Loose Coupling Within Special Education

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ABSTRACT

Since the Salamanca Framework was established in 1994, countries have made a concerted effort to work to promote special education, namely inclusive education or inclusion. The recognition of students with special educational needs (SEN) has lead to national policies in which students with SEN are brought into the classroom alongside their peers. Despite these efforts, there is a disconnect between policy and practice which ultimately prevents students with SEN from entering the classroom, or from receiving an education. This thesis looks at that loose coupling of policy and practice within the special education field by analyzing the practices of nine different countries, which contradict the policy that was first implemented.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that past two decades has brought about many changes in promotion of special education within the international community, namely inclusive education or inclusion. With the establishment of the Salamanca Framework in 1994, countries have individually set goals in line with the promotion of inclusive education in order to provide their students with a course of education despite the disability with which the student has been identified. These efforts provide a much more level playing for students with special educational needs (SEN) when it comes to accessing and receiving an education like their non-SEN peers. While there has been a great effort put forth by the international community and individual countries themselves, the road ahead is still a rocky one that requires great attention.

To give some context, prior to the 1990 World Conference on Education For All (EFA), it was estimated that 500 million people throughout the world had a disability resulting in a sensory, physical or mental impairment (UNESCO, 1990). Of these statistics, 40 percent of the disabled population were children (UNESCO, 1990). Breaking this statistic down further, 80 percent of these disabled youth were living in developing countries, and less than two percent were receiving special
services of any kind (UNESCO, 1990). It was at this point that a general consensus had concluded that something must be done about the issue.

As mentioned in the 2011 World Report on Disability published by the World Bank and World Health Organization, education is important for the individual to participate in the community both economically and socially. However, people with disabilities are more likely to be excluded from such opportunities because of the enrollment gap between disabled and non-disabled students. Despite only representing ten to twenty percent (depending on the statistic) of the overall population, people with disabilities are greatly over-represented in the population that is living in poverty (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Though today’s statistics report that the number of children with a disability between ages zero and fourteen is 93 million, and the number of people with a disability under the age of 18 is 150 million (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). This number is representative of a large sized country in terms of population. The impact of not educating people with disabilities would be like eliminating the country of Mexico from participating in the global economy.

Today as we look at these efforts, we still see there is a significant gap between disabled and non-disabled student enrollment. (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011) Students with disabilities are less likely to be provided with a full course of primary education as mandated by goal two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With these goals set to expire in 2015, in just a short years time, we still face the problem of being unable to reduce poverty through
education as intended by the MDGs. Though the World Conference on Education For All set a precedent for educating people with disabilities, we still see struggles in providing education to children with disabilities. The cause of this can be anything from poor policy implementation, lack of funding, having a differentiating definitions of what is special education. Indeed, “there are no universally agreed definitions for such concepts as special needs education and inclusive education, which hampers comparison of data” (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011, p. 209). Overall, there are still many obstacles in providing education for people with special needs.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore disparities between projected and actual enrollment numbers of students with SEN. While evidence of a policy promoting educating students with SEN is clear, the hypothesis that loose-coupling between policy and practice best explains why students with SEN receiving the educational services that are mandated by policy must be explored. Ultimately, this thesis will be able to explain why we are still seeing disparities in enrollment numbers among students with SEN.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Inclusion in Practice

Diane L. Ferguson (2008) clearly highlights the concept of inclusion in “International trends in inclusive education: the continuing challenge to teach each one and everyone.” Here we are presented with the idea that everyone should be educated whether or not he or she has a SEN. She begins with the debate of appropriately matching educational services for students with SEN. She then highlights those systems (namely those in Europe and the United States) which exhibit a general education classroom for all students, in contrast to other systems which parallel special education and general education classrooms. Since the 1990s, The United States and Europe have accepted the concept of inclusion, and now have 80-90 percent of students with SEN in inclusive environments (Ferguson, 2008). While encouraging from an inclusiveness perspective, we don't know what happens when the students are in the school. For example, while the UK and Norway provide for inclusive schools, these schools emphasize a mainstreaming concept in which students are in separate classrooms from their non-disabled peers (Ferguson, 2008). As she highlights these systems, she also analyzes the percentages of students with SEN included in the general classroom. She found that while these
percentages show an increase since the 1980s across states and countries, many states still do not meet the national standard in terms of how many students are to be included (Ferguson, 2008). Furthermore, she notes that minority students, poor students and those with disabilities are at a greater disadvantage within the current system than others in their grade level. As Ferguson concludes, she offers up important possible next steps that improve the system. These include innovative practices, such as moving away from the classical teaching model of the teacher dictating to students taking notes, and also creating a much more cohesive team amongst fellow teachers (Ferguson, 2008). What Ferguson (2008) reminds us is we have to focus on the numbers on a much deeper level in order to provide an equitable education. Some countries see inclusion as bringing students with SEN into the classroom, while others see it as placing most in a separate one.

Svjetlana Crucic contributes by explaining the various debates that have occurred within special education since the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. Here she primarily focuses on the discourse of inclusion and its various conceptualizations throughout the international community. She also expanded on this debate by analyzing the PK-12 performance of students in inclusive classrooms. She found that across qualitative studies, students with SEN in the general classroom develop a better sense of self, though other factors played a role in marginalization and/or exclusion, such as the power of the teacher or the student’s social status (Crucic, 2009). To expand on this, Crucic analyzes teachers’ attitudes by pointing out positive aspects (i.e. increased social
interaction) and negative aspects (i.e. lack of materials) (2009). In addition, students don't always receive the positive aspects of inclusion for various reasons, such as bullying or the school simply assimilating instead of including (Crucic, 2009). The overall conclusion is inclusion can be successful, though there are many factors that must be taken into consideration before success.

The World Bank published in 2011 World Report on Disability, which highlights the different types of special education models that occur across Europe. These models are special education schools, separate classes in integrated schools, and inclusive classes. The irony behind this is that the fourth point in the 1994 Salamanca Declaration clearly stipulates promotion of inclusive education. Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson (2005) are able to provide us with this definition of inclusion in “A Disability Rights in Education Modelfor evaluating inclusive education.” “The fundamental principle of Inclusive Education is that all children should have the opportunity to learn together” (Peters, Johnstone& Ferguson, 2005, 142). While Peters, Johnstone& Ferguson provide a clear definition of inclusion, they acknowledge that within a policy, inclusion can mean many different things. Here they clearly highlight the intentions of international policies such as Education For All (EFA) and the Salamanca Framework. They also discuss the problems that create barriers for the success of inclusion, such as philosophical mindsets of educators and lack of funding. Furthermore, they developed a Disability Rights in Education Model (DREM) that argues all levels of structures should be analyzed in order to create educational reform. DREM also allows for adequate analysis of an educational
system on multiple levels, most importantly at whatever level policies are failing (Peters, Johnstone & Ferguson, 2005).

