Using autobiographical accounts acquired from her extensive career in education, the author has explored the multi-faceted influences on teacher career motivation and professional development in special and inclusive education in China. The social realities faced by teachers in their professional lives in a city in China have been highlighted through comparison and contrast with those of their international peers. This is achieved through a comprehensive review of recent literature and an empirical study to encourage teacher voices with this regard.

The study reveals opportunities and challenges in China in the process of moving towards inclusive education. In particular, it identifies the impact of teacher recruitment policies, teacher education programmes, education decentralisation, rural-urban disparities as well as socio-cultural values on teacher career motivation and their professional development. It also addresses various implications regarding ethical dilemmas overlooked in previous educational research. Meanwhile, the author proposes a discussion on Self-Determination Theory in terms of motivational change.

This book provides insights for policy makers, educators, researchers, teachers and students in special and inclusive education. Readers from other walks of life in China and beyond may also gain a better understanding of the Chinese education system through the life stories of the teachers researched.
Teacher Career Motivation and Professional Development in Special and Inclusive Education in China
STUDIES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION
Volume 8

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Scope
This series addresses the many different forms of exclusion that occur in schooling across a range of international contexts and considers strategies for increasing the inclusion and success of all students. In many school jurisdictions the most reliable predictors of educational failure include poverty, Aboriginality and disability. Traditionally schools have not been pressed to deal with exclusion and failure. Failing students were blamed for their lack of attainment and were either placed in segregated educational settings or encouraged to leave and enter the unskilled labour market. The crisis in the labor market and the call by parents for the inclusion of their children in their neighborhood school has made visible the failure of schools to include all children.

Drawing from a range of researchers and educators from around the world, Studies in Inclusive Education will demonstrate the ways in which schools contribute to the failure of different student identities on the basis of gender, race, language, sexuality, disability, socio-economic status and geographic isolation.

This series differs from existing work in inclusive education by expanding the focus from a narrow consideration of what has been traditionally referred to as special educational needs to understand school failure and exclusion in all its forms. Moreover, the series will consider exclusion and inclusion across all sectors of education: early years, elementary and secondary schooling, and higher education.
Teacher Career Motivation and Professional Development in Special and Inclusive Education in China

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University of Northampton, UK
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

THE TOPIC AND THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

This book is based on an empirical study on teacher career motivation in special and inclusive education and professional development in China. The study was undertaken in order to investigate the current context in China which, in common with other countries, is in the process of moving towards a more inclusive education system. It places a special focus on the trends, opportunities and challenges of teacher education in terms of teacher career motivation and professional development in special and inclusive education. Nevertheless, it was never intended to be set in the vast and diverse context of China as a whole. Practicalities only allowed me to investigate teachers from a limited number of mainstream and special schools and student teachers from a university in a single city, located about a hundred miles south of Shanghai. This more local and familiar context created an opportunity for me to develop a purposive and selective sample for the case study materials, as will be described later in this book.

THE MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Two main factors prompted me to conduct this study. First of all, it was my personal motivation for career and professional development in special and inclusive education. The trajectory of my professional career in education may not be representative nor can it be generalised. However, it has made an impact on my thinking, perspectives and professional endeavours as well as my life, as is discussed below. My personal journey aligns with the findings of Clough and Corbett (2000) that personal and professional lives are interdependent. It also reflects the development of teacher education and professional development in China in the recent decades (Zhou and Reed, 2005).

My motivation for teaching as a career has been and still is for the main part for intrinsic reasons. My initial teacher education in a provincial-level normal university in China in the 1980s prepared me with mainly subject-based knowledge of English language. A bachelor degree from the university qualified me as a teaching assistant in a teachers’ college where students from the city or nearby were trained to be primary or secondary school teachers in the region. Unlike teaching assistants in some English speaking countries, the term teaching assistant in China referred and still refers to novice teachers in higher education. Four years later, I was allowed funded study towards a post-graduate certificate by my college and East China Normal University, which was running a joint programme with the British Council to train teachers of English at tertiary level (Gu, 2007).
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The university expansion in the 1990s (Zhu and Han, 2006) enabled my college to become a university college by merging with several local institutions. In 1998, I was given an opportunity (after taking tests) to study for a Post-Graduate Diploma in English Language Teaching (PGDELT) in the National Institute of Education of Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. It was a programme tailor-made for Chinese teachers of English in higher education and was fully sponsored by the Singaporean government (Gopinathan and Sharpe, 2002). This one-year learning experience broadened my international vision. Shortly after my return from Singapore, I was promoted to associate professorship in the School of Foreign Languages and was assigned a position as the head of the International Office of my home university. Nevertheless, years of administrative work with great responsibility and duty restricted me from building capacity in academic research. This urged me to make an impetus decision to seek further professional development in the UK as I contended that cross-cultural learning experiences would enhance the professional competencies of academics (Feng and Yu, 2009).

In 2005, by a fortuitous route, I found myself studying and researching in special and inclusive education. With limited knowledge to start with, I was sceptical of the practicality and feasibility of inclusive schooling in China. Nevertheless, I acquired empathy for the values expressed in this field and witnessed a change in my attitude which came with intensive learning. Furthermore, based in the UK, I had great opportunities to have professional contact with those who had been devoting their lives in research and practice for children with special educational needs (SEN). I was highly inspired by their motives, passion and commitment towards special and inclusive education.

The second factor which prompted me to conduct this study in a Chinese context was the potential originality of this research. During the past half-century, China has attained remarkable education achievements with the rapid increase in economic strength and increased awareness of social inclusion (Chen, 2005; Guo and Lanham, 2005). However, there was a singular lack of literature from China reporting teachers’ reflections and perceptions on their career motivation and professional development in special and inclusive education.

Most of the previous research focuses on the development in relation to special and inclusive education (Chen, 1996; Fang, 2000; Deng and Manset, 2000; Pang and Richey, 2006). Attitudes of teachers towards special and inclusive education and professional development have recently been attached importance (Wei and Yuan, 2000; Zhang and Chen, 2002; Guo and Shi, 2004; Wang, Gu and Chen, 2004; Xiao, 2005; Deng and Holdsworth, 2007). Teacher shortage, occupational commitment, emotional labour and professional stress have also attracted some attention (Wan, Wang, Du and Chen, 2008; Jiang, Wang and Fan, 2008; Liu, 2009; Tian, Zhou and Chen, 2009; Wang, 2009).

Nevertheless, research in China rarely encourages voices concerning the experiences of children in mainstream and special school settings. In addition, limited opportunities have been provided to teachers to either express their perspectives or to offer any critique of policy or practices in special and inclusive education. The potential correlation between teacher career motivation, attitudes towards special
and inclusive education and professional development has been the subject of little scrutiny.

At this point my professional curiosity built around my reading and personal experience clearly needed to be evidenced-based if it was to have any value for future teacher development. The possibility of making some impact in this area provided me with an added incentive to explore what was clearly, within a Chinese context, an under researched phenomenon.

