

Research Article:

A Study of The Roles of Resource Teachers for Inclusive Education in China: A Textual Analysis of Chinese Inclusive Education Policies

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ABSTRACT

Resource teachers play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of inclusive education by providing specialised support to students with diverse learning needs. Clearly defining their roles in China is essential for strengthening their professional development and ensuring consistency in their responsibilities. This article aims to examine the roles of resource teachers in China through a detailed textual analysis of Chinese inclusive education policies. To achieve this, word frequency analysis and thematic coding were applied to 12 policies related to inclusive education from both developed and less developed regions in central and western China. The findings indicate that resource teachers fulfil seven distinct roles, reflecting a broad scope of responsibilities that extend beyond direct teaching to include collaboration with general education teachers, parental engagement and policy implementation. However, notable regional differences exist in the way these roles are defined and enacted, largely influenced by varying levels of development in inclusive education across different regions. The disparities in the roles of resource teachers can be attributed to several key factors. The absence of a structured resource support system for special education, along with inconsistencies in teacher allocation and professional development opportunities, has contributed to significant variations in their roles. In regions where inclusive education is more established, resource teachers tend to have well-defined roles and greater access to training programmes. Conversely, in less developed areas, a lack of clear guidelines and professional support results in role ambiguity and uneven implementation of responsibilities. To strengthen the professional development of resource teachers and ensure greater uniformity in their roles, it is essential to establish professional standards that accurately reflect their professional roles.

Keywords: Resource teachers, roles, textual analysis, policies, inclusive, China

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, the concept of inclusive education was introduced in China, with Learning in a Regular Classroom (LRC) becoming the predominant approach to implementing inclusive education practices (H. Liu, 2013). Resource teachers play a crucial role in supporting LRC by providing specialised educational resources for students with special educational needs (SEN). Their professional development directly impacts the effectiveness and quality of LRC (Xu & Zhou, 2006). Since 1994, the Chinese government, at both central and local levels, has introduced various policies to promote localised inclusive education practices and support the professional growth of resource teachers. The Guidelines for the Construction of Special Education Resource Rooms in Ordinary Schools, issued by the Ministry of Education, provide a comprehensive national framework for defining the roles of resource teachers. These professionals, working in resource rooms, are responsible for tasks such as assessment, counselling and instruction for students with SEN. Their contributions are essential to the overall special education resource support system (Liu, 2007; Wang, 2017).

However, despite these policy efforts, resource teachers in China continue to face challenges related to professionalism and job stability (Gu, 2020; Huang, 2022). Many resource teachers in resource rooms work on a part-time basis and often lack a specialised background in special education. Additionally, there is a shortage of teachers with senior titles, and most resource teachers have less than one year of experience in the role (N. Liu, 2020). These issues are largely attributed to the ambiguity surrounding the roles of resource teachers, the absence of a full-time workforce, and the lack of a standardised qualification and certification system (Ma & Lei, 2023). Given these challenges, analysing the roles of resource teachers through the lens of regional policies is crucial for improving the qualification and certification system. A clearer understanding of their roles can contribute to the development of a more structured and sustainable resource teacher workforce, ultimately enhancing the quality of inclusive education in China.

Resource Teachers in China

The Ministry of Education's 1994 policy, *Enhancing Learning in Regular Classrooms for Children with Disabilities in Compulsory Education*, marked the formal introduction of resource teachers as a key support system within the LRC framework. Since 2004, China has officially recognised resource teachers as a professional workforce in the resource rooms within the LRC model. The implementation of resource rooms in China can be divided into three phases (A. Liu, 2018). The first phase (1994–2003) focused on promoting the concept of inclusive education in China, particularly the operationalisation of LRC and the establishment of resource rooms. During the second phase (2004–2010), the concept of resource teachers was formally introduced, and efforts were made to localise their development (Gu, 2020). The third phase (2011–present) has been dedicated to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of resource teachers, establishing admission and assessment criteria, and exploring professional development pathways. Overall, through a series of

policies, the positioning of resource teachers as professionals has been progressively solidified, accelerating the implementation of inclusive education. The evolving roles of resource teachers remain a central theme in discussions on their professionalisation and localisation.

The roles of resource teachers define their specific job responsibilities and clarify what tasks they are expected to perform (Dugoff et al., 1985; Wang et al., 2018). From a sociological perspective, these roles depend on how resource teachers interact with schools and meet the educational needs of their communities. Policies on inclusive education serve as the foundation for governmental action, reflecting national educational priorities, societal needs and expectations for resource teachers. These policies provide guidance and institutional support for their professional development (Peng, 2016). Through policy text analysis, the evolution of resource teachers' roles can be identified, providing insight into future directions for their professional development. For example, in 1994, the UK introduced the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, which mandated the appointment of a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in ordinary schools. Subsequent regulations, such as the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (2001) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations (2014), progressively expanded the responsibilities of SENCOs. Their role evolved from merely identifying educational needs to guiding the development of Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) and coordinating educational support resources. Similarly, in Hong Kong, legal frameworks have established Special Education Coordinators, specifying their responsibilities within inclusive education settings and aligning their roles with resource teachers. These policy-driven role definitions serve as guidelines for professional expectations and contribute to the structured development of the profession (Yu, 2018).

Since the services of resource teachers began in 1994, the Chinese government has implemented various policies at both central and local levels to promote localised practices in inclusive education and to support the professionalisation of resource teachers. However, due to varying levels of practical implementation and teacher development across regions, local governments have adopted different policies regarding the roles and responsibilities of resource teachers (Gu, 2020; A. Liu, 2018). In academic discussions, there are two primary perspectives on defining the roles of resource teachers. One perspective emphasizes the frontline role of resource teachers in rehabilitation and assessment, minimising their involvement in management tasks. A study on resource teachers in Guangzhou found that they primarily focus on direct teaching support, underscoring their critical role in instructional service delivery (N. Liu, 2020). Pilot regions such as Beijing and Shanghai have developed specific assessment and management methods for resource teachers, tailoring them to local needs while exploring professional qualification frameworks. In these areas, resource teachers are responsible for specialised education and instructional support and collaboration with mainstream teachers, while guidance fall under the duties of itinerant instructors.