**Loose Coupling in Inclusion**

By analyzing inclusion in practice, the literature suggests that problems in inclusion are a matter of the system or as Peters, Johnstone and Ferguson point out an issue of policy. Essentially, the idea of inclusion is favorable as seen through global initiatives such as EFA and, to a degree, MDGs, however there is a disconnect when it comes to the actual implementation of inclusion, either in policy or practice. After further reading, the best explanation for this is the loose coupling of policy within inclusion. To understand this we look to Orton and Weick (1990) who explain that loose coupling refers to a system where elements affect each other in some manner, but maintain a degree of separateness. They go on to explain, “an organization (top, middle, or bottom) contains interdependent elements that vary in the number and strength of their interdependencies” (1990, p. 204). Hallet (2010) delves deeper into this concept of loose coupling in “The Myth Incarnate: Recoupling Processes, Turmoil, and Inhabited Institutions in an Urban Elementary School”. He explains that education systems exhibit loose coupling as reforms may have mandated change, but the schools remain the same. Singal (2006) provides an example of this where her analysis of the Indian education system shows great disparities from the lack of necessary funding to the lack of inclusive practices despite writing it into policy. Overall, loose coupling has the ability to explain many short falls in inclusion.
Loose coupling has three recurring effects according to Orton and Weick (1990). The first is the reduction in necessary relationships. Unfortunately, education relies on relations from the micro to the macro in order to sustain an education system. Without these connections we see trends where policy is not fully implemented. The second effect is that systems can “accurately register their environments through requisite variety. (A system has requisite variety to the extent that its elements serve as a medium that can register inputs with accuracy)” (Orton & Weick, 1990, p. 210). This means that it is easier for systems to declare themselves a legitimate system with little requisites. As an example, India’s special education system is considered legitimate because they have special education practices in their policy without actually practicing it. The third effect is behavioral and cognitive discretion occurs. With behavioral discretion, top organizations have less ability to monitor lower organizations in a loosely coupled system, which means these practices are not guaranteed on the micro-level. The cognitive discretion allows for people to create their own concepts and use logic in order to carryout the process (Orton & Weick, 1990). Because many cultures do not see people with disabilities as people, it is logical for people in these cultures to exclude people with disabilities from society. While what special education systems need is a more tightly coupled system, what we see and experience with special education systems is a loosely coupled system that doesn’t guarantee an education for students with disabilities.
To contrast the loosely coupled system, a tightly coupled system would create a close connection between policy and practice. Almoosa, Storey and Keller (2012) use the United States as a model for making recommendations to Kuwait. They begin by highlighting the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and how it mandates that “children with disabilities have the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and are educated with their peers without disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to meet their unique needs” (Almoosa, Storey & Keller, 2012, p. 998). They later talk about the history of education policy in the U.S., highlighting the Civil Rights movement as a catalyst for minorities to claim their rights and protections as stipulated in legislation. This close connection of legislation and cultural awareness in the U.S. has provided a tightly coupled system where policy is practiced. Almoosa, Storey and Keller use the U.S. model to propose recommendations to Kuwait and even go on to say “[p]eople in Kuwait need to realize that inclusion is both possible and necessary and influence teachers’ attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities by providing additional training to develop teaching methods and techniques” (2012, p. 1007).
CHAPTER THREE
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this thesis is to conceptualize special education on an international scale within the parameters of policy practice. Since the World Conference on Education For All in Jomtein, Thailand in 1990, there is no doubt that special education practices and policies have grown. The World Report on Disabilities (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011) has clearly highlighted an increase in completion of primary education across decades for both disabled and non-disabled people. However, the problem remains on the micro-level where special education is not a guarantee for those with disabilities. The hypothesis of this thesis is that special education practices with the intent to promote inclusion are being underutilized despite governments’ efforts to implement these practices within policy.

To better understand inclusion, a clear definition must be set. Ainscow and Cesar (2006) provide five understandings inclusion. First, “Inclusion as concerned with disability and ‘special educational needs”’ (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 233). This statement refers to the concept that inclusion only focuses on those with SEN or disabilities. Though it is true that inclusion is not just about the student with an SEN, we cannot wholly reject this viewpoint as it promotes the rights of the student. Still,

Second, “Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusions” (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 234). Here, many countries see special education as a behavioral issue rather than providing students with SEN a learning environment with their peers. For example, it is this kind of mentality that would exclude pregnant teenage girls because they are “difficult” and as a result, create a significant disproportions of enrollments amongst males and females in the upper grade levels (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 234).

Third, “Inclusion as about all groups vulnerable to exclusion” (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 234). This idea stems from the notion of social inclusion and social exclusion that determines whether or not a student is a participant in the school. This concept is fluid as it can range in various situations like a student being expelled for behavioral issues to a student just being from a poor community (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 234).

Fourth, “Inclusion as the promotion of a school for all” (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 234). This concept centers on the idea that a school is for all people. It was a reaction to the social-class-based inequalities experienced in schools. This meaning can be construed in two different ways. The first being the idea of the common school, which was designed to discourage inequalities and disparities. Another, like in Norway, used this idea to develop of national identity (Ainscow&
Cesar, 2006, pp. 234-235). Overall, the promotion of school for all breaks down the barriers students might encounter in the school.

Finally, “Inclusion as Education for All” (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 235). Here we learn about the conception of Education for All (EFA) in the 1990s. The purpose of this was to set an international standard in order to address the need to increase access and participation in education. As countries continued to fail to meet the standards, the attention was refocused, particularly in reference to the disproportionate number of girls in the classrooms. The debate looks to the different viewpoints in policy making, thinking and practices throughout the world (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006, p. 235).

Like the last understanding, it is a common ideal that every child should be educated. Because the initial intent for the Salamanca Framework was to promote inclusive education for students with disabilities and was agreed upon by 92 different governments at the time of its conception, this paper will use the first understanding of inclusion, “Inclusion as concerned with disability and ‘special educational needs’,” to set up the framework and understanding of special education.

One of the themes Cohen (1987) presents is that policy depends on practice. As we have seen in the case of India (Singal, 2006), often times legislation has been put into place, but ideas and practices are controversial to the development of civilization through instructional inheritance (Cohen, 1987). Because of this, policy practices within education must be fully carried out at all levels to prove effective. After a review of literature, I have found that loose coupling of policy is a
phenomenon that could best explain why inclusion isn’t fully utilized. Essentially, loose coupling suggests that there are “independent components that do not react responsively” (Orton & Weick, 1990, p. 205). Ferguson (2008) demonstrates this as “the focus of special education reform was essentially structural” (2008, p. 109) but “schools have not changed nearly enough despite repeated waves of reforms and even restructuring” (2008, p. 117). This concept best explains why many European countries don’t fully promote inclusion, or other countries may have created the reform but it continues to remain only on paper. It also can explain policy practices on a macro- and micro-level.