THE ASSUMPTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Meanwhile, by reflecting upon my own learning experiences and teaching career in China which prepared me with limited understanding and expertise in special and inclusive education, I became increasingly aware that this area of education needs further promotion in the Chinese context. I began to formulate preliminary assumptions that fundamentally, a) teachers might not have a high motivation for their career in special and inclusive education; b) they might not have the expected knowledge and skills for the assurance of positive attitudes towards teaching children with SEN and c) they might have varied perceptions and expectations regarding their own continuing professional development in this area of education.

My overall hypotheses are that, a) the nature of and low priority attached to special and inclusive education in China de-motivated teachers in their career choice; b) initial teacher education programmes failed to prepare student teachers for teaching in special and/or inclusive schools; c) teachers were not provided with the necessary support or incentive to actively engage themselves in continuing professional development and d) there could be correlations between the three key elements, namely, their motivation to embark on a career in education, their knowledge and understanding of, and attitudes towards special and inclusive education and their motivation for participating in continuing professional development. It is my contention that these elements impact upon each other and have influenced the current state of inclusive education in China.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The assumptions and hypotheses which aroused my professional curiosity in this research area led me to the formulation of the main research question of this study:- what are the major factors affecting teachers’ career motivation and their professional development in special and inclusive education in China? The sub-questions which emerged from the subsequent investigation were shaped and refined on the basis of international literature as well as the limited knowledge from literature in China with this regard. The following are the guiding questions which influenced the development of the data collection process:

– What are the motivations of teachers in special and inclusive education in China?
– What is the impact of teachers’ professional knowledge and skills of and attitudes towards special and inclusive education on their career motivation?
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- What is the impact of teacher career motivation and their perspectives on special and inclusive education on their motivation for professional development?

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research resolved to become an investigation into the current situation in and the potential future direction of special and inclusive teacher education in China. As such, I was particularly interested in listening to the perspectives of teachers working in special and inclusive education to examine the contradictory pressures on schools that seek to include and value students in a competitive educational climate which create economic and social pressures to devalue and exclude students (Booth, Ainscow and Dyson, 1998: 193).

To some extent influenced by time, funding and resources available, the research questions were designed to seek answers related to the motivation of teacher career choice and their professional development specifically in special and inclusive education in China. This, as anticipated would be achieved by investigating teacher voices on the motivation of their career choice, perspectives on working with children with SEN in mainstream and special schools and their professional development. This arguably is innovative within China where teachers have had limited opportunities to articulate their perceptions and perspectives on special and inclusive education.

By encouraging teachers to offer critiques on educational policies and practices within the country, the study aimed to construct ‘reality’ regarding teachers’ professional aspirations as well as to investigate the multiple interpretations on the complex issue of inclusion. The objectives of the research were, firstly, to enquire into various aspects of teachers’ motives and attitudes for taking up their teaching career; secondly, to identify their career concerns, and their change in motives with the acquisition of greater teaching experience; thirdly, to empower teachers to articulate their perceptions of professional development and finally, to use the information to promote change where appropriate in culture, policy and practice.

This research was intended to fill the apparent void of teachers’ aspirations (Payne, 2005) in respect of their career motivation in special and inclusive education and their professional development. In so doing, the research addressed some critical issues in special needs educational provision in China by reflectively comparing this with the provision in the wider world. The necessity to recognise historical, socio-political, economic and cultural differences between the countries formed a paramount consideration for this research (Crossley and Jarvis, 2001; Mitchell, 2005). A critique was provided based on the Chinese government’s educational policies in terms of teacher education and professional development in special and inclusive education. I believe these to be the most critical factors for developing an understanding of and further promoting special and inclusive education in the context of China.

It was my hope that the research could add to the limited body of literature through an analysis of the hidden voices of teachers on their experiences in special and inclusive education in a Chinese context. Additionally, evidence-based findings
could be used as indicators to illuminate policy and practice in this area for a paradigm shift when China moves towards more inclusive education. More importantly, the implications drawn from the research could contribute to the international comparative studies of this nature. Eventually, better understanding of teachers may be reached, diverse educational needs of children may be addressed and above all, there may be a greater likelihood that educational inclusion will be achieved.

THE NATURE OF THE STUDY

This study was primarily exploratory in that it investigated motivation for career choices of student teachers, mainstream and special school teachers and their subsequent professional development. It was also descriptive as the purpose of the research was to collect data using a mixed-method approach (Creswell, 2008) including questionnaire surveys, interviews and observations. Narrative inquiries based on teachers’ stories about their professional life were also employed, which were then developed as case studies. In particular, the study focused upon an interpretive understanding of a complex phenomenon and real-life contexts in the research area.

I deployed the data in a way which enabled me to collate factors that impacted on teachers’ career knowledge and expertise in special and inclusive education and their perspectives on their professional development experiences. The data collected were aimed at deepening my own understanding of the topic. Moreover, the data provided me with evidence which assisted in the interpretation and construction of a ‘reality’ as opposed to being solely based on my assumptions and hypotheses. More importantly, this study set out to draw an overall picture and raise the awareness of the problems and issues with regard to special and inclusive teacher education and professional development in China.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The study is reported in this book in 7 chapters. Chapter II gives an overview of the global and local research contexts. A brief account of the research context in a wider world aims to reflect the current situation and the position where China is in terms of special and inclusive education. This is followed by Chapter III with an analytical review of the literature on knowledge about teacher career motivation and professional development in special and inclusive education. The issues related to methodology are detailed in Chapter IV. The findings of the research are reported in Chapter V in the order of three key themes as in the literature review chapter which also informed the basis of Chapter VI of the discussion of the findings.

Given the obvious limitations in terms of researching a complex area in a country as vast and diverse as China, comparative perspectives from within China and internationally enabled me to construct new knowledge and understanding of this research area. The implications drawn from this study allowed me to make suggestions with regard to the current policy, research and practice concerning special and inclusive teacher education and professional development within a specific
CHAPTER 1

research context. I conclude the book in Chapter VII with some recommendations based on the evidence from the research, bearing in mind that they may not be generalisable in the research context in China as a whole. However, the new knowledge thus constructed from the study gives indications for a future research agenda to be conducted nationally and internationally.
CHAPTER 2

CONTEXTUALISING SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

This chapter comprises a general account of the international context in relation to special and inclusive education. Thus it provides a broad view for an understanding of the research context in China. It is followed with an overview of current educational developments in China by concentrating on the key aspects with regard to teacher education and professional development in special and inclusive education. In addition, a brief account of the cultural context for career choice in China is given. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the research context coupled with the rationale for the choice of this context.

THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONTEXT

International Policy Initiatives

International policy initiatives by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) have enshrined the right to education for all (e.g., World Declaration on Education for All, 1990; Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, 1994; Dakar Framework for Action, 2000 and Education for All, 2007). With these initiatives, there is an increasing recognition of the right to inclusive schooling for children with SEN, albeit with various forms of support to be provided in mainstream schools and beyond. The notion of moving from special education to developing more inclusive approaches has been advocated and promoted internationally and is seen as an on-going process (Booth, 1983; Chen, 1996; Tilstone, Florian and Rose, 1998; Mittler, 2000; Farrell and Ainscow, 2002; Thomas and Loxley, 2007). A global commitment towards supporting and welcoming diversity among all learners has been made and significant advancement has been witnessed across the world in recent years (Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Ballard, 1999; Ainscow, 2005; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006a).