On the other hand, some scholars argue that resource teachers should take on broader roles in resource coordination and management. Research in central and western provinces remains in the preliminary stages, with policy texts largely replicating national documents without significant localisation (Mu, 2021; Sun, 2016). In these regions, resource teachers are expected to serve as both educators and mentors for children with special needs, conducting assessments, facilitating rehabilitation and providing itinerant guidance for teachers implementing resource room programs. The ongoing debate centres on whether resource teachers' roles should be standardised nationwide to balance teaching and management or whether their functions should be adapted based on regional differences in special education development.

This debate raises several unresolved questions: Should resource teachers primarily focus on classroom teaching, or should they act as advisors to parents and students with special needs? Should they possess a broad range of skills in rehabilitation, assessment, special education and general education, or should they specialise in a specific area? The lack of clear role definitions and responsibilities has created barriers to their professional development (Arnold, 2017; N. Liu, 2020). To date, although Chinese policies have introduced resource teacher positions and performance evaluation mechanisms (H. Liu, 2013; N. Liu, 2020; Xiao, 2004), they do not clearly define the specific roles these teachers are expected to fulfil. The overlapping and sometimes conflicting responsibilities assigned to resource teachers have led to ambiguity, hindering the effective operation of resource rooms and limiting their impact on inclusive education. Establishing clearer role definitions and a structured professional pathway for resource teachers is essential for improving their effectiveness and ensuring the sustainability of inclusive education in China.

Therefore, there are still problems regarding the roles of resource teachers, such as “Is the role of the resource teacher primarily to teach in the classroom or to act as an advisor to parents and students of children with special needs and to answer questions?” “Do resource teachers need to have knowledge and skills in rehabilitation, assessment and special education, general education, etc., or just specialists with specialist skills in special education?” Unclear positioning and responsibilities affect the professional development of resource teachers (Arnold, 2017; N. Liu, 2020). To ensure the quality of inclusive education and promote the professional development of resource teachers, this paper aims to use textual analysis of government-issued policy on inclusive education to explore the roles of resource teachers from a social needs perspective. There are three research questions:

1. What are the resource teachers' roles mentioned in the policy?
2. How do the roles of resource teachers differ in different regions' policies?
3. Why do different regions have different policies on the roles of the resource teacher?

METHOD

Textual analysis helps us understand how people make sense of the world by looking at the words and messages they produce in everyday life. Simply put, textual analysis provides more consistency, while qualitative textual analysis offers deeper insights (Owen, 2014). In this study, data were collected using qualitative research methods and analysed based on the perspectives of those who use resource teacher services. This group includes individuals with SEN, resource room users and social supporters such as general teachers, parents of SEN students and community workers. Key terms from government policies on inclusive education, published since the founding of the People's Republic of China, were identified and categorised. The data was then processed using NVivo 20 to create a word cloud, visually representing the key themes related to resource teachers. The importance of each keyword was determined by how frequently it appeared and its relevance in context. The roles of resource teachers were determined from the textual analysis.

Selection of Policy Texts

In this study, the terms “inclusive education”, “learning in a regular classroom”, “resource room” and “resource teacher” were used as keywords to search for policy related to inclusive education among the Ministry of Education and the provincial education departments, and a total of 23 documents were searched. Among them, the two requirements were: (a) the issuing institution is at the provincial level or above, and (b) the policies are still in effect, and a total of 12 policy documents were searched, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Catalogue of inclusive education Related Policy Texts (Partial)

No.	Department of enactment	Date of enactment	Name of policy
1	Ministry of Education	2016	Guidelines for the Construction of Special Education Resource Classrooms in General Schools
2	Ministry of Education	2017	The Second Special Education Enhancement Plan (2017–2020)
3	Ministry of Education	2020	Guidance from the Ministry of Education on Enhancing Learning in regular classroom for Children and Youth with Disabilities in Compulsory Education
4	Beijing Education Commission	2005	Basic Requirements for the Construction and Management of Resource Classrooms in Beijing for Learning in regular classroom

No.	Department of enactment	Date of enactment	Name of policy
5	Beijing Education Commission	2008	Beijing Municipal Education Commission Notice on the Establishment of a Support and Guarantee System for Learning in regular Classroom in Beijing
6	Beijing Education Commission	2013	Opinions of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission on Further Enhancing the Work of Learning in regular Classroom
7	Beijing Education Commission	2013	Measures for the Management of Learning in regular Classroom for Children and Youth with Disabilities in Beijing
8	Shanghai Education Commission	2006	Opinions of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission on Further Enhancing the Work of Learning in regular Classroom
9	Guangdong Education Department	2012	Implementation Measures for the Construction and Management of Resource Classrooms for Children with Special Educational Needs in Guangdong Province (for Trial Implementation)
10	Henan Education Department	2015	Basic requirements for the construction and management of resource classrooms in Henan Province
11	Sichuan Education Department	2018	Sichuan Provincial Department of Education on Further Improving Notice on the Construction of Resource Classrooms for Special Education
12	Shaanxi Education Department	2022	Further Enhancing the Construction of Special Education Resource Classrooms in General Schools

Note: Code text extracts of the policy text are in Appendix A.