In order to fully conceptualize this, this thesis will look into a sample of countries that have agreed to the Salamanca Framework. To this end, a quantitative sample of students will be analyzed to understand which students with SEN are attending school, what type of school they are attending, and how this has changed since the Salamanca Framework. This will provide statistical evidence as to whether countries are adhering to their commitment to the Salamanca Framework as well as highlight the loose coupling of policies within those countries. The final result will support my working hypothesis that special education practices with the intent to promote inclusion are being underutilized despite governments’ efforts to implement these practices within policy.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The nature of special education is unique in itself because there is still a significant gap between disabled and non-disabled students enrolled in schools (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). It is also a hot issue in the global community and has been one for decades now. Because of this, the research question is “Does the theory of loose coupling within policy best explain why there is an under-enrollment of students with special educational needs?”

The research conceptualizes the gap between policy and practice within special education that is most like the result of loose coupling of policy. It also explains the discrepancies in enrollment of students with SEN between projected and actual enrollments.

In order to answer the research question, a mixed method approach was used to best conceptualize the inclusion landscape. While the research was mixed, the standard practice of research where my quantitative research will precede the qualitative research was used to explain why there is a discrepancy in students with SEN being served in each individual country researched. This approach will explain the landscape of inclusion and students with SEN and show that many are not being included. The qualitative portion was used to explain why students are not being included in the classroom and how it relates to loose coupling theory.
To keep the research discrete and limited, three countries were selected from three regions of the world based on a convenience-based sample. The regions are Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Countries from the European region are the United Kingdom, Greece and Spain. Countries from the Sub-Saharan African region are Uganda, South Africa and Ghana. Countries from Asia are India, China and Malaysia. The countries chosen had sufficient English-language secondary scholarship. A one-to-one quantitative/qualitative analysis was used of the information collected to best explain: 1) what are the actual and projected numbers of students with SEN, and 2) what are the causes of this problem. To find information on enrollments of students with SEN, individual countries census taking websites, position papers from national councils, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics website and other national or governmental statistical websites or documents were used to lead to educational data in order to collect the data needed to portray the projected and actual enrollment of students with special needs.

To further explain the discrepancies between the projected and actual number of students with SEN enrolled in the quantitative portion of the research, I used the chi-square test for goodness of fit. For the chi-squares of each country, \( \chi^2(1, N = 1) = 3.84, p < .05 \). With a consistent null hypothesis of the population of students with SEN accounts for ten percent of the student population, leaving the alternative hypothesis being population of students with SEN does not equal ten percent of the student population. As a result, any chi-square result higher than 3.84 means that we must reject the null hypothesis and accept that there is an outside
influencing factor that is preventing students with SEN from accessing schools. I chose to use percentages of these populations as it provided a consistent outcome that supported there is an outside influencing factor that is preventing students with SEN from accessing schools and education.

For the projected percentage, I simply used the projected percentage of people living with disabilities according to the United Nations Enable website (ten percent) compared against the actual percentage of students with SEN. This website was selected as it is a universal objective source through the United Nations that provides a global perspective of people with disabilities. This helped explain the relationship between projected percentage of students with SEN enrolled by the actual percentage of students with SEN enrollment numbers in order to determine whether or not there is phenomenon occurring outside of the given population.

Once the data and the secondary scholarship were collected, the discrepancies between the projected and actual enrollment percentages of students with SEN were revealed. I was also able to highlight areas in the policy and practice gap using the theory of loose coupling in policy. It also showed me whether or not the loose coupling was occurring on macro-scale (between national and international policy), on a meso-scale (between local authorities and national policies) or a micro-scale (occurring amongst community actors such as school authorities and teachers). This answered the research question in that the quantitative research will put a spot light on the issue of under-enrollment of
students with SEN and the qualitative research allowed me demonstrate the reasons that loose coupling of policy can explain for this under-enrollment.
CHAPTER FIVE

EUROPE

England

England has been implementing inclusive education since 1997 with the election of the New Labour party as a result of the 1994 World Conference in Special Education (Hodkinson 2010). Along with this, a new curriculum was developed to meet the needs of those with SEN. The inclusive education process in England is a political one, with a top-down approach. Hodkinson (2010) points out that this top-down approach creates the rift in implementation of inclusive education.

To expand, England had 8,084,950 students enrolled in school in the 2009/2010 (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). This also includes the 226,210 students with SEN, which represents approximately 2.8 percent of the overall student population. When we look to the projected percentage of students with SEN at ten percent, we can clearly see that there is discrepancy between the number students SEN who are enrolled versus the number of students with SEN that should be enrolled. The following chi-square demonstrates the underrepresentation of students with SEN in schools.
Table 1. Enrollment in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>W/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>97.2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi_1^2 = \frac{(2.8 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-7.2)^2}{10} = \frac{51.84}{10} = 5.184
\]
\[
\chi_2^2 = \frac{(97.2 - 90)^2}{90} = \frac{(7.2)^2}{90} = \frac{51.84}{90} = 0.576
\]
\[
\chi^2 = 5.76
\]

Here \( \chi^2(1, N = 1) = 5.76, p < .05 \), well above the critical value of 3.84. Ultimately this shows that there is a phenomenon happening outside the regular population that is influencing the number of students with SEN being educated.

So what is happening to influence the low representation of students with SEN? When we look to the definition of SEN according to the Education Act 1996, section 312, a student with SEN has a clear learning disability that clearly sets the child’s educational needs as significantly different than their peers (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2012). It recognizes the need for special provisions for students with SEN so that they may be provided with some form of education that meets those needs. Here we presented with the phenomenon where there is a clear policy set in place and yet there is an underrepresentation of students with SEN enrolled in school in England.

Hodkinson (2010) analyzes this underrepresentation on three levels. First he stipulates that the government has put an accountability measure on the national
curriculum. With this, he points out that schools cannot adhere to these measures as it does not allow for them to reflect upon the changes made in order to improve teaching practice and curricula.

On the second level, he points to the local authorities. With the lack of provision of monies going towards special education, variations of special education implementation have emerged leaving children in a system without adequate provision. He later goes on to note that many of the special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) were not provided with the proper funding to support their students, thus creating problems within implementation.

The third level refers to the teachers themselves. This can be seen in two different ways. One is that teachers only seem to be supportive of inclusion given that the student has a mild SEN. For those with behavioral problems or require more attention, teachers would more likely prefer that they were excluded. The other is that of the lack of training for teachers. Many teachers who do work with students with SEN feel that there is inadequate training and therefore inhibits their work.

Overall, we see a clear loose coupling of policy and practice within England’s Special Educational system. Clearly, there is a tight coupling of policy on the macro-scale as “[t]here can be little doubt that the problematic nature of integration coupled with the statements made at the World Conference in Special Education (UNESCO, 1994) led to the emergence of inclusive education in England” (Hodkinson, 2010, p. 61). Where the loose coupling begins to break down is at the
meso-level where it then trickles down to the micro-level. It begins with the
government promoting policies that reinforce accountability, which is then
perceived as unattainable because of the inability to reflect upon teaching practices
and curricula. It then moves down to the local authorities, who then mismanage
funds and as a result don't provide adequate facilities or provisions to ensure that
students with SEN are being properly educated. Finally, we see that a combination
of teachers’ attitudes and lack of teacher training does not provide for the overall
educational needs of students with SEN. Overall, England’s policy may be tightly
coupled with international policy, but is loosely coupled amongst policy-makers and
through agents that carry-out the policies such as local actors and teachers.