The International Research Context in Special and Inclusive Education

Despite these effective endeavours, for many countries the principles espoused within these initiatives prove challenging. A significant body of research has been conducted in this area, depending on the economic strengths and more importantly, the awareness of social and educational factors presented in different countries (Potts, Armstrong and Masterton, 1995; Booth and Ainscow, 1998; Chen and Hua, 1998; Tilstone and Rose, 2003; Slee, 2005, 2006; Florian, 2006; Forlin and Lian, 2008). Dilemmas have been witnessed in policy implementation as well as in theory,
research and practice (Pijl, Meijer and Hegarty, 1997; Mitchell, 2005; Slee, 2006; Ainscow, Booth and Dyson, 2006b; Norwich, 2008a). With regard to teacher education and professional development, changes are gradually impacting upon the knowledge base of the profession (Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003).

Nevertheless, research has been identified as problematic (Clough and Barton, 1998). Recorded evidence is not as extensive for economically disadvantaged countries as for Western countries. Moreover, little coordinated national or international attention has been paid to the type of systemic reform of teacher education and teacher qualification requirements to support classroom teachers under pressure (Florian, 2009). Inconsistencies of terminology and interpretation of needs, coupled with cultural traditions and expectations inevitably present difficulties for the researchers who wish to discuss special or inclusive education at anything beyond the local level.

Studies indicate that issues of special teacher education remain an under researched area (Brownell, Ross, Colon and McCallum, 2005). Evidence from the UK (Garner, 1996; Moran, 2007) suggests that initial teacher education programmes are expected to be improved to prepare student teachers for inclusive education. A national shortage of fully certified special education teachers in the USA has been a persistent concern over the years and the shortage may increase (Katsiyannis, Zhang and Conroy, 2003). To address this severe shortage, some states in America have lowered the standards for entry in special education (McLeskey and Ross, 2004).

Therefore, it is necessary to urge some caution when considering such commitment, which clearly varies according to national priorities and is invariably influenced by other political and socio-economic demands upon nations. This is a particularly important consideration in respect of those countries which are economically disadvantaged or have been subjected to social or political turmoil.

In writing this book I have been conscious of the challenges identified by other researchers and writers in this field who emphasise the need to avoid generalisation or to indulge in naïve international comparisons. The experiences of children with SEN within mainstream or special schools still vary from country to country (Mitchell, 2005; Pijl, 2007) and making direct comparisons across these is fraught with difficulty. Similarly, interpretations of what constitutes inclusion have also proven problematic. The placement of children with SEN into mainstream schools is no guarantee of successful participation either in learning or in everyday life (Rose, 2007; Xu, 2008).

Whilst teacher opinions and in some instances the views of parents have been sought, little is known about whether children with SEN prefer to receive their education in special or mainstream schools (Farrell, 2000). Few studies have been conducted to date that investigate the effect of membership of inclusive classrooms on the educational achievement of students. Where this has been conducted, evidence is often inconclusive (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson and Gallannaugh, 2007; Black-Hawkins, Florian and Rouse, 2007). This indicates the need for greater commitment towards researching the voices of all parties involved (Clough and Barton, 1998; Jordan and Stanovich, 2003). It also emphasises a need for further
researching into the lives of teachers who play a key role in the process of inclusive schooling.

Research on teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion shows reasonably consistent findings (Lindsay, 1997; Farrell, 2000) and these are discussed later in this book both within the review of literature and in relation to my own work in China.

The International Context in Special and Inclusive Teacher Education

The quantity and quality of teachers in general. The demand for teachers who have the flexibility to address the diverse needs of learners is apparent in most countries, though it provides a particular challenge to those in disadvantaged socio-economic situations. Teacher supply varies across subjects, regions and countries. The demand for quality teachers is mostly readily satisfied by the growth in the supply of fully qualified teachers who have received appropriate initial training and professional development. In some countries, teaching as a career has become an increasingly popular option.

For example, evidence shows that the number of people considering teaching has made teacher supply less of an urgent issue in some countries as identified in England and Wales (Gorard, See, Smith, and White, 2007). Teacher shortages, when they do occur, are often regional and may vary according to subject areas. In the USA, the problem is one of increasing demand rather than diminishing supply (McLeskey and Ross, 2004).

Other research reports a trend of people with prior occupational experiences entering teaching as a career in countries like Australia and New Zealand (Priyadharshini and Robinson-Pant, 2003; Watt and Richardson, 2007; Anthony and Ord, 2008). This may well result in a changing profile of teachers in some countries with an increasing number of these colleagues bringing a wide range of life experiences to the classroom. Nevertheless, this is less the case in China where mid career change is less frequently recorded and most teachers enter the profession early and stay throughout their working lives.

The quantity and quality of teachers in special and inclusive education. In some countries, the shortage of special and inclusive education teachers has been chronic and remains to be a challenge (Booth, Nes and Stromastad, 2003; Dart, 2006; Kuyuni and Desai, 2007). Even within the USA, the increasing shortage of fully certified special education teachers represents a major issue for policy and practice (McLeskey and Ross, 2004). The problem relevant to developing and sustaining a qualified teaching force is serious and is perceived to have gradually worsened during the recent years (Boe, 2006). A review of the literature (Brownell, Ross, Colon and McCallum, 2005) indicates that, although a substantial number of investigations have focused on special education, issues on special teacher education remains an under researched area.

In England and Wales changes to teacher education have brought a greater focus to the need for all trainee teachers to have a greater awareness of special needs and inclusion issues. This has, in part been a response to the introduction of changes
in the National Curriculum which includes the introduction of an inclusion statement reminding teachers of their responsibilities to address the full range of pupil needs in their classrooms.

Changes in teacher training and professional development are gradually impacting upon the knowledge base of the profession as has been reported from several countries (Garner, 1996; Meijer, Soriano and Watkins, 2003). For example, evidence from Northern Ireland (Moran, 2007) suggests that initial teacher education programmes are expected to be improved to prepare student teachers for inclusive education following the increasing trends towards inclusion.

Darling-Hammond (1997) suggests that, when examining the issue of teacher shortages, it is important to consider not only the supply and demand but also the quality of teachers filling positions. Teacher shortages in special education reflect both a quantity shortage of teachers (i.e., a shortage in the number of individuals who are available to fill positions) and/or a quality shortage of teachers (i.e., a shortage in the number of teachers who are fully certified for their positions and available to fill vacant teaching positions) (Katsiyannis, Zhang and Conroy, 2003:246).

In this regard, Katsiyannis, Zhang and Conroy (2003) suggest that a national shortage of fully certified special education teachers in the USA has been a persistent concern over the years. They predict that the shortage may increase. One overall reason for teacher shortage is the decreasing number of qualified professionals entering the field of special education and the increasing number of special education teachers who are beginning to retire and/or leave the field. To address this severe shortage of special education teachers, some states in America, according to McLeskey and Ross (2004), have lowered standards to allow people with a bachelor’s degree and who can pass a basic test to be certified where in the past the training was provided at higher degree level.

