majority of sample teachers consider students with disabilities as a disturbance to the class and many of them hold a negative attitude towards students with disabilities in their classrooms. Following that, the second sub-theme refers to students with disabilities as a dangerous resource, which means they can hurt other normal students and damage the school's facilities. Considering the situation of students with disabilities in their classrooms, many teachers regard these students as a headache. Particularly these students can hurt other normal students, which can lead to other normal students' parents against. As nowadays many Chinese families only have one kid, therefore if their kids are hurt by these classmates with disabilities, normal students' parents will be against putting these students with disabilities in their kids' classroom. Cases like that are highlighted by sample teachers:

He (student with disability) always makes some dangerous actions, not only hurt himself but also hurt others. You know, if he hurts other students, their parents will come to school to argue!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-11)

She (student with disability) is a dangerous resource in my classroom and you don't know when there will be some safety problems. For example, last time one student made her books fall down the table without intention, she used her hand to push that normal student. Unfortunately, that night this student was in a fever, very serious. This is a serious problem.

I always say parents send their kids to the school to study, however, the safety of their kids cannot ensure! Nobody knows what will happen in the future, it's dangerous!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

Sometimes, students with disabilities can damage schools facilities, as one teacher said:

He (student with disability) always damage class's desks, chairs, blackboard..... Every time in school's meeting, our class is always mentioned that facilities always are broken and needed to repair.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-12)

The third sub-theme comes to sitting, sleeping and eating, which means some students with disabilities in school 'can do anything but without learning' (one sample teacher's words) and this 'anything' mainly includes sitting on the chair to sleep and eat. According to sample teachers' views, two causes are responsible for that situation: one is lacking fixed professional support/special teachers and another is that regular teachers themselves lack related teaching abilities. Therefore some teachers expressed the view that currently some students with disabilities in mainstream schools are 'wasting time and life' (sample teachers' words) as they just moving from home to school where they can sleep and eat and no learning at all. Like some regular teachers stated:

He (student with disability) doesn't influence our class teaching. Every day he just sitting in his desk and sleeping. During lunch time he is eating with us. Then nothing, without learning. He cannot understand the lessons and also no special teachers for him.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-14)

His (student with disability) parent doesn't care about his study and just put him in the school. You know his parents just think the school is a place to help them to take care of their kid. He doesn't understand the lessons and everyday he just sitting here without learning. What about his future? I think his parents should think about that, they cannot let their kid only sitting in the school without doing anything!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)

Actually, apart from the two reasons that teachers mentioned before, the parents of students with disabilities do not care about their kids' study is also an important cause that leads to these

students solely sitting in the classroom without learning. As well documented in the existing research, parents of students with disabilities act as a critical role in school's inclusive education practice. However, currently only some parents of students with disabilities actively attend regular schools' inclusive education practice, the majority of them are still keeping silence. On the contrary, parents of normal students actively participate in regular school's inclusive education practice, however, mainly plays as a barrier. Therefore, some measures need to take to address that phenomenon and to raise parents of students with disabilities' awareness in terms of helping schools to teach their kids.

The fourth sub-theme is about some students with disabilities stay alone without friends in the classroom, many reasons account for that situation: strange and harmful behaviors, dangerous actions, with dirty cloths, etc. Some sample teachers highlighted this situation:

In our class no one wants to play with him (student with disability). I ask other students to play with him, but no one. He is very dirty, especially with dirty cloths and no one wants to play with him. Others are clean with clean hands, faces, cloths. He is dirty, so on one play with him. He is alone in the classroom.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

He (student with disability) never plays with others and others also don't play with him. So he always plays with himself and stays alone.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-22)

The fifth sub-theme concerns some students with disabilities are being bullied by other normal students. Although students with disabilities stay alone in the school, however, they are at dangerous of being bullied by other normal students, which is frequently referred by sample teachers. Specially, the bullying frequently happens in fourth or fifth grade, as teachers said students' age in that grade is about 10 or 11 and they want to do some adventures. Finally, these students will focus on the students who are different from them, which are these with disabilities. The forms of bullying are various, like some students together fighting with one student with disability, to throw students with disabilities' books and pencils, to close the door when students with disabilities entering the bathroom, etc. As some teachers said:

Some students in our class always bully him (student with disability). Like yesterday some naughty students together to throw his cloths on the floor. And sometimes they will say some bad words to upset him.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-10)

In my class with students grow up, some naughty students always tease him and sometimes give him something to eat, actually those things cannot eat. I cannot always control them.

Other students think he is stupid and bully him.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-14)

I am a secondary school teacher and in my class some boys are higher than me. They are naughty students and always bring some troubles to our class. Sometimes they together go to fight with the one student with disability in my class. It's dangerous!

(Regular teacher, secondary school, CH-17)

The last and sixth sub-theme refers to lacking related resources for students with disabilities: learning materials and professionals. Currently, lacking of related learning resources for students with disabilities is the main cause which should be responsible for all the situations what we mentioned earlier in this section. For example, students with disabilities just sitting, sleeping and eating in the school, becoming a dangerous resource, being bullied by other students. Therefore, to some extent, the lacking of related learning resources should be firstly addressed and then other situations will automatically change into a better orientation. As teacher said:

Unfortunately, some students with disabilities now cannot understand the lessons, before in the first grade they can understand, but now we are in the second grade, some of them cannot understand like other students. Particularly for the lessons of Chinese and math. We cannot do anything as we don't know how to do with that. There are no special teachers to help them, to help us regular teachers. This lacking makes some students with disabilities just sitting in the classroom without learning.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

The second main theme is **a changing process** which includes one sub-theme: from a disturbance to a friend. As we discussed in the Italian part, the situation of students with disabilities is not static, but in a changing process. Compared with Italy, in Chinese regular school context the lacking of fixed professional special/support teachers can be considered as a chief barrier to promoting inclusive education, which results in all the work relates to students with

disabilities are undertaken by regular teachers. Although regular teachers regard that as an additional burden on their existing workload, the majority of sample teachers in my interviews stated that they still spared no effort to help these students with disabilities being included in their classrooms. Rather than helping students with disabilities to learn as good as other students, the regular teachers try their best to help students with disabilities to change from a disturbance to a friend in the class. Like teachers said:

She's (student with disability) study is not good and when she firstly came here, she likes a disturbance to our class. And I started to talk with her and ask students to help her. Nowadays, she is fine with others. Yes, these two years he changes a lot!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)

In my class there is student with disability, at first she cannot do anything. She always hugged others and made some noises during the class teaching. You know other students' parents together came to our school to ask the director move this student outside their kids' class. Because she really disturbs others learning. Our school managers and I start to help this student and also ask help from our local special education school. Nowadays, she is very good and others are happy to stay with her. During this one year, she changes a lot!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

The third and last main theme is about *sitting and learning* and two sub-themes are under this theme: well personal development and a good relationship with others. Currently, students with massive level of disabilities still in the special education schools, only these students with light or middle level of disabilities can be placed into the regular schools. Undoubtedly, when these students with disabilities firstly entered the regular schools, strange environment will influence their feelings and behaviors, therefore they will make some strange behaviors. However, as time goes on their situation will change into a good direction, particularly with the great effort of regular teachers. The first change is about personal development, which includes learn some basic subject knowledge and social, emotional development. Developments like that usually emerge in the second year when students with disabilities being included in the regular schools. Some sample teachers expressed that view:

Now she (student with disability) can learn something and before she didn't learning anything. Within these two years, now she can draw some pictures and sing some songs.

*Particularly, in the Chinese lesson she can remember some poems!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)*

*He (student with disability) now can communicate with others and want to express his feelings and ideas with others. It's really a good development. Beside that his physical education is well and he runs faster than others. With help of our physical education teacher, he stands for our school to attend our school district competition, he got a prize. So I think he is a good in our school with a well development!
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)*

In relation to well personal development is that students with disabilities have a good relationship with others, which can be considered as a result of the personal development. At the same time, having a good relationship with others can help students with disabilities learning knowledge and developing social skills. As sample teachers reported:

*Now, she (student with disability) has a good relationship with other students in our classroom. Everyone helps her and plays with her. Therefore she has a good feeling in classroom. She learns some lessons and some students also help her after class. It's really in a good situation!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)*

*In our school there is a student with strong disability. At first she didn't talk with others and others also didn't talk with her. During the class and after class the regular teacher started to help her to talk with others and play with others. Step by step, now she has many friends in our school, and she is very happy in the school because she has friends and keeps a good relationship with them. I think she's communication skills now is very good!
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)*

5.5 Perspective: What is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education?

In Chinese regular school context, three kinds of proper placement for students to receive inclusive education were provided by sample teachers, which are placement in special schools, placement in mainstream schools and conditional placement in mainstream schools. For each placement, some reasons were offered by sample teachers as well, please see table 21 for a

detailed description.

Table 21 What is the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Perspective	Placement in special school	Special school with more professionals and learning resources
		Regular teachers lacking related professional abilities
		Regular teachers do not have time and energy for students with disabilities in the class
		Students with disabilities can develop life skills while in mainstream schools nothing
		Small number of students with disabilities
		Students with disabilities' strange and negative behaviors in mainstream schools
		Students with serious disabilities should place in special school
		Normal students' parents high demand and against
	Placement in mainstream school	Mainstream school more likes a small society than special school
		Well-personal development in mainstream schools
		Surrounding by students with problems in special school
		Parents protect their respect and self-esteem
		Compulsory Education Law's regulations
	Conditional placement in mainstream	Placement cannot produce negative influences
		Considering regular teachers' inclusive education workload

The first main theme concerns *placement in special schools* and eight reasons were identified for that idea: special school with more professionals and learning resources, regular teachers lacking related professional abilities, regular teachers do not have time and energy for students with disabilities in the class, students with disabilities can develop life skills while in regular schools nothing, small number of students with disabilities, students with disabilities' strange and negative behaviors in regular schools, students with serious disabilities should place in special school and normal students' parents high demand and against. From the school practice and related policies, special education still plays a critical role in educating students with disabilities in China and this is why there are so many reasons to support special school as a main placement for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education. In particular, all of these reasons we listed above are frequently highlighted by nearly all sample teachers.

The first and most frequently reason mentioned by sample teachers is special school with more professionals and learning resources, like special education teachers, specific professionals for language, mental disability, related equipments for treating students with disabilities, etc. In all, various advantages were provided by sample teachers when put students with disabilities in special schools to receive inclusive education. Like some sample teachers said:

*Personally, I think it's better to put students with disabilities in special schools. As far as teachers are concerned, teachers in special education schools are more professional, patient and meticulous than us. They have professional training and know more about these students than us because we never learn this kind of knowledge.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)*

*But in fact, I think may be it better to put these students (with disabilities) in special education schools. In this way, special schools can give them some professional guidance and education. I think it will be better! In our country, the regular teacher don't have professional skills for these students, it's difficult to educate these students in mainstream schools and also we don't have time for them!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)*

Extracts like that can easily find in sample teachers' interviews and three points can draw from these extracts: from culture perspective special education school is long considered as a proper place for students with disabilities and this still a dominant thinking in Chinese society; from special schools' perspective, currently nearly all the learning resources like special education teachers, related professionals and equipments, are concentrated in special education schools where they can meet students with disabilities' individual needs and provide appropriate education for these students; and finally from mainstream schools' perspective, lacking fixed professional special/support teachers is a biggest barrier to inclusion and furthermore nearly all regular teachers do not receive any special education and inclusive education training during their pre-service teacher education programmess, all those considerations persuade sample teachers to support special school is a appropriate placement for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education.