Coding

The policy texts on resource teachers were analysed using an inductive approach (Teng, 2023; Yan & Shang, 2024), meaning that themes and patterns were identified directly from the data rather than being predetermined. This method, applied in NVivo, is especially useful for exploratory studies as it allows key insights to emerge naturally (Wen, 2024; Li, 2024). The process began with data familiarisation, where the 12 collected policy texts on inclusive education were carefully reviewed to understand their content. This step helped identify potential themes without any pre-set expectations. Next, open coding was

carried out, where relevant sections related to the roles of resource teachers were analysed. Instead of assigning predefined categories, this method allowed key ideas to surface naturally. After that, nodes were created in NVivo 20 to organise the emerging themes and concepts. Policy clauses related to resource teacher roles were grouped into categories such as “resource teacher roles.” Nodes with similar meanings were then combined to form broader themes, focusing on resource teachers’ responsibilities in relation to three main groups: children with SEN, resource classrooms and social supporters (general teachers, parents and community workers). Through this process, the study identified three key thematic areas and 24 functional categories, helping to structure a clearer understanding of the roles of resource teachers. A detailed breakdown of the coding process is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of coding

Modules	No. of documents	Themes	No. of occurrence	%
SEN student	10	Disability diagnosis	5	10.4
		Assessment implementation	7	14.6
		Material selection	4	8.3
		Teaching aid creation	3	6.3
		IEP development	7	14.6
		Educational guidance	10	21.0
		Rehabilitation	9	18.7
		Psychotherapy	3	6.3
Social supporters (general teachers, parents of students, community workers)	9	Itinerant guidance	10	21.2
		Resource and technical support	7	14.8
		Cooperation in the development of IEP and course design	7	14.8
		Research	5	10.6
		Professional training	9	19.1
		Consulting	3	6.3
		Communication	3	6.3
		Suggestion	3	6.3

(continued on next page)

Modules	No. of documents	Themes	No. of occurrence	%
Resource room	4	Plan development	2	6
		Record management	3	10
		Administrative management	7	23
		School registration	2	6
		Resource allocation	2	6
		Resource management	6	20
		Registration and documentation	4	13
		Resettlement and referral	4	13

Note: Code text extracts of the policy text are in Appendix A.

Validation of reliability and efficacy

To ensure the reliability of the coding, two coders independently coded the data using the same scheme. The coding results were analysed using Cohen's Kappa index and the percentage of agreement at the end of the process. A Kappa index between 0.41 and 0.60 indicated moderate agreement, while 0.61 to 0.80 indicated substantial agreement and values above 0.81 reflected almost perfect agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). The comparison results showed that 81% of the coded content had a Kappa index in the range of 0.40–1.00, indicating that the coding reliability met the required standard.

RESULTS

Roles of Resource Teachers

Resource teachers are full-time staff assigned to resource rooms, and they can be categorised into three groups based on whom they serve: resource rooms, children with SEN and social supporters (including general teachers, parents of students and community workers). The results showed that for resource rooms, a total of eight key functions were identified: Plan Development, Record Management, Administrative Management, School Registration, Resource Allocation, Resource Management, Registration and Documentation, and Resettlement and Referral (see Figure 1). Among these, the most frequently mentioned functions were Administrative Management (23%) and Resource Management (20.5%).

For children with SEN, another set of eight key functions was identified (see Figure 1). The most prominent among these were Educational Guidance (21%) and Rehabilitation Support (18.7%). For social supporters, eight key functions were also identified (see Figure 1), with the most frequently mentioned being Itinerant Guidance (21.2%) and Professional

Training (19.1%). These findings highlight the diverse responsibilities of resource teachers across different target groups they work with, emphasising their critical role in administrative tasks related to the resource room, direct student support, and professional development for educators and caregivers. Table 3 outlined the summary of their critical roles derived from the textual analysis.

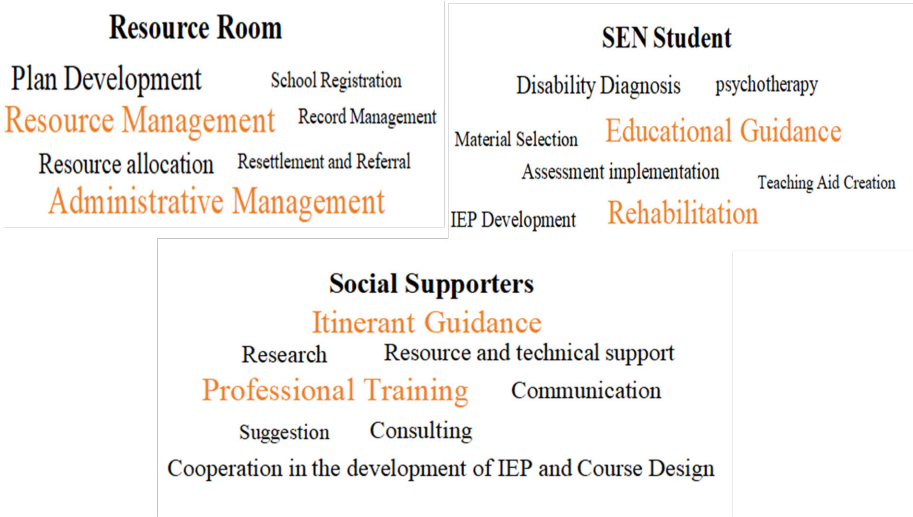


Figure 1. Roles of resource teachers in policy texts

Table 3. Summary of roles and functions

Target groups they serve	Themes	Role	Functions
SEN student	Disability diagnosis	Assessment specialist	Identification, classification assesses students' learning progress
	Assessment implementation		
	Material selection	Curriculum coordinator	Design or develop curricula and teaching aids
	Teaching aid creation		
	IEP development	Educational supporter	Tutoring
	Educational guidance		
	Rehabilitation		
	Psychotherapy		