**Greece**

In an attempt to streamline inclusion, Greece has informally introduced the
implementation of SENCOs into the Greek educational system (Agaliotis, I & Kalyva
E, 2011). Agaliotis and Kalyva (2011) address a critical point in the Greek education
system in that inclusion is very prominent within Greek policy, but the policy isn’t
well recognized in practice. To better understand this context, of the 1,486,410
students enrolled in both primary and secondary schools the 2009/2010 school
year, only 8,139 receiving special education services (Hellenic Statistical Authority,
2011), which represent only 0.5 percent of the student population. When we apply
this to the projected number of students with SEN as 148,641, the discrepancy
arises.
To better understand the discrepancy, the chi-square shows us that something outside of the population is influencing SEN enrollments in Greece.

Table 2. Enrollment in Greece

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi^2_1 = \frac{(0.5 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-9.5)^2}{10} = \frac{90.25}{10} = 9.025
\]

\[
\chi^2_2 = \frac{(90 - 99.5)^2}{90} = \frac{(9.5)^2}{90} = \frac{90.25}{90} = 1.003
\]

\[
\chi^2 = 10.028
\]

The result $\chi^2(1, N = 1) = 10.028, p < .05$, well above the critical value of 3.84. One of the phenomena causing this is the loose coupling of policy within Greece.

These discrepancies may be seen at one level. As Agaliotis and Kavyla point out, clearly laws, policies, documentation, etc. are in place at the national government level, but are interrupted at the local levels either because of school conditions or teachers perceptions that inhibit the implementation of special education policy (2011). Mostly, this is seen at the micro-level where teachers hold great autonomy in the Greek educational system. While the legislation mandates that every child is to be educated, which is similarly expressed within the Salamanca Framework, teachers’ attitude lean towards a more restrictive environment for students with SEN, which results in pull out programs for them (Agaliotis & Kavyla, 2011). Teachers often times also cite “time shortage, lack of specialized knowledge
on their side, the high demands of the curriculum, and potential problems in the academic progress of non-disabled students” (Agaliotis & Kavyla, 2011, p. 544) as reasons to avoid inclusion. The loose coupling of policy seen through the lack of its initiative in practice and thus prevents Greece's special education policy to be fully carried-out.

Within Greece’s educational system, we see that Greece has a clear goal and agenda set for special education, namely inclusion. Here we see loose coupling of policy occurring as result of resistance and hesitation from the teachers within Greece.

In the Greek educational system teachers enjoy a high degree of autonomy in their classrooms, and despite the fact that all decisions on educational policy are officially being made centrally (by the Ministry of Education), there are several examples of legislation (e.g. legislation on assessment of school quality, teacher accountability, and classroom organization), that have been neutralized by the open opposition of the Teachers’ Unions or by the tacit resistance or uncooperative stance of schools or individual teachers (Agaliotis & Kavyla, 2011, p. 544).

Essentially, this high level of autonomy prevents Greece’s special education system to advance. Loose coupling in Greece is occurring on the micro-level and will only change once teachers’ attitudes have changed.

**Spain**

Spain holds an extensive history when it comes to the inclusion of students with SEN. “Initial initiatives can be traced back to the sixteenth century and were intended for children with sensory disabilities” (Cardona, 2009, p.4). Spain’s own city has even lent its name to the famous international document, the Salamanca
Framework, which has revolutionized special education, namely inclusion. With all of these efforts, it is easy to assume that special education and inclusion are well-respected institutions within Spain.

In the nineteenth century, the deaf and blind were provided with education through charitable organizations, and those with mental illness also relied on the care of aid-providing institutions (Cardona, 2009). From here segregation of people with special needs developed, which carried on into the twentieth century. We see a reflection of this in the 2009/2010 educational statistics as only 106,977 of 4,495,188 are identified with having an SEN. Essentially, 2.4 percent of the population is receiving special education service. When \( \chi^2(1, N = 1) = 6.418, p < .05 \), this indicates that something outside the population is influencing the low SEN enrollment.

Table 3. Enrollment in Spain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi_1^2 = \frac{(2.4 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-7.6)^2}{10} = \frac{57.76}{10} = 5.776
\]

\[
\chi_2^2 = \frac{(97.6 - 90)^2}{90} = \frac{(7.6)^2}{90} = \frac{57.76}{90} = 0.642
\]

\[ \chi^2 = 6.418 \]

While it is not as drastic as Greece or England, something is creating a rift between policy and practice.
As Cardona notes, three key pieces of legislation break the cycle of segregation and promote the concept of inclusion: Act on Social Integration of People with Disabilities, Act on General Organization of Educational System, and Act on Education Quality (2009). In her study, Cardona noted that the enrollment of students in special education schools has decreased since the enactment of these laws. Along with these new laws, she notes that a new thinking must also be implemented, referring to general teacher and societal attitudes. The practices of teachers do not respond as favorably as the enrollment results. Despite legislations’ demand to promote an inclusive environment, schools are using separate settings depending on the students with SEN. “Students with autism and other personality disorders, as well as students with multiple disabilities are the two groups of students with SEN with lower rates of inclusion in regular classroom placements.” (Cardona, 2009, p. 9) Even though inclusion in Spain is regarded as the education (with proper supports) of all children in the general neighborhood educational setting, it is clear that certain groups are excluded. Therefore, the policy to practice gap occurs at the meso-level, somewhere between the national government level and the local authorities.

Cardona also notes that teachers also influence the trend of student with SEN enrollment. While delivery of services are increasingly more aligned with legislation, “teachers are not always responding favorably to the need to collaborate with other school staff, which may indicate the limited training they have received in collaboration as well as the additional time needed for effective collaboration”
(Cardona, 2009, p.9). Because teachers do not feel they receive enough support, students are still being excluded from the general classroom. In addition to the loose coupling occurring on the meso-level insufficient training for teachers take place at the micro-level.

Spain’s loose coupling of special education policy clearly occurs on the meso-level and the micro level. The loose coupling on the meso-level suggests select students with SEN are segregated into a different setting. The loose coupling on the micro-levels occurs when teachers need more training in order to manage collaboration efforts more effectively. Within Spain, it is clear that Cardona’s suggestion of “new thinking, and renovated practices” (2009, p.9) must take place in order to fully utilize inclusion legislation.
For China, inclusion is as much a part of its Confucian philosophy as it is its law (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011). “The idea of a da tong society, which literally means ‘The Great Together’, is a dream deeply rooted in Chinese culture, and has been pursued for thousands of years, up to the present day” (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011, p. 360). Also, when we look Article 25 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, it clearly states that general education facilities are to be open to those with disabilities and should provide proper supports for those with disabilities. This kind of rhetoric in both China’s philosophical practice and its law is comparable to both Education For All and the Salamanca Framework in providing for a tight coupling of policy between national law and international standards. But philosophy and policy don’t tell the entire story.

