

Inclusion of Chinese Children in Norwegian Kindergartens

*A study of Chinese parents' opinions on
their children's inclusion
in Norwegian kindergartens*

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Abstract

This research study attempts to look into Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction. Parents play a significant role in child development, especially in the early years. To be able to understand how Chinese parents perceive inclusion of their children in Norwegian kindergartens will help us gain insight into an important factor for the occurrence of inclusion at the early stage of a person's life in a foreign society - parental influence. The need of this study resonates with globalization and the growing trend of inclusion and inclusive education on a global scale. With migration and immigration taking place at a drastic speed, inclusion of more diverse individuals and their individual differences has become an unavoidable social issue for a growing multicultural society, like Norway, to take into account. To include immigrants in the mainstream society shall start with the inclusion of their young children in the mainstream kindergarten. In this study, Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens will be under investigation.

A qualitative interview study was carried out to solve the research problem. Relevant literature review and theoretical framework will be presented, in relation to inclusion in the early years, social interaction and child development, the importance of adult support in child development, the attitude theory, as well as the inclusive Norwegian kindergarten system. Findings of the study reveal the inclusive nature of the Norwegian kindergarten system and its connection with Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction. The Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of the Kindergarten will be referred to frequently.

The targeted audience of this study includes Chinese parents of kindergarteners in Norway, policy makers and other professionals in the areas of early years education, child development and inclusion. With an understanding of Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, Norwegian kindergartens can reflect on their current policies and practice toward foreign children and families. This, undoubtedly, will contribute to the development of a growing multicultural society like Norway, with consideration of perspectives given by a small immigrant minority.

Key words: inclusion, social interaction, Norwegian kindergartens

Foreword

With my previous work experience and current academic pursuit in the field of special and inclusive education, under the inspiration of an interesting conversation with a Chinese mother in Norway, a big amount of curiosity was generated inside me over parental support for inclusion of their children in a foreign country. As how we think is inclined to impact what we do. I decide to concentrate on parents' opinions, to discover what, first and foremost, influences inclusion at a person's early stage of life within a family and how that influence is.

Upon the completion of this Master's dissertation, I would like to firstly dedicate it to my beloved parents, extended family members, friends and former colleagues. Without their love, support and encouragement, I would not have been able to make it to Europe to pursue this study. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Helen McCabe, Mr. Derek Pinchbeck and Mr. William Weydig for their generous academic and professional support while I was applying for this meaningful program.

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1 Introduction

This research study attempts to explore Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction as one key aspect. Parents play a significant role in child development, especially in the early years. To be able to understand how Chinese parents perceive inclusion of their children in Norwegian kindergartens will help us to gain insight into an important factor for the occurrence of inclusion at the early stage of a person's life in a foreign society - parental influence. This research interest is closely related to the author's work experience, pertinent theories on social interaction, child development and the importance of adult support in child development, as well as to the parent-kindergarten collaborative mechanism which is established in the inclusive Norwegian kindergarten system. A qualitative interview study was carried out for the exploration of Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction. Certain literature review and theoretical framework will be presented, in relation to inclusion in the early years, social interaction and child development, the importance of adult support in child development, the attitude theory, along with the Norwegian kindergarten system which strengthens inclusion and social interaction in the early years. The procedure of designing and carrying out this interview study will be elaborated on in the Research Methodology chapter. Following that, findings of the study will be displayed, in correspondence with the research problem and research questions. In the end, discussions will be made on basis of the research findings, revealing value of this study on the broad topic of inclusion in kindergarten and the author's critical reflection on the entire research process.

1.1 Significance of the study

The need of this study resides in the nature of the global development nowadays. With migration and immigration taking place at a drastic speed, inclusion of more diverse individuals and their individual differences has become an unavoidable social issue for a growing multicultural society, like Norway, to take into account. Norwegian kindergartens promote a home-kindergarten collaborative mechanism for providing a safe, caring, free and

stimulating environment to children from various backgrounds with an inclusive ethos. Looking into some children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction through their Chinese parents' eyes has its unique meaning by shedding light on the broad topic of inclusion in kindergarten. To start inclusion in the early years has been argued as an ideal approach not only in the sense of laying a critical and early foundation for inclusion, but also in the sense of improving the quality of child development via encompassing and promoting differences. At the same time, Vygotsky's cognitive theory has endowed social interaction with great value as preceding cognitive development and language development. In addition, both he and Piaget have attached great significance to the positive role adults play in child development. Chinese parents in Norway can certainly provide a distinctive perspective on the topic of inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens, in comparison with theoretical conclusions and educational professionals' opinions. There have been plenty of research articles probing into either inclusion or social interaction as a stand-alone topic in child development and in the kindergarten context. Among them, there is a tendency toward investigation into teachers and parents' perceptions of inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream kindergartens. This can be exemplified by the work done by Cheng (1997), Kemp and Carter (2005), Gena (2006), Cheuk and Hatch(2007), Gu (2009) and Siewe (2012). However, so far, there seems to be little direct research conducted yet in link with parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in kindergarten, with a specific focus on social interaction, in a general sense. Moreover, the author intends to accentuate the inclusive side of her study within the entire Special and Inclusive Master's course in this research study, with a focus on inclusion in the early years. Considering the above reasons, this study has its irreplaceable value in the field of inclusion and inclusive education.

1.2 Experience in the field

Before working with students with SEN, the author was a Children's Instructor at an early childhood education center in China, which serves infants from newborns to five-year-olds. This center addresses children's developmental milestones and the impact of various adult-child relationships on child development. Notably, parents or other primary caregivers need to

join their children in class with full participation. Thanks to this work experience, the author grasped a key concept in early childhood development, which is constructive and prompt adult support for intellectual and social stimulation in accordance with the child's developmental stage. Specifically, she gained awareness of the importance of development of social interaction in the early years, with the help of adult stimulation.

Later on, the author was offered an opportunity to work with students with SEN at a K-12 international school in China. This experience enabled her to understand the impact of developmental milestones in the early years on social development on the later stage of a person's life. The three students she worked closely with appeared to have difficulties with social interaction. Among them, the oldest was a 12-year-old Chinese girl with autism who exhibited the least social interaction, especially with peers. This social difficulty partially resulted from their SEN and largely affected all three of them to socialize with their peers and teachers in school. This inevitably led to a considerable amount of exclusion, both academically and socially. Through communication with my colleagues who had worked with those students before, the author found out there had been a large lack of attention, care and most importantly, of positive and consistent stimulation for social interaction for the three students, both in school and at home, with the oldest lacking the most since kindergarten. After realizing that, at the start of her two-year work with the oldest, the author collaborated with her department and other classroom teachers to revise the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for the student, with a goal of providing maximum opportunities for the development of her social interaction both within the class and in the bigger school community. At the end of the author's two-year work with her, the student did progress at her own level, both academically and socially, but the progress had been curbed inevitably by the inconsistency between school and home in following the IEP through together. Neither did the parents provide opportunities for the student's socialization with classmates at school parties, nor they taught her how to interact with her sibling. Because the social support which began to be more abundant at school did not seem to emerge at home, the student's progress in her social development remained unstable. Despite the fact that the author strived to persuade the parents to engage more in their child's social development, the parents insisted that what their child receives in school should be more important than what can be given at home. They added that as long as the child is happy in school, they should have nothing else to expect or worry about. Evidently, those opinions reflect and correspond with their limited parental

involvement in the child's social development, which, at least, partially causes her social exclusion to prevail. Witnessing this pair of parents' negligence of the importance of encouraging and developing social interaction between their daughter with SEN and her peers drives me to inquire about the parental role in a child's social development, with a focus on social interaction.

Since starting this precious and meaningful course in Special and Inclusive Education in Europe, I have been acquiring knowledge of the policies and practice in Europe and beyond, on the topic of special and inclusive education. With my previous working experience with typically-developing infants and later, school children with SEN, I have been endeavoring to shift my study focus toward inclusion in the early years in a general sense. I would like to trace the whole issue related to special and inclusive education all the way back to the possibly earliest start of formal education. Kindergarten, generally speaking, falls into that consideration. Furthermore, kindergartens in Norway admit infants as young as newborns and hence, fit my study focus the best.

At the beginning of the author's study at University of Oslo, before carrying out this research study, she had an interesting conversation with a Chinese mother about Norwegian kindergartens. Her son attended a Norwegian kindergarten at Age Three. At the beginning, he told her he did not understand what the teacher was saying in kindergarten. The mother did not respond much, as she considered her son as too young to need much social interaction with peers and teachers in kindergarten. She regards play as the sole activity young children would and should do, with or without social interaction with peers and teachers. In addition, she believes over time language would not be a problem, as her son was basically immersed in a Norwegian-only environment in the kindergarten and that language development takes time and a natural development process. The mother also gave an intriguing account of the differences she has recognized between Chinese kindergartens and their Norwegian counterparts. Among the differences, social skills stood out. Besides, she mentioned that in Norway, parents shoulder the responsibility, with support from the kindergarten, to help their children transit from home to kindergarten. Considering her previous work experience with Chinese parents, the author found this conversation aroused her curiosity over Chinese parents' efforts on assisting their children with inclusion in the Norwegian society, given that the Norwegian kindergarten system sounds like being in favor of nurturing social skills in

children via collaboration with parents. In order to dive deeper into the issue, specifically, the author is curious about Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction.

On the official website of Norwegian Embassy in China, it indicates there are approximately 5,000 Chinese living in Norway, accounting for a small part of this Nordic country's immigrant population. Despite the fact that this study is trying to focus on Chinese parents, a small group in the entire Norwegian population, the research interest aligns well with the Norwegian kindergarten system.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study results from the author's curiosity over parental support for inclusion of their children in a foreign country. As how we think is apt to impact what we do. She decides to concentrate on parents' opinions, to discover what, first and foremost, influences inclusion at a person's early stage of life within a family and how that influence is. Hopefully, the findings will be conducive to the promotion of inclusion in general. With an understanding of Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, Chinese parents in Norway can relate to each other and seek a better child-rearing approach for their children in Norway, while Norwegian kindergartens and relevant policy makers can reflect on their current attitudes, curriculum and code of conduct toward foreign children and families. This, undoubtedly, will contribute to the development of a growing multicultural society like Norway, with consideration of perspectives given by a small immigrant minority.

1.4 Research problem and questions

This research is intended to respond to the author's inquiry on **Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens**. Under the overarching theme of inclusion, there is a specific focus, which is social interaction. In order to explore Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction, a few research questions were designed accordingly. They refer to Chinese parents' general understandings of inclusion, their specific opinions on their children's

inclusion and social interaction in the Norwegian kindergarten, their perceptions on the connection between inclusion and social interaction and finally, how they encourage their children's inclusion and social interaction in the Norwegian kindergarten.

1.5 Chapter outline

The first chapter is a concise summary of this research study, including its content, purpose and value, the writer's personal background in the field of child development and inclusive education, as well as the research problem and research questions. The second chapter will present the theoretical background and literature review as the academic backdrop for this research study. Relevant theories and literature will be utilized to validate this study as reference. The third chapter will go through the whole process of the research design of this study by disclosing details of methodology and ethical considerations which are of paramount importance to research of any kind. The fourth chapter will reveal findings of this interview study, in line with the research problem and research questions. The fifth chapter will be a summary of all the findings, combined with concluding discussions. Finally, the last chapter will be a reflective evaluation of the whole research study and further, propose ideas for future research on the topic of inclusion in kindergarten.

2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Two Key Concepts

2.1.1 Inclusion

Miller and Katz (2002) define inclusion as ‘a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work.’ Roberson (2006) points out that despite the fact that inclusion often appears in company of diversity and that the two terms are often ‘used interchangeably,’ they shall be discerned from each other with their prominent distinctions.

In the *Index for Inclusion: developing play, learning and participation in early years and childcare*, inclusion in the early years is portrayed as follows:

‘Inclusion in early years and childcare is as much concerned with the participation of practitioners as with the involvement of children and young people. Participation implies playing, learning and working in collaboration with others... More deeply, it is about being recognised, accepted and valued for ourselves’ (Booth, Ainscow & Kingston 2006, p.3).

Booth et al. relate inclusion in the early years largely to the participation of practitioners and that of children embodied by playing, learning & working with others.

2.1.2 Social Interaction

Social interaction involves both people talking and acting with each other and different structures in society. It is the foundation of social relations. With regard to social interaction in the early years, ‘One of the characteristics of childhood is interaction through play... Children gain fundamental and relevant knowledge and insights through everyday events that occur in social interaction, play and structured activities’ (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2006, pp.14). Social interaction ignites learning and development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework on Inclusion

With regard to inclusion, this research study focuses on social interaction in kindergarten, by laying an emphasis on the earliest possible start of inclusion in a child's formal education.

2.2.1 The evolution of inclusion: from integration to inclusion

With special education's large expansion in the 20th century in the English educational system, which gradually paused during the last two decades (Thomas & Loxley 2001, p.22), Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009, p.74) assert that the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) stimulated the development of inclusion from the concept of integration. So far, there have been abundant varied interpretations of the notion inclusive education, with no one unified definition in place. UNESCO (1994) stresses the diversity of all learners' needs, participation increase and exclusion reduction are existent not only in learning, but also in cultures and communities. The UK government document, *Inclusive Schooling: Children with Special Educational Needs* provides statutory guidance on the practical operation of inclusion of children with SEN into mainstream schools (DfES 2001b). The *Index for Inclusion*, which is provided to all British schools for reference, views inclusion more as a process:

'In our view, inclusion is a set of never ending processes. It involves the specification of the direction of change. It is relevant to any school however inclusive or exclusive its current cultures, policies and practices. It requires schools to engage in a critical examination of what can be done to increase the learning and participation of the diversity of students within the school and its locality' (Booth et al. 2000, p.12, cited in Frederickson and Cline 2009, p. 71-72).