Related to that reason is the second one which refers to regular teachers lacking related professional abilities for teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms. Here, it is not

necessary to explain more about this reason as we have already mentioned that many times in earlier parts, we just put some sample teachers' interviews here to reflect their concerns:

As you know as a teacher, I think all want to teach students, no matter you are with disability or not. But now for us it's difficult to teach students with disabilities because we never receive these professional training. When you put more and more students with disabilities into our schools (mainstream), it is bad for these students, we cannot teach them, they are just sitting here. If you want to teach them, you need professional methods and strategies, but we don't have. Yes, better to put them into special schools to receive inclusive education. Here is not education, is just sitting!
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-20)

I want to teach them (students with disabilities) in my class, however, I don't know how to do it. So I think it's better to put them into special schools.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-25)

The third sub-theme comes to regular teachers do not have time and energy for students with disabilities in the class, as they already have a lot of work to do, like 50 normal students' work, and now you put one or two students with disabilities into their classroom, how regular teachers allocate additional time and energy for these students, particularly when the regular teachers do not have related professional abilities. What I state here is a seriously practical problem that highlighted by sample teachers in their day-to-day school practice. And moreover, currently with the regular schools' inadequate preparation for teaching students with disabilities, it is not a good choice to transform students with disabilities from special schools to regular schools. As sample teachers stated that view:

Now, there are 53 students in my class, plus her (student with disability) is 54. The 53 students' work for me is already like a mountain, now you put her in my class, I can only protect her safety. For study, I really don't have the time and energy for her. My energy is limited! Students like her are better to put in special schools because we don't know how to teach students with disabilities and the school is not ready for them.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-14)

It's impossible! Your energy is limited! You already have so many normal students and now you need to separate energy for these students with disabilities in your class, it's very difficult. There are no special teachers in our school, we don't have related training. So, I

think it is good to put them in special schools to receive inclusive education, now the majority time they (students with disabilities) are only sitting in the classroom!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

The fourth sub-theme is students with disabilities can develop life skills in special schools while in mainstream schools nothing. And particularly, this sub-theme mainly considers the future of students with disabilities. As the sample teachers expressed a fact that putting these students with disabilities into mainstream schools is meaningless as the majority of time they solely sitting in the classrooms without learning, while if you put them in special schools, with professional teachers and specific programmes these students can learn something, like make cake, learn hairdressing and other skills, which they can earn a life with these professional skills. Considering that two situations, sample teachers think the second option is good for students with disabilities' future. As one teacher said:

Sure, it's better to put in special schools! We always discuss that, if we put him (student with disability) in the special school, he can learn some skills and he can use these skills to earn a life in the future. Like his painting is good, you can see it's different from others, even better than some other students who learn painting after class. But now in here, no teachers teach him, also we don't have time. It's not good for him.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-15)

The fifth sub-theme concerns a small number of students with disabilities when compared with the large number of normal students in the regular schools, which leads regular schools overlook this small part of students. Currently in China, one primary or secondary school's population is ranging from 1500 to 2500, while if the school includes both primary and secondary education the students' population can reach around 4000. Within this large population, when you put twenty or thirty students with disabilities, it is difficult for regular schools to put more attention on these students. In particular, when teachers consider that mainstream schools are for 99% normal students and this traditional thinking put the less than 1% students with disabilities at a dangerous situation. As some sample teachers said:

As you see, there are one or two students with disabilities in each class and it's not easy for us regular teachers to manage. You cannot leave your work and just for these students,

their number is really small. Also you don't have time and energy for them. If there are more, we can organize a special class for them, but now it too small and it's good to put them in special schools to receive inclusive education.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The sixth reason for that placement lies in students with disabilities' strange and negative behaviors in regular schools can produce bad influences on other normal students' safety and study, particularly under the high pressure from middle and college entrance exams. As we mentioned earlier, some students with disabilities can produce some strange or harmful behaviors, which not only put other normal students at dangerous but also can disturb regular teachers' class teaching, which inevitably leads the regular schools are rejecting these students. Furthermore, as sample teachers argued that you cannot use the small number of students with disabilities to damage the majority students' interest. Therefore, the sample teachers considered that the students with disabilities who make strange and negative behaviors should be educated in special schools, as they said:

Sometimes some students with disabilities can produce bad influences on other students. For example in some secondary schools some students with disabilities hurt other students by hand or mouth. Some of them even take off the cloths during the class teaching. These behaviors are really bad for other students as they are young, they will learn those bad behaviors. Yes, sometimes we can put these students in special schools.

(Special teacher, special school, CH-4)

The seventh reason is about students with serious disabilities who should be placed into special schools as these students will be dangerous at mainstream school not only for themselves but for other students. In addition, lacking related special teachers and learning resources will lead these students only sitting in the classroom without any learning. As one sample teacher said:

Some students with light disabilities, we can put them in our class to teach as these students don't disturb the class and can learn by themselves. But for some students with high level of disabilities should put in special schools. I think we can't teach these students. Special schools can teach because here have special education teachers.

(Regular teacher, secondary school, CH-18)

The last and eighth reason comes from the normal students' parents' demand and against and

this is particularly obvious under the middle school/college entrance exam pressure. As we mentioned earlier, currently middle school/college entrance exam still plays a critical role in attending a good secondary school or university and these exams are considered as the best opportunity to change their kids' fate. Therefore, not only students but also their parents put much attention on these two exams. Given that, when putting students with disabilities into the regular school, the first reaction comes from normal students' parents as they concern more on their kids' interest. Like some sample teachers stated that when some students with disabilities firstly placed into the classrooms, a group of normal students' parents together made a signature to against school's arrangement because they considered that will produce some negative influences on their kids' current study and furthermore will influence their kids' future. From current Chinese society, parents' worries can fully understand. Specifically, when many families regard middle school/college entrance exam as the only way to change their families' fate, therefore any potential factors that can hinder this will be fully eliminated by parents. Under that background, many sample teachers considered that with well resources' special schools are the best choices for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education:

*Nowadays, we have a lot of pressures from the parents, especially the normal students' parents. As you're a Chinese student, you even know better than me, the middle school/college entrance exam is considered as the only way to change your fate, nobody can hinder that. If you do, parents will try their best best to against that! In this way, it's better to put students with disabilities into special schools, here you can find good special teachers and professionals, now the mainstream school don't have these resources.
(Special teacher, special school, CH-3)*

*Yes, when firstly put this girl (student with disability) in our school, the girl sometimes made some strange behaviors and influenced other students' study. All other students' parents together come to our school director's office to ask us to rearrange this girl. Anyway, their idea is that you cannot put this girl in my kids' class. If you put, parents will against!
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)*

While many teacher consider the *special schools as a proper placement* for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education, some sample teacher, particularly the special schools teachers, argue that we should put students with disabilities into the regular schools to educate as

special school is not an ideal place for students with disabilities. In all, five reasons were provided by sample teachers to support their argument, which are regular school more like a small society than special school, well-personal development in regular schools, surrounding by students with problems in special school, parents of students with disabilities protect their kids' respect and self-esteem and Compulsory Education Law's regulations.

The first sub-theme refers to regular school more likes a small society than special school, which is better for students with or without disabilities' development. From sample teachers' view that regular school is like a small society, inside students with disabilities can learn many good things like how to communicate with others, how to attend the community's activities, etc. Compared with regular schools, special school more likes a separated island which is bad for students' development. As one special teacher said:

From personal development perspective, everybody needs a model, an example, a standard to learn, in that way the mainstream school is a good place. Putting students with disabilities into here, they can learn social skills. The mainstream school more likes a normal society where is better for students with disabilities' future development. Special school, more or less likes a separated environment, inside there are less opportunities for students' development. Although there are some programmes in special schools, but many of them are intention-made, not like the programmes in mainstream schools, because the mainstream school is a natural environment.

(Special teacher, special school, CH-4)

In relation to that thinking is the second reason which is well-personal development in regular schools for students with disabilities, as well as students without disabilities. For that, one special school teacher's view can fully describe that idea:

From my working experience with many mainstream schools, I can say it's better to put the majority of students with disabilities into mainstream schools. Because they can have a good personal development in here, in special schools they cannot achieve that development. In mainstream school, the students with disabilities have many normal friends, they can learn communication skills, study methods, good habits...Because they are many communities that students can develop their interests. Also, they can have some normal friends. For example, in one mainstream school where I help them to develop inclusive education, one student with disability is developing well, she can communicate with others, play with others, learn some subject knowledge, all that is impossible in special schools. Every time I go to that school saw her very happy here!

(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

The third reason comes to surrounding by students with problems in special school, and this is specially highlighted by special school teachers. As in special school, students with different kinds of disabilities stay together to study and this environment is not good for students' personal development. As special teacher argued that children at that time want to communicate with his/her friends, learn something from their surroundings. Therefore, if you put all students with disabilities together in a special school, it is difficult for them to communicate and learn as people surround him/her has some problems. Given that, regular school is an appropriate placement for students with disabilities. One special teacher's account can illustrate that:

If you put students with disabilities in special school, you will find it's difficult for them to communicate with other students surrounding them, because other students also have some problems, some cannot speak, some cannot move, some cannot see. Within this environment, how can you develop? From education theory, we know that surround environment plays a important role in students' development. If you put in mainstream schools, these students with disabilities will have a good development.

(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

The fourth sub-theme is parents of students with disabilities protect their kids' respect and self-esteem and traditional culture are mainly responsible for that. Currently in China, it will be considered as a bad thing if one family has a child with disability, because the prejudice on disability still popular and dominant people's thinking. In the past, if one family has a kid with disability, they will put her/him at home and not allow to go outside. Nowadays, only when children have really strong disabilities, therefore the parents will put their kid in special schools. Otherwise, if not strong they will choose regular schools. Putting their children in mainstream schools can tell their relatives, friends and neighbors, that their children are normal like other children. On the contrary, if whose children go to the special schools, which definitely will attract some prejudices form the society. As one sample teacher said:

From parents' perspective, unless their children's disabilities are very strong they will put them in special schools, or they will put their children in mainstream schools. One is because mainstream schools have a series of subjects which are good for their children's

*development. And more important is that others will think that their kids are normal. For example, some children with intellectual disabilities, even these children in mainstream schools cannot learn but only sitting here. Parents will choose mainstream schools, because in this way others cannot find that their children have problems. But if you send you children in special schools, the situation is totally different and others will think your children is not normal. In this way, parents will feel shame. As now society still has a bad thinking on disability. You can see there are like **primary school or **secondary school, you never see **mainstream primary school or **mainstream secondary school, but you can see **special school. The word 'special' gives people a bad thinking. (Special teacher, special school, CH-4)*

The fifth sub-theme is Compulsory Education Law's regulations which clearly state that mainstream schools should accept all the children of school age within their areas and no one can violate this regulation. Although some students with disabilities are placed into special schools due to their high level of disabilities, however, if their parents insist on putting their kid to regular schools, no schools can reject according to the current policy. As one teacher said:

He (student with disability) can stay in this mainstream school to continue his secondary school education. He comes from local area and public school should be responsible for his nine years' compulsory education. Schools cannot reject him. (Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

The third and last main theme is **conditional placement in regular schools**, which includes two sub-themes: placement cannot produce negative influences and school should consider regular teachers' inclusive education workload. This theme indicates sample teachers complicated feeling towards the placement in terms of students with disabilities to receive inclusive education, on one hand they know for some students with disabilities the regular school is a proper place to receive education, while one the other hand they are afraid of this arrangement will influence other normal students' study and teacher themselves self-interest. Given that, they consider that placement in regular school is a good way for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education. However, if that works some conditional requirements must be met. The first conditional requirement refers to placing students with disabilities into mainstream schools cannot produce negative influences on pre-existing school ecology, for example placement cannot influence other normal students' study and safety, regular teachers' teaching and assessment results, etc. Some sample

teachers' interviews clearly illustrate these views:

Cannot influence other students' study:

Yes, like students with physical disabilities can place in our school because they don't produce negative impacts on other students. We need to be responsible for other students. Like students with intellectual disabilities cannot place in mainstream schools because they will hinder other students' learning. Yes, students who don't produce negative influences on other students' study can place in the mainstream schools. Otherwise it will be difficult.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-13)

Cannot influence other students' safety:

Yes, like she (student with disability) sometimes hurt other students, it's dangerous. If you hurt other students, then their parents will be against that. They put their children in the school we need to protect their children's safety. I think if you want to put students with disabilities in the mainstream schools, those students cannot hurt other students, then we can study and learn together.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-11)

Cannot influence regular teachers' teaching:

The mainstream school is a better than special school and students with disabilities can receive a proper education. However, if this works the students with disabilities cannot influence my teaching. If these students always disturb my teaching, how can I teach them and how can I teach other students. If they always disturb class teaching other students' parents will be against them!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-12)

Cannot influence regular teachers' assessment results:

I think students with disabilities in our school are developing very well. We have a flexible assessment standard for both students and regular teachers. We don't consider students with disabilities' score into regular teachers' assessment results. So this means these students' score cannot influence class average score. Yes, if these students' score can produce a negative influence on class average score, no teachers want to teach them!

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

What we mentioned above fully presents sample teachers' concern, firstly it looks reasonably but after a deeper consideration all those conditional requirements are based on protecting normal students and regular teachers' interest. Seriously, even sacrifice students with disabilities' interests to protect others (normal students and regular teachers)' interest. Just as some sample teachers expressed '*we are mainstream schools and we are for 99% normal students*' (sample teachers' words), having this thinking in mind leads to regular teachers making this conditional placement decision.

The last conditional requirement comes to considering regular teachers' inclusive education workload and this is primarily from regular teachers' perspective. Considering Italian school practice, we know that there is an additional role, support teacher, who collaborates with regular teachers together to teach all students. And particularly the support teachers pay more attention to students with disabilities' learning. Undoubtedly, under this arrangement the support teachers will get return for their work, which might include basic salary, oral prize or something else. One point we can conclude from that is these support teachers are not doing without pay. However, in current Chinese regular school practice, the majority of regular teachers' work for students with disabilities is voluntary work without paying. As we stated earlier, with big class size regular teachers already have much work to do, while put some students with disabilities into their classrooms without allocating more teachers, which definitely increases their workload. In this way, some sample teachers expressed the view that regular school should consider this part of workload which relates to students with disabilities into their whole workload. At least, this part of work should be identified by school director and other teachers. In a word, this part of work should be clearly identified and acknowledged. As one teacher said:

Yes, I agree to put students with disabilities in my class to receive education and it's good for them. As a teacher you need to teach all the students, no matter he or she with disabilities or not. But, if I work the school should identify my work, ok you even don't need to give me more salary, but you need to see my effort.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

At first, this condition requirement likes a negation with schools. However, from a comparative perspective, Chinese regular school teachers just state a fact. If, we change our point,

asking Italian support teachers work like Chinese regular school teachers without pay, what about their reactions?

5.6 Interpretation: What is the general development trend of inclusive education during your schooling and working period?

As we have already discussed in the Italian's interpretation section, the primary intention of this part is to investigate the historical development trend of inclusive education from regular school teachers' angle. In order to get a full picture of the history of inclusive education development, we ask teachers to recall their schooling education experience about the situation of inclusive education in their own schools, to provide some information in terms of the inclusive education development from their kindergarten until they finished their studies. Finally, we combine teachers' schooling education and working period to present a picture of Chinese regular teachers' account on inclusive education development history, distinguishing from the official inclusive education development history which stated in the various state policies. However, as we applying that to Chinese regular school context, two unpredictable problems emerged during the fieldwork. Firstly, as we stated in the empathy dimension, only two sample teachers mentioned that they had the classmates with disabilities during their schooling, for the rest of sample teachers they did not meet students with disabilities until they attended the work. Therefore, as the inadequate data from only two sample teachers, this section will mainly focus on sample teachers' working period. However, here we present that two sample teachers' words to provide some information about inclusive education in the past:

One sample teacher's experience:

*Yes, I had a classmate who cannot see when I was in primary school. Yes this student was in my class, but I don't remember his situation because he only stayed for a short time and then leaved. I don't know where he went.
(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)*

Another sample teacher's schooling experience:

In my school, there was a student with disability. It looks like this student has some intellectual problems. This student and my brother were in the same class, however, as my brother went to the upper grade, this student was still in the same class. And then me and this student were in the same class. When I finished this grade went to the upper grade, this student still in the same class without changing. When we were in the same class, this student was always bullied by other students and this student always crying in the corner of the class.

(Special teacher, special school, CH-4)

From that two sample teachers' schooling experiences and the fact that the majority of sample teachers never had classmates with disabilities when they were students, we can infer that the situation of inclusive education in the past was not good like currently. However, more data is needed to make a proper conclusion in terms of the development of inclusive education in Chinese school context in the past decades.

Secondly, after telling their feeling of the inclusive education development in their own schools, nearly all the sample teachers provided some necessary suggestions and measures that are needed to take to address the barriers to inclusive education in their own schools. At first glance, these responses seem to irrelevant to this dimension, but after a deeper consideration, responses like that actually reflect sample teachers' opinions on that question, just in different ways. These measures which offered by the sample teachers is a kind of development trend that should take place in the future regarding the inclusive education. Given that, we also group that as a main theme to fully illustrate sample teachers' opinions.

As to the interpretation dimension in Chinese regular school context, two main themes were identified: better and better and measures should be taken in the future. In addition, each main theme has some sub-themes, and please see table 22 for a full presentation.

The first main theme is the situation of inclusive education in regular schools is ***better and better***, which includes four sub-themes: from zero or some to many: students with disabilities start to be placed into mainstream schools, from negative to positive: mainstream schools start to change attitudes towards students with disabilities, more and more hardware (money, resource rooms, related equipments, barrier-free facilities) are being invested into mainstream schools and more policies are issued on inclusive education. Unlike Italian sample teachers refer to the concrete years, like before 1977, 1977 and around 2000, as the boundary to divide the inclusive

education development in different periods, while sample teachers in China do not refer the concrete year as the line to distinguish the worse and better situation of the inclusive education development in their schools. On the contrary, nearly all the sample teachers just stated that inclusive education in their schools is becoming better and better during those years without mentioning the concrete years. For example, the oldest sample teacher is at 60 and has been a regular teacher for 38 years from 1971, while the youngest sample teacher's age is 29 and has become a teacher for 3 years. Both of them refers to the development trend of inclusive education in their own schools as better and better in recent years without stating which year. Considering that, current research respects sample teachers' views without stating the concrete year in terms of the first main theme.

Table 22 Interpretation: What is the general development trend of inclusive education during your schooling and working period?

Dimension	Themes	Sub-themes
Interpretation	Better and better	From zero or some to many: more and more students with disabilities start to be placed into regular schools
		From negative to positive: regular schools start to change attitudes towards students with disabilities
		More and more hardware
		More policies are issued on inclusive education
	Measures should be taken in the future	Setting fixed professional special/support teachers in regular school
		Training regular school teachers on special and inclusive education
		More clear policy regulations on inclusive education
		Reorganizing existing curriculum to meet all
		Considering regular teachers' inclusive education workload

The first sub-theme refers to from zero or some to many: more and more students with disabilities start to be placed into regular schools and this development trend was frequently highlighted by all the sample teachers. Compared with their schooling education experiences from kindergarten to university, all regular teachers have the same feeling that recent years more and more students with disabilities have been placed into mainstream schools and some sample teachers even stated that their schools end the history of without students with disabilities. From

zero or some to more and students with disabilities receive their education in regular schools can easily find from sample teachers' interviews, like some sample teachers said:

When I was a student from kindergarten to university, I never met students with disabilities in my school. When I started to work in this mainstream school, I found there are some students with disabilities, you know this is the first time I met students with disabilities in mainstream schools. As I know students with disabilities usually in special schools, not here. And in recent years I feel there are more and more students with disabilities coming to our schools.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-14)

I have been a teacher for 30 years and this is the first time I meet students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Yes, in the past I heard some mainstream schools received students with disabilities. And you can find nowadays in our school there are more students with disabilities than before. Yes, I feel these years mainstream schools start to welcome students with disabilities.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-6)

With more and more students with disabilities have been put into regular schools, the regular schools' attitudes towards these students have changed a lot from negative and rejected to positive and receptive and this is the second sub-theme mentioned by sample teachers. As sample teachers stated that school leaders, school managers and themselves' attitudes towards students with disabilities are positive and spare no effort in helping those students with disabilities being included in regular schools, as one regular school inclusion manager said:

Nowadays, there are more and more students with disabilities in our school and almost every class you can find one or two students with disabilities. From school leader to school managers, regular teachers, other students and their parents, a welcoming atmosphere is forming. And now our school there is a high acceptance of students with disabilities. All the students with disabilities in our school are very happy and have a good relationship with other students.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

As a special school director for 10 years, this director illustrated this changing in a detailed way:

As a teacher and director of a local special school, I can feel these years our society, government, mainstream schools and our special schools have changed a lot. All people start to care about students with disabilities, especially the mainstream schools. In the past, these schools didn't like students with disabilities and some of them even rejected students with disabilities. With our government's effort, now you can see mainstream schools are welcoming students with disabilities and they start to recognize that they should be responsible for students with disabilities. And now our school area's mainstream schools always invite me to their schools to help them how to include and teach students with disabilities in their schools. Yes there are still problems and still have more space to improve. But current development trend is good. Step by step we can become better and better in the future!

(Director, special school, CH-2)

The third sub-theme refers to more and more hardware was built in regular schools. With more and more students with disabilities being placed into regular schools, more and more hardware, like specific found for students with disabilities, resource rooms, related equipments, barrier-free facilities, are being invested into regular schools. During the fieldwork in the sample schools, you can feel the majority of sample schools have already taken some measures to meet these students with disabilities in their schools, like resource room, specific school manager for managing inclusive education, related special education training programmes for regular teachers, etc. All these hardware has been well developed in regular schools and some sample teachers' interviews emphasized that situation:

Our school has developed inclusive education for more than eleven years. There are many changes in our school, like special found was established for students with disabilities, a new resource room was built and some barrier-free facilities for students with disabilities were built. Particularly, in the past the resource rooms was in the fourth floor, maybe because school mangers think that the things relate students with disabilities is not important, so just find a place for them. In fact, the fourth floor is not a good position for students with disabilities. In 2013 we moved this resource room from fourth floor to the ground floor. Now is in a very good position!