As of 2009, only 417,400 of 259,703,000 students with disabilities were enrolled in special education schools in China (KPMG, 2010). This is less than 0.1 percent of the population.
Using the chi-square test, \( \chi^2(1, N = 1) = 10.89, p < .05 \), meaning there is a phenomenon influencing the low SEN enrollment.

While China in fact has inclusive classrooms, many students are not accounted for. Yu, Su and Li (2011) note that while 2,460,000 children between the ages of 6 and 14 have a disability, over two million of them are not enrolled in school. Furthermore, these numbers indicate that only 0.64 percent of students are identified with having a disability. Because a tally of 2,460,000 with disability is so remote from the projected number of 25,970,300 students with SEN, we can see that there is a clear loose coupling of policy and practice.

Chinese government policy provides for inclusive special education. Yu, Su and Lui describe the policy, which mandates normal schools must offer courses in teaching special education and provides adequate training for teachers in special education practices, all of which are to occur at various levels (Yu, Su and Lui, 2011). In addition to these courses offered in normal schools, teacher training centers in

### Table 4. Enrollment in China

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
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<td>99.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi^2 = \frac{(0.1 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-9.9)^2}{10} = \frac{98.01}{10} = 9.801
\]

\[
\chi^2 = \frac{(99.9 - 90)^2}{90} = \frac{(9.9)^2}{90} = \frac{98.01}{90} = 1.098
\]

\[
\chi^2 = 10.89
\]
the larger cities like Beijing and Guangzhou help facilitate training for special education teachers. Thus Chinese policy sets out to address education of students with SEN.

However, despite these efforts, the existing infrastructure of special education does not provide adequate support for students with SEN (Yu, Su & Lui, 2011). To begin with, great disparities in implementation exist between rural and urban regions (and even within districts within urban regions). Furthermore, special education is not well developed as a whole, with input and support inadequate, less competent staff, and antiquated methodology and idea of special education. Most importantly, funding is unavailable with only 5.5 billion renmenbi ($850 million) to serve 129,000 students with SEN (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011). Where over 2.5 million children have been identified with a disability, this indicates vast majority of students with SEN go underserved. Because of these issues within implementation and infrastructure, we see that loose coupling of policy and practice occurs at the meso-level. While the law is in place, it simply does not have necessary support to uphold it.

The teaching staff can also be an obstacle to providing education to students with SEN. Yu, Su and Liu note that teacher attitudes prevent students with SEN from being included in the classroom. Not only do the majority of teachers disagree that inclusion provides better learning outcomes for students with SEN, but they also state that inclusion provides no benefit to students with SEN whatsoever, and furthermore, they would prefer not to teach students with SEN (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011).
This may be in part due to the Chinese charity model of disability in which Chinese can aid and support people with disabilities, but people with disabilities do not have the same basic rights to education and employment. Though there is a shift towards a more harmonious model of society (one that follows Confucian philosophy as stated earlier) (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011). Teachers’ attitudes still suggest that a charity model is in place, hindering the education of students with SEN. Due to this model of charity, we can see a loose coupling of practice and policy at the micro-level where individual actors prevent students with SEN from an education that is provided for in the country’s in law.

As China progresses, one can hope to see a more tightly coupling of law and practice within special education. It is clear that the law mandates that students with SEN be educated, which is also represented in international standards. Unfortunately, the lack of infrastructure hinders development of special education inclusion practices. Also, teacher attitude and inadequate training account for the sub-par education that students with SEN receive for those enrolled. As Yu, Su and Liu suggest, policy development and professional development are crucial for China’s special education practices to be fully realized.

India

While India is politically making efforts to develop and promote special education, the number of people identified with disabilities proves that they have an up hill battle to climb. As Singal (2009) describes, the 2001 Census and the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 58th projects that 18 to 22 million people in
India have a disability. This contrasts with the World Health Organization’s prediction of approximately 40 million people living with a disability in India. Clearly this shows a disparity in identifying people with disabilities. Furthermore, Singal also notes that the Registrar General of India acknowledges that data on disability in India are unreliable because methods don’t account for, or minimize, social stigma factors when it comes to disability. The same could be said for the entire education system in India.

To gain a better perspective on India’s special education system, Singal states that the national census suggests only 28 percent of children with disabilities were actually enrolled in school (2009). When applied to the number of children who have been identified as having a special need in the 2008 data set (2,621,077) (Singal, 2009), the result is that only 733,901 students with SEN (or about 0.4 percent of the student population) are in fact being educated within India. When 196,105,859 (UNESCO, 2013) students in India are being educated, the projected number of students with SEN should be 19,610,585. Using the chi-square test, $\chi^2(1, N = 1) = 10.24, p < .05$ shows that there is an outside factor contributing to the low SEN student population.
Table 5. Enrollment in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>99.6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
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\[
\chi^2_1 = \frac{(0.4 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-9.6)^2}{10} = \frac{92.16}{10} = 9.216
\]

\[
\chi^2_2 = \frac{(99.6 - 90)^2}{90} = \frac{(9.6)^2}{90} = \frac{92.16}{90} = 1.024
\]

\[
\chi^2 = 10.24
\]

Both social and political factors contribute to the low SEN student population. Singal (2009) acknowledges that families play a role in the disclosure of family members with disabilities. This is because the strong hierarchical system within those families discourage the reporting of someone with a disability due to social stigma. This is not the only cause, however, as structural factors such as castes, gender, religion, etc., intersect with disability, resulting in marginalization and poverty.

The government’s actions are also certainly a factor in special education in India. Article 41 of the Indian Constitution promotes the rights of people with disabilities. The policy derived from this section of the constitution demonstrates a tightly coupled effort for the education of children with SEN to the Millennium Development Goals. It states that economic capacity and development are necessary to promote “securing the right to work, old age, sickness and disablement” (Singal, 2009, p. 7). However, it later cites the clause “within the limits” in Article 26 of the
constitution (Singal, 2009). This alludes to the notion that the government can only provide for a few facilities, resulting in poor educational results for students with SEN.

Within India, loose coupling occurs on three levels. The first is the micro-level where individual family members fear the social stigma of having a family member with disabilities, which prevents the proper identification of people with SEN. Because the social stigma is a result of cultural norm, the second level loose coupling could be argued as occurring on the meso-level as well. Most importantly however is that the loose coupling is occurring mostly on macro-level, as it can be argued that the government’s efforts are not extending its full abilities in providing children with SEN a proper and effective education. With all of these facets in mind, it is clear that the loose coupling of policy and practice is occurring within India.