Teacher shortage in terms of quantity and quality in special and inclusive education is also keenly felt in many economically disadvantaged countries. In India, for example, a large number of individuals with disabilities remain out of school (Kalyanpur, 2008). A similar situation is reported in China (Deng and Holdsworth, 2007) attributing this to multi-dimensional factors including the educational system which leave teachers with limited resources at their disposal.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT IN CHINA

An Overview of the Current Education System in China

An appreciation of developments in education in China is important for any reader who wishes to understand the current situation with regard to inclusive schooling and teacher education within the country. China is one of the oldest established countries with the largest population in the world which also presents with great geographic and regional disparities (Bray, 1998; Zhang, 2001; Liu and Li, 2006). An unbalanced economic development in different regions of the country and significant variations in social structure add to the unevenness of development in terms of education.
Throughout history, the education system in China has undergone successive transformations influenced by the ideological changes of those in power. In the recent decades, the Chinese government has conducted macro management over education to ensure the right direction of educational reform and the implementation of the national educational guidelines. The success in economic reforms has ensured an increased investment and adaptation of favourable policies and initiatives in education (e.g., *The 9 Years’ Compulsory Education Law*, Ministry of Education (MoE), 1986; *the Law on the Protection on the Rights of the Disabled*, National People’s Congress (NPC), 1990; *The Teacher Act* (NPC), 1993; *The Education Act* (NPC), 1995). These have maintained and guaranteed the lawful rights and interests of students, teachers and schools (Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2004). Joint efforts from all levels and sectors of education have also improved the country’s intellectual outlook and boosted the economic and social development of China.

Below is a brief description of the current education system in China divided into three categories: basic education, higher education and adult education:

**Basic education.** Basic education includes primary and regular secondary education. The latter is further divided into secondary junior and secondary senior education. Pre-school education is optional which lasts up to three years for children from age three to six. Primary and secondary junior schooling is compulsory which lasts 9 years. Secondary senior education lasts another three years for those wishing to continue their education but having to pass locally administrated selective entrance examinations. Besides, basic education also provides educational opportunities for adults with low standards of literacy.

China has achieved tremendous progress in basic education. The *9 Years’ Compulsory Education Law* issued by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 1986) entitles equal education opportunities for all eligible children from ages 6 to 15. Funds to support compulsory education in rural areas are co-financed by the central and local governments. In particular, the amended law (National People’s Congress of China, 2006) regards the refusal of children with SEN as a violation of the law (Article 57, 2006).

Until 1993 the curriculum was totally controlled by the central government. A result of this strong uniformity created huge difficulties in practice. The centrally designed curriculum is extensive and demanding, leaving little flexibility for local adaptations. In the fall of 1993, a small portion (10%) became the responsibility of local governments. The content which is inaccessible and un-motivating can be distant to the reality of diverse learners. The Curriculum Reform of Basic Education (Ministry of Education, 2001) has been implemented to integrate all dimensions of education. This reform aiming at promoting the whole development of students not only in intellectual and physical skills but also in knowledge-seeking skills is currently being practiced.

Although China will be demanding less number of teachers for basic education in the years to come before reaching the global target of ‘Education for All 2015’ (UNESCO, 2006), this is just a comparison with its past based on the decline of school-age population in the country in the recent few years. In fact, the Chinese
government still needs to recruit 1.7 million new teachers over the next decade due to the retirement of a sizeable portion of the teaching force. The government planned for the partial implementation of the law in the early 1990s and full implementation in the whole country by the end of twentieth century. Whereas progress has been significant, there remain many challenges ahead for basic education in the country.

Concerning the contextual differences of education in different regions of the country, the law has stipulated free-tuition for compulsory education. It exempted school charges for students first in the rural areas of the backward western parts of the country in 2006 and nationwide in 2007, which further guaranteed school-age children the right to free education. The gross enrollment rate of senior secondary schools was 42.1% (Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2004).

However, the country has been and is still experiencing unprecedented challenges in basic education to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of Education for All by 2015 (UNESCO, 2007). Although enrolment in primary school has been nearly universal, access used to be (and still is in some areas) restricted for students from economically disadvantaged families or those with SEN (Piao, 1992; 1995). Besides, problems like solely pursuing high continuation rate in mainstream schools and academic pressure on students have not been fully tackled. In addition, the decentralisation of education increases the variations in local government expenditure on education from region to region. Significant barriers to full participation in education for children with SEN remain as is described later in this chapter.

Given China’s size, resources and diversity, the quantity and quality of teachers is still recognised as a critical challenge in basic education (Wang, 2004; Paine and Fang, 2007). Although the central and local governments are increasingly making investment policies for teacher education, the proportion of teachers holding the required qualification is still low in certain regions with geographical and/or economical disparities (Li, 1999). By 1999, the percentage of primary education teachers holding a tertiary qualification reached only 13, although the World Education Indicator mean was 64% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD)/UNESCO, 2005). In 2002, the percentage reached 31 (Wang, 2004), contrasting with the International Labour Organisation and UNESCO’s report which suggested that a truer picture might be less than two out of ten (Siniscalco, 2002). Although the percentage has been steadily increasing, a lot of teachers in China still do not have the educational background required by the government (Robinson and Yi, 2008).

Higher education. Higher education suffered tremendous losses during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) due to the shutdown of the system (Yang, 2000). The reinstating of a National University Entrance Examination in 1977 created opportunities for more students to enter higher education. Beginning from 1994, an institutional merger took place in Chinese higher education, a strategic policy for the transition period from a planned economy to a market economy. This has been subject to political intervention, which in many cases has caused the difficulty of building a unified identity for the new institutions (Wan and Peterson, 2007).
Higher education encompasses a broad range of different degree programmes to train specialists for all sectors of the country’s development. For example, in the early 1990s, Chinese universities admitted very limited number of the school student cohort. Recently, the participation to higher education is much widened, though still limited to those who can pass the entrance examinations held annually nationwide.

The further expansion in higher education in the last decade has provided senior high school graduates with more chances of accessing higher education, a sign of movement in higher education from the ‘elite’ stage into a ‘mass’ stage (Lin and Zhang, 2006; Wen, Xie and Li, 2007). Research (Hung, Chung and Ho, 2000) indicates that in Shenzhen, the first and largest Special Economic Zone in China, a large majority of secondary students have a positive intention to pursue higher education. They act in accordance with predictions in the human capital theory.

Nevertheless, issues like capacity building of academics and unemployment of university leavers have been increasingly serious due to the expansion, which has not fundamentally enabled China to move forward in the face of various challenges like the recent global economic recession (Wan and Peterson, 2007).

**Adult education.** Adult education is an important part of the Chinese educational landscape, which has parallels with the basic and higher education categories. Since 1978, the Chinese government’s policies relating to adult education have laid a foundation for accelerating its development. The Outlines for Educational Reform and Development in China (MoE, 1993) regarded adult education as a new education system which plays an important role in the continuous enhancement of the national quality in developing conventional school education toward life-long education.

