

Inclusive Status and Future Development of Children with Special Educational Needs in the Chinese Early Childhood Education System

By Difeng He

Matian Hanlin Kindergarten, Guangming District, Shenzhen – January 2026

Research Overview:

This study employs an ecological perspective to analyze the systemic barriers to inclusive early childhood education for children with special educational needs (SEN) in China. It proposes a dual-track intervention framework, integrating internal kindergarten capacity-building with external systemic support, to translate inclusive principles into sustainable practice.

Purpose:

The research aims to investigate the current implementation gap between inclusive education policies and classroom practices for children with SEN in China's kindergartens. Moving beyond identifying challenges, its core purpose is to develop a comprehensive, multi-level analysis and propose a structured framework for actionable strategies. This involves examining disconnects across societal attitudes, legal frameworks, institutional readiness, teacher competency, and family dynamics, to formulate coherent recommendations for both educational practice and policy development.

Methods:

The study is designed using a mixed-methods approach within an ecological systems framework. The methodology is structured around two primary analytical pillars derived from situation and countermeasure research:

1. Multi-level Situation Analysis: Data is collected and analyzed across interconnected systemic levels: (1) the macro-level (national laws, regulations, and overarching education policies); (2) the exo-level (societal attitudes and external professional support organizations); (3) the meso-level (kindergarten environments, administration, and resources); and (4) the micro-level (caregivers/teachers, children with SEN, their peers, and family support).

2. Dual-Track Countermeasure Framework: Analysis is organized to generate solutions along two tracks:

- * Implementation Within Kindergartens: Focusing on teacher mindset and inclusive concept strengthening, strategies for positive in-class interaction and peer support, design of pre-service and in-service professional training, and the creation of adaptive physical and pedagogical environments.

- * Support From Outside Kindergartens: Focusing on the improvement of laws and regulations, reform of inclusive education majors in higher education, enhanced supervision

and guidance from governmental functional departments, and accessible professional assistance from external institutions.

Methods include policy document analysis, semi-structured interviews with kindergarten stakeholders (administrators, teachers, special education coordinators), and comparative case analysis to ground the framework in practical contexts.

Results/Discussion:

Preliminary analysis confirms that barriers to effective inclusion are systemic and interrelated, manifesting as critical misalignments. Key findings highlight the gap between progressive national policies and inconsistent local implementation; between societal advocacy for inclusion and a prevalent lack of actionable strategies and resources at the kindergarten level; and between the acute need for specialized, continuous support and its fragmented availability.

The discussion presents an integrated ecological intervention model as the necessary path forward. This model argues for synergistic action: internally, kindergartens must prioritize building inclusive capacity by strengthening teachers' conceptual understanding and practical skills, fostering supportive peer cultures, and tailoring environments. Externally, this internal work must be enabled and sustained by concurrent advancements in robust legal safeguards and funding, the transformation of higher education to produce practice-ready inclusive education specialists, and the establishment of reliable networks of professional support services.

The study concludes that only through this deliberate inside-outside synergy can the principle of educational equity be fully realized for children with SEN in China. The proposed framework offers a structured blueprint for bridging cultures—connecting international best practices in inclusive education with local innovations adapted to the specific socio-cultural and institutional contours of the Chinese early childhood education system.