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Target groups they serve	Themes	Role	Functions
Social supporters (colleagues, parents, social workers)	Itinerant guidance	Itinerant instructor	Educational guidance
	Resource and technical support		
	Cooperation in the development of IEPs and course design		
	Research	Professional development facilitator	Research
	Professional training		Training
	Consulting	Counsellors	Consulting
	Communication		Communication
Resource room	Suggestion		Suggestion
	Plan development	Manager	Organisation and management
	Record management		
	Administrative management		
	School registration		
	Resource allocation		
	Resource management		
	Registration and documentation		
	Resettlement and referral		

Differences in the Roles of Resource Teachers Across Regions in China

From national central documents to local documents, there are also subtle differences in the roles of resource teachers across different regions in China, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Different roles of resource teachers by location

Location	Assessment specialist	Curriculum coordinator	Educational supporter	Itinerant instructor	Professional development facilitator	Counsellors	Manager
Central							
Central government	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
More developed districts							
Beijing		/	/			/	/
Shanghai		/	/			/	/
Guangdong		/	/	/		/	/
Midwest district							
Henan	/	/	/	/	/		/
Sichuan	/	/	/	/	/		/
Shanxi	/	/	/	/	/		/

Note: Code text extracts of the policy text are in Appendix A.

Table 4 highlights significant regional differences in the roles of resource teachers. In central government policy, resource teachers have a more integrated role, combining both specialised instruction for children with special needs and managerial responsibilities, making their roles more comprehensive. In comparison, in more developed districts, resource teachers have a more specialised and practical focus, primarily responsible for teaching children with special needs, providing educational resources for both children and parents, and requiring advanced expertise in special education. Unlike in central policy, tasks related to itinerant guidance, child assessment and rehabilitation are handled by separate teachers. For example, Shanghai has introduced detailed policies, such as the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission Document on Several Opinions on Strengthening the Management of Working with Classes (2006) and Strengthening the Construction of Resource Teachers for Working with Classes (2019), which clearly define the roles and entry standards for resource teachers.

In contrast, the Midwest districts strictly follow central government policies without region-specific adaptations. Resource teachers in these areas have more diverse and loosely defined responsibilities, often handling a mix of instructional, administrative and support roles. However, the classification of duties remains unclear, and there is a lack of formal supervision and appraisal mechanisms, leading to inconsistencies in role expectations and performance evaluation. These differences highlight the need for localised policy adjustments to ensure resource teachers across all regions receive clear guidelines and appropriate support based on their specific roles and responsibilities.

Reasons for Different Roles of Resource Teachers

The role of resource teachers varies across different districts, with some requiring them to conduct assessments for students with SEN and manage student records, while others focus primarily on providing teaching support. These differences arise due to two main reasons:

1. The ongoing development of special education support systems across different regions in China.
2. A shortage of trained professionals in special education.

In some areas, resource teachers are expected to handle both teaching and administrative tasks, which can lead to role conflicts, especially when proper training is lacking.

First, one key reason for these differences is that special education support systems are still evolving, leading to regional variations in their structure and implementation. While national policies provide guidelines, how they are applied depends on the progress of inclusive education in each area (A. Liu, 2018; H. Liu, 2013). For example, cities like Shanghai and Beijing, which have well-developed inclusive education systems, use a “one case per lifetime” student management approach. This means resource teachers are involved in student assessments and responsible for maintaining records to support long-term education planning. However, in regions where inclusive education is still developing, there are not enough trained professionals to form dedicated assessment teams, which affects how resource teachers are assigned their responsibilities.

Second, there is still a shortage of qualified professionals in special education (Huang, 2022; H. Liu, 2013; Wang, 2021). Many teachers are transferred from general education to special education roles without proper training. Without a background in special education, they may struggle to manage resource rooms, conduct assessments and support students with SEN effectively. This lack of expertise often leads to confusion about job responsibilities and conflicts between teaching and administrative duties. Addressing these issues requires clearer role definitions for resource teachers and better training programs to equip them with the necessary skills.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to elucidate the roles of resource teachers through textual analyses of a total of 12 policies related to inclusive education in six regions of China. The study found that, firstly, there were seven basic roles of resource teachers, namely Assessment Specialist, Curriculum Coordinator, Educational Supporter, Itinerant Instructor, Professional Development Facilitator, Counsellor and Manager. Secondly, there were regional differences in policies regarding the roles of resource teachers. Resource teachers

in Beijing, Shanghai had more robust policies, more systematic management and clearer roles. Third, the special education resource support system has not yet been established, and the imbalance in teacher resource allocation and professional development level is the main reason for the different roles of resource teachers in each region.

One key finding in this study is that, despite regional variations in China, resource teachers generally fulfil seven core roles. These roles, identified through policy analysis and literature review (see Table 3), include Assessment Specialist, Curriculum Coordinator, Educational Supporter, Itinerant Instructor, Professional Development Facilitator, Counsellor and Manager. Each of these roles reflects the diverse and multifaceted responsibilities of resource teachers in supporting students with SEN. As an Assessment Specialist, a resource teacher is responsible for identifying learning difficulties, conducting assessments, and determining the necessary support for students. The role of a Curriculum Coordinator involves selecting appropriate educational materials, developing individualised teaching strategies and designing curriculum modifications to accommodate diverse learning needs. As an Educational Supporter, the resource teacher provides direct assistance to students through individualised instruction, intervention strategies and ongoing monitoring of academic progress.