Adult education has progressed as a socialist adult education system with typical Chinese characteristics and is changing in response to the ever increasing needs of the country. The purposes and objectives of adult education have been to raise the quality of life for workers; to train individuals for jobs and prepare specialists, administrators and managers; and develop people who are dedicated, moral, disciplined and well-informed.

**Special Education**

Politico-historical forces have shaped the development of current educational practices in special education in China (McLoughlin, Zhou and Clark, 2005) which can be roughly divided into three stages (Ellsworth and Zhang, 2007):

The early stage (1874–1949) formed special education institutions with the western religious influence (Deng, Poon-McBrayer and Farnsworth, 2001). Schools were mainly for students with hearing and/or visual impairments and were restricted to those who could afford education expenses. During the second stage (1949–1980), some more special schools were established to accommodate children with visual and/or hearing impairments. Due to the lack of teaching resources worsened by collectivist ideology and economic inability, education for individuals with learning difficulties or other disabilities was nonexistent (Pang and Richey, 2006). In particular, little achievement was made during the setbacks of the Cultural Revolution years (1966–1976) which attached no priority to education as a whole.
The third stage has witnessed the expansion and speedy growth of special education when the reform and opening policies transformed the country and provided a breeding ground for special education. Disability was identified in six categories: hearing and visual impairments, mental retardation, emotional disturbance and physical and multiple disabilities. This definition was made in the Law on the Protection on the Rights of the Disabled (National People’s Congress, 1990) under the impact of the global rise of a movement for the rights of disabled people. The policy initiatives (e.g., The Outline of the 9th Five Year National Development Plan for the Disabled (1996–2000), State Council, 1996) have made explicit stipulations on safeguarding the rights to education of the disabled. In recent developments more inclusive education has been promoted by the government through requiring and empowering provinces to begin the process of giving everyone access to education, regardless of their diverse educational needs.

Nevertheless, there is a big gap across the country between the overall standard of development in the western and eastern, rural and urban regions caused by social, economic and geographic disparities. Local governments operate in a context of globalisation, especially in terms of economic interdependence (Wang, 2006). Given that education is seen as a major investment for economic and social goals, it is arguable that some local governments do not invest as much in special and inclusive education as it merits. The following list shows the development and the current situation in special education in China:

- In 1979, the first special school for children with learning disabilities (mental retardation) in Shanghai (Potts, 2003).
- In 1982, the first special education diploma programme in a teachers’ college in Jiangsu Province; the first diagnoses of individuals with autism in Nanjing (McCabe, 2008).
- In 1984, the first special education teachers college (diploma) in Nanjing.
- In 1986, the first bachelor degree programme of special education in Beijing Normal University (Qian and Liu, 2002; Wang, Gu and Chen, 2004).
- In 1993, the first Masters’ degree programme in Beijing Normal University (Qian and Liu, 2002; Wang, Gu and Chen, 2004); the first autism institute for individuals with autism in Beijing (McCabe, 2008).
- From 1990–1999, in the Chinese Journal of Special Education, only about 5% of the articles were published on Learning in Regular Classrooms (LRC), another 3% of the articles on special and inclusive teacher education, and about 7% of all the articles published in the same journal at the same period are research based (Lin, 2000).
- In 2003, the first PhD programme in special education in Beijing Normal University (Qian and Liu, 2002); In 2003, about 20% and in 2004, no student teachers graduated from bachelor degree programmes of initial special teacher education in Beijing Normal University chose to work in special education. In fact, since 1990, a large number of the student teachers of the same university chronically chose other professions upon graduation. Within those graduated and joined teaching in special schools/or special education organisations, the attrition rate was 28.4%. Since 1996, about 10 – 25% of the student teachers applying to
Masters’ programmes chose to further their studies in special education. Since 2000, an increasing number of the student teachers have applied to Masters’ programmes (about 30% annually). However, most of them applied to study other majors so that they could have chances to be in other professions than special education (Wang, Gu and Chen, 2004).

In 2007, the national mean of teacher student ratio in special education was 1:15. In Yunnan Province in the southwest of China, the ratio was 1:42 (New Statistics Year Book, 2008).

The current amount of service provision in special education is clearly insufficient (Deng and Manset, 2000). The specific case of provision for children with autistic spectrum disorders may be taken as an example here. McCabe (2008) has stated that, although educational opportunities for children with autism are increasing, demands are yet to be met. No official figures are available of the enrolment of students with autism for schooling due in part to the fact that many students with autism are not correctly diagnosed and partly to the fact that autism does not have its own category under the law (see National People’s Congress, 1990).

In addition, the diagnostic system is not well developed for other learning difficulties (Wang, 2007). Moreover, a lack of awareness of SEN in teachers, particularly in economically disadvantaged rural or remote areas is very common (McCabe, 2008). Many students with SEN in West China are still denied schooling and inclusive education has been encountering great challenge (Pang and Richey, 2006; Deng and Holdsworth, 2007).

Inclusive Education

Since 1986 China has been making great endeavours in moving towards inclusive education under the pressure from an international agenda. Relevant laws (MoE, 1986; National People’s Congress, 1990) entitled all children to a fundamental right to education by the Chinese constitution. The experiment of Learning in Regular Classrooms (LRC), the Chinese version of inclusive education (Deng and Manset, 2000) has unique Chinese characteristics. It was the initiative of local governments in response to the urge for a favourable and supportive atmosphere for children with SEN (primarily sensory impairments or mild mental retardation) to be accommodated in mainstream schools.

This LRC approach has contributed to a major increase in the education opportunities for those who used to be denied access to education of any sort. According to the National Report on Education for All in China (MoE, 2005), school entrance rates of students with disabilities have increased dramatically in this aspect.

Nevertheless, as LRC is driven by pragmatic needs and has been practised in a different social and cultural context from inclusive education initiatives in the West (Deng and Guo, 2007), the policies and legislation have not secured implementation and practices. The problems posed by greater diversity are still seen as belonging to the children rather than the system (Potts, 1995; 2000). Although extra provisions were made, a range of factors are yet to be addressed in the process of promotion
of inclusive education. In particular, LRC has highlighted some weaknesses in Chinese educational provision (Deng and Manset, 2000; Feng and Jament, 2008a).

Apparently, the philosophy of inclusion has posed challenges to the whole education system. The challenges imply little awareness within society and insufficient support for those who are still experiencing exclusion, discrimination and segregation from mainstream education. Government expenditure on education remains to be lower compared with some comparable economically disadvantaged countries (Hannum and Wang, 2006). Besides, too often, education to some Chinese policy makers is perceived as an opportunity rather than a right. Despite the success achieved in China, inclusive education still does not have full acceptance either as a concept or in practice in schools and society (Wang, 2006). There is still much to be accomplished, especially in special and inclusive teacher education and professional development.