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

This school's inclusive education is very good. In my last work place, inclusive education is not in a good situation. But now here is fine, we have special manger for inclusive education, specific assessment system for inclusive education work, provide opportunities for students with disabilities to develop their potential and also school director seek opportunities for us to go outside for continue training on inclusive education. Yes, I find

things here is better!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-19)

The fourth sub-theme comes to more and more policies are issued on inclusive education to facilitate regular schools to promote inclusive education practice. Undoubtedly, more and more students with disabilities are put into regular schools, changing attitudes towards students with disabilities, hardware for students with disabilities, all cannot come to realize without related state inclusive education policies' support. In terms of the policies on promoting inclusive education, I have already discussed in the chapter four, here I just show some extracts from sample teachers to report their views on that changing:

These years many policies on inclusive education have been issued by our government, like The plan for improving special education (2014-2016), The second plan for improving special education (2017-2020) and Education for persons with disabilities (2017), you know all these policies give us force and energy to develop inclusive education.
(Director, special school, CH-2)

Nowadays, different levels of policies on inclusive education are issued by central government, province, city and school district. You know all these policies give us a strong base to develop inclusive education. Not like the past, it's very difficult to find policies to support students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Now with these policies, related resources can allocate to mainstream schools.
(Director, primary school, CH-23)

The second main theme is *measures should be taken in future*, which covers five sub-themes: setting fixed professional special/support teachers in regular school, training regular teachers on special and inclusive education, more clear policy regulations on inclusive education, re-organizing existing curriculum to meet all students and considering regular teachers' workload relates to inclusive education. In particular, all these measure here were mentioned frequently by sample teachers.

The first sub-theme is setting fixed professional special/support teachers in regular schools, which is the highest demand and emphasized by all sample teachers for many times. As we discussed in the barrier to inclusive education section, lacking of fixed professional support/special teachers is considered as the biggest barrier to inclusion in current Chinese regular

school context. Therefore the first measure that urgently needs to take is setting fixed professional support/special teachers in regular schools suggested by sample teachers. As regular teachers argued that they are lacking necessary professional abilities for teaching students with disabilities in their classrooms, which leads to some students with disabilities just sitting in the classrooms without learning. Therefore, the first and most important measure to solve that problem is to set fixed professional special/support teachers in their schools. On the one hand, the fixed professional special/support teachers can better teach these students with disabilities in the regular schools, on the other hand, to alleviate regular teachers' heavy workload. We can see that from some teachers' account:

The most and urgent measure should be taken is the special teachers, there must be fixed special teachers in mainstream schools to help students with disabilities to study, or these students just sitting here without learning anything. Yes, this is the first we need to do. Without specific special teachers for that, other measures sometimes cannot work.
(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

I think the very necessary necessary measure we need to take is to add special teachers in our mainstream school to help us to teach students with disabilities. As you know, to be a teacher you need the certificate, if you don't have the certificate you can't teach. If you teach without certificate, it's illegal. But now as regular teacher not only me, all the regular teachers in my school don't have the certificate for teaching students with disabilities. But, in practice we need to teach them because there are no special teachers in our schools. In fact, this is illegal. The next step I think school must set special teachers. The special teachers have professional abilities for teaching those students, they are training for that. Also, with these teachers, my workload can reduce some. Nowadays, I am so busy with normal students and students with disabilities in my classroom!
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-15)

The second sub-theme refers to training regular teachers to acquire professional teaching ability for students with disabilities. Currently, Chinese pre-service teacher education programmes is in a double system, one for regular teachers and one for special teachers. Therefore, regular teachers nearly do not receive anything about special and inclusive education during their pre-service teacher education programmes. As we mentioned many times current Chinese regular schools do not have special teachers, all the work related students with disabilities are undertaken by regular teachers. Particularly, we need to keep in mind that these regular teachers without

related abilities for teaching these students. During our fieldwork, many sample teachers hope to receive more training on special and inclusive education to facilitate their teaching:

As I am a regular teacher and I never receive related formal training on how to teach students with disabilities. But now I need to teach because there are students with disabilities in my class, you cannot leave them here without caring about them. Actually I don't know how to do with them. So I hope I can receive some training in the future.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-16)

I think it's better that our school can provide some chances for us to receive some training on special and inclusive education because now I don't know anything about that only a name 'inclusive education'. Yes, as a teacher I want to teach everyone and I don't want to ignore anyone, but if you don't know how to teach and maybe yours wrong teaching can make some negative impacts on students with disabilities. Yes, I need help from training.
(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-24)

The third sub-theme refers to making policy regulations on inclusive education more clear and not just one sentence as 'we encourage regular schools to take some affective measures to develop inclusive education' (words from sample teachers). The vague regulations on inclusive education have some negative impacts on school practice, like providing some space for regular schools to escape their responsibilities for teaching students with disabilities, regular schools are confused about where they can get related resources for developing inclusive education, etc. Therefore, a more clear policy on inclusive education needed to be issued to well support regular schools to develop inclusive education. As sample teachers stated:

In terms of the current policies on inclusive education, I think these policies should more clear. For example, if one class has one student with disability, the policy should make clear about the class size of that class, which means class with students with disabilities' size cannot over one fixed number, like 40, 45, or others. Now there isn't a clear regulation on that.
(Inclusion manager, special school, CH-1)

Our countries' policies on inclusive education are vague. Ok, not only on inclusive education also for other areas. Just say encourage mainstream schools to develop inclusive education, mainstream schools should try their best to develop inclusive education. Yes, these regulations are important, but I think if we can make more clearer policies, it will be better for schools.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-7)

The fourth sub-theme comes to re-organizing existing curriculum to meet all students and this sub-theme was specifically highlighted by special school teachers. Currently, the hardware, like fund for inclusive education, resource room for students with disabilities, learning equipments, are nearly well-armed in the majority of regular schools because these years the government has been invested much money into regular schools for developing inclusive education. As some sample teachers stated, some areas' regular schools, like Shanghai, Beijing and Jiangsu province, have all related hardware for inclusive education, to some extent, even better than some western countries' mainstream schools' facilities . Therefore, what need to be improved is the existing curriculum as current curriculum mainly designs for normal students, while with limited considerations of students with disabilities. Moreover, the middle school and college entrance examinations also leads to regular schools' curriculums more focus on normal students rather than students with disabilities. Therefore, some sample teachers, particularly special school teachers suggest to redesign the existing curriculum to meet all students, as one special school teacher said:

From my experiences with helping mainstream schools to develop inclusive education, I think next step we should focus on how to change the curriculums to meet all students, because current courses more concern normal students and neglect students with disabilities. Like money, resource rooms and equipments, we all have. Nowadays, the majority of mainstream schools in this area don't lack that things, but the curriculum is not good. Now the situation is if the mainstream schools don't need more money, resource rooms and equipments, and you continue to give them, it will be a problem and not a good thing. So current and future work is change curriculum to meet all students.

(Director, special school, CH-2)

Finally, the fifth sub-theme refers to considering regular teachers' inclusive education workload. Due to unclear policy regulations, currently some regular teachers' work on inclusive education is not considered as their workload in the final teacher assessment in some sample schools, which means regular teachers' related work on inclusive education is without pay. Compared with support teachers in Italian school context, we can more easily understand sample teachers concern. Undoubtedly, placing students with disabilities into the classroom will bring more work for regular teachers, particularly when there are no fixed professional special/support

teachers. In addition, Chinese regular schools' big class size has already produced a lot of work for regular teachers and the majority of teachers are already struggling for that, while to put some students with disabilities into their classrooms will undoubtedly increase their workload. All that considerations make sample teachers argue that schools should consider the inclusive education work into their final work assessment because that really brings more workload for them. As some sample teachers stated that from their working experiences:

Yes, I never reject the student with disability in my class. As a teacher, I try my best to teach him. However, now in my school they don't consider my work on this student. Our school director even didn't know this student after a long time. I never reject this work and I think school should consider my effort for this student.

(Regular teacher, primary school, CH-21)

In the future, the school should improve the salary standard for regular teachers whose classes have students with disabilities. Nowadays, only give 200 or 300 yuan (30 or 40 euro) to these regular teachers in one school term, it's too less! Next the school must consider regular teachers' workload into the salary assessment. Our school is better than others, as I know some schools even without considering this workload into regular teachers' workload, just for free.

(Inclusion manager, primary school, CH-9)

“In between” conclusion

This chapter has explored regular school teachers' understanding of inclusive education from six aspects and a Chinese regular school inclusive education ecology is illustrated based on sample school teachers' account. As we stated in the previous chapter, from regular school teachers' perspective we can acquire a different version of inclusive education which was presented in government policy documents, to some extent, combining bottom perspective that based on school teachers' account and top perspective that based on government policy perspective can enable us gain a better understanding of one country's inclusive education. Results from that chapter illustrate that school teachers' understanding of inclusive education still dominants by medical or individual deficit model, regular teachers without proper training on special and inclusive education leads to students with disabilities just sitting without learning at regular classrooms and

this is also regarded as one of the biggest barriers to further promoting inclusive education. While for the proper placement for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education, the majority of sample teachers considered the segregated special schools is the first choice. Finally, for the future development of inclusive education, various suggestions are provided by sample teachers, like setting fixed professional special/support teachers in the regular schools, more clear inclusive education workload indentify standard, etc. According to sample teachers' account, the government still needs to issue more specified policies that focus on inclusive education to further improve current school inclusive practice. In the context background part (chapter four) we presented a picture of inclusive education development in Italy and China from policy perspective, while this and previous chapter from school teachers' perspective to understand inclusive education, combining both perspectives the reminder of the thesis will from a comparative perspective to examine inclusive education in Italy and China, primarily based on state policy documents and school teachers day-to-day school practice.

Chapter Six Inclusive Education in Italy and China Compared

Introduction

Based on previous chapters, this chapter aims to answer the third research question which is what can we learn for the future development of inclusive education from the analysis of inclusive education practices in Italy and China? Starting from a comparative perspective, replying that question can enrich our knowledge of ‘how to make education more inclusive’ from a comparative perspective between Italy and China. With this intention in mind, this chapter will mainly focus on comparing Italian and Chinese school inclusive education practice based on school teachers’ perspective. As Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty (1997) stated in their study that employing a comparative perspective is aim to enrich our knowledge of inclusive education practice in different countries rather than just a simple description, which also can apply into the current study. In addition, as current research is conducting in two different countries, Italy and China, with each has its own cultural, historical and political contexts and these differences inevitably exert some impacts on how inclusive education in two languages, Italian and Chinese, is used, disabilities’ categories defined and inclusive education policy and school practice developed, experienced and changed. Therefore, with the research is going on and it became quickly clear that the intention of comparing two different countries had to be ruled out. The author is then particularly interested in exploring Italian and Chinese unique differences, histories and practices in terms of inclusive education policy and school practice. In doing so, to raise questions and identify issues which emerge from these two contexts. This chapter, then, to some extent, is not ‘comparative’ because there is no attempt to treat the data from two quite different contexts as comparable, but I wish that various questions and issues which emerge from considering two quite different contexts, Italy and China, will be illuminating and enrich our understanding of how to make education more inclusive.