The Itinerant Instructor role requires resource teachers to provide support beyond a single classroom, working across multiple schools or educational settings to guide teachers and ensure inclusive practices are implemented effectively. As a Professional Development Facilitator, resource teachers engage in training and mentoring their colleagues, promoting inclusive education practices and contributing to professional learning communities. The Counsellor role extends beyond academic support, encompassing emotional and social guidance, as resource teachers often collaborate with parents, therapists and school psychologists to address students' psychological well-being. Lastly, as a manager, resource teachers oversee the organisation and administration of resource rooms, maintain student records, coordinate support services and manage the allocation of special education resources within schools. These seven roles highlight the essential contributions of resource teachers in fostering inclusive education, ensuring that students with SEN receive comprehensive academic, social and emotional support tailored to their individual needs.

Comparing the roles of resource teachers across different regions and countries provides valuable insights for their professional development in China. A widely accepted definition of a resource teacher includes providing educational support for students with special needs and developing IEPs (Gu, 2020; Huang, 2022). However, policies vary by region, influencing how these roles are structured. For instance, in Hong Kong, resource teachers primarily serve as problem-solvers, offering advisory and support services to mainstream teachers, students and parents (Forlin, 2010). In contrast, in Europe and the United States, resource teachers are classified in greater detail, with roles such as itinerant mentors and structured entry standards for training and assessment. In some regions, resource teachers are referred to as Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo), resource advisory teachers or special education teachers (Dobson & Douglas, 2020). These differences

highlight how resource teachers' responsibilities are shaped by local educational objectives and service targets. Refining these roles not only enhances professional development but also encourages localised research that aligns with specific educational needs.

In China, regional differences in policy documents reflect variations in the refinement and specialisation of resource teachers' roles. Policies from more developed regions tend to offer clearer job descriptions and structured responsibilities, often incorporating other professionals, such as rehabilitation therapists, to assist resource teachers in their work (Ma & Lei, 2023; Li, 2024). In contrast, in central and western regions, the roles of resource teachers are less specialised, with broader and often conflicting responsibilities due to the limited availability of trained professionals. This lack of specialisation can lead to role conflicts and inconsistencies in service delivery. Addressing these regional differences requires balancing standardisation and flexibility in policy implementation. Policymakers should consider each region's economic development, cultural background and educational resource distribution when formulating special education policies. For example, central and western regions may require additional financial and policy support to bridge the gap with more developed areas. While allowing for regional variations, establishing baseline standards and guidelines is essential to maintaining the overall quality of special education nationwide while enabling localised adaptations.

Another significant finding is that resource teachers require a high level of professional expertise to effectively fulfil their roles. Their work demands specialised knowledge in special education, child rehabilitation and assessment (H. J. Liu, 2018; Qin & Liu, 2021). Beyond these technical skills, resource teachers must also be proficient in managing resource classrooms, designing individualised instructional strategies and assessing students with SEN. Additionally, professional ethics play a crucial role in their effectiveness, as dedication to SEN education and a strong sense of responsibility are key factors driving their specialisation. However, despite the recognised importance of professional development, resource teachers in China continue to face significant challenges (Xu, 2019). The absence of clearly defined roles has led to many resource centres relying on these teachers for a wide range of tasks, resulting in role overload and inefficiencies. Furthermore, the shortage of trained professionals has led to the reassignment of general education teachers to resource teacher positions, despite their lack of specialised training in special education (H. J. Liu, 2018). This mismatch between role expectations and actual expertise not only affects the quality of support provided to students with SEN but also adds to the difficulties resource teachers face in carrying out their responsibilities effectively. Addressing these challenges requires structured professional development programs, clear job descriptions, and targeted training initiatives to ensure resource teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to fulfil their roles and contribute meaningfully to inclusive education.

Last but not least, the development of resource teachers is heavily influenced by their environment, a concept supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. This theory explains how various layers of influence shape professional growth. The microsystem, the most immediate layer, includes resource teachers' perceptions of their roles and their

day-to-day interactions. The mesosystem consists of relationships between schools, administrators and parents, all of whom influence the effectiveness of resource teachers. The macrosystem, the broadest layer, encompasses cultural, ideological and social factors, such as government policies and societal expectations of inclusive education. Government-issued policy documents and analyses of policymakers' perspectives provide insight into how these larger forces shape the roles and development of resource teachers. Therefore, to enhance the professional development of resource teachers, improvements are needed at multiple levels. At the macro level, national policies should clearly classify resource teachers, define their roles and introduce professional standards tailored to different regions. This includes strengthening training, assessment and supervision mechanisms. At the meso level, schools, administrators and parents should increase their awareness of resource teachers' work and actively support their integration into the educational system. At the micro level, resource teachers should engage in continuous professional development, refine their expertise, and align their skills with the practical demands of their work. Strengthening professional training, clarifying job roles and fostering collaboration across these levels will help advance the effectiveness and recognition of resource teachers in China.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed 12 inclusive education policy documents from six regions in depth through textual analysis to clarify the seven major roles of resource teachers and reveal the geographical variability that exists in the definition of the roles of resource teachers. The study found that due to the imperfections in the special education resource support system and the uneven allocation of teacher resources, there were significant differences in the degree of localisation of the roles of resource teachers in different regions. Specifically, resource teachers in the central and western regions face higher requirements for professionalisation, their roles are more complex and diverse, and the classification of their roles and responsibilities is not clear enough, with a lack of effective supervision and assessment mechanisms.

In order to further promote the professional development of resource teachers, it is recommended that the government, on the basis of grasping the core role functions of resource teachers and taking into account the actual situation of the region, formulate professional standards for resource teachers that are in line with the local characteristics, strengthen supervision and guidance, and improve the entry conditions for resource teachers. At the same time, school administrators and parents of children with special needs need to enhance their understanding of and co-operation with the work of resource teachers, and provide them with the necessary support and assistance. In addition, resource teachers should also take the initiative to strengthen their professional learning and consolidate their professional foundation, to better adapt to the requirements of their roles, thereby enhancing the quality and effectiveness of inclusive education. Through the concerted efforts of various parties, the gap in the professional development of resource teachers

in different districts can be effectively narrowed, thus promoting equity and quality in education.