Inclusion evolved from integration. It is an on-going developing process.

2.2.2 Inclusion in the Early Years

The reason why inclusion in the early years (below Age Five, with the preschool age between three and five years old) is attached great importance to as a key factor in the area of inclusive education in this paper is because the development of early years, namely, early childhood development is consisted of paramount significance to the entire human development.

According to Bruce (2005), adulthood can be best prepared for on the basis that children have their needs met during childhood. What can be inferred is, education provided to this certain age group lays a critical foundation for the following years and the quality of the relevant education matters tremendously (Craft, M., cited in Bruce 2012, p. xii).

With regard to special and inclusive education, inclusion in the early years therefore plays an essential role, as Armstrong et al. (2010, p. 124) state [the development of] a truly inclusive system begins with the recognition of the importance of early childhood care. Wall (2006, p. 185-186) further explains that by including young children in the early years setting, they are likely to grow together with peers from their own community all the way up to higher educational institutions, which she believes helps generate positive social changes in terms of attitudes and values toward individual differences.

2.2 Theoretical Framework on Social Interaction

2.2.1 Social Interaction in the Early Years

In relation to the reason why social interaction is focused on in this research study, child development stands out as a significant relevance.

Social interaction has its indispensable place in child development. Vygotsky's social constructivism regards social interaction as preceding cognitive development and language development, which signifies the value of social interaction in early childhood development (McLeod, 2007). What is worth noting, Piaget's social theory, which has been largely neglected, elaborates on the meaning of children's social relations by pointing out 'adult-child and peer relations influence every aspect of development and that affective and personality development are intimately related to intellectual and moral development' (DeVries 1997, cited in Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002, p. 34). DeVries further explains about Piaget's proposal on how cognitive, affective and moral development can be promoted through collaborative social interaction between children and adults (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002, p. 34).

2.3 Theoretical Framework on Opinions

The meaning of probing into Chinese parents' opinions on their children's social interaction in kindergarten partially resides in the relation between attitude and behavior, psychologically. Since this research study is qualitative while attitude is more indicative of a quantitative study, it is more accurate to use its synonym 'opinion' instead. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which concerns the determinants of a specific behavior theoretically, attitude and social normative perceptions toward a certain behavior determines behavior intention, which in turn can best predict a behavior (Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 68). In this qualitative interview study, Chinese parents' opinions and the Norwegian kindergarten system correspond with attitude and social normative perceptions respectively in the TRA. Studying both of them is conducive to both the comprehension and prediction of their behavior, in terms of providing conscious parental support to the development of children's social interaction. Furthermore, it is manifest to witness parental support in fostering inclusion in the early years.

However, in order to study the construction of behavior, simply taking attitude and social normative into consideration is far from being objective enough, as TRA has been extended to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and later, together with TPB, to an Integrated Behavioral Model (IBM). Based on TRA, TPB has an additional element – perceived control over performance of the behavior. Aside from behavioral intention, knowledge and skill to conduct a certain behavior, a behavioral-performance-friendly environment (Triandis 1980, cited in Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 78), prominence of the behavior (Becker 1974, cited in Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 78), repetition of the behavior (Triandis 1980, cited in Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 78) and personal agency (Bandura 2006, cited in Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 79) which is composed of self-efficacy and perceived control are elements well-worth noting, in order to predict the occurrence of a certain behavior (Jaccard, Dodge & Dittus 2002, cited in Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 78). This is what the IBM entails for dissecting the construction of behavior. In addition, there are other variables which may impose an indirect impact on behavior, such as 'demographic, personality, attitudinal, and individual difference variables' (Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 81). Moreover, regarding the applicability of either the TRA, TPB or IBM, Fishbein (2000) disapproves of Airhihenbuwa and Obregon's (2000) derogation of the limited applicability of the above-mentioned three theories to other cultures, other than to the Western culture alone. According to him, they can be applied across cultures, in both developed and developing countries (Montano & Kasprzyk 2008: 81). All of this will be taken into account later in the analysis of the collected data in this research study.

Explicitly, interviewed Chinese mothers' personal background, their Chinese breeding in particular, will be discussed accordingly.

2.4 Theoretical Framework on Adult Influence on Children's Social Development

With regard to support for children's social interaction, two critical concepts of Vygotsky's, namely, the *more knowledgeable other* (MKO) and *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), verify the necessity of the interaction between a child and a more capable partner (teacher, peers, parents or a non-living aid). The support is provided between child's 'independent problem solving' and 'the level of their potential development' which is determined 'through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers' (Vygotsky, 1978, pp.86, cited in McLeod, 2010). MKO normally refers to the primary caregiver of a child, who can help the child abridge the distance between his/her current development stage and a higher stage within his/her ability, namely to reach the ZPD. MKO plays an important part in the improvement process.

Aside from cognitive theories, in Sullivan (1953) and Piaget's (1965) socialization theories exist two kinds of socialization in child development. One, being the traditional socialization theory, is that the child adopts agents' acquired knowledge of meaning as a recipient; the other, more being a collaborative model of socialization, is the child's self and others are 'equally agents and recipients' (Youniss 1982: 8). In the process of children's social development, children's relations with both peers and adults 'serve equally important but distinct functions' (Youniss 1982: 1): the former as 'a source of sensitivity, self-understanding, and interpersonal cooperation' while the latter a source of sensing 'order and authority.' Child-adult interaction seems to play an outward guiding role to the child, while peer interaction among children seems to be an inward mutual learning process.

These theories above clearly testify the significance of social interaction in the early years and most importantly, the adult support for it.

2.5 Literature Review on the Inclusive Norwegian Kindergarten System

2.5.1 Inclusion in the Norwegian Society

With its capital city Oslo known for its multiculturalism and the government's multicultural policies (Rogers 2000; Bergh & Bjørklund 2003; Vaagan & Enger 2004; Lien et. al, 2005), the Norwegian society is embracing increasing diversity in various aspects. Even the Norwegian Kindergarten Framework has given Norway such recognition as being 'a multicultural society' (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp.9). One of the aspects can be embodied in kindergartens, as they enrol a growing number of non-Norwegian children.

2.5.2 Norwegian kindergarten is an inclusive environment: the Norwegian Kindergarten Act & Framework Plan

According to the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan, the purpose, values and tasks of kindergartens emphasize children's participation and promote inclusion, while the content of Norwegian kindergartens stress care, play, learning, social competence, linguistic competence and cultural diversity.

2.5.2.1 The purpose: Basis for an all-round development & A home-kindergarten collaborative approach

As stipulated in the law, with the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and the Framework Plan (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2005 & 2006) provide guidelines on the content and tasks kindergartens shall abide by, Norwegian kindergartens have the following purpose to strive toward:

'The Kindergarten shall, in collaboration and close understanding with the home, safeguard the children's need for care and play, and promote learning and formation as a basis for an all-round development' (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp.9).

'The children shall ... have the right to participate in accordance with their age and abilities' (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp.15).

Clearly, care, play, learning and formation are the basic content of child development in Norwegian kindergartens. The term home refers to children's guardian. Most commonly, it refers to parents. Norwegian kindergartens endow parents with a shared responsibility for child development, as the Framework Plan *'emphasizes the importance of adults' attitudes, knowledge and ability to related to and understand children...'* (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp.5) This emphasis corresponds with Vygotsky and Piaget's theories on the importance of the adult role in child development.

2.5.2.2 The content: care, play, learning, social and linguistic competence, cultural diversity

The Norwegian kindergartens stress the social nature of children by saying *'Children are social players who themselves contribute to their own and other children's learning. Interaction with other people is crucial to children's development and learning'* (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp. 14). Evidently, social interaction has its indispensable place in child development.

'Kindergartens shall meet the children with trust and respect ... shall contribute to well-being and joy in play and learning, and shall be a challenging and safe place for community life and friendship. The Kindergarten shall promote democracy and equality and counteract all forms of discrimination' (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp. 13-14)

Trust, respect, well-being, play, learning, safety, friendship, equality are distinct concepts embodied in Norwegian kindergartens. In addition, social interaction, linguistic competence and cultural diversity are also reiterated in the two documents, in connection with the previous concepts: *'Learning shall take place in the daily interaction with other people and the surroundings, and must be closely interlinked with care, play and formation'* (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp.13). This shows the function of social interaction as prompting and linking the basis of child development.

'Mutual processes of interaction between children and adults in play and learning in the kindergartens, and being considerate of each other, are essential elements in the formation of children' (same as above).

Over here, child-adult interaction is highlighted as an important part of children's social interaction in kindergarten. Specifically, it is also pointed out that how kindergarten staff handle interaction with children influences children's learning experience: *'Learning will be affected by the quality of interaction between children and staff'* (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp. 29). This once again corresponds with Vygotsky and Piaget's theories on the adult influence on child development. *'... the actions and attitudes of staff in response to children's learning experiences are crucial'* (same as above).

Moreover, linguistic competence is another focus of the Norwegian kindergartens' content. *'Early childhood is the fundamental period for the development of language. Interaction through body language and play involving sounds is important to the way in which young children approach other people'* (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp. 30). As Vygotsky's social constructivism indicates, social interaction plays an important role for language development. For those children whose mother tongue is not Norwegian, the Norwegian kindergarten is very supportive. They *'must support them in their use of their mother tongue, whilst working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills'* (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp. 31). This language support which is mandated in the Framework Plan is bound to improve children's social interaction with each other and hence, help them to be better included.

In addition, in the content of kindergartens, it is stipulated that

'Kindergartens shall impart values and culture, provide room for children's own cultural creativity and help to ensure that all children experience joy and ability to cope in a social and cultural community. Kindergartens shall nurture children's curiosity, creativity and desire to learn and offer challenges based on the children's interests, knowledge and skills. Kindergartens shall ... contribute to even out social inequalities' (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2006, pp. 31).

Is it visible that cultural differences are promoted in Norwegian kindergartens. Besides, kindergartens shall develop children's curiosity and desire to learn.

With regard to staffing, kindergartens are required to have adequate pedagogical qualification to work with children (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2005, pp.7).

Clearly, the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and the Norwegian Kindergarten Framework Plan accentuate the important role of social interaction and a joint care-and-responsibility scheme between the kindergarten and home for children's development. Social interaction influences every aspect of child development; kindergartens strive to develop an inclusive setting for children of different backgrounds, while parents have a compulsory part to play in cooperation with the kindergarten to promote an inclusive, caring and stimulating environment for children's well-being and development.

2.6 Summary

The theoretical framework and the literature review in this study corresponds well with each other, in terms of stressing the importance of inclusion, social interaction in child development, as well as the importance of adult support in child development. Based on this inter-connected academic background, through investigation into Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norway with a focus on interaction, this study will have its value in the exploration of the influence of parental perception on children's inclusion in a certain cultural context, with an emphasis on social interaction.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Goal and Research Questions

3.1.1 Research Goal

This research study strives to gain an insight into Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction. A qualitative interview study was conducted to achieve this goal.

3.1.2 Research Questions

The research problem is Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens. This interview study targets social interaction as one specific aspect under the overarching theme of inclusion.

Hereunder are the research questions corresponding with the research problem:

1. How do Chinese parents understand inclusion?
2. What are Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens?
3. What are Chinese parents' opinions on their children's social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens?
4. What do Chinese parents think about the connection between social interaction and inclusion?
5. How do Chinese parents encourage their children's inclusion and social interaction in the Norwegian kindergarten?

3.2 Research Paradigm

The philosophical position of this research study, which underpins the nature of the entire research falls on interpretivism. According to Mukheji and Albon (2010, p. 23), this research paradigm ‘emphasises gaining a detailed insight into an issue as opposed to being concerned with being able to make generalisations about the world.’ The author attempted to look into Chinese parents’ opinions on their children’s inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction, which is obviously unlikely to be generalized across contexts. Therefore, interpretivism is an ideal philosophical basis for the study to reside on.

3.3 Qualitative Research Approach

Concerning the nature of the research questions which indicate the nature of the research methodology, as Creswell (2008, p.141) points out, there are some typical qualitative research question features, like ‘one central question and several sub-questions,’ question-initiating words like how or what, ‘exploratory verbs [like] explore or describe, ‘broad, general questions’, possible mentioning of the participants and the research site. The research problem highlights this study’s investigation focus on opinions, while the research questions are composed of ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions.

In addition, Mukheji and Albon (2010, pp.24) consider qualitative methodology and its relevant methods are primarily adopted by interpretivist research. Therefore, the selection of research paradigm and methodology ought to be coherent. Taking the research paradigm, research problem and research questions into account, this study would be deemed as adopting a qualitative research methodology, which is often characterized as small-scale and in-depth (Mukheji and Albon, 2010). This very character of the qualitative methodology resonates with the nature of the author’s intention of this study, as the individual parents’ opinions are designed to be delved into on their children’s inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction.

3.3.1 Interview

In order to carry out this qualitative study on parents' opinions which were verbalized by informants themselves via interview, an interview study was utilized as the research approach. As Bryman (2004, pp.319) contends, it is the interviewee's perspectives that a qualitative interview pays a great amount of attention to. In my study, it is the parents' opinions I am curious about. Accordingly, the research method is interview, which was semi-structured. A semi-structured interview is composed of an interview guide which comprises a list of questions or narrowed-down topics, as well as of a great amount of 'leeway' for the interviewee to decide how to respond (Bryman, 2004, pp.321). A semi-structured interview helped the study both align with the over-arching research problem and allow space for flexibility and spontaneity of a least controlled interview process. Each interview was designed and expected to last around one hour or one and a half hours.