Teacher Education

Teacher education in China is composed of pre-service education and in-service training with both laying an emphasis on courses in the curriculum subject areas (Song, 2008). As the largest provider of teacher education and training in the world which also sustains the world’s largest number of primary and secondary schools (Yang and Wu, 1999), China has the lowest proportion of teachers with tertiary qualifications for teaching primary and secondary education (UNESCO, 2001).

Pre-service training institutes normally provide full-time education for student teachers in preparation to enter into the teaching profession whilst in-service training institutes provide more part-time based training (Song, 2008). General higher teacher pre-service programmes, which last for 4 years, are offered in normal universities and education departments of regular higher education institutions for the training of secondary level teachers. These institutions of higher learning play an active part in in-service training of secondary school teachers as well. Regular secondary teacher pre-service education aims mainly at the training of teachers for pre-school, primary and special education levels. The 2–3 years’ programmes are conducted in teachers’ colleges or schools where in-service teacher training is also offered in forms of distance learning, self-study, evening classes and other similar arrangements.

At present, the proportion of non-teacher education colleges in the total number of teacher-training academies has risen to 54% (Chinese National Commission for UNESCO, 2004). The active participation of the colleges in teacher education has injected new vitalities into the construction of an open and flexible system of teacher education.

Overall, the curriculum structure for the teacher training schools, especially those pre-service training schools, consists of three main components: general education courses which offer a series of comprehensive training in political/ideological issues, foreign languages, physical education and computer science; subject matter courses within the academic areas in which the student teachers are enrolled
(e.g. English, Physics, Chemistry, or History, etc.); and educational/pedagogical courses which offer training in the areas such as pedagogy, psychology, and subject content teaching methodology and the like.

Since 1978, China has witnessed a succession of developments brought forward by a process of dynamic reform in policies and practices in teacher education. The initiatives (MoE, 1986; the Teacher Act by the National People’s Congress, 1993) target the building of a mechanism of quality assurance for teaching as a profession by paying substantial attention to improving, developing and restructuring teacher education (Zhou and Reed, 2005). However, the criteria for teaching in the Act (1993) are set at a very basic level as they only focus on academic qualifications (Wang, 2004; Gu, 2006). Before the Act, in China, a large number of teachers were recruited with the minimum required qualification for teaching and some even started teaching without any qualification (Li, 1999). This is in contrast with the practices in many Western countries where individuals pre-qualify for entry into the teaching market conditional on certifications from the state authority and/or holding a graduate degree in education.

Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development in China has existed since the introduction of teacher education a century ago (Yang and Wu, 1999). Since the late 1970s, China has devoted itself to increasing the quantity and enhancing the quality of existing teachers. The unified nationwide professional standards designed and issued by the government in the early 1980s (Zhou and Reed, 2005) urged teachers to seek further education opportunities through in-service training. This is evidenced by the government’s efforts in restoring and establishing advanced training institutions to undertake in-service training, especially for those who missed their education and training during the Cultural Revolution years.

In-service training of teachers can be divided into degree and non-degree education. Degree education includes not only the ‘top-up’ education for in-service teachers without qualified certificates but also the ‘upgrading’ education for in-service teachers with qualified certificates. The non-degree education for in-service teachers is the main part of continuing education. This has been the key to teacher training embraced by teachers to meet the ever increasing societal expectations. Schools are encouraged to establish partnerships with teacher education and in-service training institutions to create chances for teachers both in and out of schools.

The Ministry of Education sets regulations on continuing education by defining the contents, categories, organisation administration, infrastructure standards, examination and verification, awards and penalties of continuing teacher education. The targets of such training are to meet primary school teachers’ requirements of continuing education, to orient new teachers during the probation period and to enhance the basic skills of all that hold teaching posts.

One kind of professional development model is called Action Education (Xingdong Jiaoyu in Chinese). It is a form of school-based training model which aims at updating ideas of teaching and learning, and designing new situations to improve classroom practice through exemplary lesson development. As it directly tackles issues in
teaching and learning, although there are some challenges in implementing the model, it has shown the potential to enhance in-service teacher learning and professional development with comparatively low cost. It is promoted in many schools in China.

However, the increased demand for ‘change in the nature, the purpose and the mode of delivery’ of professional development in teacher education (Garner, 2006:17) is particularly challenging due to the growing disparities in wealth within the country and the unevenness of the teaching force profile (Paine and Fang, 2006). In particular, since the mid 1990s, most professional development models have been influenced by the Government’s priorities and the market economic system. Teachers are increasingly urged to seek professional development with insufficient support in many aspects.

Special and Inclusive Teacher Education

Special teacher education has been the focus of development only in recent decades. Before the early 1980s, there had been virtually no specialised teacher training system for special education programmes in China (Xu, 2008). The growth in special education teacher training programmes has been remarkable (Ellsworth and Zhang, 2007). However, China is still under tremendous pressure of teacher shortage in special and inclusive education. Many issues need to be addressed.

First of all, special teacher education is offered only in a very limited number of normal universities and colleges as opposed to general teacher education. Optional courses of special education are offered in certain colleges or universities. Secondary special teacher training institutes normally enroll graduates from junior secondary schools and educate them for 3–4 years so that student teachers can teach in primary schools for the deaf, blind and intellectually disabled.

Secondly, pre-service teacher education in China involves little or no preparation for teachers of children with SEN (McCabe, 2008; Wang and Wang, 2009). Given that China witnessed a noticeable improved access of children with SEN into special schools, mainstream schools and/or even including universities and colleges, professional development programmes offer insufficient training to provide teachers with the necessary knowledge or skills.

In terms of the courses for special education, the compulsory courses are classified into public and specialised categories. The public ones are mainly courses of subjects plus Ideological and Political Education, and Introduction to Special Education. The specialised ones are offered for different specialties based on the local needs for special primary education. They include Psychology, Pedagogy, Methodology and other courses for broadening student teachers’ knowledge, developing their interests and special skills in prevention and examination of deformity. Teaching practice includes visiting, probating and assisting special education teachers. Extra-curricular activities provide education in science and technology, arts and sports.

Schools as well as local governments encounter challenges of supporting effective diagnosis and funding for teacher professional development. The challenges are also encountered in terms of large sized classes and inappropriately-designed curricula.
SPECIAL AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

(Cortazzi and Jin, 2001). As a consequence, children with SEN have not yet received enough attention, largely due to the flaws in general teacher education which include few modules on special and inclusive education (Wang and Wang, 2009).

In despite of the tremendous efforts, China has not yet helped itself as expected, in the international profile of teachers for inclusive education (Yu, 2008). International and comparative reports reveal that the quality of education in China is still well below the international standards particularly in the number and qualification of teachers in basic education (UNESCO and the World Education Indicators (WEI), 2001; 2006a).

The quantity and quality of teachers in special and inclusive education. It is then clear that in China one of the most pressing problems facing special and inclusive education is the scarcity of well qualified teachers (Gan, 2004; Wang, 2006; Yu, 2008). According to the government statistics (MoE, 2003), among 30,349 teachers and staff in special schools, there were only 48 teachers with graduate attainment, 3,757 with undergraduate attainment and the rest had lower educational backgrounds. About 50% of the teachers and staff had received some special training to be qualified in special education (MoE, 2003). For example, it is reported (McCabe, 2008) that at the Autism Institute, a well known educational institute for children with autism in Beijing, none of the teachers had taken a formal class in special education when they began to teach in the school at its early establishment in 1993. This has little significance in comparison with the total number and qualification of teachers in other education sectors in the country.