**Malaysia**

Malaysia introduced inclusive education in response to UNESCO’s Education for All in an effort to encourage interaction between students with and without SEN (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006). Here, students with SEN are either partly or fully included in classrooms at the primary and secondary levels. However, there remains great confusion as to what how inclusion is defined in Malaysia. Policymakers and practitioners don’t have a clear understanding of inclusive education and the policy itself does not provide that clear understanding nor a definition. (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006) “AktaPendidikan 1996 (Education Act 1996) explains that the national context towards special education is based on the principle to integrate and to make
inclusive special education students who have the right to be alienated as and when necessary” (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006, p. 38).

To better understand the current loose coupling of inclusive education in Malaysia, it is important to start by looking at the student enrolment rate. In 2012, 5,086,180 students were enrolled in Malaysia. Using ten percent for the projected number of students with SEN, the number should be 508,618. In fact Malaysia has only enrolled 50,294 students with SEN (making up only one percent of the student population) in both the regular education setting and in special schools. In this case, \( \chi^2(1, N = 1) = 10.24, p < .05. \)

Table 6. Enrollment in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi^1 = \frac{(1 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-9)^2}{10} = \frac{81}{10} = 8.1
\]

\[
\chi^2 = \frac{(90 - 99)^2}{90} = \frac{(9)^2}{90} = \frac{81}{90} = 0.9
\]

With this discrepancy, clearly there is something in Malaysia preventing students with SEN from being educated.

The disconnect in government policy began at the macro-level. Education for All and the Salamanca declaration were geared towards the inclusive education of all students with SEN. This has even been extended to the inclusion of all students
with the Millennium Development Goals. Because countries and communities alike have not been able to distinguish a clear definition of inclusion, the concept of “all” leaves itself to be diluted with definitions, much like the case in Malaysia. “According to the Malaysian Ministry of Education, students with special needs are those who are visually handicapped, or partially or fully deaf or suffer from the disability to learn.” (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006, p. 36).

Worth considering is that in Malaysia a student may have a special need, such as paralysis or a mild form of cerebral palsy, that does not warrant the label the “disability to learn.” As a result, students who have physical or sensory impairments, or other mental or emotional conditions that may not fall into the categories defined by the 1996 Education Act, are either not identified or are excluded from the classroom because their special need is not provided for. This ultimately creates a loose coupling in policy on the macro-level as Malaysia’s definition of students with special needs does not adhere to the term “all” in the EFA and Salamanca Frameworks.

Malaysia also experiences loose coupling on the meso-level as teachers have an impact on the implementation of policy. It is crucial to note that the concept of inclusion is valued amongst the majority of teachers in Malaysia, and they feel that students with SEN benefit from this setting (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006). At the meso-level, teachers feel that they lack the necessary skills and training to handle students with SEN in their classroom. More professional development and training would benefit both the teacher and the student, but that is dependent on training
institutions to provide the necessary curriculum and exposure to teach students with special needs. On the micro-level, teachers also have a hard time applying inclusive practices even though knowledge of policy and understanding the meaning of inclusion could aid in the practice of inclusion (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006). The simple communication and application of policy could positively impact inclusive education as a whole.

Unlike most countries observed up to this point, Malaysia hasn’t seen much loose coupling of policy at the micro-level as teachers in fact value inclusive education. The loose coupling here appears to be occurring on the macro- and meso-levels: national policy doesn’t fully adhere to international standards, while training does not provide quality professional development so teachers may implement inclusive education to its greatest extent. Once Malaysia has addressed these key components, tighter coupling of policy and practice will enable Malaysia to serve all students with SEN.
CHAPTER SEVEN

AFRICA

Ghana

Prior to the Salamanca Statement, Ghana had addressed the issue of serving students with SEN through the 1962 Education Amendment Act that established a Special Education Division to handle the identification, education and rehabilitation of students with SEN (Aderas&Asimeng-Boahene, 2011). After the Salamanca Statement, Ghana took their efforts further by intensifying it to include greater program development and collaboration with NGOs. Along with newer policies, Ghana also saw a higher rate of enrollment of students with SEN. Even with all of these changes, Ghana still faces the issue of accurate data reporting. Even though the UN predicts that the population of people with disabilities is at 10 percent, it is predicted that Ghana’s disability may be higher than that. As a result, students with SEN may not be receiving the quality education in Ghana as policy states (Aderas&Asimeng-Boahene, 2011).

Even though data is scarce when it comes to identifying students with SEN in Ghana, it is available. In 2007, of children in the 4-16 age range that could attend school, less than one percent been provided with access (Akyeampong Et Al, 2007). If we apply this one percent (given the best case scenario) to the student
enrollment in 2007 of 4,500,372 (UNESCO, 2013), we see that at best 45,003 students with SEN are being educated in Ghana. After seeing that the projected number of students with SEN in Ghana as 450,037, it is clear that there is a discrepancy between the projected and actual number of students with SEN. After running the chi-square test, $\chi^2(1, N = 1) = 9, p < .05$ shows that there is an occurrence that is influencing the low enrollment of students with SEN.

Table 7. Enrollment in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$\chi^2_1 = \frac{(1 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-9)^2}{10} = \frac{81}{10} = 8.1$

$\chi^2_2 = \frac{(90 - 99)^2}{90} = \frac{(9)^2}{90} = \frac{81}{90} = 0.9$

$\chi^2 = 9$

While Ghana has improved policy and stepped up efforts to align itself better with international standards, to see such a discrepancy between the projected and actual number of students with SEN implies that there is a gap between policy and practice. One reason for this is culture. “People with disabilities face occasional ridicule through local folklore and songs due to the long-held beliefs that they are a curse from the ancestors” (Aderas&Asimeng-Boahene, 2011, p. 29). Because of the lack of awareness and persisting cultural misconceptions, students with disabilities are stigmatized and thus experience discrimination and segregation. Even the mere
notion of a child born with a disability is taboo and many see it as a punishment. With these social stigmas and the notion that spirits cause families and individuals to experience disability (Aderas & Asimeng-Boahene, 2011), we see that on a micro-level the social structure and individuals are preventing the implementation of special education policy in Ghana.

When it comes to the educational system, Ghana has clear set policies in place, however they are not being implemented due to the segregation of students with SEN. Not only are the community and individual families segregating their children with SEN from the rest of the community, but schools also segregate students with SEN through special schools (Aderas & Asimeng-Boahene, 2011). This is mainly because of the lack of awareness of the policy guidelines on inclusion by the government. Another factor is that the high teacher to student ratio makes it difficult for teachers to include students, especially when they feel that they have not enough training to handle students with SEN in the classroom (Aderas & Asimeng-Boahene, 2011). The lack of preparation, training, support, etc. leaves teachers without the necessary tools to include students with SEN. As a result, many teachers don’t want to accept students with SEN. In addition to seeing a loose coupling of policy and practice on a micro level, Ghana is experiencing a loose coupling of policy and practice at the meso-level as the education system is not adhering to the policy designed by the Ghanaian government.