Prior to conducting any interviews, an interview guide was drafted by the author, in accordance with the research problem and research questions. Upon final approval by the author's Supervisor after rounds of discussions and refinement, in order 'to eliminate any ambiguous, confusing or insensitive questions, to check the length of the time for the interview and to check that confidentiality and anonymity are maintainable' (Opie 2010, p.115). a pilot interview was conducted between the author and one of her friends, with an aim at testing the feasibility of carrying out an actual interview based on the interview guide. However, because the friend is a single male Norwegian university student while the informants participating in this study are all Chinese mothers, the friend did not seem to be able to identify much with Chinese mothers on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens by providing relevant answers to the research questions. Therefore, unfortunately, this pilot interview did not turn out to be helpful. At that moment, considering all the appointment dates had already been finalized for the actual interviews before the pilot study, there was not much possibility of finding a Chinese mother within a short period of time for a second pilot interview. Since the author would like to keep all of the contacts she has gained as my actual informants in the interview study, she was not able to revise my interview guide pursuant to the pilot study. As a result, naturally, the first interview served not only as the first actual interview but also as a pilot interview to refine the interview guide. What can be guaranteed is whatever change was made to the interview guide following the first interview, all the informants were asked the same questions for the sake of validity in research.

Once the interview guide was finalized, with the support of the Supervisor and the author's university department, she applied for research permission from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) with attachment of the interview guide and received their letter of approval soon afterwards. A copy of the letter is attached to this thesis as Appendix 2. Following NSD's consent, in order to gain informed approval from the informants, with the Supervisor's guidance, the author prepared informed consent letters for both the informants and her to sign together in person on the interview site. A copy of the information note is attached to this thesis as well as Appendix 3.

3.4 Sampling

3.4.1 Background of Sampling

The informants of the interview study are all Chinese mothers of kindergarteners in Norway, aged between two and four years old. The reason why this study focused on this particular nationality group and age range in Norway is because firstly, being a Chinese herself, the author is curious about Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norway whose kindergartens, in line with both the Kindergarten Act and the Kindergarten Framework Plan, emphasize creating a safe, caring and inclusive environment for all children with collaboration between kindergarten and home. As previously elaborated on, social interaction is of great significance in the early years and needs to be addressed in child development. Hence, this study has a specific focus on social interaction and uses it as an essential aspect under the broad theme of inclusion. Secondly, between Age Two and Four, with enhanced symbolic thinking skills, children engage in 'social pretend play' by taking social roles, like mother, father and child (Therrell, 2002). As Vygotsky's MKO and ZPD theories indicate previously, to provide timely and positive support for social interaction between kindergarteners between two and four years old has its irreplaceable significance.

3.4.2 Number of Informants and Sampling Method

Considering interview is the single research approach taken in this study, in order to enhance the validity of this research, five informants were designed as needed for detailed study. In order to glean this number of informants, a non-random, non-probability sampling technique was administered, which can be specified as the snowball sampling technique in this study's case (Mukheji and Albon 2010). The author is a member of a non-profit organization for Chinese professionals in Norway. In order to find relevant informants for the study, she contacted this organization and asked them to help me target potential informants. Fortunately, in the end, the author achieved two contacts through the organization, who are Informant 1 and 4. Later, Informant 4 recommended Informant 3 to her, while she met Informant 2 during a social activity arranged by the organization and Informant 5 during an academic seminar at her university in Norway. All of the five informants are Chinese mothers, who have shown kind interest in the research study and would like to participate in the interview.

3.4.3 General information on informants

Informant 1: Went to Norway in 1999 to study; holds a post-doctoral degree in medical biology; is a researcher in bio technology; married a Chinese and has two children.

Informant 2: Went to Norway in 2001 to study; is a part-time translator; married a Norwegian and has one child.

Informant 3: Went to Norway in 2007 to reunite with her husband and to work as a researcher; is now a full-time mother; married a Chinese and has two children.

Informant 4: Went to Norway in 1997 to study; holds a post-doctoral degree; is a researcher; married a Norwegian and has two children.

Informant 5: Went to Norway in 2004 to study; has a Ph.D; is doing research in language; married a Chinese and has two children. She is a devout Christian.

3.5 Data Collection

Audio-recording was utilized to help prevent the author from being distracted by solely concentrating on note-taking during the interview and hence, helped her pay close attention to what the interviewee will be saying (Bryman, 2004). GarageBand is a sound recording application compatible on Apple computers which can provide good sound quality. Holding a Apple laptop computer, I used this application to record interviews. Once finished, the recording needed to be manually saved and then was kept on the laptop for the study.

Interview conversations were transcribed after the interview. Afterwards, transcribed data was translated from Chinese to English, when necessary. Informant 1's speech was mostly in English, while the rest of the five informants' was mostly in Chinese. The transcribed and translated data was critically analysed with the help of the data analysis method, in line with the overarching research problem and specific research questions. Themes were utilized to identify, summarize and analyse the research results. These themes can be meaningful segments of text in informants' responses; these responses were grouped into identified similar categories, which can be named or numbered as themes (Bryman, 2004, pp.231). This contributed to solving the research problem and research questions. Memoing, which can be notes I took for myself while analyzing the transcribed and translated data is helpful for closer data analysis (Mukheji and Albon 2010).

3.5.1. Information on the Background of Data Collection

I conducted six interviews in total, with the fifth missing the original recording because of some unexpected technical issue. The informant suggested having the interview in a restaurant during her lunch break from work. Unexpectedly, there was no electric socket during the customer seating area for me to keep my laptop charged during the interview, while the restaurant happened to serve a big volume of customers, which created a lot of sound disturbance to the interview. At the end of the interview, my laptop ran out of battery and the recording I made on it was unfortunately lost. As the Informant was unwilling to repeat the interview with me afterwards and the communication between us to retrieve the information we had shared during the interview was not very smooth, this interview was nullified, leaving five interviews used for this study in the end.

Interview with Informant 1:

Time and place: 8th September, 2013, in an open park

Language: English was mostly spoken during the interview, combined with Chinese and Norwegian occasionally; both the interviewer and the informant are not native English speakers, which made the interview last almost two hours.

Interview with Informant 2:

Time and place: 9th September, 2013, at the informant's house

Language: Chinese was mostly spoken during the interview, combined with English and Norwegian occasionally.

Interview with Informant 3:

Time and place: 10th September, 2013, at an open cafe

Language: Chinese was mostly spoken during the interview, combined with English and Norwegian occasionally.

Interview with Informant 4:

Time and place: 11th September, 2013, at a university's lobby

Language: Chinese was mostly spoken during the interview, combined with English and Norwegian occasionally.

Interview with Informant 5:

Time and place: 6th October, 2013, inside a meeting room at a Chinese Christian church.

Language: Chinese was mostly spoken during the interview, combined with English and Norwegian occasionally.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Analysis method

The hermeneutic circle is a philosophical concept for interpretation. It is used in this research study to analyze the findings. Within the entire analytic process of this circle, the thematic method is utilized to link the findings with relevant theories, while the analytic method is

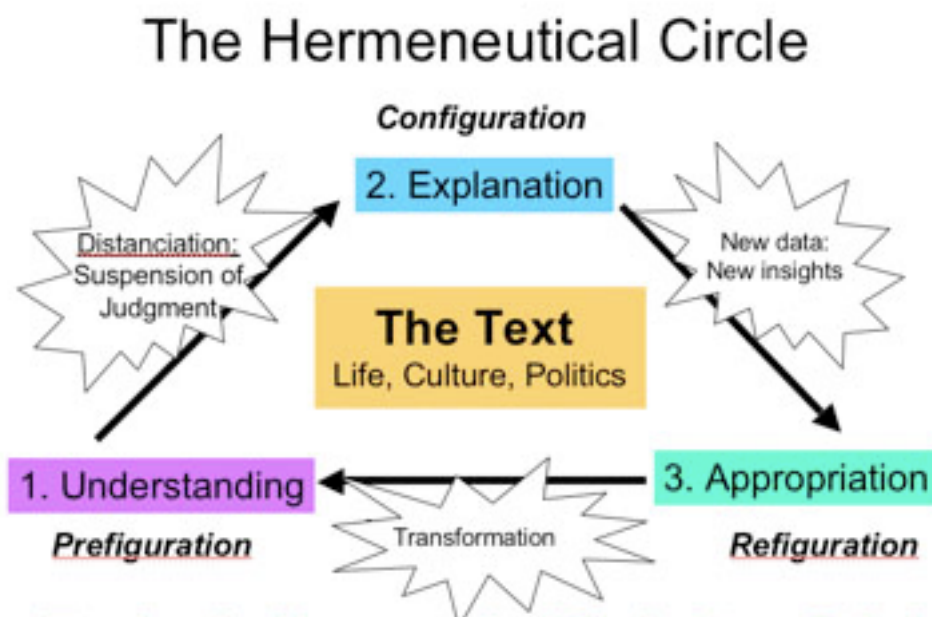
utilized to discover new ideas and concepts which have not seemed to be put forward in existing theories or research.

According to Grassie (2008),

'Hermeneutics is the philosophy of interpretation. Problems of interpretation are endemic in scriptural studies, translation, law, history, literature, and the social sciences... How one interprets sacred scripture, translates from a foreign language, applies case law, constructs history, and reads a work of literature can lead one in very different directions with some times contradictory results.'

The hermeneutical circle operates in three stages. The first is pre-judgement or prefiguration, which involves existing understanding; the second is configuration, which involves explanation and the third is re-figuration, which involves appropriation. The process can be illustrated as in Figure 1.

Figure 1.



(source: http://www.grassie.net/images/hermeneutic_circle.jpg)

3.6.2 Analysis process

As Kvale & Brinkmann (2009, pp.211) note, ‘hermeneutics does not involve any step-by-step method’. With my existing understanding of inclusion and social interaction, in combination with my previous work experience in inclusion, I designed the interview study, with an intention to look into Chinese parents’ opinions on their children’s inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction. Within the entire data analytic process of the Hermeneutical Circle, I made use of the thematic method to link the findings with relevant theories on inclusion in the early years, social interaction and child development, the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Kindergarten Framework, as well as with the attitude theory. Key concepts were extracted from the data and referred to existing theories or other frameworks. Concerning the new ideas and concepts which have not seemed to correspond with existing theories or other frameworks, the analytic method was utilized to cherish them as valuable findings of this study under critical examination.

3.7 Validity

I communicated with parents mostly in Chinese, despite the fact that the study was designed and will be presented in English. Therefore, the language barrier was inevitably existent in this study, which is likely to affect the authenticity of collected data (Bryman 2004). The data transcription was completed in a descriptive manner, the same way as how the informants voiced their opinions. It is unavoidable for me to apply some of my existing understanding on the matter of inclusion into the interpretation of the data.

3.8 Generalization

Based on the nature of qualitative study, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this study. Each informant possesses their own individual differences, which are worth noting.

3.9 Limitations

3.9.1 Design of the study

Without discreet designing, it turns out that all the informants in this study are Chinese mothers. Therefore, the research problem could have been more accurately stated as Chinese mothers' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens. That way, the dispute over the absence of Chinese fathers' opinions on this matter can be prevented, as fathers are also parents.

3.9.2 Pilot study

As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, the pilot study was not successful, as the person who volunteered to be interviewed is not able to relate to Chinese mothers on the subject of their opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens. His kind participation did not yield to the improvement of the interview guide. Due to the limited amount of informants I was able to gain prior to the actual interview, I was not willing to pick any one of my informants to do the pilot study with me but would rather keep all of them for the actual interview. After the unsuccessful pilot study, I went straight to the start of the actual interviews, without refining the interview questions. That affected the quality of my interview questions and as a consequence, affected the quality of my interviews. The first interview basically turned out to be both a pilot study and an actual interview. I made some changes to the interview questions during the interview. For the sake of validity, I kept all the changes consistent with the rest of the informants in the later interviews. Without a discreet design, the first interview lasted about two hours. That led to a time-consuming data transcription process afterwards, which in turn resulted in a slow work flow.

3.9.3 Preparation for and control of the interview

All the interview sites were decided by the informants for the consideration of their own convenience. However, neither an open park, a restaurant, nor an open café is likely to be an ideal place for interviews which require a private and quiet environment. Because of this, several interview recordings have too bad sound qualities to be heard distinctively for a smooth data transcription later. As a result, data transcription took a long time to be completed, which affected the entire work flow of the write-up of the thesis. Besides, since the recording software application is on the laptop, assuring the laptop is either fully charged or kept charged and that recorded data is properly stored shall be of top priority.

Disappointingly, because of the restricted nature of the sites, I was not able to predict and prevent technical problems well enough, although I did use one recording application on my mobile phone as a backup for my laptop in case of emergency. Still, the fifth interview was aborted, because my laptop crashed at the end of the interview without information stored, while my mobile phone surprisingly failed to work properly either to be able to capture the whole interview as an alternative.