Concerning the inclusive education practice, the data for comparison is primarily coming from the teacher participants’ interview data which we analyzed and reported in chapter five and

six. To gain a full and clear comparison, the six dimensions in terms of understanding theory will be employed as the comparative framework. The main analyzing procedures are as following:

- 1) to provide a general description of Italian and Chinese situation refers to each dimension;
- 2) to draw similarities and differences between Italy and China under each dimension;
- 3) to ask some questions and (or) identify some issues related to each dimension after comparison;
- 4) to provide a relatively comprehensive picture of each dimension based on above analysis.

6.1 Explanation dimension compared

In Italian school context, teacher participants' explanation of inclusive education mainly contains six themes which are values, subjects, a changing process, additional support, physical placement and difference between inclusion and integration, while under each theme some sub-themes were grouped, the total number is eighteen. In Chinese regular school context, sample teachers' understanding of the meaning of inclusive education includes seven themes which are value, safe and quiet, self-development, a transformation process, additional support and physical placement, while sixteen sub-themes were grouped. For a general description of explanation dimension in Italy and China, please see table 23.

Table 23 Explanation dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Explanation	Values (6)	Value: an ideal education, but very difficult to realize now (4)
	Subjects: students with SEN (4)	Safe and quiet: without creating disturbance (3)
	A changing process (2)	Self-development: no specific measures (3)
	Additional support (2)	A transformation process: (2)
	Physical placement (2)	Additional support (2)
	Difference between inclusion and integration (2)	Physical placement (1)
		Subject: students with disabilities (1)

Regarding to the meaning of inclusive education, four similar topics were mentioned by both

Italian and Chinese teacher participants, where are value, additional support, physical placement and subject. Considering inclusive education as various kinds of values that deserve to pursue is highlighted by sample teachers, like inclusive education is ‘a kind of education for all students’, ‘respect students’ differences’, ‘provide chance for every student’, respect students’ potential’, ‘ensure success for everyone’, ‘a good education for students with disabilities’, ‘a kind of education without discrimination’, ‘emphasizing students’ strength’, etc. Although various kinds of values were referred to inclusive education by both Italian and Chinese teacher participants, there are still some differences between these two countries’ teachers understanding. For Italian teacher participants, inclusive education is a kind of ideal education that for all students, regardless of students’ cultural background, with or without disabilities, foreign students. In all, inclusive education is good for all. In Chinese regular school context, inclusive education is considered as a good form of education, to some extent, mainly for students with disabilities. In China, currently the regular schools are still regarded as main place for normal students rather than students with disabilities. Therefore, although regular teachers referred inclusive education to all students, however, they will add one more sentence to emphasize inclusive education is mainly focuses on students with disabilities in the regular classrooms. In addition, after expressing the idea that inclusive education is a kind of value, the majority of Chinese regular teacher participants mentioned that this kind of inclusive education currently is difficult to achieve in Chinese regular schools because of various challenges, like lack fixed professional special/resource teachers, regular teachers lack necessary professional abilities, national examination-oriented culture, etc., which we still have a long way to go to reach that aim. The second common theme is considering inclusive education as some kinds of students need additional support in the mainstream/regular classrooms. In terms of the additional support, support/special teachers, special schools and related learning resources were frequently mentioned by both Italian and Chinese teacher participants. For who need these kind of additional supports, students with SEN, particularly students with disabilities were highlighted by teacher participants. From that resource (additional support) perspective to define inclusive education clearly reflects that some teachers still consider current mainstream/regular school system cannot fully meet students with SEN’ needs, therefore additional supports, in particular related resource from special institutions, need to be provided for well teaching students. The third common theme is to refer to

inclusive education for students with SEN, in Italy the SEN mainly includes students with disabilities, DSA, foreign students, refugees and students with other problems while in China primarily focuses on students with disabilities. Two points emerge from that perspective: one is inclusive education is for some kinds of students rather than for all, which is different as teacher participants mentioned in the first topic that inclusive education is a kind of education for all students and this is particularly reflecting in Italian school context. From a theoretical level, teachers prefer to relate inclusive education to various kinds of values that are worth to achieve as they stated in the first theme, however, when comes to the classroom practice, students with SEN is frequently considered as the main subject of inclusive education rather than all students. Another point highlights inclusive education can meet students with SEN' individual needs, general education cannot achieve that aim and this point is particularly popular in Chinese regular school context. As teacher participant stated there is no inclusive education until students with disabilities are coming to our (regular schools) schools, therefore pre-existing general education cannot meet these 'new comers' and we invent the inclusive education for teaching students with disabilities. The fourth common theme mentioned by both countries' teacher participants is inclusive education is a kind of physical placement in mainstream/regular schools, like a seat in the classrooms, a chair and a desk for students with disabilities, from home to school. This understanding of inclusive education, as teacher participants reported mainly because pre-existing mainstream/regular school system cannot provide an appropriate education for these new students, which makes these students just acquire a physical place in classroom and sit here rather than learn something here. Instead of learning in the classrooms students with disabilities merely sitting at classrooms leads some teachers, both in Italy and Chin, hold a negative attitude towards inclusive education and what is even worse, some teacher participants against current inclusive education.

In addition to the similarities, there are also some differences between Italian and Chinese teacher participants' definition of inclusive education. These different explanations on inclusive education fully reflect Italian and Chinese cultural, historical and political contexts' influences on teachers' understanding of inclusive education. In Italy, inclusive education has a long history and it was the first country to implement full inclusion in the world. This long cultural tradition of acceptance of students with SEN in mainstream schools is contributed to Italian school teachers'

understanding of inclusion in two different ways. The first one is teacher participants see inclusive education as a changing process which mainly refers to change existing mainstream school settings to meet students with SEN' needs. From a historical perspective, some sample teachers mentioned that started from 1970s the government issued related policies to develop inclusive education, step by step support teachers were provided for students with disabilities, teacher education programmes were changed to make all teachers have the professional abilities to teach all students, etc., while mainstream schools also took some measures to well meet students with SEN' needs, like changing teaching plans, methods, assessments, creating various programmes. The word 'changing' was frequently emerging during the interviews and inclusive education is changing process to meet students' needs fully reflects Italian historical and cultural contexts' influences on school teachers' perspectives. The second is to define inclusive education from the differences between inclusive education and integrated education, to some extent, this also needs to explain from a historical perspective. As teacher stated that when firstly implemented inclusive education between 1970s and 1980s, students with SEN were merely placed into the classrooms with limited measures to care about them and students with SEN need to adapt to the existing school arrangements, while since 1990s the situation started to change into a better and better direction, related measure were provided to help students with SEN in the classrooms and mainstream school system also changed to meet students' needs. While in China, putting students with disabilities into regular classrooms can date back to 1950s, with years' efforts, currently the LRC is considered as a Chinese practical way to promote inclusive education (e.g. Jia, 2018). However, with Chinese specific historical-cultural contexts, like Confucius thought and deficit thinking on disability, which undoubtedly makes inclusive education has some specific meanings in Chinese regular school context. The first is considering inclusive education as ensuring students with disabilities to stay safely and quietly in the regular classrooms without creating disturbance to class teaching and damaging other students' study and safety. This understanding, to some extent, clearly reflects Chinese traditional thinking on persons with disabilities who are abnormal, a disturbance to others and need to be segregated. The second one refers to inclusive education as students with disabilities' self-development in regular classrooms. Historically, regular schools are built for normal students while special schools for students with disabilities. This clear division makes regular school system lack related settings for teaching students with disabilities, like

regular teachers lack professional abilities, while all the related learning resources are gathered in special schools. When more and more students with disabilities were placed into regular schools, the related reforms in regular schools cannot catch up that practice, which inevitably leads some students with disabilities merely sitting in the classrooms and develop by themselves. The third specific understanding is considered inclusive education as a transformation process, on one hand regular classroom teachers need to transform to meet students with disabilities while students with disabilities also need to adapt to the existing regular school settings. Particularly, there are two differences when compared with inclusive education is regarded as a changing process in Italian school context: one point is the majority of Chinese regular teacher participants consider they need to change rather than all the pre-existing regular school system because the regular schools for normal students' thinking is still dominating school education. While in Italy, from a historical point, teachers stated that pre-existing mainstream school settings need an overhaul to develop inclusive education. The second point is students with disabilities need to change themselves to adapt the regular classrooms as pre-existing regular classrooms cannot change all for these little number of students. This is a point highlighted by regular teachers, which reflects teachers' thinking that inclusive education not only relates to 'us' (regular teachers) but also the 'new comers' (students with disabilities).

From the models of disability we discussed in previous chapters, the social model of disability can be employed to understand the majority of Italian teacher participants' perspectives on inclusive education. For them, inclusive education means the pre-existing mainstream school organizations need to change and reform to well meet students' various needs rather than ask students to adapt to current school systems. While we should also acknowledge that medical or deficit model is still shared by some Italian teacher participants, especially classroom teachers who transform their responsibility of teaching students with disabilities to support teachers because they lack related professional abilities to fix the students with SEN, particularly students with disabilities, in their classrooms. In China, the medical or deficit model of disability is still shared by the majority of the Chinese regular teacher participants, which is deeply embedded in their day-to-day teaching practices. Disability is as an excuse to reject to teach students with disabilities, or to explain students with disabilities' inability to learn. Therefore, disability is considered as a barrier to learn and teach, which is students with disabilities' own problem and

they should responsible for that, while is not teachers' matter. Furthermore, the view that he student with disability as a person who needs to fix and special teachers should be responsible for that task is also a deficient thinking on students with disabilities. Although medical model of disability is dominating Chinese regular schools' practice, there are still some regular teachers understand disability from a social model, and therefore teachers and schools should change to accommodate students with disabilities' diversity needs. However, at the same time those teachers also express the view that currently it is difficult to apply the social model into regular school as *'regular school has many important and big things to do and students with disabilities is a minority and the school directors do not have time to take care about them. So school always ignores them'* (one teacher's word).

After a detailed analysis and comparison of Italian and Chinese teacher participants' explanation of inclusive education, we can temporally reach a relatively comprehensive definition of inclusive education based on Italian and Chinese teacher participants' perspectives. Inclusive education can be considered as:

- a) a kind of educational value that deserve to pursue, for example a kind of education for all students, respect students' differences, provide chance for every student, respect students' potential, ensure success for everyone, a good education for students with disabilities, a kind of education without discrimination, emphasizing students' strength, etc.;
- b) a kind of educational provision for students with special educational needs;
- c) an additional support to facilitate students who need extra help in the classrooms;
- d) a reforming pre-existing school system's process to meet all students' individual needs;
- e) a physical placement in mainstream/regular schools;
- f) a safe and quiet life in mainstream/regular schools;
- g) a self-grow in mainstream/regular schools;
- h) a kind of education that is different from integrated education.

6.2 Application dimension compared

Regarding to the question of 'how you promote the inclusive education in your work', in Italian

school context four themes were identified, which are collaboration, inclusive pedagogy, taking outside and functional approach, in all eighteen sub-themes were grouped under these four themes. While in China, three themes were identified which include moral approach, collaboration and inclusive pedagogy, in all twelve sub-themes were grouped. Please see table 24 for a full description.