Overall, Ghana as a country has the best intentions and truly wants to provide educational services to students with SEN. Because of the close alignment of
policy to the Salamanca Statement and EFA, there is tight coupling between the country’s and the international standards. Where the loose coupling occurs is in the individual families and communities that continue to stigmatize children with SEN, and the educational system that does not provide for adequate resources for students with SEN. These two factors must be addressed in order to see a tighter coupling of special education policy and practice.

South Africa

South Africa is unique as it is a country that has most closely aligned its own constitution to international human rights policies. With the new constitution ratified in 1996, the post-apartheid mentality guaranteed the equal opportunity and equitable access to education, especially for students with SEN (Englebrecht, 2006). With policies like the White Paper on Education and Training and the South African Schools Act, education of those with SEN with in government policy is clearly in line with international standards as it requires and expects schools to provide students with SEN a quality education (Englebrecht, 2006).

What Englebrecht (2006) calls for, however is an evaluation of learning barriers within South Africa. To understand what the learning barriers are in place, it is crucial to understand the level of enrollment of students with SEN. As of 2011, 108,240 students had been identified with a special educational need. When we see that 12,680,829 students are enrolled in school, the projected number of students with SEN should be 1,268,082. Essentially, 0.9 percent of the population is made up of students with SEN. Where \( \chi^2(1, N = 1) = 9.201, p < .05 \), these numbers show
that there is something happening in South Africa where its special education policies are not reaching all students.

Table 8. Enrollment in South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
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<td>99.1</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi_1^2 = \frac{(0.9 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-9.1)^2}{10} = \frac{82.81}{10} = 8.281
\]

\[
\chi_2^2 = \frac{(90 - 99)^2}{90} = \frac{(-9)^2}{90} = \frac{81}{90} = 0.92
\]

\[
\chi^2 = 9.201
\]

Even though there is equitable distribution of funding for schools across South Africa, many issues in infrastructure arise that hinder the practice of inclusive education. One of the many reasons for this is the lack of preparation of teachers to teach students with SEN (Englebrecht, 2006). “Inclusive education is thus perceived to place additional demands on teachers and to cause stress, which impacts negatively on the progress of all children in the classroom” (Englebrecht, 2006, p. 257). The preparation and professional development that is provided for teachers in South Africa is short and does not take into consideration the various aspects and realities of the realities for teachers (Englebrecht, 2006). Because of the lack of preparation of teachers, we see that government policy is loosely coupled at the meso-level, as the education system itself does not provide for the needs of students with SEN through the inadequate preparation of their teachers.
Even in the post-Apartheid era, socio-economic statuses of the Apartheid era still grip the education system based on teacher and parent attitudes. The education policy in South Africa requires a great amount of community involvement and a community based approach when it comes to the implementation of inclusive schools (Englebrecht, 2006). In lower-socio economic communities, parents are unable to support their child’s needs due to fatigue from work and their own illiteracy. Teachers are then left with the burden of the students’ education, which often times come with issues such as absenteeism and repetition. Unfortunately, this creates a disconnect between parents and teachers as they don’t understand each other’s positions. The lack of collaboration then hinders the community involvement aspect of inclusive education (Englebrecht, 2006), and creates a loose coupling of policy and practice on the micro-level as individual attitudes prevent the quality of education as mandated by policy.

While South Africa has the best intentions and clearly wants to demonstrate its intent to align policy with national standards, the broken systems on the meso- and micro-levels prevent this from becoming a reality. In order for South Africa to tightly couple its policy with practice of special education, it must do two things: provide greater teacher preparation and create a more collaborative effort within the communities. Though there are remnants of Apartheid era factors, the post-Apartheid efforts are still being played out and can erase the Apartheid era factors over time.
Uganda

When analyzing the constitution, Uganda has aligned itself educationally with EFA objectives with the statement “all persons have the right to education.” The part that makes Uganda unique is that this statement was enacted in 1954, almost 40 years before the Salamanca Statement, which was followed up with a great amount of interest from individuals and NGOs (Kristensen, Omagro-Loican, Onen, & Okot, 2006). Despite these efforts, we see a clear discrepancy between actual and projected number of students with SEN enrolled. Of the 9,309,047 students enrolled in schools, only 206,275 students with SEN are enrolled in school. (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2011). This means that 2.2 percent of students enrolled in school have a special need. When the projected number of students with SEN is 930,904 (or ten percent), the $\chi^2(1, N = 1) = 6.76, p < .05$ clearly shows that there is something happening that is preventing Uganda’s educational policy from fully being practiced and implemented.

Table 9. Enrollment in Uganda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>w/SEN</th>
<th>w/o SEN</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
\chi^2_1 = \frac{(2.2 - 10)^2}{10} = \frac{(-7.8)^2}{10} = \frac{60.84}{10} = 6.084
\]

\[
\chi^2_2 = \frac{(97.8 - 90)^2}{90} = \frac{(7.8)^2}{90} = \frac{60.84}{90} = 0.676
\]

$\chi^2 = 6.76$
Efforts to promote education in Uganda have been the primary goal for the Ugandan government. With more recent legislation that has opened up enrollment opportunities, it also brought along a thinning of educational resources, insufficient number of trained teachers, and high student-teacher ratios (Kristensen, Omagro-Loican, Onen, & Okot, 2006). Even when you look at the general statistics of students with SEN, these can prove unreliable as well. In one aspect, there are possibly more students with disabilities in the classroom as teachers and master teachers lack the training necessary to identify students with SEN. Another aspect is the high dropout rate of students (Kristensen, Omagro-Loican, Onen, & Okot, 2006). With infrastructure issues that result in the lack of attention of students with SEN, we clearly see that there is a loose coupling of policy and practice in within Special Education policy in Uganda.

Because of Uganda's policy to include all students that looks similar (if not identical) to the Salamanca Framework, we can see a tight coupling of policy between national and international standards at the macro-level. The loose coupling of policy and practice occur at the meso-level where the educational infrastructure fails to meet policy requirements. Though policy mandates that students are to be included in the classroom, classrooms are not hospitable for students with SEN. The high student-teacher ratio, the lack of training and preparation of teachers, and the lack of resources make it difficult to educate students with SEN. This also can be attributed to the inaccurate counting of students with SEN included in the classroom. In order for Uganda to more tightly couple its practice to policy,
modifications to the educations infrastructure must be made. Once this happens, then Uganda may be able to meet the needs of its students and policy can be successful.
CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When we return to the initial research question “Does the theory of loose coupling within policy best explain why there is an under-enrollment of students with special educational needs?”, we can see that it is an influencing factor. Throughout this thesis, we used the concept of loose-coupling theory to explain the policy to practice gap when it comes to special education and inclusion in these nine specific countries. To further emphasize this, we look to the population numbers presented to us. Using ten percent of the population for the base line as a predictor of the special needs population per the United Nations, we establish that ten percent of the student population should have an SEN. However, after analyzing statistics, we see that no country in this study was able to identify more than three percent of its student population as having an SEN. When we ran the chi-square test of goodness of fit for each country, we found significant results. Essentially, each country had a result from the chi-square $\chi^2(1, N = 1) > 3.84, p < .05$ which suggests that something outside the normal population is influencing the low number of students with SEN enrolled in school. There is a clear under-enrollment and underrepresentation of students with SEN in each of these countries.
To understand how loose coupling plays a role in this is that we have to look at the policy to practice gap. Because international policy promotes the concept of inclusion, it not only recognizes the need to educate people with SEN, but also sets up goals to meet this demand. To clarify, Ainscow and Cesar (2006) remind us that inclusion is generally focused on the student with SEN; being a learning opportunity; accepting students of generally excluded populations; the development of culture by either eliminating disparities or reinforcing a national culture; and everybody’s right to learn. Essentially, each of these countries should use one or all of these inclusion focuses.