3.10 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues shall be prioritized in research studies of any kind. Mukheji and Albon (2010, p. 33) states ‘a careful consideration of ethical issues is of central importance to any research project.’ In addition, they believe that children between newborns and eight-year olds in particular shall be paid considerable ethical attention to, due to their age and vulnerability, which is supported by Coady’s statement that ‘children are heavily represented among victims of research’ (Coady 2001, p.64, cited in Mukheji and Albon 2010, p. 36). As the age group of the Chinese children I targeted at in my research is between two and four years old, I am obliged to conduct an ethics-bound research by designing my study. Since the study is focused on Chinese parents’ opinions, while designing the interview guide, with the guidance of my Supervisor, I tried to avoid questions which tend to touch upon direct, personal and sensitive information on children and create those which would only entice parents to share their own perspectives on their children’s inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens on a general term, without revealing their children’s personal information. Of course, parents might feel uncomfortable with certain interview questions during the interview. As the informed consent letter indicates, parents have absolute freedom to avoid answering questions during the interview.

In addition, anonymity and confidentiality was promised in a written in the informed consent letter between the informants and me. During Data Analysis, real names and any description that are likely to put my informants and their children at risk of public exposure and recognition were meticulously altered.

4 Presentation of Results and Discussions

4.1 General information on Children of Informants

This part will provide some general information on children of all the informants in this study. Under the overarching guidance of the interview guide, information on both kindergarten and home situation will be presented, in relation to the research question. While sharing their opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens during the interview, it is rather comprehensible that the informants are apt to referring to their own children's stories to elaborate on their thoughts. This provides useful information for the study as to what is special about an individual child that is impacting his/her inclusion in the kindergarten. Key concepts were extracted from the informants' speech and highlighted for summarization. Those concepts are closely related to not only the research question but the research problem as well.

4.1.1 Child of Informant 1

Information on Child of Informant 1: The child is four years and three months old. He is Informant 1's second child. His parents are both Chinese. *At home:* Informant 1 and her husband try to speak Chinese at home with their children. The younger one uses both Chinese and Norwegian in a mixed way. After discussing with both the specialist in the community and the kindergarten leader, Informant 1 was advised to start teaching some Norwegian to him at home. He practices Norwegian with Informant 1 for several hours every day at home. Informant 1 shows uncertainty about speaking Chinese with her younger child at home causing his lack of sense of security in kindergarten, although believing language is an important factor. Instead, she contends the change of environment is more the reason for the difficulty in kindergarten at the beginning for the younger child. *In kindergarten:* he is placed in the group for Age Three to Six. The teacher-child ratio in his age group is one to six. Half of the children in his age group are non-Norwegian, but he is the only Chinese. As he entered the kindergarten at a relatively young age, which is one year and six months old, being a child who needs a lot of sense of security, he had a difficult time adjusting to a new environment without his mother's presence. It took a long time for him to build trust in kindergarten. For

almost four or five months after he entered kindergarten, he would cry for half day in kindergarten. **Home-Kindergarten collaboration:** Both the kindergarten and Informant 1 tried their best to help build the child's sense of security and reduce his crying in kindergarten. After Informant 1 spent almost one year in the kindergarten as a parent helper to accompany the child to help him adjust to the environment, he gradually stopped crying. Informant 1 does not consider the child's change of behavior as the direct result of her one-year in-kindergarten support for her child. Instead, being a neuro-biologist who has read different educational theories, she takes the child's own behavior and development more as the real reason. **Current situation:** Now the child is well established and social, willing to talk to everyone. He has started to enjoy kindergarten.

Comments on Child of Informant 1: According to Informant 1, this child needs a lot of sense of security. With the change of environments, his transition from home to kindergarten took a relatively long time to succeed. This can be an usual case. The reason for his relatively long transition might be related to language. He spoke only Chinese at home prior to entry to the Norwegian kindergarten. By the time when he entered the kindergarten, facing a Norwegian-only environment, he might have felt unsafe. Informant 1 is not very sure about the language barrier; instead, she would rather attribute her child's earlier difficulty with kindergarten to the change of environment. Concerning his inclusion in the kindergarten, Informant 1 does not think there is any need to worry about inclusion in the kindergarten, as in the kindergarten she sees every child receives equal attention and care, as well as participates in the same activity. All of those to her makes up inclusion.

4.1.2 Child of Informant 2

Information on Child of Informant 2: She is nearly three years old and the only child. Her father is Norwegian, so she is half Chinese, half Norwegian. **At home:** She speaks Chinese with Informant 2 and English with her Norwegian father. Informant 2 does not redeem that as affecting her child in kindergarten, because she reckons that at Age Two, children tend to play on their own, without too much communication and interaction with each other. Informant 1 further contends that despite that teachers would let children play on their own, in their curriculum and lesson plans, there are activities that are designed to encourage children to play together, such as story-telling, singing, dancing and eating together. **In kindergarten:**

She entered kindergarten when she was almost two. She is placed in the group for Age One to Three. The teacher-child ratio is one to three in the kindergarten. There are no other non-Norwegian children in the kindergarten. Being half Chinese, she does not receive extra Norwegian language support in the kindergarten, as there is none available. When she entered kindergarten, she didn't know how to speak Norwegian. At the start of kindergarten, she was left out in the kindergarten. When it was story-telling time, she could not understand the story and would either run away from the group to play on her own or become absent-minded. **Home-kindergarten collaboration:** There are three days at the very beginning of kindergarten when parents can accompany their children in Norwegian kindergartens to help build their children's sense of security and hence manage to transit from home to kindergarten. Informant 2 spent two days with her child in the kindergarten and found her child's transition smooth, as the child is sociable and easy-going. **Current situation:** she is very happy about and fond of kindergarten. She does not run around during story-telling time any more. Her Norwegian language skills has improved. She gets along with other children in kindergarten, is able to make friends and has got good friends already. She also has got her favorite teacher. When she plays by herself at home, Informant 2 notices that she speaks Norwegian. In addition, Informant 2 regards language communication and being able to be with other children is very important for child development and inclusion in kindergarten.

Comments on Child of Informant 2: According to Informant 2, because this child is sociable and easy-going in nature, transition from home to kindergarten was not too much a big issue as a whole. As the child was speaking Chinese and English at home, the beginning of kindergarten was a bit difficult. She couldn't understand Norwegian and failed to concentrate during story telling. But gradually, with the improvement of her Norwegian, she overcame the language barrier and became well-adjusted in kindergarten. In this child's case, language was an issue at the beginning, but with a sociable personality and the natural gradual development of her language skills in a Norwegian-only kindergarten environment, the child's transition from home to kindergarten is relatively smooth.

4.1.3 Child of Informant 2

Information on Child of Informant 3: She is nearly two years old and Informant 3's second child. Her parents are both Chinese. **At home:** She speaks Chinese at home with parents and

sibling. Informant 3 thinks this imposes some influence on her child's kindergarten. Informant 3 thinks that at the very beginning of kindergarten, especially at around Age Two, children of whatever nationality are inclined to play on their own and will gradually play with each other by two and a half years old. Although in groups for Age Below Three in kindergarten, teachers will guide and instruct children to become familiar with each other, Informant 3 does not think teachers' guidance will play an immediate and eminent role in making children interact with each other; instead, she finds that it takes a gradual progress and by two and a half years old, the change is prone to occurrence. **At kindergarten:** She is placed in the group for Age Two to Three. The teacher-child ratio is one to three. There are several non-Norwegian children in her group. There is a 'connector person' arranged by the kindergarten for the transition for her and her older sibling, as they didn't understand Norwegian at the start of kindergarten. **Home-kindergarten collaboration:** At the very beginning, Informant 3 consulted the teacher about her child's language issues; the kindergarten reported this to the community which sent specialist to observe the child. The conclusion is there is no need for extra Norwegian support for the child. There was some language barrier for the connector person and the child to understand each other. Informant 3 made Chinese-Norwegian cue cards for the connector person to communicate with the child. **Current situation:** Right now, she is well adjusted in kindergarten.

Comments on Child of Informant 3: According to Informant 3, this child went through some difficulty during transition, because of language. With the collective support from both home and kindergarten, she managed to adjust in kindergarten.

4.1.4 Child of Informant 4

Information on Child of Informant 4: He is three years old and Informant 4's second child. He is half Chinese, half Norwegian. **At home:** He speaks Norwegian at home, very minimal Chinese with Informant 4 occasionally. Because of this, he does not need any Norwegian language support in kindergarten. Informant 4 regards him speaking Norwegian at home has been very helpful for his inclusion in kindergarten. **In kindergarten:** He is placed in the group for Age Two to Five. The teacher-child ratio is one to four. There are non-Norwegian children in the age, with him being the one only who has Chinese origin. His transition went smoothly and well. He started kindergarten at a young age. **Home-kindergarten collaboration:**

Informant 4 accompanied the child for two days during the three-day time allowance for parental company in kindergarten. *Current situation*: The child has been doing very well in kindergarten.

Comments on Child of Informant 4: According to Informant 4, since her child's father is Norwegian and that the child speaks Norwegian most of the time at home, this makes his inclusion in kindergarten very easy. Therefore, Informant 4 does not find inclusion is an issue for her and her child. Clearly, with the advantage of his Norwegian language skills, the transition from home to kindergarten got on very well.

4.1.5 Child of Informant 5

Information on Child of Informant 5: She is four and a half years old and Informant 5's second child. She was born in Norway. Both of her parents are Chinese. *At home*: Informant 5 would like to enhance her children's Chinese language skills by teaching Chinese to them and taking them to the Chinese church to meet more Chinese people. Before Age Four, she spoke Chinese at home. Recently, she uses Norwegian with her older sibling. Informant 5 encourages her to use Chinese. Informant 5 considers speaking Chinese with children at home helps develop their Norwegian language skills in kindergarten. *In kindergarten*: She is placed in the group for Age Three to Five. The teacher-child ratio is six to one. She went to a family kindergarten when she passed one year old, where she adjusted very quickly. Although her language communication skills was limited at that stage, she still got along with everyone and enjoyed herself in the family kindergarten. When she was transferred to the current kindergarten after Age Two, her transition took some time. She needed one specific teacher for her to feel safe and interact with. She gradually adapted to the new environment. The current kindergarten is affiliated to an international company. At least one third of the children in kindergarten are non-Norwegian. Therefore, there are many non-Norwegian children in her group. There is another Chinese child in her group, with whom she can communicate in Chinese. There is extra Norwegian language support available in the kindergarten. Every Thursday, there is a special Norwegian language lesson for non-Norwegian children to attend, while Norwegian children are invited to joint hem as chat buddies. *Home-kindergarten collaboration*: Informant 5 accompanied the child for three days in the family kindergarten and for two days in the current kindergarten during transition.

Current situation: She is doing very well right now and does not need a specific teacher for her in kindergarten.

Comments on Child of Informant 5: According to Informant 5, this child has shown some good social ability at an early age. Although there was some need for teachers to support her at the beginning of kindergarten after Age Two, she has adjusted well. Speaking Chinese at home might have been one of the reasons to explain why she had some difficulty adjusting to kindergarten at the beginning. But gradually, with her own language development and the collective support from both home and kindergarten, she overcame the Norwegian language problem and adapted well to kindergarten.

4.1.6 Summary about the Children of Informants

Transition from home to kindergarten is the very beginning of a child's inclusion in a new and significant social environment in their lives. Children of the informants in this study are different from each other and have their own needs for development.

Child of Informant 1 needs an abundant sense of security. It is important for both home and kindergarten to collaborate to help him establish trust between kindergarten and him, in order to cope with the change of environments. Besides, speaking Chinese at home and learning Norwegian in kindergarten causes him to speak a mixture of Chinese and Norwegian. Language might have been a barrier for his transition into kindergarten. He cried for almost four or five months after entering kindergarten.

Child of Informant 2 is sociable in nature. She speaks Chinese and English at home. At the beginning of kindergarten, she could not understand Norwegian, which caused her to lose concentration during story telling.

Child of Informant 3 speaks Chinese at home. She went through some difficulty during transition from home to kindergarten. Although the kindergarten arranged a specific staff to work with her, communication was a problem.

Child of Informant 4 speaks Norwegian most of the time at home. He does not seem to encounter much trouble during transition from home to kindergarten.

Child of Informant 5 has got some good social ability herself. It is likely that speaking Chinese at home made her transition into kindergarten a bit difficult. She stuck to a specific teacher and cried for a while.

When the child does not have any Norwegian language foundation when he/she enters kindergarten like Children of Informant 1, 2, 3 and 5 in this study, transition may take some time. The kindergarten-home collaborative support for children's transition to kindergarten can shorten the length of transition. Besides, it also depends on the child's personality. If he/she is sociable, transition may take shorter time, such as Children to Informant 2 and 5.

In comparison, those who do have good Norwegian language foundation prior to kindergarten is inclined to a smooth transition, like Child of Informant 4.

Hence, language can be an important issue worth noting, regarding the very start of inclusion.

4.2 Chinese parents' personal experience with inclusion of themselves in Norway

This part will provide some general information on the informants' personal experience with their own inclusion in the Norwegian society in this study. As the informants were asked to express their opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens during the interview, it is considerably meaningful to inquire to them about their personal experience with inclusion in Norway. It is understandable that their personal experience directly influences their perception of inclusion and is highly likely to impose certain effects on how they would like to rear their children. In this study, their own experience with inclusion in Norway has a direct impact on how they think of their children's inclusion in Norway in the future and for many of them, on how they would like to bring up their children in Norway. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look into this part and look into the parental influence on children's inclusion in the kindergarten. Key concepts were extracted from the informants'

speech and highlighted for summarization. Those concepts are closely related to not only the research question but the research problem as well.