Table 24 Application dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Application	Collaboration (9)	Moral approach (5)
	Inclusive pedagogy (4)	Collaboration (4)
	Taking outside (3)	Inclusive pedagogy (3)
	Functional approach (2)	

Two common themes emerged in both Italian and Chinese teacher participants' responses to application dimension, which are collaboration and inclusive pedagogy. The first common strategy to put inclusive education into day-to-day school practice is collaboration. As existing studies documented that successfully promote inclusive education needs a shared responsibilities and collaborations among related stakeholders, like students' parents, special schools, local medical institutions, local educational departments, etc. (e.g. Ainscow, 2005; Booth, Ainscow, 2011; Sharma, Loreman, Macanawaic, 2016; Sharma, Loreman, Simi, 2017) Concerning current study, the collaborative strategies that were employed by Italian and Chinese teacher participants include normal students with students with SEN, classroom teachers and support teachers, school with students' families, local school networks, experienced teachers with new teachers, with local medical staff, etc. These various kinds of collaborative strategies created by teachers, on one hand clearly state a fact that mainstream/regular schools alone cannot successfully develop inclusive education until it tries to collaborate with related stakeholders within local communities, on the other hand to cultivate a shared inclusive culture among local community to further promote inclusive education. The second main strategy mentioned by teacher participants is inclusive pedagogy, which means 'a shift in teaching and learning from an approach that works for most learners existing alongside something 'additional' or 'different' for those (some) who experience difficulties, towards one that involves the development of a rich learning community characterised

by learning opportunities that are sufficiently made available for everyone, so that all learners are able to participate in classroom life' (Florian, Linklater, 2009). The inclusive pedagogy in current study includes flexible teaching methods, aims, students' assessments and various working choices. However, there is a big difference in terms of inclusive pedagogy in current study that was used by teacher participants and Florian and Linklater' definition of inclusive pedagogy. According to Florian and Linklater' definition, inclusive pedagogy means teaching and learning approaches are available for all learners rather than a method that are available for the majority of learners with something 'additional' or 'different' for some learners who have learning difficulties. While in current study, inclusive pedagogy, to some extent, is an additional diet exclusively for students with SEN, particularly for students with disabilities because pre-existing teaching cannot meet these students' individual needs or these students cannot adapt to the pre-existing teaching arrangements. And this kind of understanding of inclusive pedagogy is common both in Italian and Chinese school context.

Regarding to these two common themes in Italy and China, two points need to bear in mind in order to gain a full and deep understanding of inclusive education picture in two countries. Firstly, the intention of collaboration. As collaborative strategy is a common way to promote inclusive education to be used by Italian and Chinese teacher participants, but the intention for employing collaboration is different. In Italy, the main intention of various collaborative methods is to help students with SEN to study well in the classrooms. While in Chinese regular school contexts, the main intention of collaboration is to make sure that students with disabilities can safely stay in the regular classrooms, and then to help those students to learn. Influenced by deficit thinking on disability, putting students with disabilities into regular classrooms not without against within local community, particularly the against from normal students' parents because they consider these students with disabilities may be hinder their kids' study. Therefore, to collaborate with normal students' parents is a common strategy that is employed by regular schools and the main point is to acquire normal students' parents' support and understanding, to ensure students with disabilities firstly can sit in the regular classrooms. Other collaborative way like peer support, one or two normal students with one student with disability, is a strategy that regular teachers ask normal students to take care of students with disabilities after class, to make sure students with disabilities are safe in the school. Only students with disabilities can safely sit in the regular

classrooms, and then we can start to mention study to students with disabilities. Strategy like collaboration with special school' teachers' main aim is to facilitate students with disabilities to study in the regular schools. Secondly, considering the inclusive pedagogy, in Italian school context the this method is well organized and planned in both support and classroom teachers' class teaching; while in Chinese regular school context is more spontaneous and personal, which means regular teachers use inclusive pedagogy occasionally rather than well planned before and only some teachers, like experienced or elder teachers and young teachers, use that method in their teaching. The main cause accounts for that difference is pre-service teacher education programmes. In Italy, the pre-service teacher education programmes contain related topics on inclusive and special education, therefore support and classroom teachers can apply what they learnt in the pre-service teacher education programmes into class teaching; while in China, currently the regular teachers' pre-service teacher education programmes have limited topics on inclusive and special education. Therefore, without related training to teach students with disabilities makes regular teachers' teaching for these students more spontaneous and personal.

In terms of the difference in application dimension, both Italian and Chinese teachers have its own specific strategy to develop inclusive education in everyday school practice, respectively. In Italian school is taking students with SEN outside to teach, which was frequently highlighted by nearly all teacher participants. The main reason to employ that method is to meet students with SEN' individual needs and to help them to learn well. Normally, this method is used by support teacher who takes students with disabilities go outside for another leaning programme. While in Chinese regular school context, one of the most strategies to promote inclusive education mentioned by teacher participants is moral approach, which means regular teachers give more care, attention and encourage to students with disabilities in their classrooms. Because regular teacher have no ideas to teach these students, therefore they can only give some moral support to help these students.

Based on Italian and Chinese teachers' perspectives on how to promote inclusive education in their day-today class teaching, we can get a relatively comprehensive useful tool box that can help teachers to develop inclusive education:

- a) collaborative strategy, school collaborates with related stakeholders within local communities;

- b) inclusive pedagogy, for example flexible teaching plan, methods, assessments, etc.;
- c) taking students with SEN outside for a while, for meeting students' needs, for other specific programmes;
- d) moral approach, teachers pay more attention and care to students with SEN;
- e) functional approach, to use related technologies to help students to learn.

6.3 Self-knowledge dimension compared

In self-knowledge dimension, we will state barrier and facilitator to inclusive education separately. As to barrier to inclusive education, in Italian school context six themes were identified, which relates to classroom/regular teacher, students with SEN, support teacher, school, government and normal student and under these themes twenty-one sub-themes were grouped. In Chinese regular school context, seven themes were identified: classroom/regular teacher, regular school level, students with disabilities, state policy, school leader, normal student and traditional culture, in all twenty-seven sub-themes were grouped. For a detailed illustration, please see table 25.

Table 25 Self-knowledge dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Self-knowledge: barriers to inclusive education	Classroom/regular teacher (6)	Classroom/regular teacher (8)
	Students with SEN (6)	Regular school level (6)
	Support teacher (4)	Students with disabilities (5)
	School level (3)	State policy (3)
	Government (1)	School leader (1)
	Normal student (1)	Normal student (1)
		Traditional culture (2)

Identifying barriers to inclusive education in two quite different countries is a tough work, as we will find that although a same main theme is emerging in Italy and China, however, there are still considerable differences in terms of that main theme across two countries. Here my intention is not to discuss all barriers in detail as I have already done in chapter five and six, here I want to re-examine those barriers across two countries and to draw some main points and identify some issues in terms of barriers to inclusive education.

Overall, there are four similar themes in Italy and China. The first one is barriers relate to

classroom/regular teacher. Classroom/regular teachers lack related professional abilities to teach students with SEN and negative attitudes were two common barriers both mentioned by teacher participants in Italy and China. However, it is worth to point that lacking of abilities to teach students with disabilities has different meanings in Italy and China. In Italy, we can find that the lacking means the classroom teachers' abilities to teach students with disabilities is inadequate, while in Chinese regular school context the lacking means regular teachers nearly have no abilities to teach these students who are disabilities. In addition to these two common topics relate to classroom/regular teachers, Italy and China both has its own specific barriers to inclusive education. In Italian school context, some barriers refers to classroom teachers mainly result in a bad relationship between classroom and support teachers, which makes classroom teachers ask support teachers to go outside to teach students with disabilities and draw a clear line between support teachers in terms of responsibilities for educating students with disabilities. While in China, other barriers relate to regular teachers primarily refers to the heavy workload. A regular classroom normally has around 50 normal students, when put some students with disabilities into the pre-existing large size class, which definitely makes regular teachers have no time and energy for students with disabilities in their classrooms.

The second similar theme refers to students with SEN as a barrier to inclusive education. A re-examination of that theme in Italy and China, we can find nearly all the barriers relate to students with SEN in Italian and Chinese school context is the same, both countries' teacher participants highlight the barriers of negative behaviors of students with disabilities, students with disabilities cannot understand and catch up with class teaching, students with disabilities in a small number, students with disabilities' parents' un-collaboration and students with disabilities' individual needs. For that phenomenon, two points are worth to consider: one is medical model of disability is still existing in Italian and Chinese school practice, another one is disability as a personal characteristic can act as a barrier to inclusive education. Although it is necessary to change pre-existing school system to meet students with disabilities' individual needs, however we cannot underestimate students' disabilities' negative influences on inclusive education.

The third similar theme is school-level barriers to inclusive education. Lacking related resources for teaching students with disabilities and big class size are two common school-level barriers both in Italy and China. One interesting issue is how can we identify and define the big

class size. As we see that big class size as a barrier was highlighted by both Italian and Chinese teachers, in Italian school context the class size in primary school is around twenty, while in China is around fifty and some areas even can reach around sixty. Particularly, in Italian school context normally one classroom teacher and one support teacher together teach students, while only one regular teacher responsible for a whole class in Chinese regular school context. This comparison makes us reconsider what is a proper class size to develop inclusive education. Moreover, in China the pre-existing regular school system act as a serious barrier to inclusion, which contains no school-level fixed professional resource/special teachers, inclusive education is an additional school agenda, fixed assessment method.

The fourth similar theme is government or state policy. Although both two countries' teacher participants refer to that, however the barriers are totally different. In Italy, teacher participants mainly highlights that the government cuts money for support teachers, which seriously hinder current Italian school inclusive education practice. While in China, the pre-existing two separate teacher education system, lacking of related inclusive education policies and examination-oriented education system were three serious problems mentioned by teacher participants. Compared with other barriers, the barriers in that theme are more complicate because this is related to country's whole education development plan, which needs more time to address.

Apart from these similar themes, there are some themes exclusively belong to Italy and China, respectively. In Italian school context, support teacher is considered as a barrier to inclusion, which mainly refers to support teachers' inadequate abilities to teach students with disabilities and support teachers frequently change into classroom teachers. While in Chinese regular school context normal students' parents' against and traditional culture are two serious problems. Concerning normal students' parents, they are the main stakeholders who influence regular schools' inclusive education practice because they are in a larger number. Students with disabilities produce a negative influence on their kids' study is the main reason why normal students' parents against LRC. In terms of traditional culture, regular school is for 99% normal students and special school is good for students with disabilities are two common cultural barriers for school inclusive practice.