Only two countries in this study saw disruption in policy coupling on the macro-level, within the government. Malaysia could arguably not be in line with international policy as it provides a definition of what they consider is a disability. Because international policy highlights the word “all,” providing a definition (Ali, Mustapha & Jelas, 2006, p. 36) could create exclusions of those with disabilities not defined by the Malaysia government making the loose-coupling occur as high up as the macro-level. India on the other hand faces governmental factors that creates a loose coupling in policy. While it does not explicitly exclude the rights of anyone, in Article 26 of its constitution where it examines people’s right to work, it also adds the clause “within limits” (Singal, 2009) which means to the capacity the government is capable of providing. Essentially this provides a cop out in when providing rights to its citizens if the government feels that it is not in their own best interests. Loose coupling of policy here can best explain the low enrollment of
students with SEN as the government does not guarantee the rights of those with
and SEN as it is directed in international policy.

After analyzing each country’s policy and how it is practiced, we see that
implementation has become a critical factor as well which suggests that loose-
coupling is occurring on the meso-level, between the national government and local
authorities. In all of these instances, the policies of these countries attempted to
closely align themselves with the Salamanca Declaration. Unfortunately, there is still
a breakdown in the practice of policy as the highest percentage of students with SEN
representing the overall student population is no higher than three percent. The
common theme behind this was infrastructure. In almost every case, teachers felt
unprepared to teach students with SEN, citing a lack of teacher training. For
example, in England “76% of SENCos felt that their role was undermined by a lack of
funding and 40% believed that there was not sufficient support for pupils with
special educational needs” (Hodkinson, 2010). While the country may have a tight
coupling of policy on the macro-level, the teacher education and training occurs on
the meso-level where the policy and practice begin to separate, loosening the
coupling of the policy. As a result, students were excluded because their learning
needs were not being met in the classroom.

Other instances sited basic budgetary issues or physical infrastructure where
funds where either not produced or the building space was inadequate. Uganda faces
the issue of improper physical infrastructure as some schools have to get water
from wells and bore holes (Kristensen, Omagor-Loican, Onen&Okot 2006). In the
example of China, the government does not provide the budget necessary to meet the needs of the 2.5 million students with SEN (Yu, Su & Liu, 2011), even though the vast majority of them do not attend school. This loose coupling of policy at the meso-level can be easily argued as to why these students are not receiving the educational services that are granted to them by policy.

When it comes to teacher attitudes and the general culture that surround students with SEN, loose-coupling theory explains why students with SEN are not being served as a result of the policy to practice gap occurring at the micro-level, community actors. Teachers have a strong impact on the loose coupling of policy. On one side teachers lack the necessary training to teach students with SEN, which was seen in each country. We see this in China as very few courses for special needs education training are offered the 40 normal schools that provide special needs education training (Yu, Sui & Liu, 2011). But training does not always ensure that teachers maintain a positive attitude in regards to inclusion. In South Africa, conservative and traditional values are still apparent as “different” learners are often bullied and teachers themselves fail to recognize the basic human rights of each student (Englebrecht, 2006). In Spain, teachers are reluctant to collaborate with peers to provide the educational supports for students with SEN (Cardona, 2009). Because teachers play probably the most important role in special needs education, inclusion or education as a whole, it is clear that more preparation and training of teachers is needed for the proper implementation of inclusion. It is also
clear that teacher attitudes must shift to promote a more positive environment for its students.

Individual communities also play a role in the loose coupling of policy. In Ghana, the stigmatization of having a disability prevents students from attending school, even though it is within their own right (Aderas & Asimeng-Boahene, 2011). In India, families fear the social stigma of having a family member with a disability, and will often times prevent a student with SEN from being educated (Singal, 2009). The practice of policy in this matter is interrupted by individuals within the community who choose not to allow their children to partake in the educational setting. The overall culture of teachers, communities and families creates a loose coupling on the micro-level as it prevents the policy to be fully carried out. Loose coupling theory works best in this situation as the government has set a given policy into place, though it is not practiced.

In conclusion, since the Salamanca Declaration, it is clear that efforts are being made to provide everyone with access to education. Unfortunately, there is still much work to be done at the meso- and micro-levels for all students to be included in classrooms. Most importantly, these consistencies and attitude do not confirm or deny regional uniqueness. For inclusion as well as special needs education to be fully implemented, much changes need to occur within infrastructure and teacher preparation.
CHAPTER NINE

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While special education and inclusion have existed longer in some countries than others, the Salamanca Declaration brought recognition to the matter and brought upon a consensus that people with special needs have a right to an education. While efforts prove that countries recognize the need to educate people with SEN, students are still being excluded from the classroom. While my thesis examines the policy to practice gap through loose-coupling theory, several areas could be examined further.

One of the issues that arose during my research was the lack of accessible data of students with special needs. This made it difficult to identify the specific populations of students with SEN. Without this critical piece of information, much of my research would have relied heavily on theory rather than examining and occurring phenomenon. An area of future research could focus on the process of data collection on students and people with SEN, which could focus on how students with SEN are identified and then how they are reported. For example, are students with SEN being properly identified? This area of research could go further in depth as to the true nature of inclusion and special education, which would produce a greater understanding of the policy to practice gap that is happening in these countries.
Another issue that arose during the research was identifying an abundant amount of research on the practices of special education in a variety of countries. Because of this, the scholarly research available limited the number of countries for analysis and limited the scope of my work to specific regions. More individual country studies would provide for a greater breadth of information, allowing for better comparing and contrasting of practices in special education and inclusion and how it relates to policy. This will allow for more consistent and concrete results to be developed.

Finally, the findings suggest that the loose coupling of the policy and practice was a result of cultural stigmas. Before inclusion and special education can be fully promoted, it is important to understand the cultural stigmas that could impede the policy to practice gap in order to provide conclusions and best practices. The research of cultural implications within special education and inclusion would provide for a greater understanding of the policy to practice gap at the micro-level. This would allow for a deeper analysis of how culture plays a role in loose coupling theory.

Special education and inclusion is still a relatively new field that requires much research to understand how it is practiced in various regions, and how policy shapes it. The right to education for everyone is just that: a right. In order to ensure these rights, future research is needed to understand how the policy to practice gap can be closed.


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VITA

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