4.2.1 Experience of Informant 1

Informant 1: She considers the Norwegian cultural is, to some extent, closed and that therefore, it is not easy to be integrated fully into the society. She still feels like being a minority in Norway, regarding career development. However, she is very objective by pointing out that not placing foreigners on management positions is not a unique issue in Norway and that it does embody the limited degree of integration. In a way, she feels included, though her feelings can be hurt. Her conclusion on the reason why she has been kept from management positions in Norway is her Chinese way of thinking. She also finds out through open conversations with Norwegian friends that her Chinese way of thinking distinguishes her from Norwegians. She further contends that certain way of thinking results from the culture where she grew up. She grew up in China.

Comments on Informant 1: Informant 1 attributes the partial inclusion of herself in the Norwegian society to her Chinese way of thinking. She thinks growing up in China shapes that and hence, believes her children may be included in Norway better, because they will grow up in Norway. This can be seen later in the findings.

4.2.2 Experience of Informant 2

Informant 2: She confides that life in Norway is not as eventful as life in China. She does not reckon that she can be included in the Norwegian society to a high degree, although she does accept the society to a great extent. Alike Informant 1, she attributes this to the fact that the critical period of her development took place in China and that she did not come to Norway at an early age. All of this, in her opinion, retains her Chinese way of thinking inside her.

Comments on Informant 2: Clearly, similar to Informant 1, Informant 2 is very hopeful toward her child's inclusion in Norway, which can be seen later in the findings.

4.2.3 Experience of Informant 3

Informant 3: She conveys that she is satisfied with life in Norway. She regards her inclusion in the Norwegian society to be fairly good. She has some Norwegian friends and finds the Norwegian society tolerant, Norwegians friendly. She also thinks Chinese in Norway tend to have a good reputation for either their education or professional background.

Comments on Informant 3: Informant 3 holds a very positive attitude toward Norway and her inclusion in the society. This can be an impetus for her motivation to support her children's inclusion in the kindergarten with good efforts, which can be seen later in the findings.

4.2.4 Experience of Informant 4

Informant 4: She expresses that she feels good with life in Norway. She has been familiar with and well-adjusted to the Norwegian society. She has Norwegian friends and colleagues. Firmly contending that language plays a major part in inclusion, she believes better Norwegian language competence will better her inclusion in Norway. At the same time, she reckons that it takes some personal awareness and willingness to want to be included, instead of letting fear and hesitation stop oneself. She finds the Norwegian society relatively open, tolerant and objective, with most Norwegian people being amicable. In addition, she admits that marrying a Norwegian certainly helps her to be better included in the society.

Comments on Informant 4: Considering her highly positive comments on Norway and her marriage background, Informant 4 does not think it is a matter for her children to be included in the Norwegian society, which is evident in the findings.

4.2.5 Experience of Informant 5

Informant 5: She feels content with life in Norway, with her religion and church guiding her. But she does not feel well included in Norway. Similar to Informant 1, she finds Norwegian culture relatively closed, which emphasizes building friendships since childhood, cherishes

family relations and addresses similarity. She does not find it easy to enter the Norwegian social circle.

Comments on Informant 5: Informant 5 appears to attribute her unsuccessful inclusion in the Norwegian society to the relatively closed Norwegian culture; however, underneath this, it is explicit that building friendships since childhood is closely linked to the matter of entering Norway at a young age, just as what Informant 1 and 2 point out. Therefore, alike Informant 1 and 2, Informant 5 is positive toward her children's inclusion, as they will grow up in Norway and therefore, have childhood friends. This can be seen later in the findings.

4.2.6 Summary of the informants' personal experience with their own inclusion in Norway

The majority of the informants in this study attribute their unsuccessful inclusion in the Norwegian society to the time when they came to Norway. They deem their entry to Norway as too late for them to erase their Chinese way of thinking which was shaped by the Chinese culture where they spend the critical period of development. The Chinese way of thinking keeps them from being part of Norway and not having childhood Norwegian friends makes it hard to enter the Norwegian social circle. In comparison with themselves, their children will be growing up in Norway, which makes me hopeful toward their children's future.

4.3 Inclusion

Under the overarching theme of inclusion, Chinese parents' general understanding of inclusion is firstly explored. Following that, their specific opinions on their children's inclusion in the Norwegian kindergarten is further inquired about, together with another specific question on their expectation of a good kindergarten for their children.

4.3.3 Chinese parents' opinions on inclusion

Since my research problem is Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction, finding out their general opinions on inclusion is of great necessity. Their general opinions on inclusion can be seen as an

overarching perspective above their specific ideas on their children's inclusion in the kindergarten. Hereunder are some key concepts which have been revealed in their speech, on the topic of inclusion. Moreover, I will discuss these concepts later in Chapter 5, in correspondence with the literature review and theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

During the process of data analysis, I recognized three key concepts on the topic of Chinese parents' understanding of inclusion. They are 1. Connection between inclusion and integration; 2. Different aspects of inclusion; 3. Language communication is vital for inclusion; 4. Cultural awareness and skills needed for inclusion.

4.3.3.1 Different aspects of inclusion Connection between inclusion and integration

Informant 1 mentioned the concept of integration as follows, when asked to define inclusion, in accordance with her understanding. Furthermore, other informants brought up other different aspects of inclusion, which are 1) same as everyone else, 2) open and tolerant environment, 3) friendship, 4) acceptance, 5) barrier-free equal communication.

Inclusion precedes integration: *'Inclusion precedes integration and integration is further and deeper than inclusion in degree'* (Informant 1).

Considering the history of inclusion, evidently, Informant 1 reversed the sequence between inclusion and integration. However, she expressed her recognition of both the difference and connection between inclusion and integration. Integration historically preceded inclusion. In Norway, back in the mid-1990's, (social) integration was a popular concept – special schools were built up for those who had special educational needs to have access to education; with the evolution of integration and the human rights movement, inclusion emerged as a new concept. In Norway, these days, special schools are shut down and students, in spite of their special educational needs, are admitted in mainstream schools, so as to be entitled to the same education as every other student.

Same as everyone else: *'Inclusion is that you are the same as everyone else and that you have the same rights as everyone else'* (Informant 1).

Informant 1 appears to believe that inclusion is all about being the same. She does not focus on diversity. This is a dilemma on the resolution of inclusion in general. Theoretically, inclusion is more associated with differences and diversity, while Informant 1 sees in her real life that inclusion has more association with sameness.

Open and tolerant environment: *'Generally, inclusion entails the following: ... the exterior environment needs to be open and tolerant as well'* (Informant 4). Informant 4 stresses that the existence of an open and tolerant environment is an important external factor for inclusion.

Friendship: *'Inclusion is closely associated with friendship; it is about being able to establish friendships'* (Informant 2). Informant 2 uses friendship as an index for inclusion.

Acceptance: *'Inclusion, first of all, is acceptance...'* (Informant 5). Informant 5 defines inclusion as to be accepted.

Barrier-free equal communication: *'Inclusion ...; second of all, is barrier-free equal communication'* (Informant 5). Informant 5 also connects inclusion with a certain kind of communication which possesses an equal relation between the parties during the communication process without any disturbance.

4.3.3.2 Language communication is vital for inclusion

Within this concept, there are three points that can be highlighted in the informants' answers. They are 1) language communication, 2) mastering the Norwegian language, 3) language and interaction.

Language communication: *'Language communication and being able to be with other children is very important for child development and inclusion in kindergarten'* (Informant 2). Informant 2 highlights establishing peer relationships through language communication as an important element for both child development and inclusion in kindergarten.

Mastering the Norwegian language: *'In order to be included fully in the Norwegian society, mastering a high level of Norwegian is a must'* (Informant 3); *'Generally, inclusion entails the following: ... mastering the Norwegian language on a high level – an essential factor ...'* (Informant 4). Informant 3 and Informant 4 agree on the significance of the Norwegian language competence. They contend it is a prerequisite for inclusion. The higher a foreigner's Norwegian language level is, the higher degree of his/her inclusion in Norway is likely to be.

Language and Interaction: *'... Good language skills and interaction with other people matter... Inclusion requires interaction through language'* (Informant 4). Informant 4 regards interaction with competent language skills as essential for inclusion.

4.3.3.3 Cultural awareness and skills are needed for inclusion

There are three points within this concept as follows. They are cultural awareness and behavior, knowledge of Norway and to attend social activities.

Cultural awareness and Behavior:

'Inclusion comprises of inclusion on a cognitive level and on a behavioral level. The former refers to understanding of and familiarity with different aspects of Norway, for instance, society and culture. The latter indicates behaving like a Norwegian. Codes of dressing, diet, way of thinking, behavior and manners, personality and language, in particular, affect inclusion on both the cognitive level and on the behavioral level' (Informant 3).

'Generally, inclusion entails the following: ... gaining a knowledge of various aspects of Norway, including the Norwegian worldview...' (Informant 4);

Informant 3 divides inclusion into two different levels. One is on the cognitive level, the other on the behavioral level. Both Informant 3 and Informant 4 pinpoint the knowledge about Norway as part of inclusion in the Norwegian society. In addition, Informant 3 adds another level of inclusion, which is following the code of behavior applied and accepted in the Norwegian society.

Norwegian social circle: *'Generally, inclusion entails the following: ... having a social circle with Norwegians and communicating with them on a wide range of topics ...'* (Informant 4)

Informant 4 points out establish social circles with Norwegian people as part of the process of making inclusion happen.

Attend social activities: *'Generally, inclusion entails the following: being able to attend various social activities ...'* (Informant 4). Informant 4 also identifies the importance of participating in social activities in Norway, in relation to inclusion.

Comment to cultural aspect with inclusion

To summarise, four key concepts can be derived from the five informants' response on inclusion. They are inclusion precedes integration, different aspects of inclusion (including being the same as everyone else, having an open and tolerant environment, friendship, acceptance and barrier-free equal communication), language communication is vital, as well as cultural knowledge and skills.

Clearly, informants hold different interpretations of inclusion, in comparison with theories. Still, they are of great value via presenting unique understandings of inclusion and thus, enriching the interpretation of inclusion.

4.3.4 Inclusion in the Norwegian Kindergarten

As some of the Informants expressed, kindergarten is a society and the first formal education in a person's life. Therefore, to start the investigation into inclusion in kindergarten has its great value and meaning. The earlier inclusion can be started in a person's life, the better he/she can be included in the future, the larger scope of inclusiveness a society can possess. The Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework acknowledge both the global trend of inclusive education and the growing extent of diversity in Norway. They both accentuate a kindergarten-home collaboration scheme for the well-being and development of all children. This part is to look into parents' opinions on inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, pursuant to their general understanding of inclusion.

4.3.2.1 Different aspects of inclusive practice in Norwegian kindergartens

These aspects are 1) no need to worry about inclusion in the kindergarten, 2) kindergartens are doing well in inclusion, 3) kindergartens help all children integrate, 4) activity is open to everyone, 5) equal respect, care and attention, 6) teacher-home collaboration, 7) curriculum and teacher participation, 8) play is what children do most in kindergarten and matters a lot to inclusion.

No need to worry about inclusion in the kindergarten: *'With 50 percent of all the children being foreigners in my child's kindergarten, I don't need to worry about inclusion of my child in the kindergarten'* (Informant 1). Although Informant 1 defines inclusion with the concept of sameness, diversity of the children in her child's kindergarten makes her worry little about inclusion. In this sense, it is clear that she does link diversity with inclusion, despite the fact that she did not bring it up directly while talking about inclusion earlier during the interview. This shows a natural progress of thinking and understanding of a concept, when one is not totally prepared on the topic.

Kindergartens are doing well in inclusion: *'The Norwegian kindergartens... They are doing well... Norwegian kindergartens do well in inclusion'* (Informant 1); *'The current kindergarten does well in inclusion'* (Informant 4). Both Informant 1 and Informant 4 show approval of the inclusive practice conducted in Norwegian kindergartens.

Kindergartens help all children integrate: *'The Norwegian kindergartens try a lot to help all children integrate into the environment'* (Informant 1). Following her approval of the Norwegian kindergarten's success of including children, Informant 1 further elaborates via using the concept of integration, contending that all children are integrated in the kindergarten with support. This, again, shows her ambiguous understanding of the two concepts, which are inclusion and integration.

Activity is open to everyone: *'Every activity is open to everyone, which is the basic in kindergarten'* (Informant 1). Informant 1 points out a fundamental element of the Norwegian kindergarten, which is each activity is open to everyone and links it with inclusion.

Equal respect, care and attention: *'Every child receives equal respect, care and attention'* (Informant 1). In addition, Informant 1 pays attention to the equal respect, care and attention

children receive in kindergarten as an important index for the success of inclusion in kindergarten.

Teacher-home collaboration: *‘Teachers collaborate with parents to help children establish sense of security in kindergarten’* (Informant 4). Informant 4 recognizes a good inclusive practice in the Norwegian kindergarten. That is the teacher-home collaboration on helping children with the establishment of their sense of security in kindergarten.

Curriculum and teacher participation: *‘The kindergarten curriculum shall set up specific activities for children to interact with each other. Between Age 2 and 4 , it is the best for teachers to participate in children’s activities where they can play a guiding role’* (Informant 3). Informant 3 puts a stress on the kindergarten curriculum and teacher participation, with regard to inclusion in kindergarten. She finds designing specific activities for children’s interaction with each other important for inclusion; moreover, she reckons that for young children aged between two and four years old, teacher participation in children’s activities matters as they can provide guidance to children on how to interact with each other.

4.3.2.2 Play is what children do most in kindergarten and matters a lot to inclusion.

Most of the informants have the same recognition of the importance of play in children’s day-to-day kindergarten life. As Norwegian kindergartens accentuate the element of play in kindergarten for children, when talking about inclusion in the Norwegian kindergarten, the majority of the informants connect play with inclusion. They touch upon three elements of play, in relation to inclusion: 1) play shapes inclusion, social interaction and language, 2) all can play together, 3) play with other children.