The interpretive scope of the current study is constrained by a limited sampling of areas and the possible obsolescence of the analysed policy documents. The credibility of the findings is contingent upon the singular analytical approach utilised and the potential biases inherent in document selection and the interpretation of policy texts. To improve the robustness of future research, it is advisable to expand the sample size and employ the most recent policy texts. Incorporating diverse empirical methods, examining the practical implementation of policies, and conducting comparative analyses with international counterparts may yield a more comprehensive understanding of resource teacher policies. These approaches would be essential in enhancing professional development strategies for resource teachers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Code Text Extracts of the Policy Documents

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
1	Ministry of Education	2016	Guidelines for the Construction of Special Education Resource Classrooms in General Schools	- Resource rooms shall be staffed with appropriate resource teachers to ensure that they can function properly. - Resource teachers are special education teachers working in resource rooms, undertaking tasks such as measuring, counselling, and teaching children with special educational needs (SEN), and playing an important role in the entire special education resource support system - Resource teachers must have a background in special education, rehabilitation or other related professions, Resource teachers are included in the management of special education teachers, and are given preferential treatment in performance appraisals, evaluations of merit and appraisal of positions (titles).
2	Ministry of Education	2017	The Second Special Education Enhancement Plan (2017-2020)	- Coordinated planning on a district and county basis, with a focus on selecting some regular schools to establish resource rooms, staffed by teachers specializing in the education of persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as “resource teachers”), and designated to enroll students with disabilities. - Other regular schools with five or more students with disabilities are also required to gradually set up special education resource rooms, staffed with full-time and part-time resource teachers.

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
3	Ministry of Education	2020	Guidance from the Ministry of Education on Enhancing Learning in regular classroom for Children and Youth with Disabilities in Compulsory Education	Outstanding teachers who have graduated in special education or who have passed the professional training and assessment for special education organised by the provincial education administrative departments, and who have rich experience in special education teaching and rehabilitation training, are selected to serve as special education resource teachers and itinerant instructors.
4	Beijing Education Commission	2005	Basic Requirements for the Construction and Management of Resource rooms in Beijing for Learning in Regular Classroom	1. To assess students referred by the regular classroom teacher. 2. To draw up an individualised education plan in collaboration with the regular classroom teacher based on the assessment results within two weeks of the student's admission to the classroom 3. Select appropriate teaching materials and create practical teaching aids according to students' individual differences and needs. 4. Provide individualised instruction according to the needs of students. 5. Strengthening close liaison with the teachers of the original class and the students' parents and providing them with the necessary advisory services and follow-up counselling. Resource teachers who can do so may also conduct itinerant guidance services to provide counseling and guidance to LRC teachers in their own districts

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
5	Beijing Education Commission	2008	Beijing Municipal Education Commission Notice on the Establishment of a Support and Guarantee System for Learning in Regular Classroom in Beijing	Taking schools with a large number of LRC students as units, they will continue to establish and improve more resource rooms that meet the standards and will be well equipped with teachers who have certain specialised knowledge to serve as full-time or part-time resource teachers. Schools should make good use of the resource rooms, giving full play to their role in providing targeted education and rehabilitation for LRC students, providing support for school teachers in learning special education theories and teaching methods, and educating other normal students in the school in understanding, caring for and helping students with disabilities, as well as effectively radiating their role to neighboring LRC schools.
6	Beijing Education Commission	2013	Opinions of the Beijing Municipal Education Commission on Further Enhancing the Work of Learning in Regular Classroom	1. Provide technical support on special education for schools accepting LRC students and make comments and suggestions on the placement of LRC students, curriculum arrangement, education and teaching management, evaluation contents and methods, and allocation of education resources. 2. Provide technical guidance on the formulation and implementation of individualised education plans, rehabilitation training education and teaching. 3. Provide rehabilitation training to LRC students with rehabilitation training needs, etc.

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
7	Beijing Education Commission	2013	Measures for the Management of Learning in Regular Classroom for Children and Youth with Disabilities in Beijing	There should be at least one full-time resource teacher in the resource room, with an appropriate increase in accordance with the number of LRC students in the school. The workload of the part-time resource teacher in the resource room should not be less than two-thirds of his/her total workload. Establishing itinerant instructors and specifying their main responsibilities: 1. Provide technical support on special education to schools receiving LRC students, and give advice and suggestions on the placement of LRC students, curriculum arrangement, education and teaching management, evaluation contents and methods, and allocation of education resources. 2. To provide technical guidance on the formulation and implementation of individualised education plans, rehabilitation training, education and teaching. 3. Providing rehabilitation training to LRC students with rehabilitation training needs, etc.
8	Shanghai Education Commission	2006	Opinions of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission on Further Enhancing the Work of Learning in Regular Classroom	Schools with more than 10 LRC students should set up a specialised resource room with a full-time resource teacher to provide students with a rich and lively supportive environment that suits their developmental needs, so as to promote the healthy growth of students.
9	Guangdong Education Department	2012	Implementation Measures for the Construction and Management of Resource Rooms for Children with Special Educational Needs in Guangdong Province (for Trial Implementation)	1. Resource teachers must have good educational qualities, be relatively stable and have a certain degree of organisational and coordinating skills, management skills, teaching and research skills, professional guidance skills and the ability to use and maintain professional equipment (they must receive a series of relevant professional training). 2. It is appropriate for the resource teacher to be responsible for 10 to 12 hours of tutoring per week, with the rest of the time being spent on managing the resource room and providing counseling and guidance services to LRC teachers and parents.