Another example is a comparison between the expected teacher student ratio by Chen (1990, cited in Potts, 1995:165) and the most recent statistics in this respect. According to her report on a survey on the number and quality of teachers in three coastal provinces (Liaoning, Jiangsu and Shandong) commissioned by the Chinese government in 1988, Chen (1990) calculates that if working on a teacher student ratio of 1:6, the provinces would need 68,500 more teachers. She further states: ‘If China could really solve all of its many difficulties and reach the pre-set target laid out in the development plans, then by the year 2000 China’s Special Education work will be able to join the ranks of middle-level developed countries’ (Chen, 1990:2, cited in Potts, 1995:173).

However, statistics (New Statistical Yearbooks, 2008) indicate that the number and quality of teachers is incomparable with the mounting number of children with SEN, although there are no reliable figures available as there is little awareness about a range of learning difficulties of children (Wang, 2007). According to the Basic Statistics on Special Education by Region 2007 (New Statistical Yearbooks, 2008), the national mean of teacher student ratio in special schools was 1:15 whilst the highest rate was 1:42 in Yunnan province in the south-west of China.

Recent studies on special education teachers in Jiangsu Province (Jiang, Wang and Fan, 2008) and Shanghai (Wan, Wang, Du and Chen, 2008) may well illustrate the issue. Jiangsu Province is in the leading position in the development of special education in the country. The teacher student ratio was 1:11 in 2007 (New Statistical
Yearbooks, 2008), which was well above the national mean, although it was almost double the size of Chen’s expected ratio (1990). However, less than 25 per cent of teachers researched have bachelor degrees. Only about 36 percent of the teachers have been trained in special education whilst about 6 percent of teachers do not even have teaching qualifications. Most of the schools in Jiangsu Province would demand teachers to have degrees for entry. According to Jiang, Wang and Fan (2008), each year, among the students who graduate with a bachelor degree in special education in the country, quite a few choose to further their education or work in other professions. Few people with a bachelor degree are available to teach in the schools in Jiangsu Province. This finding supports Wang, Gu and Chen (2004).

A similar report has been produced in relation to an investigation into special education teachers’ professionalisation in Shanghai (Wan, Wang, Du and Chen, 2008). The ratio of teacher student in Shanghai was 1:9 in 2007 (New Statistical Yearbooks, 2008), which ranks in the top 10 according to the national mean. Nevertheless, the percentage of teachers who have received professional training was insignificant. About 30 percent of the teachers researched have never received any training in special education prior to and/or post service. This indicates that the diverse educational needs of children may not be addressed properly if at all, as a result of the insufficient number and poor quality of teachers available.

Cultural Context for Career Decisions

From 1949 to the early 1990s, the Chinese government undertook the responsibility of job assignment leaving little choice for individuals. The national economic planning policy used to secure jobs for all graduates, including high school and college students. People depended heavily on the government’s placement arrangements for jobs. Students educated in the collective culture with communist ideology were convinced of the necessity to obey and accept whatever positions were given to them by the government. Students believed that they were obliged to contribute to the socialist society by working on the occupations needed, not necessarily the occupations they were interested in.

This job placement system granted all employees in the state or collective sectors lifelong employment with promotion by seniority known as the ‘Iron Rice Bowl’ system (Zhang and Pope, 1997, cited in Zhang, Hu and Pope, 2002) which guaranteed also benefits such as pension, free medical service and cheap housing. Research (Hu, Chen and Lew, 1994; Zhang et al., 2002) reveals that off-spring could take on their parents’ jobs after their parents’ retirement. Once the jobs were taken, they could never be lost.

From early 1990s, the transition from a planned economy to a socialist market economy brings a dramatic change in the Chinese employment system which affects nearly the entire population in all urban areas of China (Hu et al., 1994; Zhang et al., 2002). State-guaranteed jobs were no longer secured as before. Student placement systems were revolutionised in education institutions. Competitive and contractual employment systems were adopted. Nowadays, students have freedom in their career
choices, although more often than not, they are provided with little counseling or advice from professionals but are guided solely by their families, friends or school teachers. Meanwhile, they have to face tough competition in job hunting and insecurity in employment.

Teacher Career Motivation

Factors influencing teacher career motivation are multifaceted. Historically China has a long tradition of respecting teachers and valuing education. However, the country has difficulties in recruiting the most promising teaching talent because of competition from more prestigious and lucrative professions (Chen, Lim and Gopinathan, 2003). Due to an insufficient financial input into education, the payment and welfare package of teachers still remains uncompetitive in some areas. Teaching as a profession has in many respects become a low priority for the majority of Chinese school leavers (Paine, 1991).

In response, a concerted effort was made by the Chinese government and society to raise the profile and standards of teaching, to enhance the status of the teaching profession and attract more attention to teacher education. This is evident from the central government’s policy initiatives in reference to teachers. Apparently, teacher career motivation is enhanced with the issue of the Teacher Act (1993) which, for the first time ever, identified teaching as a profession.

The Act specifies teachers’ qualifications for different levels of education and paid more attention to teachers’ economic status by addressing teacher salaries and benefits. The Educational Act (NPC, 1995) further requires the government to improve teachers’ working and living conditions as well as their social status by waiving their tuition fees and also subsidising a living allowance to those registered in teacher education programmes. Another policy document on the Outline for Education Reform and Development in China (MoE, 1993) specifies new standards for teachers. It aims at forceful measures to raise teachers’ social status by improving the conditions of teachers’ work, study and living so that teaching becomes the “most respected profession”.

In the 1980s, teacher education played a strategic role in the central government’s policies and laws. The reform of the 1980s closed the teacher education system allowing only teacher education institutions to prepare teachers. The graduates from teacher institutions were appointed to positions in education by the institutions. This policy ensured an adequate supply of teachers. However, it had negative effects (Yang and Wu, 1999). High school leavers preferred to choose universities other than normal universities or teacher education colleges. Thus normal universities and colleges were unable to recruit the most excellent students. There have been flows of well-educated and competent people to the areas of economic prosperity. Very often, male students in particular identified teacher education as the least desirable option in their career choice.

A teacher shortage coexists with relatively large geographic and/or economic disparities. Many teachers prefer urban posts for several reasons, mostly related to conditions such as quality of life, working conditions, opportunities for professional
development and access to health facilities. The central and local governments use different strategies to deploy teachers so as to ease the issues caused by geographic disparities. In recent years, the central government has waived university tuition for prospective teachers in some national level universities. Students are offered a free year of courses at master’s level if new graduates accept a three-year rural posting. This has improved the recruitment of teachers.