Play shapes inclusion, social interaction and language: *‘At Age 4, the most interesting part of a child’s (kindergarten) life is play. Play can shape many things, like inclusion, social interaction and language’* (Informant 1). Informant 1 endows play with a significant meaning by connecting it with inclusion, social interaction and language. She regards play as influential for all of them.

All can play together: *'The kindergartens try to emphasize all children can play with each other and don't encourage children to form small groups'* (Informant 1). Informant 1 highlights another inclusive practice in the Norwegian kindergarten, which is children are encouraged to play with each other, without forming small groups.

Play with other children: *'Inclusion in the kindergarten is being able to play with other children, having no cultural conflicts, getting along without being rejected/repelled/excluded'* (Informant 2). Informant 2 defines inclusion in kindergarten with the concept of play. She deems being able to play with other children as an index for the success of a child's inclusion in kindergarten.

4.3.2.3 Cultural aspects of Inclusion:

Include everyone, differences and cultures: *'Children are not really grouped for the sake of their nationalities. Basically, kindergartens would like to include everyone. They try to merge all the differences and cultures together'* (Informant 1). Informant 1 considers the kindergarten as a place for including differences, though she defines inclusion with the concept of sameness.

Participate in cultural exchange: *'Kindergartens organize annual summer parties for families to participate, which provides a channel for cultural exchange'* (Informant 1); *'Accepting the Norwegian culture and participating in social activities which are organized by the kindergarten'* (Informant 2); *'Kindergartens shall... establish a multicultural atmosphere by promoting multi-cultures ... Being invited to Norwegian children's birthday parties at their homes signifies successful inclusion'* (Informant 3); *'Multi-cultures shall be promoted in kindergarten'* (Informant 5).

4.3.2.4 Comment to the cultural aspect of inclusion

Under the big theme of inclusion, on the topic of inclusive practice in the Norwegian kindergarten, Informant 1 and Informant 2 give positive comments on kindergartens' efforts on promoting cultural exchange through organizing social activities for families to attend. Informant 3 and Informant 5 links multi-culture directly with inclusion. In comparison with

Informant 1 and Informant 2 who focus on group activities, Informant 3 provides an interesting and unique understanding of the success of a child's inclusion in kindergarten. She pays attention to individual social activities and regards her child being invited to Norwegian children's birthday parties as the index of success of the child's inclusion in kindergarten.

4.3.2.5 Language as an important aspect of inclusion

Language appears frequently in the informants' speech. Clearly, the informants attach a considerable amount of importance to language, on the subject of inclusion. There are two concepts emerging in the informants' speech on this topic: 1) Norwegian language support in kindergarten is necessary, 2) Bilingual teachers are needed particularly for young children in kindergarten.

Norwegian language support in kindergarten is necessary: *'Language is the most important part. Through play, language enables interaction, while interaction promotes inclusion'* (Informant 2); *'Kindergartens shall provide language support for children in need with patience ... Parents shall help children improve language skills'* (Informant 3); *'The kindergarten provides language support to children in need. This matters a lot, because language is conducive to inclusion'* (Informant 4).

Bilingual teachers are needed particularly for young children in kindergarten:

'Bilingual teachers shall be generated more to work in kindergartens where there are bilingual children, especially for those at a young age... Language is a critical factor for the happening of inclusion. Extra Norwegian language classes will be helpful for foreign children' (Informant 5).

4.3.2.6 Comment to language aspect of inclusion

Most of the informants agree on the importance of language and kindergartens providing Norwegian language support to children in need. Informant 3 also points out the need of parents helping their children with Norwegian language skills, while Informant 5 pinpoints the need of bilingual support particularly for young children in kindergarten.

4.3.5 Parents' understanding of a good kindergarten for their children

Via listening to Chinese parents' understandings of a good kindergarten, first of all, we can see what parents care about in kindergarten for their children. This can help imply if inclusion or social interaction would be one of their concerns. Second of all, both policy makers and kindergartens in Norway can reflect on their policy and practice for evaluation and improvement. In addition, it is also useful for other parents of any background to listen to their counterparts' thoughts on kindergarten education and reflect on their own in turn.

According to the informants, good kindergartens comprise elements, such as improve children's development, safety is guaranteed with good facilities, free and outdoor play, teacher competence, teacher-child interaction, care and good catering.

4.3.3.1 Improve children's development

Informants bring up different concepts which they care about, regarding children's development. They are 1) intellectual development, 2) development of one's own way of thinking, 3) emotional quotient (EQ) development and 4) personality development.

Intellectual development:

'A good kindergarten shall accumulate children to explore and develop curiosity, not setting up limitations around children... In Norway, when children are three, they can do whatever they love. This is on one hand good; but on the other, lacking in the nurturing of children's intellectual development. Children need information and knowledge which is not only about academics. I care about the training of my child's brain. Giving information and knowledge to the child will make his brain develop' (Informant 1).

'... children can learn from kindergarten; in addition to parents' role, [a good kindergarten] can assist children's development by playing a positive role' (Informant 2).

Development of one's own way of thinking: *'Intellectually, I would like my children to have freedom to explore towards any direction and believes that is the only way children can shape their own way of thinking' (Informant 1).*

EQ development: *'Norwegian kindergartens do well in children's EQ development' (Informant 1).*

Personality development: *'... kindergarten ... lets children play freely. This way, children are relaxed, which is good for the build-up of their personality' (Informant 4).*

4.3.3.2 Comment improvement of children's development

Informants pay attention to kindergarten's ability to improve their children's development, which include intellectual, EQ and personality development.

Safety is guaranteed with good facilities. *'Safety is a must' (Informant 1); 'A good kindergarten ... Second of all ... has good facilities, especially on safety issues' (Informant 3). Safety is one of the top concerns on informants' mind, in relation to kindergartens' quality.*

Free and outdoor play: *'I find the current kindergarten very good. It not only teaches knowledge but also lets children play freely... It also allows children to spend a good amount of time outdoor. These are two big differences from Chinese kindergartens' (Informant 4). Informant 4 approves of the value Norwegian kindergartens attach to free and outdoor play.*

Teacher competence: *'A good kindergarten first of all has high-quality teachers who are patient with and fond of children and who are responsible for their jobs' (Informant 3). I pay more attention to a kindergarten's software, which is to see how approachable teachers are, how open and tolerant they are to children, how they guide children, spot children's needs and cater to them accordingly' (Informant 5). Both Informant 3 and Informant 5 address teacher competence as a vital index for kindergartens' quality.*

Teacher-Child interaction: *'It is important for the teacher to show how he himself / she herself does things. Children can learn this through interaction with teachers' (Informant 1); 'There are two factors to consider, regarding what a good kindergarten would be for my child: hardware and software. Hardware refers to facilities. Software refers to interaction between teachers and children...' (Informant 5). Both Informant 1 and Informant 5 highlight*

the importance of teacher-child interaction, with regard to the quality of kindergarten education.

Care: *'A good kindergarten provides care to children'* (Informant 2). Informant 2 stresses care as an index for kindergarten's quality.

Good catering: *'A good kindergarten ... Third of all... provides good catering'* (Informant 3). Informant 3 cares about her child's well-being with a focus on food.

Summary

Through looking into Chinese parents' understanding of a good kindergarten for their children, we can see that rarely do they mention the concept of inclusion. Two out of five of them highlight teacher-child interaction as one important index for the good quality of a kindergarten.

4.3.6 Chinese parents' assumption of inclusion of their children in Norway in the future

Five informants reached a unanimous agreement on a bright future of their children's inclusion in the Norwegian society. Informant 1 believes her children will be better included than herself. Informant 2 thinks that inclusion of her child will not be an issue. She explains that her child has been growing up in Norway, which will certainly enhance her feelings of belonging to this society. Informant 3 believes her children will be better included than herself. Informant 4 believes her children will be well included, considering their family and language background. Informant 5 observes Chinese friends' children in Norway and thinks that for Chinese children who were born and are growing up in Norway, it is not difficult to be included in the Norwegian society. She elaborates that her children will have old friends whom they met during early childhood. They will have frequent contact with each other. In addition, she holds that it is not that hard for Chinese people to receive social acceptance in Norway, because the Chinese culture, custom and religion are not particularly disapproved of in Norway.

Comment

All of the informants are optimistic about their children's inclusion in the Norwegian society, because they think growing up in Norway enables inclusion to occur more easily with a higher degree.

4.4 Social Interaction

4.4.1 Chinese parents' opinions on their children's social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens

Since social interaction is one specific aspect that is addressed on solution to my research problem in this study on Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, finding out their general opinions on social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens will enable us to see how they view this important element in inclusion and whether they attach great importance to it or not. Hereunder are some key concepts which have been revealed in their speech, under the overarching topic of inclusion. They are 1) social interaction is important for the development for social skills for adulthood, 2) social interaction is teaching, 3) social interaction reveals children's needs, 4) play is mostly important during children's peer interaction, 5) language matters during social interaction in kindergarten.

Social interaction is important for the development of social skills for adulthood: *'Social interaction is very important in kindergarten'* (Informant 5); *'Social interaction is important for social life in adulthood'* (Informant 3); *'Social skills matter a lot for adult life'* (Informant 4).

Informant 3, 4 and 5 regard social interaction as an important learning channel for children to acquire social skills for their future development in society.

Social interaction is teaching: *'Social interaction in kindergarten is a kind of teaching. That is the way for children to learn how to behave by copying a good example in the kindergarten. They can apply the knowledge into practice while interacting with other children'* (Informant

1); *'Peer interaction helps children learn and grow together'* (Informant 2); *'It is important to learn how to interact with other children, as well as to how to solve conflicts with other children'* (Informant 4); *'It is through social interaction in kindergarten that children can learn about society, languages and emotions, as well as develop skills for all of them'* (Informant 5).

Informant 1, 2, 4 and 5 regard social interaction as a channel for children to learn.

Social interaction reveals children's needs: *'It is through social interaction in kindergarten that children's needs can be discovered and met'* (Informant 5).

Informant 5 considers social interaction helps children's needs to be recognized and catered to.

Play is mostly important during children's peer interaction: *'Play is the predominant element in peer interaction'* (Informant 2).

Informant 2 emphasizes play as a vital element in children's peer interaction.

Language matters during social interaction in kindergarten: *'During play, children use languages to interact'* (Informant 2).

Informant 2 also points out the importance of language in children's social interaction in kindergarten.

Comment

All the informants see the importance of social interaction for child development in kindergarten. Some further highlight that play and language are two vital elements in social interaction in kindergarten.

4.4.2 Parents' opinions on relation between children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction

Social interaction in kindergarten is composed of children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction. It is interesting to look into Chinese parents' opinions on the relation between the two, to see if they attach importance to the teacher's role in children's social interaction in kindergarten.

As the study unfolds, some informants think the two types of interaction are equally important; some consider one outweighs the other, while one takes child development into consideration on this matter.

- 1) **Equally important:** *'Peer interaction and child-teacher interaction is equally important; they depend on each other. Children learn through playing with other children, while teachers can correct them'* (Informant 1); *'The two are equally important. Children naturally choose to interact with each other; teachers can intermittently play a guiding role during children's peer interaction, when conflicts arise by providing prompt support'* (Informant 4); *'The two are equally important. Children can learn a lot from peers, including language and emotions. Teachers play a guiding role, which does not happen among peers. They are inter-connected'* (Informant 5).

Informant 1, 4 and 5 think children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction are equally important.

2) Teacher-child interaction outweighs children's peer interaction

'Both peer interaction and child-teacher interaction are important. Child-teacher interaction plays a guiding role. Teachers can impart knowledge (including social knowledge and skills) and guides children during their social activities. Child-teacher interaction outweighs peer interaction for its guiding and instructing role' (Informant 2).

Informant 2 attaches more importance to teacher-child interaction and underlines teachers' guiding role.

3) It depends on the stage of child development.

'The nurture of social skills starts in kindergarten. Under Age 4, peer interaction is mostly nurtured via teacher guidance. Child-teacher interaction plays a leading role at a child's young age. When the child grows older, with the development of their own social skills, the leading part of child-teacher interaction gradually fades out, children are capable of initiating interaction between each other' (Informant 3).

Informant 3 refers to child development, in relation to the connection between children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction.

It takes a gradual process for teacher's guidance to take effect.

'At the very beginning of kindergarten, especially at around Age Two, children of whatever nationality are inclined to play on their own and will gradually play with each other by two and a half years old. In groups for Age below Three, teachers will guide and instruct children to become familiar with each other. But Informant 3 does not think teachers' guidance will play an immediate and eminent role in making children interact with each other; instead, it takes a gradual progress and by two and a half years old, the change is prone to occurrence' (Informant 3).

Informant 3 stresses the natural process of child development. She contends that the effect of teacher guidance during children's interaction with each other is more visible after children start to play with each other.

Comment

All the informants recognize the connection between children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction in kindergarten. Some consider the two are equally important; some place more emphasis on teacher-child interaction while one thinks more about meeting the differing needs on different stages of child development.

4.5 Chinese parents' opinions on connection between social interaction and inclusion

This interview study's research problem is on Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, with a focus on social interaction. On the basis of the informants' separate understanding of inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten, it is

meaningful to see if they think the two are connected and how they are connected. Some thinks there is little connection, while some sees close connection between the two; some sees play is more connected with inclusion and social interaction.