Barrier to inclusive education in one country is not in a static situation, with the school inclusive education practice development, some barriers will disappear while some new barriers

will emerge. For example, currently there are no support/resource teachers in Chinese regular schools, therefore there are no barriers relate to that topic. However, to set fixed professional support/resource teachers in regular schools has become one of Chinese education agendas to reform pre-existing regular school system. Although support/resource teachers do play a critical role in school inclusive education practice, however they can also act as barriers as we find in Italian school context. Given that, it is worth to provide a checklist of barriers to inclusive education, which can provide lessons for schools to develop inclusive education now and future. Considering that, based on Italian and Chinese school teachers' views we conclude a relatively comprehensive checklist of barriers to inclusive education:

- a) classroom/regular teachers' inadequate abilities;
- b) classroom/regular teachers' negative attitudes towards students with SEN;
- c) classroom/regular teachers' pre-existing teaching habit;
- d) support/resource/special teachers' inadequate abilities;
- e) support/resource/special teachers' negative attitudes towards students with SEN;
- f) support/resource/special teachers' frequently changing;
- g) the un-collaboration between classroom/regular teachers and support/resource/special teachers;
- h) school lacks related learning resources, like specific instruments, learning space, enough founding, etc.;
- i) school lacks fixed professional support/resource/special teachers;
- j) big class size;
- k) inclusive education is an additional school agenda;
- l) school's pre-existing assessment standard;
- m) school's unclear inclusive education workload identification standard;
- n) students with SEN's negative behaviors;
- o) students with higher/strong/serious level of disabilities;
- p) students with SEN, particularly with disabilities, in a small number;
- q) students with SEN's un-collaboration;
- r) students with certain kinds of disabilities' specific needs;
- s) normal students' parents' against;

- t) pre-existing dual separated special and regular teacher education programme;
- u) lacking of related inclusive education policies;
- v) external less-inclusive policy environments, like examination-oriented education system, ‘accountability’ and ‘standards based reform’ agendas, etc.;
- w) traditional culture, like regular schools are for normal students, special schools are good for students with disabilities, deficit assumptions about persons with disabilities, etc.

Considering the facilitator to inclusive education, in Italian school context seven themes were identified, which are support teachers, classroom/regular teachers, taking outside for while, school level, students with SEN and normal student. For sub-themes, in all twenty-three were grouped. In Chinese regular school context, five themes were identified: regular school level, classroom/regular teacher, students with disabilities, normal student and state policy, in all fourteen sub-themes were grouped under these themes. For a more detailed description, please see table 26.

Table 26 Self-knowledge dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Self-knowledge: facilitators to inclusive education	Support teacher (5)	Regular school level (5)
	Classroom/regular teacher (5)	Classroom/regular teacher (3)
	Taking outside (3)	Students with disabilities (2)
	School level (3)	Normal student (2)
	Students with SEN (3)	State policy (2)
	Normal student (2)	
	Inclusive culture (2)	

A careful examination and comparison of the main themes in terms of barriers and facilitators to inclusive education in Italian and Chinese school context we can find that the main themes in two parts are same while the main point is how the sub-themes under each main theme is addressed. Put simply, if some effective and proper measures are taken barriers can change into facilitators to inclusive education. For example, one of barriers relates to Italian and Chinese classroom/regular teachers is their negative attitudes towards students with disabilities, but teachers can change their negative attitudes into positive attitudes towards students with disabilities if some measures were taken. Therefore, in this section we are not going to make a

comparison between Italy and China regarding to the facilitators to inclusive education as we did in the barrier part. Here we merely provide a relatively comprehensive checklist of facilitators to inclusive education from Italian and Chinese school teacher participants' perspectives, for the question of how one barrier change into a facilitator, readers can find an answer from the following checklist. Facilitators include:

- a) classroom/regular teachers' positive attitudes towards students with SEN;
- b) classroom/regular teachers have related professional abilities to teach students with SEN;
- c) classroom/regular teachers change their teaching to meet students' diversity needs;
- d) classroom/regular teachers' scientific understanding of inclusive education;
- e) classroom/regular teachers have a good collaboration with support/resource/special teachers;
- f) support/resource/special teachers' positive attitudes towards students with SEN;
- g) support/resource/special teachers have adequate abilities for teaching students with SEN;
- h) qualified teacher education programmes for all teachers;
- i) taking student outside to meet her/his individual needs;
- j) taking student outside for other programmes;
- k) inclusive education is considered as a normal part of school agenda;
- l) regular schools have fixed professional support/resource/special teachers;
- m) regular schools collaborative with local special schools;
- n) specific school-level groups for inclusive education;
- o) school leaders' support for inclusive education;
- p) school-level programmes for inclusive education;
- q) students' disability level is not in a strong or serious situation;
- r) students' parents' support and collaboration;
- s) students collaborate with each other;
- t) a comprehensive inclusive education policy support system;
- u) local education authority's support;
- v) inclusive culture.

6.4 Empathy dimension compared

In the empathy dimension, the main concern is to investigate the situation of students with SEN being included in the mainstream/regular schools. As we stated earlier in chapter five and six, in order to get a historical picture of students with SEN being included in the mainstream/regular schools' situation this dimension was divided into two parts which include 'as a student' and 'as a teacher'. As for the first part 'as a student', this part mainly focuses on primary and lower secondary education schooling with the time between around 1970s and 1990s, in Italy there is one theme which is students with disabilities in a bad situation and two reasons are mainly responsible for that: one is all the students with disabilities in the same special class which located in the mainstream schools and the second is students with disabilities without support teachers. While in Chinese regular school context, this part was missing because only two teacher participants mentioned that they had classmates with disabilities when they were in primary and secondary school, therefore we just put their accounts there and without groping into an independent theme because of the inadequate data.

In terms of the second part 'as a teacher', three main themes were identified in Italian and Chinese school context respectively. Particularly, the three themes in Italy and China are same, which are sitting without learning, a changing process and sitting and learning, while for the sub-themes in all nine were grouped in both Italy and China. Please see table 27 for a detailed description.

Table 27 Empathy dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Empathy	As a student	
	In a bad situation (2)	
	As a teacher	
	Sitting without learning (4)	Sitting without learning (6)
	A changing process (3)	A changing process (1)
	Sitting and learning (2)	Sitting and learning (2)

For the first theme is sitting without learning, both Italian and Chinese teacher participants mentioned that for some students with disabilities, in particular students with disabilities who were

newly entering the mainstream/regular schools and students with serious disabilities, there are just sitting in the chair without learning. Three common sub-themes were both grouped in two countries, which are disturbing the teachers' class teaching, sitting like a vegetable or sitting, sleeping, playing and eating and lacking related resources for students with disabilities. The first two of these three sub-themes reflects students with disabilities' situation in classrooms, while the third sub-theme which leads students with disabilities merely sitting in the classrooms because of lacking related learning instruments (Italian and Chinese school context) or fixed professional resource/special teachers (Chinese school context). In addition to these three common sub-themes, each country has its own exclusively sub-themes. In Italy, the support teachers will take some students with disabilities outside when these students cannot learn or merely disturb the class teaching, which happens frequently for students with serious disabilities. While in Chinese regular school context, some students with disabilities were bullied and considered as a dangerous resource for the whole class. For these students they rarely study in classroom, on the contrary they are the main targets who are being bullied by normal students or play as a dangerous resource to hurt other students.

A changing process is the second theme, which fully reflects that the situation of students with disabilities in the classroom is not static while is in a changing process. Both Italian and Chinese school teacher participants highlighted some students with disabilities' situation have experienced a changing process which is from a disturbance for the classroom to a friend of classroom. With students with disabilities stay more and more time in the mainstream/regular classrooms, on one hand they start to be familiar with the new environment, other students, teachers, etc., on the other hand teachers and other students also try their best to help students with disabilities, all of that makes students with disabilities change into a good direction. While in Italy two more sub-themes were grouped and both refers to these years students with SEN have received less and less support than before, which leads some students with SEN in a bad situation. The changing process mainly in two aspects: one is some students with SEN, like DSA, without support teachers and now classroom teachers should be responsible for them, while in the past these students have support teachers; the second is students with disabilities receive less and less support hours than before which means one support teacher currently is responsible for more students with disabilities than before, which inevitably leads the support hours for each student is

decreasing. Many reasons lead to that, please see the barrier part of self-knowledge dimension where I discussed more about these problems.

The third theme is sitting and learning, which includes students with SEN have a well personal development and a good relationship with others, like normal students, teachers, etc. Teacher participants' responses in that theme is nearly same in both Italian and Chinese school context, both consider students with SEN can learn in the classrooms. In addition, it is worth to mention that this situation mostly happens to students with lighter or middle level of disabilities or students with disabilities have already stayed in the classrooms at least one school term.

Based on Italian and Chinese school teacher participants' perspectives, we can temporarily conclude a relatively comprehensive answer in terms of the situation of students with SEN being included in the mainstream/regular classrooms:

- a) sitting without learning;
- b) a changing process;
- c) sitting and learning.

6.5 Perspective dimension compared

Considering the appropriate placement for students to receive inclusive education, two main organizational placements were provided by Italian school teachers, which are placement in mainstream classroom plus taking outside for a while and placement in special school. While in China three primary organizational arrangements were provided by school teachers: placement in special school, placement in regular school and conditional placement in regular school. Furthermore, under the main themes some sub-themes were grouped, in all seventeen and fifteen were grouped in Italy and China respectively. Please see table 28 for a detailed description.

Placement in special school was mentioned both by Italian and Chinese school teacher participants and five common reasons for that placement were identified by two countries' teacher participants: students with serious/strong level of disabilities, mainstream/regular schools' professionals and learning resources are limited, special school with more professionals and learning resources, students with different kinds of disabilities and students can learn job or life skills in special school. In Italy school context one specific reason was provided by teacher

participants, which is the mainstream school already has many problems. Therefore the special school is an appropriate place for students with SEN to receive inclusive education. While in Chinese school context, three specific reasons were offered by teacher participants, which are regular classroom teachers do not have time and energy to teach students with disabilities, the students with disabilities is in a small numbers and normal students' parents' high demand and against, all of these persuade teachers consider special schools rather than regular school is a ideal place for students with disabilities to receive inclusive education. Particularly, two points need to be given more attention to better understand that theme. The first point is receiving inclusive education in special school is not common in Italian school context, which was only mentioned by six teacher participants. While in Chinese school context, this placement was frequently mentioned and highlighted by all the teacher participants. The second point is the six Italian teacher participants who supported to place students with disabilities into special school to receive inclusive education all have a well understanding in terms of special school education, which means some had been a special school teacher in the past, some are older and there were special education schools when they were students in primary schools, some are with a good command of special education knowledge. Therefore, related knowledge background of special school education, to some extent, facilitates these six teacher participants to consider special schools as a proper place to educate students with disabilities.

Table 28 Perspective dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Perspective	Placement in mainstream classroom plus taking outside for a while (3 plus 6)	Placement in special school (8)
	Placement in special school (6)	Placement in regular school (5)
	Others (2)	Conditional placement in regular school (2)

Apart from the common theme that places students with SEN in special school to receive inclusive education, some specific themes were identified both in Italian and Chinese school context. In Italy, placement in mainstream classroom plus taking outside for a while was considered as an ideal arrangement for students with SEN to receive inclusive education. Particularly, this placement needs to be divided into two parts which include mainstream

classroom and taking outside for while. One of critical reasons why should we place students with SEN into mainstream classrooms to receive inclusive education was there are no special schools, which was frequently highlighted by teacher participants. Actually, in current study the majority of teacher participants (N=14) have limited or zero level of real experience of special school education because special schools were abolished during 1970s. Therefore, from these teachers' perspectives the mainstream school is the only choice for students with SEN to receive education. However, according to teacher participants' responses some students with disabilities do need to specific treatment or additional support, therefore taking outside to meet these students' individual needs was highlighted by teacher participants as well. While in Chinese school context, two specific placements were provided by teacher participants. The first one is to place students with disabilities into regular schools to receive inclusive education. Particularly, this perspective was totally mentioned by special school's teacher participants. Based on their working experiences, the 4 special school teacher participants all mentioned that regular school rather than special school is an ideal place for students with disabilities' development because regular school is more like a society where students can well develop. The second refers to conditional placement in regular schools, placement cannot produce negative impacts on normal students' learning and teachers' teaching was the main requirement that students with disabilities need to meet, otherwise students with disabilities cannot place into regular classrooms. In particular, this placement was mainly highlighted by regular school teacher participants. From that conditional placement, we can see that when refer to arrangement of students with disabilities, regular school teachers put normal students and their own interest higher than students with disabilities' interest. Furthermore, instead of from a positive perspective to see place students with disabilities into regular schools, regular school teachers prefer to employ a negative angle to see that arrangement.