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
10	Henan Education Department	2015	Basic Requirements for the Construction and Management of Resource Rooms in Henan Province	1. Be responsible for the assessment of students referred by the regular classroom teacher. 2. To draw up an individualised education plan in collaboration with the regular classroom teacher on the basis of the assessment results within two weeks of the student's admission to the class. 3. Selection of appropriate teaching materials and production of practical teaching aids according to the individual differences and needs of the students. 4. To provide individualised counselling according to the needs of students. 5. Strengthening close contact with teachers of the original class and parents of students, providing them with necessary counselling services and follow-up counselling. Resource teachers who are able to do so may also conduct itinerant guidance services to provide counseling and guidance to LRC teachers in their districts.
11	Sichuan Education Department	2018	Sichuan Provincial Department of Education on Further Improving Notice on the Construction of Resource Rooms for Special Education	The work undertaken by resource teachers in the management of resource rooms, counselling and guidance services for LRC teachers and parents should be counted as part of their workload and they should be given a preference in performance appraisal, merit assessment and job (title) evaluation.
12	Shaanxi Education Department	2022	Further Enhancing the Construction of Special Education Resource Classrooms in General Schools	1. To focus on the development of special education counselling, testing, assessment and archiving activities. 2. To conduct subject knowledge, life counselling and social adaptation training, and basic rehabilitation training. 3. To provide a supportive educational environment and conditions. 4. Carry out functional tasks such as training for general teachers, parents of students and relevant community workers.

Appendix B

Code Text Extracts of the Policy Documents (Chinese Transfer)

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
1	教育部	2016	关于加强残疾儿童少年义务教育阶段随班就读工作的指导意见	资源室应配备适当的资源教师，以确保资源室能够正常运作。资源教师是在资源室工作的特殊教育教师，承担着对有特殊教育需要（SEN）的儿童进行测量、辅导和教学等任务，在整个特殊教育资源支持系统中发挥着重要作用。资源教师必须具有特殊教育、康复或其他相关专业背景，资源教师纳入特殊教育教师管理，在绩效考核、评优评先、职务（职称）评聘等方面给予倾斜。
2	教育部	2017	第二期特殊教育提升计划（2017-2020年）	优先采用普通学校随班就读的方式，就近安排适龄残疾儿童少年接受义务教育。以区县为单位统筹规划，重点选择部分普通学校建立资源教室，配备专门从事残疾人教育的教师（以下简称“资源教师”），指定其招收残疾学生。其他招收残疾学生5人以上的普通学校也要逐步建立特殊教育资源教室。依托乡镇中心学校，加强对农村随班就读工作的指导。有条件的儿童福利机构继续办好特教班或特殊教育学校。
3	教育部	2020	关于加强残疾儿童少年义务教育阶段随班就读工作的指导意见	配齐师资力量。各地各校要选派具有一定特殊教育素养、更加富有仁爱之心和责任心的优秀教师，担任残疾学生随班就读班级班主任和任课教师；选派特殊教育专业毕业或经省级教育行政部门组织的特殊教育专业培训并考核合格、具有较丰富特殊教育教学和康复训练经验的优秀教师，担任特殊教育资源教师和巡回指导教师。要加大教师的配备力度，并保持教师队伍相对稳定，满足随班就读教育教学工作基本需要。鼓励各地通过政府购买服务，探索引入社工、康复师等机制，承担随班就读残疾学生照护以及康复训练、辅助教学等工作

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
4	北京市教育委员会	2005	北京市随班就读资源教室建设与管理的基本要求(试行)	1. 负责对普通班级教师转介来的学生进行相关的评量。 2. 在学生入班两周内, 根据学生的评量结果, 会同普通班级教师共同拟订实施个别化教育计划。 3. 根据学生的个别差异和需要, 选编适当的教学材料和制作实用的教具; 4. 根据学生的需要, 进行个别辅导 5. 加强与原班教师和学生家长之间的密切联系, 为他们提供必要的咨询服务及追踪辅导。有能力的资源教师还可以开展巡回指导服务, 为本区的随班就读教师提供咨询和指导
5	北京市教育委员会	2008	关于在全市各区县开展建立随班就读工作支持保障体系工作的通知	市、区县教委共同投入, 以随班就读学生较多的学校为单位, 继续建立和完善更多符合标准的资源教室, 并配备好具备一定专业知识的教师担任专职或兼职资源教师。各学校要利用好资源教室, 充分发挥资源教室对随班就读学生进行有针对性教育和康复, 对学校教师学习特殊教育理论与教学方法提供支持, 对学校其他正常学生进行理解、关心、帮助残疾学生的教育等作用, 并将其作用有效地辐射到周边随班就读学校。区县教委设专人负责随班就读工作。以区县特殊教育中心为依托, 配备专兼职人员, 为随班就读学校教师提供咨询、培训和指导
6	北京市教育委员会	2013	北京市残疾人联合会关于进一步加强随班就读工作的意见	1. 在接收5名及以上随班就读学生的学校建立资源教室, 或建立区域资源中心。安排专职或兼职资源教师, 配备适当的教具、学具、康复训练设备、器材和图书资料等, 为随班就读学生得到针对性辅导和训练创设必要条件。建立资源教室的长效服务机制, 保障资源教室的功能发挥。资源教师、巡回指导教师应当具有特殊教育专业相关背景或接受过特殊教育及相关专业知识和技能培训, 有丰富的特殊教育教学经验或康复训练实践经验。建立区县承担随班就读工作教师的岗位补助制度, 资源教师和巡回指导教师享有特教教师特殊岗位补助津贴。(一)为接收随班就读学生的学校提供特殊教育技术支持, 对随班就读学生安置、课程安排、教育教学管理、评价内容与方式、教育资源配置等工作提出意见与建议;(二)对个别化教育计划的制定与实施、康复训练、教育教学等工作进行技术指导;(三)对有康复训练需要的随班就读学生进行康复训练等