Little connection

'I don't see so much association between social interaction and inclusion in kindergarten, because children are treated equally. Everyone receives the same attention from teachers. It does not matter how much interaction there is, because children take part in the same activity, including learning... According to my experience with the Chinese kindergarten system, if parents have more communication with the kindergarten, children will receive more attention from teachers. But that is not the case in Norway... I do not think peer interaction influences inclusion in kindergarten. Children are encouraged to play with each other, instead of forming small groups. Maybe if the child has a better connection with other children, the child may for his/her own sake feel more secure for having more friends. This perhaps has an influence on inclusion in terms of children's feelings and emotions' (Informant 1).

Based on her previous understanding of inclusion and social interaction, Informant 1 does not see the connection between inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens; instead, she sees the connection occurs more in Chinese kindergartens.

Close connection

Informant 2, 3, 4 and 5 acknowledge the connection between inclusion and social interaction in different ways: 1) social interaction promotes inclusion, 2) social interaction precedes inclusion, 3) social interaction is the foundation for inclusion, 4) social interaction is the pre-condition for inclusion.

1) Social interaction promotes inclusion: *'There is connection. Being able to enter Norwegian society via participation in social activities will help inclusion in my children's future ... Social interaction promotes inclusion, but does not necessarily leads to inclusion'* (Informant 2).

2) Social interaction precedes inclusion: *'There is connection. Social interaction precedes inclusion; it is the foundation of inclusion'* (Informant 3).

3) Social interaction is the foundation for inclusion: *'Inclusion does not occur without communication and interaction. Social interaction is a very important approach or the foundation for inclusion'* (Informant 4).

4) Social interaction is a pre-condition for inclusion: *'Inclusion cannot happen without interaction. Social interaction is an important pre-condition for inclusion'* (Informant 5).

Comment

Informant 2, 3, 4 and 5 all find social interaction essential for inclusion.

Play shapes inclusion and social interaction at Age 4: *'At Age 4, the most interesting part of a child's (kindergarten) life is play. Play can shape many things, like inclusion, social interaction and language'* (Informant 1).

Having her four-year-old child in the Norwegian kindergarten, Informant 1 recognizes more connection between play, social interaction and inclusion in kindergarten for children at Age 4. She deems play as the foundation for child development in various aspects at this age.

Comment

Most informants associate social interaction with inclusion in kindergarten and attach great importance to social interaction for inclusion, while one informant attaches more importance to play particularly at Age 4.

4.6 Chinese parents' encouragement of their children's inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens

Both the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework state that it takes collective efforts for home and kindergarten to strive on the well-being and development of children. Helping children transit from home to kindergarten, for example, tends to be the first issue the two

parties face together. With kindergartens' support, parents have the obligation to accompany their children in kindergarten during the first week in kindergarten, so as to help their children establish sense of security and trust in a new social environment, which is the kindergarten. Finding out how Chinese parents encourage their children's inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens is conducive to revealing what Chinese parents really care about through examining what they would like to do or what they have actually done. We will be able to see if they care about inclusion or social interaction in kindergarten; otherwise, what they really care about can be an indicator of their own opinions on child rearing, which might be under some cultural influence on the basis of their own cultural backgrounds.

Five informants present different information on how they encourage their children's inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten, which includes 1) no need to play a big role but provide guidance on behavior, 2) parents play an important part, 3) parents and teachers are equally important, 4) be a supporter and 5) play a guiding role.

No need to play a big role but provide guidance on behavior:

'I do not think I have to play a role in my child's inclusion in the kindergarten, but I do play one in teaching him how to behave and treat other children. I believe behaving normally can prevent exclusion. But I do not need to teach too many social skills, because the kindergarten teaches that' (Informant 1).

Informant 1 does not see the need of her playing a big part in her children's inclusion and social interaction, as previously she explains that Norwegian kindergartens do well in inclusion and that there is no social interaction issue in kindergarten. But she still intervenes by guiding her children on how to behave around peers, in hope of preventing exclusion from happening. In this sense, it is clear that Informant 1 cares about her children's inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten.

Parents play an important part: *'I play an important part. In kindergarten, teachers are the most important. Outside kindergarten, parents take over. I guide and encourage my child to interact with other children' (Informant 2).*

Informant 2 recognizes her role as important and pays attention to supporting her child to interact with other children. She cares about her child's social interaction in kindergarten.

Parents and teachers are equally important.

‘Kindergarten teachers and parents are equally important. Inclusion in society is more associated with parents’ role while inclusion in kindergarten is more with teachers. Parents shall help children improve language skills, take children to take part in children-targeted social activities outside kindergarten to help them understand the Norwegian society, culture and history. Not only do I teach Norwegian to my children at home, but I also teach them how to communicate with teachers. I made Chinese-Norwegian cue cards for the teacher who acted as a connector person for my children to use to communicate with them during transition time. I teach my children how to get along with Norwegian children by learning from my Chinese friends whose children had been to Norwegian kindergartens before. I encourage my children to make friends with more of other children, instead with only the same several. I took my son to pick birthday gifts for his friends and then accompanied him to birthday parties. I play Norwegian nursery rhymes for my children, use fairy tales and other types of children stories in Norwegian primary school textbooks and read them to my children every day’ (Informant 3).

Evidently, Informant 3 attempts hard not only to help her children interact with other children and teachers in kindergarten, but also to help them to be better included in the Norwegian society. Her efforts focus on providing Norwegian language support, enriching her children’s knowledge of Norway, teaching her children social skills and supporting kindergarten teachers to work with her children.

Be a supporter: *‘I play the role as a supporter. But there is no need for me to try extra hard to help my children. With the help of their Norwegian language competency, there is no need for me to worry about inclusion’ (Informant 4).*

Informant 4 thinks of herself as a supporter of her child’s inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten. But she does not think there is a big need for her to intervene too much, because her children are half Chinese, half Norwegian, with good Norwegian language skills.

Play a guiding role.

‘Parents play a guiding role. I teach my children to respect both their own and other cultures, strive to improve my children’s Chinese language skills by teaching Chinese to them and taking them to the Chinese church to meet more Chinese people, pass my own concept of value and worldview to my children and help them to integrate into the society with my best comprehension of inclusion’ (Informant 5).

Informant 5 attaches great importance to the role parents can play in a child's inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten. Interestingly, she believes improving her children's language skills in the mother tongue will help improve their Norwegian language skills. Being a devout Christian herself, she would like her children to benefit from her religion and use church as a social network for her children to learn to interact.

Comment

Although Informant 1 and Informant 4 do not think there is a need for them to play a big role in their children's inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten, the five informants all seem to attach great importance to the support and guidance they can provide to their children for inclusion and social interaction. All of them care about inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten, in spite of the fact that the degree of their concern varies and so does what they would like to or have actually done.

5 Discussion

In this chapter, discussions will be made between the findings presented in Chapter 4 which are derived from the interview study with five Chinese mothers in Norway and pertinent theories, legislative frameworks and research studies, in relation to the research problem and research questions stated in Chapter 2 and 3. Five informants provided interesting perspectives on inclusion in kindergarten, with social interaction being one specific focus of this study. During the discussions, we will see if those informants' opinions correspond with relevant theories, legislative frameworks and research studies. For these ideas which do not seem to comply to any theoretic, legislative or research reference, it is valuable to discover and acknowledge them as new ideas in the field of inclusion for further exploration.

5.2 Chinese parents' opinions on inclusion

5.1.1 Different aspects of inclusion

One Chinese parent in this study reckons that inclusion precedes integration. Under theoretic consideration, we can say that she seems to confuse inclusion with integration. However, it is still worthwhile to see how she interpreted inclusion in her own way. Other parents in the study put forward different aspects of inclusion. They are 'same as everyone else,' 'open and tolerant environment,' 'friendship,' 'acceptance,' and 'barrier-free equal communication.'

The Norwegian Kindergarten Framework (The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research 2006, p.25) stresses the inclusive nature of the kindergarten where differences are cherished by stating '*Respecting differences is one of the key values of kindergartens.*' This reveals a dilemma over this parent's understanding between similarity and difference on the topic of inclusion, without referring to relevant theories.

Clearly, the five Chinese parents in the study hold different interpretations of inclusion, in comparison with theories. However, the varying aspects of inclusion correspond well with the Norwegian kindergarten system. This demonstrates the value of looking into parents'

opinions, as they are specific concrete ideas which tend to result from their actual experience in daily life.

5.1.2 Inclusion in the Norwegian Kindergarten

As some of the Informants expressed, kindergarten is a society and the first formal education in a person's life. Therefore, to start the investigation into inclusion in kindergarten has its great value and meaning. The earlier inclusion can be started in a person's life, the better he/she can be included in the future, the larger scope of inclusiveness a society can possess. The Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework acknowledge both the global trend of inclusive education and the growing extent of diversity in Norway. They both accentuate a kindergarten-home collaboration scheme for the well-being and development of all children. This part is to look into parents' opinions on inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens, pursuant to their general understanding of inclusion.

1. Different aspects of inclusive practice in Norwegian kindergartens

The Chinese parents focus on different aspects of inclusive practice in Norwegian kindergartens. They are 'there is no need to worry about inclusion in the kindergarten,' 'kindergartens are doing well in inclusion,' 'kindergartens help all children integrate,' 'activity is open to everyone,' 'equal respect, care and attention,' 'teacher-home collaboration,' 'curriculum and teacher participation' and 'play is what children do most in kindergarten and matters a lot to inclusion.'

2. Cultural aspects of Inclusion

The Chinese parents in the study also bring up the cultural aspects of inclusion. One parent considers the kindergarten as a place for including differences, though she defines inclusion with the concept of sameness. Others highlight the importance of participation in cultural exchange for inclusion. Under the big theme of inclusion, on the topic of inclusive practice in the Norwegian kindergarten, some Chinese parents give positive comments on kindergartens' efforts on promoting cultural exchange through organizing social activities for families to attend. Some link multi-culture directly with inclusion. On the topic of attending social

activities which can contribute to inclusion, some focus on group activities, while one provides an interesting and unique understanding of the success of a child's inclusion in kindergarten. She pays attention to individual social activities and regards her child being invited to Norwegian children's birthday parties as the index of success of the child's inclusion in kindergarten.

3. Language as an important aspect of inclusion

Most of the Chinese parents in the study agree on the importance of language and kindergartens providing Norwegian language support to children in need. Some also point out the need of parents helping their children with Norwegian language skills, while some pinpoint the need of bilingual support particularly for young children in kindergarten.

5.1.3 Parents' understanding of a good kindergarten for their children

According to the Chinese parents in this study, good kindergartens comprise elements, such as improving children's intellectual, emotional and personality development, safety shall be guaranteed with good facilities, free and outdoor play, teacher competence, teacher-child interaction, care and good catering. It is visible that rarely is the concept of inclusion explicitly and directly mentioned, while teacher-child interaction is as one important index for the good quality of a kindergarten.

5.1.4 Chinese parents' assumption of inclusion of their children in Norway in the future

All of the informants are optimistic about their children's inclusion in the Norwegian society, because they think growing up in Norway enables inclusion to occur more easily with a higher degree.

5.2 Social Interaction

5.3.1 Chinese parents' opinions on their children's social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens

All the Chinese parents in the study consider social interaction as important for the development of social skills for their children's adulthood. They think of social interaction as teaching and a channel to reveal children's needs. Particularly, play and language are pinpointed as pivotal in social interaction in kindergarten.

5.3.2 Parents' opinions on relation between children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction

Some Chinese parents in the study think children's peer interaction and teacher-child interaction are equally important. Some lay more emphasis on teacher-child interaction for its guiding function for children's peer interaction. Some stress the stage of child development and acknowledge the changing nature of the proportion of the two elements of social interaction in kindergarten in line with children's changing need during development. Overall, teacher-child interaction is considered important for its guiding function.

5.3 Chinese parents' opinions on connection between social interaction and inclusion

The majority of the Chinese parents in the study acknowledge the connection between inclusion and social interaction. They depict the connection in different ways, such as: social interaction promotes inclusion, social interaction precedes inclusion, social interaction is the foundation for inclusion and social interaction is a precondition for inclusion. Clearly, they find social interaction essential for inclusion.

Different from her counterparts, there is one parent stated that she does not see the connection. Having her four-year-old child in the Norwegian kindergarten, she recognizes more connection between play, social interaction and inclusion in kindergarten for children at Age 4. She deems play as the foundation for child development in various aspects at this age.

However, without realizing that play is, as a matter of fact, part of social interaction, she has unconsciously connected social interaction with inclusion and endowed social interaction with a considerable amount of significance.

5.5 Chinese parents' encouragement of their children's inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens

Five Chinese parents in this study elaborated differently on how they encourage their children's inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten, which includes 'no need to play a big role but provide guidance on behavior,' 'parents play an important part,' 'parents and teachers are equally important,' 'be a supporter' and 'play a guiding role.'

There are two parents who do not think there is a need for them to play a big role in their children's inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten. One thinks the kindergarten has done well enough, while the other who married a Norwegian does not see any problem of her children being included and interaction in the kindergarten as the children speak fluent Norwegian. However, five of them all seem to attach great importance to the support and guidance they can provide to their children for inclusion and social interaction. All of them seem to care about inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten, in spite of the fact that the degree of their concern varies and so does what they would like to or have actually done.