After comparing Italian and Chinese school teachers' view on the proper placement for students with SEN to receive inclusive education, we temporarily provide an overview of the organizational placement structure in terms of students with disabilities to inclusive education:

- a) mainstream/regular class, no support;
- b) mainstream/regular class, in-class support for teacher and/or pupils;
- c) mainstream/regular class, taking outside support.
- d) full-time special school.

6.6 Interpretation dimension compared

Concerning the general development trend of inclusive education in Italy and China, three main themes were identified from Italian school teacher participants' responses, which are worse: before 1977, better and better: 1977 to around 2000 and worse than before: around 2000 to current. While in Chinese school context, two main themes were identified: better and better and measures should be taken in the future. Moreover, eleven and nine sub-themes were grouped in Italian and Chinese part respectively. Please see table 29 for a detailed description.

Table 29 Interpretation dimension compared in Italy and China

Dimension	Main themes in Italy	Main themes in China
Interpretation	Worse: before 1977 (2)	Better and better (4)
	Better and better: 1977 to around 2000 (5)	Measures should be taken in the future (5)
	Worse than before: around 2000 to current (4)	

Unlike previous five dimensions, Italian and Chinese school teacher participants' responses in that dimension are totally different because two countries have totally different inclusive education development context and history. In Italian context, the inclusive education development history was mainly divided into three phases. Before 1977, the inclusive education was in a worse situation as students with disabilities were in special schools or classes and students with disabilities in mainstream schools without related support measures. After 1977, the situation started to change into a better orientation, with more policies were issued, more learning resources (e.g. support teachers, specific instruments, specific programmes, etc.) were provided to facilitate students with SEN to learn in mainstream schools. To summarise, after 1977 a strong atmosphere for inclusive education spread in the whole Italian society. However, this well development trend was changing into a worse orientation around the year of 2000 and many reasons were responsible for that changing: the government cuts the money to develop inclusive education, support teachers were reduced, support teachers' frequently changing, etc. While in Chinese school context, the response was simple as the short history of inclusive education development. Two main responses were provided by teacher participants: better and better and

measures should be taken in the future. To some extent, only the first one refers to the interpretation dimension while the second one is not. Considering Chinese inclusive education short development history situation, the second theme was also considered because this also reflects teacher participants' perspectives on that dimension. Compared with past practice that students with disabilities were placed into special education schools, currently more and more students with disabilities are coming to regular schools to receive education and related policies on inclusive education are issued to facilitate regular schools to develop inclusive education, which leads to teacher participants considered that current Chinese inclusive education is becoming better and better. At the same time, as teacher participants stated that there are still many barriers need to be addressed to make regular schools more inclusive. To better address these various barriers as we documented in chapter six, some necessary measures need to be taken were provided by teacher participants, which includes setting fixed professional special/resource teachers in regular schools, training regular school teachers, issuing more clear policies to develop inclusive education, etc.

From Italian and Chinese school teacher participants' responses, we can see that different countries have different inclusive education development route because each country has its own specific historical background, cultural tradition and social context. Given that, here we do not provide an overview in terms of the inclusive education development trend as that trend is different in different social contexts.

“In between” conclusion

In this chapter I have briefly re-examined the inclusive education in Italy and China from a comparative perspective based on the six dimensions: explanation, application, self-knowledge, empathy, perspective and interpretation. In doing so, some applications were provided to enrich our knowledge in terms of 'how to make education more inclusive'. Particularly, in each dimension I have provided a relatively comprehensive overview to that dimension based on Italian and Chinese school teacher participants' views. However, we need to bear in mind that each country has its own cultural, historical and political contexts, therefore there is no single answer to how to make education more inclusive. On the contrary, there are various ways to achieve that.

Conclusion and Prospect *He er bu tong* (Harmony but not sameness): the many faces of inclusive education

The significance of the concept of *inclusive education* emerged at the ‘World Conference on Special Needs Education’ in Salamanca in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). Since then, it has come to occupy a place on the global agenda and challenged existing educational systems the world over (Piji, Meijer, Hegarty, 1997), and many countries have been putting considerable effort into making their education more inclusive (Booth, Ainscow, 1998). Considering the worldwide movement towards to making education more inclusive current study is conducted. From a cross-culture comparative perspective, current exploratory study mainly considers two countries, Italy and China, as examples to further investigate how they make their educational systems more inclusive. Italy and China were intentionally chosen, on the one hand inclusive education comparative studies between Italy and China are rarely conducted until now, considering that current study decides to choose Italy and China to make a comparison and to fill that research gap. In doing so, we can make a communication and exchange in terms of inclusive education policy and practice between Italy and China, achieve the goal of learning from each other. On the other hand, both Italy and China can be considered as one of the traditional western and eastern countries respectively, therefore this study provides a good chance to open a dialogue between western culture and eastern culture and through the dialogue to make both cultures more open and more inclusive.

Influenced by the inclusive education global agenda, both Italy and China have launched a national education reform towards to making their education systems more inclusive and more open. In Italy, since 1970s various policies under the umbrella of *integrazione scolastica* were issued by Italian government to place students with SEN into regular schools, to abolish special schools, to provide related support measures, to reform pre-existing education systems, etc., which aims to make inclusion as a primary principle of the whole education system, the whole society. While in China since 1980s the ‘Learning in Regular Classrooms’ (LRC) initiative was developed as a Chinese model to promote inclusive education. With years of efforts, currently the LRC has become the main form of educational provision that serves the majority of students with

disabilities in China. Both Italy's *integrazione scolastica* and China's LRC derive from their specific own cultural, historical and political contexts. Considering *integrazione scolastica* and LRC, we can conclude that both actions have the same goal that is to develop inclusive education, or to make education more inclusive, however with different ways. For fully understanding that, here we can employ Chinese philosophy of 'harmony but not sameness' (Li, 2006; Zhang, 2001), which can be briefly summarized as encouraging differences and differences can make a harmony. As I stated elsewhere (Jia, 2018), Chinese traditional philosophy of 'harmony but not sameness' opens a new window for us to better understand current global inclusive education reforms. *Bu tong* (Differences or not sameness), which mainly emphasizes different countries employ different ways to develop inclusive education and the way to develop inclusive education is primarily influenced by country's specific cultural and historical contexts. However, compared with *bu tong* we need to emphasize more on the *he* (harmony), which is the purpose of the inclusive education—to provide qualified and appropriate education for all. We should acknowledge the *bu tong*, but we should acknowledge more about the *he*, which is the main trend of international inclusive education reforms.

Starting from a comparative perspective, current study mainly contributes to the *bu tong*, to enrich our knowledge of how to make education more inclusive and open. Particularly, this inclusive education comparative study is just a beginning and an exploratory between Italy and China, or between western and eastern culture. In future, more comparisons, communications and exchanges are needed to make a more comprehensive and deeper dialogue. More researchers are needed to be conducted to let people from different cultures to tell their stories of inclusive education. In doing so, enrich the meaning of *bu tong* and our knowledge of how to make education more inclusive.

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Italian summary

La ricerca presentata in questa tesi è un'analisi comparativa interculturale volta alla comprensione dell'educazione inclusiva in Italia e Cina. Lo studio mira a esplorare la comprensione degli insegnanti del concetto di inclusione nel contesto italiano e cinese. Alla luce di tale obiettivo, viene utilizzata una prospettiva storica per comprendere l'evoluzione delle politiche scolastiche inclusive in Italia e Cina e per esaminare attentamente come tali politiche si siano evolute in diversi periodi storici e in che modo abbiano influenzato le pratiche scolastiche. In particolare la presente ricerca, basata sulla comprensione dell'educazione inclusiva nelle politiche e nelle pratiche scolastiche quotidiane degli insegnanti, vuole arricchire la nostra conoscenza di "come rendere l'educazione più inclusiva" a partire da una prospettiva comparativa interculturale. Per raggiungere tali obiettivi, viene utilizzata una metodologia di ricerca qualitativa, con alla base la progettazione a ritroso come framework teorico e l'utilizzo di diversi strumenti. Per analizzare i dati di ricerca viene adottata la prospettiva dell'analisi tematica, attraverso l'utilizzo del software ATLAS.ti.

I risultati di questo studio comparativo interculturale mostrano che una corretta comprensione dell'educazione inclusiva dovrebbe tenere pienamente conto del "sapore locale" dei contesti culturali, storici e politici, sia italiani che cinesi. Questo studio non è "comparativo", perché non vi è alcun tentativo di considerare i dati provenienti da due contesti piuttosto diversi, l'Italia e la Cina, come comparabili, ma piuttosto lascia aperte domande e questioni emergenti, al fine di arricchire la nostra comprensione di come rendere l'educazione più inclusiva.

Dati i risultati di questo studio, non esiste un'unica interpretazione dell'educazione inclusiva. Al contrario, l'educazione inclusiva ha molti volti e la filosofia cinese di "*he er bu tong*" (armonia ma non identità) ci fornisce un'utile chiave di lettura.

English summary

This exploratory study is a cross-cultural comparative analysis of understanding inclusive education in Italy and China. The exploratory study aims to explore teachers' understanding of inclusive in Italian and Chinese context. Given that aim, a historical perspective is employed to understand the historical policy evolution of inclusive education in Italy and China and to carefully examine how inclusive education policy was issued in different history periods and how these inclusive education policies influenced the school practice. Particularly, based on the understanding of inclusive education in government policy and school teachers' day-to-day school practice, the present exploratory study wants to enrich our knowledge of 'how to make education more inclusive' from a cross-cultural comparative perspective. In order to achieve these aims, a qualitative research design is employed, with understanding theory as a theoretical framework and various methods as tools. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data with software—ATLAS.ti—aided.

This cross-cultural comparative exploratory study's results show that a proper understanding of inclusive education should fully consider the 'local flavour' in both Italian and Chinese cultural, historical and political contexts. Considering that, this exploratory study, to some extent, is not 'comparative' because there is no attempt to treat the data from two quite different contexts as comparable, but I wish that various questions and issues which emerge from considering two quite different contexts, Italy and China, will be illuminating and enrich our understanding of how to make education more inclusive.

Given the results of this exploratory study, there is not a single understanding of inclusive education. On the contrary, inclusive education has many faces, for that point, Chinese philosophy of '*he er bu tong*' (harmony but not sameness) provides us some implications.