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
7	北京市教育委员会	2013	北京市残疾儿童少年随班就读工作管理办法	资源教室至少要设专职资源教师1名,并根据学校随班就读学生的数量适当增加。兼职资源教师在资源教室的工作量不应低于其总工作总量的三分之二。设立巡回指导教师,明确其主要职责: 1. 为接收资源教室学生的学校提供特殊教育技术支持,对资源教室学生的安置、课程安排、教育教学管理、评价内容与方法、教育资源配置等提出意见和建议; 2. 对个别化教育计划的制定和实施、康复训练、教育教学等提供技术指导; 3. 为有康复训练需求的特殊需要学生提供康复训练等
8	上海市教育委员会	2006	关于加强随班就读工作管理若干意见	1. 为普通学校教师提供指导与服务。配合普通学校教师分析随班就读对象的发展情况,参与制订个别化教育方案及对随班就读学生的评估。与随班就读教师共同研究并解决教育教学、康复训练中的困难与问题。 2. 为随班就读学生和家长提供指导与服务。对有特殊康复训练需要的随班就读学生进行康复训练。为家长提供教育咨询,指导家长采用正确的方法对学生进行康复训练。 3. 为普通学校开展随班就读工作提供服务。了解普通学校开展随班就读工作的情况,对随班就读学生的确定、安置、教育资源的配置和利用等工作提供咨询服务。 4. 承担随班就读学生的学籍管理工作。掌握区域内随班就读对象的情况,参与随班就读对象的审核,负责随班就读学生个人档案、学籍管理工作,及时更新有关信息。 5. 开展随班就读工作研究。参与区域内随班就读教育教学、管理工作研究,组织力量开展教研与科研。 6. 承担本地区随班就读教师、学生家长关于特教知识与技能培训的组织工作

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
9	广东省教育厅	2012	广东省特殊儿童少年随班就读资源教师建设与管理实施办法（试行）	随班就读资源教室的人员配备： 1. 每个随班就读资源教室要配置1-2名专职资源教师，编制依据粤机编办〔2008〕109号文在随班就读教师中统筹解决，关系挂靠在各地随班就读指导中心或委托各地特殊教育学校代管，享受特殊教育教师专项补贴。 2. 资源教师负责场室的使用安排与管理、指导随班就读教师在教学中落实个别化教学方案、提供各种专业支持与咨询服务、组织教研活动及家长沟通等等。 3. 资源教师一定要具有良好的教育素养，相对稳定，并具有一定的组织协调能力、管理能力、教研能力、专业指导技巧、专业设备的使用和保养能力（必须接受一系列相关的专业培训）。 4. 资源教师每周负责的辅导课以10-12课时较为适宜，其它时间主要用于资源教室的管理、为随班就读教师和家长提供咨询与指导服务。 5. 学校可安排数名校内的青年志愿者协助做好个别化的辅导。
10	河南省教育厅	2015	河南省随班就读资源教室建设与管理基本要求	资源教师： 1.每所学校（幼儿园）应根据残疾儿童少年在校数量设置 1—3名资源教师； 2.资源教师应持有《教师资格证书》； 3.资源教师应经过一定学时的专业培训，取得上岗证书，或有过一年以上资源教室工作经历。 资源教师的职责和权利： 1. 负责对普通班级教师转介来的学生进行相关的评量； 2. 在学生入班两周内，根据学生的评量结果，会同普通班级教师共同拟订实施个别化教育计划； 3. 根据学生的个别差异和需要，选编适当的教学材料和制作实用的教具； 4. 根据学生的需要，进行个别辅导； 5. 加强与原班教师和学生家长之间的密切联系，为他们提供必要的咨询服务及追踪辅导。有能力的资源教师还可以开展巡回指导服务，为本区的随班就读教师提供咨询和指导

No.	Department	Year	Name of policy	Policy content
11	四川省教育厅	2018	关于进一步加强普通学校特殊教育资源教室建设的通知	普通学校应将资源教室纳入学校统一管理，配备好专兼职资源教师，在开放时间、经费投入、日常管理以及职能职责等方面建立完善的管理制度，保障资源教室正常发挥作用。资源教师承担的资源教室管理、随班就读教师和家长咨询和指导服务等工作，应计入其工作量，并在绩效考核、评优评先和职务（职称）评聘中给予倾斜。区域内特殊教育学校或特殊教育资源中心应加强对资源教室的业务指导和评估，对区域内资源教室的运行及成效进行考核评价，并将结果上报主管教育行政部门，充分发挥特殊教育资源中心对普通学校残疾学生随班就读工作的指导服务、辐射带动作用
12	陕西省教育厅	2022	进一步加强普通学校特殊教育资源教室建设的通知	进一步提升资源教师专业水平。要严把资源教师入口关，给资源教室配备的专（兼）职资源教师，原则上须具备特殊教育、康复或其他相关专业背景。要加强资源教师培训，省级将资源教师纳入特殊教育相关培训范围，举办资源教师示范性培训。市、县要组织开展资源教师全员培训。各相关学校要组织资源教师积极参加精品课程创建、开展教育科学研究，引导推动资源教师不断探索特殊教育方法、解决实际遇到的特殊教育问题、努力提高残疾学生教育质量。 进一步发挥资源教室作用。要围绕开展特殊教育咨询、测查、评估、建档等活动；进行学科知识、生活辅导和社会适应性训练、基本康复训练；提供支持性教育环境和条件；开展普通教师、学生家长和有关社区工作人员的培训等职能任务，制定详细的工作方案和计划，积极开展相关活动，建立健全工作档案和相关登记，切实发挥出资源教室对随班就读工作的支撑作用