With regard to special and inclusive education, factors influencing teaching choice are made even more complex. There is a lack of respect for this profession which consequently affects teachers’ social, contextual and personal identities (Day and Sachs, 2004). Teacher status in society and within the education system affects teacher career motivation and to some extent, leads to teacher attrition in special and inclusive education. In particular, educational reform with its increased commitment to a reordered system by urging better provision for marginalised or excluded learners has placed huge responsibilities on teachers. Inclusive education teachers are increasingly challenged by the widening gap between the high expectations of inclusion policy and the lack of suitable tools to implement it. This has also had the result of encouraging students for higher degrees and ultimately pursuing a teaching career at tertiary level (Wang, Gu and Chen, 2004). Hence, it is important to examine teacher career motivation for special and inclusive education.

The Research Context for the Study

The broader Chinese context described within this chapter has been presented in order to assist the reader in being able to contextualise the district where the research reported in this book was conducted. This research was conducted in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province. The 9 years’ Compulsory Education Law (1986) divides China into three categories based on the diversified territory and immense regional disparities between urban and rural areas as well as economically developed and under-developed regions:

- Cities and economically developed areas in coastal provinces and a small number of developed areas in the hinterland
- Towns and villages with medium development and
- Economically backward areas.

| Table 1-1: Basic statistics of the number of schools, students and teachers in China by levels of education in 1,000 Unit (2007) (Data citation source: New Statistical Yearbooks, 2008) |
|:-------------|:-----------------|:--------------|:---------------|
| National total | Number of schools | Total enrollment | Full-time teachers |
| Special schools | 1,6 | 419,3 | 35 |
| Primary schools | 369 | 107,899 | 5,652 |
| Secondary schools | 92 | 103,216 | 5,784 |
From the table, it is evident that the numbers of special schools, students with SEN and teachers in special schools are significantly small as compared with those for general education. This information is necessary for an understanding of the local research context.

The province. Zhejiang Province is located in the southern part of the Yangtze River Delta in the southeast of China with a population of 49.8 million reported in 2006 (www.zj.gov.cn). Zhejiang belongs to the first category listed above. In 2007, 75,000 middle school teachers and 145,000 primary school teachers received in-service training at all-level teachers’ training organisations. The teacher student ratio in special schools in 2007 was 1:10, which was above the national mean of 1:15 (New Statistical Yearbooks, 2008). The number of special schools in Zhejiang (N=63) in 2007 was the total of six provinces and one city in China. The registered number of students in special schools for the disabled was 14,200. The number of teachers in the province has been raised and teaching quality has been improved in coordination with the development of all types of educational goals.

The city. Shaoxing is a city under the direct jurisdiction of Zhejiang provincial government. This medium-sized city, in the eastern part of China, south of Shanghai has a population of 4.3 million in six administrative divisions. Shaoxing is rich in cultural heritage with about 2,500 years of history and civilisation. A public awareness of education and long tradition in running schools makes Shaoxing the home of a range of well-known people in all walks of life generation after generation.

There are currently 5,632 schools of different kinds (http://www.sx.gov.cn). Among them, there are only 2 special schools accommodating children with learning difficulties and/or hearing and speech impairments from the urban district with a population of 620,000 people and beyond. The fast growth in economic strength puts Shaoxing on the second tier next to the economically well developed cities such as Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen. As it is reasonably developed in economic terms, there is a high tension in academic competition for students as well as job opportunities for school leavers.

The special schools. The two special schools are the only ones in the city. The school for children with learning difficulties was established in early 1980s while the school for sensory impaired children was set up in 1947. This aligns with the country’s overall development in special education. By the time of the field work in 2006, there were about 92 students with learning difficulties aging from 6 to 17. There were 13 teachers teaching in 9 grades in the school. In the school for the sensory impaired, there were about 130 students aging from 6–18 in 10 classes. They were taught by 24 full time teachers and served by 11 other support staff. There were children learning in different grades ranging from primary to secondary vocational. The two schools are rated as primary schools. Unlike the other schools researched, there were 3 cover teachers in the school for children with learning difficulties. The cover teachers worked full time at the school. But they did not
enjoy equal terms and conditions as other qualified teachers. They are college or university graduates but with no initial teacher training before they were recruited.

**The mainstream schools.** Seven mainstream schools were involved in the study, ranging from primary, secondary junior to secondary senior. They are all located in Shaoxing.

Among the seven mainstream schools, one is an independent primary and secondary school with about 8000 students. Two schools are regarded as the top academically achieving schools out of 11 provincial key mainstream secondary schools. The schools enjoy a good reputation for the quality of teaching resources, a high percentage of students being admitted to higher education institutes and universities. The students are mainly from the local community. Still others come from other communities or cities attracted by the reputation of the schools. Students have to prove their high academic attainments to be admitted. Other than this, they have to pay extra tuition. Teachers are very heavily loaded by an imperative of helping students to pass tests for access to good senior middle schools or higher education.

Another two, one primary and the other secondary, are key schools of the city. They are very much selective academically and are under the administration of the municipal people’s government. The primary school is located in the centre of the city where children are mostly from economically well-off families and/or families with high social status. This is in contrast to the school located on the outskirt of the city. That school has a particular large number of students whose parents are mostly physical labours from countryside areas working in the city, known as migrant workers in China. Being a community serving school, it is more inclusive in the enrollment of students. The final two schools are junior ones rating average in the local unofficial league tables.

**The university.** The university is a provincial multidisciplinary higher learning institution growing in both popularity and strength. Approved by the Ministry of Education, the university was founded in 1996 on the basis of the amalgamation of several institutions, chiefly a teachers college and an advanced professional college. The university can be traced back as a primary teachers’ school founded in 1909 and has been forging ahead vigorously in the past decades from the teachers’ school to a teachers’ college till it was renamed as a university in 1996. It has undergone tremendous expansion in all disciplines it covers.

In 2007 the university’s full-time undergraduates reached over 20,000 in 52 undergraduate programmes (grouped into 24 departments) which cover eight academic disciplines, namely, arts, science, engineering, medical science, law, pedagogy, management and economics. There are roughly 15,000 part-time students taking courses in various programmes of adult education. There is an emphasis on initial teacher training, but there are also programmes such as humanities, languages, business and management, engineering, computer science, mathematics and information technology. There is no module on special and inclusive education as no lecturers have had any formal training or qualification in teaching the modules, given their research and teaching capacity in education in general.
The Rationale for the Selection of the Research Context

No research has tried to relate the motivation for a career to the motivation for professional development in special and inclusive education, in Zhejiang Province, or arguably in the country. It is important to recognise that neither the province nor the city is presented within this work as being representative of China as a whole. The choice of the schools and the university in the city for this research was mainly because of my personal and professional interest in seeking the perspectives of teachers in this particular area to test my assumptions and hypotheses of the research topic (see Chapter Three). This has necessitated a focus upon the city whilst taking account of what can be learned from the wider context in China.

This chapter has set the context for the research. It has provided the information which will enable readers to consider the methods deployed and the discussion of the findings on the basis of some understanding of the situation within Zhejiang Province and a wider Chinese context. The conditions within the city of Shaoxing, the province and the current state of educational development in China as a whole were influential in terms of the decisions made throughout the research process.