6 Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusions of the research study

6.1.1 Chinese parents' child-rearing focus resonates with the inclusive Norwegian kindergarten system.

Concerning what they care about in the kindergarten for their children, Chinese parents in this study didn't necessarily refer to inclusion directly. They mentioned specific concepts, such as learning, play, care, teacher competence, safety and food. Some referred to social interaction directly. All of those concepts are embedded in both the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Kindergarten Framework Plan. As both documents state that the Norwegian kindergarten system shall be an inclusive environment for the well-being of all children. It can be manifested that although Chinese parents in this study did not talk about inclusion directly, their child-rearing philosophy and opinions on their children's life in Norwegian kindergartens are related to the inclusive ethos residing in the Norwegian kindergarten system. In a way, those Chinese parents rely on the Norwegian kindergarten system to bring up their children with optimistic expectation of their children's inclusion not only in the kindergarten but in the Norwegian society in the future as well.

Based on their high education background in Norway as well as on their own experience with inclusion in Norway as adults, considering their children's current kindergarten life, Chinese parents in this study appear to hold a positive attitude toward their children's inclusion in the Norwegian society in the future.

Specific aspects like play, learning, language, social interaction, care, safety and food which are those Chinese parents' concerns in kindergarten are all covered clearly in the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Kindergarten Framework Plan.

6.1.2 Language influences inclusion.

Particularly, mastering the Norwegian language is deemed as essential for successful inclusion in Norway by the Chinese parents interviewed in this study. One parent believed strengthening her children's Chinese skills will benefit their Norwegian competence. She also brought up the concept of having more bilingual teachers for young children in kindergarten.

6.1.2 Inclusion in the early years matters.

Most of the Chinese parents in the study have attributed their partial inclusion in the Norwegian society to their Chinese way of thinking. They deem that it is because they did not grow up in Norway, the Chinese way of thinking has therefore been engraved on their mind during the period of their critical development in China. In comparison with them, their children have been growing in Norway and attending Norwegian kindergartens at a young age. This fact, together with their satisfaction with the Norwegian kindergarten's inclusive service for their children, makes them believe the future of the inclusion of their children in the Norwegian society is bright. From this, it is explicit that starting inclusion as early as possible has its significant effect on the formation and development of a child in a certain societal context. Specifically, inclusion in kindergarten has its indispensable part to play in the whole process of a person's inclusion in society.

6.2 Limitations of the research study

6.2.1 Design of the study

Without discreet designing, it turns out that all the informants in this study are Chinese mothers. Therefore, the research problem could have been more accurately stated as Chinese mothers' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens. That way, the dispute over the absence of Chinese fathers' opinions on this matter can be prevented, as fathers are also parents.

6.2.2 Pilot study

As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, the pilot study was not successful, as the person who volunteered to be interviewed is not able to relate to Chinese mothers on the subject of their opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens. His kind participation did not yield to the improvement of the interview guide. Due to the limited amount of informants I was able to gain prior to the actual interview, I was not willing to pick any one of my informants to do the pilot study with me but would rather keep all of them for the actual interview. After the unsuccessful pilot study, I went straight to the start of the actual interviews, without refining the interview questions. That affected the quality of my interview questions and as a consequence, affected the quality of my interviews. The first interview basically turned out to be both a pilot study and an actual interview. I made some changes to the interview questions during the interview. For the sake of validity, I kept all the changes consistent with the rest of the informants in the later interviews. Without a discreet design, the first interview lasted about two hours. That led to a time-consuming data transcription process afterwards, which in turn resulted in a slow work flow.

6.2.3 Preparation for and control of the interview

All the interview sites were decided by the informants for the consideration of their own convenience. However, neither an open park, a restaurant, nor an open café is likely to be an ideal place for interviews which require a private and quiet environment. Because of this, several interview recordings have too bad sound qualities to be heard distinctively for a smooth data transcription later. As a result, data transcription took a long time to be completed, which affected the entire work flow of the write-up of the thesis. Besides, since the recording software application is on the laptop, assuring the laptop is either fully charged or kept charged and that recorded data is properly stored shall be of top priority. Disappointingly, because of the restricted nature of the sites, I was not able to predict and prevent technical problems well enough, although I did use one recording application on my mobile phone as a backup for my laptop in case of emergency. Still, the fifth interview was aborted, because my laptop crashed at the end of the interview without information stored, while my mobile phone surprisingly failed to work properly either to be able to capture the whole interview as an alternative.

Based on this experience, in order to conduct quality interviews in the future, I would always make sure that I will, first of all, have a sensible discussion with my informants over the sites for the interview for better results and second of all, attempt to consider possible technical glitches and prepare alternatives in advance.

6.2.4 Literature review and theoretical framework

Inclusion and social interaction are rather abstract concepts in theory. In comparison, this study is intended to stress the application of inclusion in real life. Specifically, it is designed to explore Chinese parents' concrete opinions on their children's inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens, on basis of their real-life child rearing experience in Norway. It is comprehensible that parents tend not to talk about abstract concepts, like inclusion, directly. Nonetheless, it is the specific aspects they focus on with regard to their children's life in kindergarten that can indirectly shed light on the general topic of inclusion.

Based on this mentality, this study lacks theoretical study on key concepts which are brought up by the informants, such as culture, language and play. Instead, the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan are used more, in link with the findings, in order to underline the selection of the context of this study, which is Norway.

If granted more time and capacity, I would like to look into relevant theories and delve into the theoretical side of the concepts the informants have put forward on the matter of inclusion and social interaction in kindergarten.

6.2.5 The limitation of the researcher

Being a full-time student studying inclusion with previous work experience with families in the field of inclusion, it is unavoidable for me to carry some prejudgment while designing the study and later, processing the findings of the study. Strictly speaking, my own influence on the study as an inexperienced researcher is restrictive. Being a first-time researcher, I was not able to design the whole study very systematically. Moreover, I was not able to predict the efficiency of my performance over this five-month long work period. Without setting up a clear structure for the actual work, my time management of the whole research is far from

being satisfactory. The data transcription took longer time than I had expected. During data transcription, I was unable to concentrate fully on the desk work. Unfortunately and unexpectedly, some medical treatment further distracted me from the work and sadly, affected my performance. Facing pressing deadlines, I went through some psychological stress, which did no good to my already low performance.

Through learning a hard lesson from this research study, I would like to keep reminding myself of the importance of being structured, organized and disciplined for future work and study.

6.2.6 Limited generalization of the study

This study is a small-scale qualitative interview study, looking into five Chinese mothers' opinions on their children's inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens. As the nature of qualitative study determines the limitation of the generalization of its findings, this interview study is bound to provide narrow outcomes on the exploration of Chinese parents' opinions on inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens. Hence, follow-up studies shall continue for further exploration on this matter.

6.3 Implications of the research study

6.3.1 Thorough implementation of the Norwegian Kindergarten Act & Framework Plan

It is evident in this study that the five Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion and social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens correspond well with the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan. Although they contend that because of their Chinese background which nurtures their Chinese way of thinking, they have not been included fully in Norway, there seems to be little conflict between their opinions on child-rearing and kindergarten and the Norwegian kindergarten system. That may be attributed to their higher education experience in Norway and relatively long period of living in Norway. Based on what their children have experienced in the Norwegian kindergarten, the Chinese parents in

this study hold positive attitudes toward their children's inclusion in the Norwegian society in the future. That, to a great extent, is supported by the Norwegian kindergarten system. This systematic reliance determines the meaning of implementing the Norwegian Kindergarten Act and Framework Plan more thoroughly.

6.3.2 More study is needed.

The number of informants in this interview study is five. The small scale of the study limits the generalization of the findings. In addition, the informants in this study all turn out to have high education background and a relatively long living experience in Norway. Most of them are researchers, with one doing language study specifically. Their high education background and sufficient living experience in Norway inevitably influences their answers to my research questions and therefore, narrows down the generalization of this study. As a result, more study of Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction is needed for a more diverse and holistic view on this matter.

6.3.3 Chinese fathers' opinions shall be targeted in the future.

As a limitation of this study, all the Chinese parents interviewed in this study are mothers. As research has proven, fathers play an important role in child rearing in the early years alongside mothers. Therefore, in order to look into Chinese parents' opinions on their children's inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens with a focus on social interaction, it is necessary to take both mothers and fathers' opinions into consideration. The connection between the two parties' opinions can impose an impact on the whole parental influence on child rearing.

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Appendix 1 Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Juan Chen

Erasmus Mundus MA in Special & Inclusive Education

University of Oslo

5th September, 2013

- Research Topic: Chinese parents' opinions on the importance of social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens

- Main Research question: Young Chinese children's parents' opinions on the importance of peer and adult-child social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens in Oslo.

- Sub-questions:
 1. What are Chinese parents' opinions on the importance of social interaction between their children and children's peers and teachers in a Norwegian kindergarten in Oslo?

 2. How do Chinese parents encourage and help develop social interaction between their children and children's peers and teachers in a Norwegian kindergarten in Oslo?

- Interview Objective:

To find out Chinese parents' opinions on the importance of their children's social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens in Oslo, with a focus on parental support for early inclusion of ethnic minority children in Norway.

- Type of Interview: semi-structured (time: 30-45min, max. one hour)

- Question List:

Section	Question	Sub-question	Notes
Introduction	Parent's & children's background	<p>1. When and why did you come to Norway?</p> <p>2. What is your profession in Norway?</p> <p>3. How old is your child?</p> <p>4. Which age group is your child placed in the kindergarten?</p> <p>5. What's the teacher-child ratio in your child's age group?</p> <p>6. How many non-Norwegian children are there in your child's age group in the kindergarten?</p> <p>7. Does your child receive any extra language support in the kindergarten?</p>	

<p>Body</p>	<p>1.parents' opinions on the importance of social interaction between their children and children's peers and teachers in the kindergarten</p>	<p>4.Which age group is your child placed in the kindergarten?</p> <p>5.What's the teacher-child ratio in your child's age group?</p> <p>6.How many non-Norwegian children are there in your child's age group in the kindergarten?</p> <p>7.Does your child receive any extra language support in the kindergarten?</p> <p>1-1. What kind of kindergarten do you regard as a good one for your child?</p> <p>1-2. How would you rank the importance of <u>academics</u>, <u>peer and child-adult social interaction</u>, as well as <u>pastoral care in the kindergarten</u>?</p>	<p>*1-2.Content depends on the answer to the previous question.</p>
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	<p>2.parents encourage and help develop social interaction</p>	<p>1-3. What do you think about social interaction in the kindergarten? -peer -child-adult</p> <p>2-1.How was the beginning when your child just started attending the Norwegian kindergarten?</p> <p>2-2.Have you done anything to help and encourage your child's interaction with peers and teachers in the kindergarten?</p> <p>If yes, what have you done? What is the situation now? How would you describe it?</p>	
<p>Wrap Up</p>	<p>Parents' opinions on inclusion, the current situation of inclusion in Norwegian kindergartens & their own roles</p>	<p>1.What is your understanding of inclusion?</p> <p>2.Do you see any connection between social interaction and</p>	

		<p>inclusion?</p> <p>If yes, what do you think can be done to enhance social interaction between your child, his/her peers and teachers, in order to help your child to be better included in the kindergarten?</p> <p>3.What do you think can contribute to inclusion in the Norwegian kindergarten?</p> <p>4.How do you think about your role in the inclusion of your child in the Norwegian kindergarten?</p> <p>5.What will be your focus on your child's development in the future?</p> <p>6.How do you find your life in Norway as a Chinese?</p> <p>7.Is there anything else that you would like to add?</p>	
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Appendix 2 Permission Letter from NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Ivar Morken
Institutt for spesialpedagogikk
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Postboks 1140 Blindern
0318 OSLO

Vår dato: 12.09.2013

Vår ref: 35372 / 3 / JSL

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 05.09.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

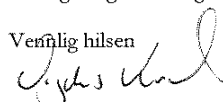
35372	<i>Chinese parents' opinions on the importance of social interaction in Norwegian kindergartens in Oslo, Norway</i>
Behandlingsansvarlig	<i>Universitetet i Oslo, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
Daglig ansvarlig	<i>Ivar Morken</i>
Student	<i>Juan Chen</i>

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>.

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen


Vigdís Namtvedt Kvalheim


Juni Skjold Lexau

Kontaktperson: Juni Skjold Lexau tlf: 55 58 36 01
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering
Kopi: Juan Chen, Økern Torgvei 92, H0819, 0589 OSLO

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Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 35372

Based on the information we have received about the project, the Data Protection Official can not see that the project will entail a processing of personal data by electronic means, or an establishment of a manual personal data filing system containing sensitive personal data. The project will therefore not be subject to notification according to the Personal Data Act.

The Data Protection Official presupposes that when transcribing interviews, or when otherwise transferring data to a computer, one does not register any information that makes it possible to identify individuals, neither directly nor indirectly. All electronic processing of data in the project must be done anonymously. Anonymous information is defined as information that in no way can identify individuals in the data material, neither directly by name or social security number, indirectly through a combination of background information or a list of names referring to a reference number, or through an encryption formula and code.

Appendix 3 Information Note

Information Note

This interview study is on Chinese parents' opinions on social interaction in the Norwegian kindergarten in Oslo. Information involved in this study will be handled with full confidentiality and anonymity. Informants are free to withdraw anytime during the study.

The Supervisor of the student researcher of this study is Professor Ivar Morken at the University of Oslo. His telephone number is 22858123. If the informants have any questions, they are free to contact Professor Morken.

By this, informants agree to be interviewed by Master's Student at University of Oslo, Juan Chen, and to let her make use of their statements in her research and academic publications.

Informant's Signature _____

Date _____

Student Researcher: Juan Chen

Mobile: 40943883

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