

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PLANS AND PRACTICES IN CHINA, THAILAND, AND TURKEY

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## ABSTRACT

*As the changing world becomes more globalized and diverse, people become more connected. It is beneficial educators to learn about the educational practices of every nation. Educational planning efforts promote inclusive education and practices in the three countries: China, Thailand, and Turkey. It is important to raise awareness of the ways that history, culture, social perceptions, and public policy influence special education. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the transitional process of special education programs, services, and public policy toward inclusive education in China, Thailand and Turkey. In addition, this paper aims to present the development of educational plans that promote inclusive education and practices in these countries. The results of this paper indicate that the special education development and its process in China, Thailand, and Turkey are challenging. China is anxious for special education reform. Thailand has progressive special education initiatives spreading throughout the country. The education policies in Thailand and Turkey have addressed issues regarding children with disabilities and appear to move toward inclusion for individuals with disabilities. Indeed, the prospects for individuals with disabilities in these three countries are improving.*

## INTRODUCTION

In response to the recognition of human rights, special education began gaining attention in China, Thailand, and Turkey in the mid-to-late 1900s. The governments of these countries have strengthened public policies to promote the development to meet the needs of special education services for children with disabilities. Although the Chinese government issued laws and regulations to protect educational rights for children with disabilities (China Disabled Persons' Federation [CDPF], 2008a), there was no consistency in policy implementation. This inconsistency resulted in serious consequences of discrimination in the educational system ("Human Rights Watch," 2013). Special education services were in need of improvement and making progress (Wang, 2009). According to Kritzer (2012), special education in China was quite similar to special education in the United States prior to the implementation of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975. The system was lacking consistency from school to school, city to city, and province to province. Social inclusion, educational support and interpersonal activities were neglected (Guo, 2016; Wang, 2009; Xu & Malinen, 2015).

Attitudes toward children with disabilities in Thailand may vary. Some parents of children with disability view themselves being punished by their actions in a previous life. But, some Chinese-Thai considered that having a child with Down Syndrome was a sign of good luck (Fulk, Swerdlik, & Kosuwan, 2002). Other factors that have impacted attitudes toward disability include level of education, socioeconomic status, and rural versus urban geographic location. Educational reform has struggled to keep pace with rapid change in demand for special education services that may require a cultural paradigm shift regarding perceptions of children with disabilities (Fullan, 1993; Hallinger, 1998a, 1998b). Children without disabilities have been integrated with children with

disabilities in the regular schools as much as possible. As a result, a mainstream class for children with disabilities has been included in at least one public school in each province (Chonlatanon, 1995).

In comparison to the United States, an emphasis on education of individuals with disabilities has started later in Turkey with the enactment of special education law, *Ozel Egitime Muhtac Cocuklar Kanunu* (1983), which is also known as “Law No. 2916,” and the legislative decree, *Kanun Hukmunde Kararname (KHK)* (573) in 1997 (Akcamete, 2010). However, application of these laws caused some issues such as lack of teachers to meet government needs, regular classroom teachers’ pessimistic approach on inclusive education, and insufficient collaboration between parents and teachers (Engelli ve Yasli, 2016; Karnas & Bayar, 2013a).

## **AN OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN CHINA, THAILAND, AND TURKEY**

Special education has been viewed through aspects of culture, religion, and history. The history of special education in China, Thailand, and Turkey has followed a similar path in several ways. The notion of individuals with disabilities in China was rooted in Confucian heritage, political ideology and contemporary social status (Campbell & Uren, 2011; Deng & Harris, 2008; Wang & Mu, 2014). Deng and Poon-McBrayer (2004) emphasized that Chinese culture has compassion for individuals with disabilities due to the influence of Confucian philosophy, which also has a strong influence in Chinese educational reform and school design.

Special education in Thailand was established in 1939 with the first establishment of the school for the blind (Sukbunpant, Shiraihi, & Kuroda, 2004). Children with visual and hearing impairment studied in the regular school first in 1962 and 1984 respectively. Three laws made progress to special education in Thailand: the National Law 1997, the Nation Educational Act of B.E. 2542 (1999), and the Rehabilitation Act of 1991. Individuals with disabilities were seen as a symbol that the family might have committed some sin in the past (Driedger, 1989). A majority of Thai people practice Buddhism (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). In Thai tradition, the parents and their extended families have supported children with disabilities at home. School attendance may not be an option for them. Poor families or families who live in rural areas are less likely to know about special education programs being available for them (Fulk, Swerlik & Kosuwan, 2002). Families in higher socioeconomic status or educated people seek private services for their children with disabilities (Vorapanya & Diane, 2014).

In Turkey, the view of individuals with disabilities is rooted in Islamic religion. It is purported to promote a respect for individuals with disabilities. A child with disability is seen in Turkish region as a gift of the God (Karagoz, 2008).

### **Special Education in China**

American and European missionaries started to build special educational institutions in China after the First Opium War (Deng & Harris, 2008). People in China were knowledgeable about special education at the foundation of the People’s Republic of China and began special education efforts after 1949 (Kritzer, 2014). Schools for individuals with blindness and deafness were founded at that time. In the Mao-era between the 1950s and 1970s, the primary aim of Chinese special education was to train people to be socialist laborers (Deng & Harris, 2008). Gu (1993) reported that there were 269 special schools with an enrollment of 28,519 students by the year of 1976 when the Cultural Revolution officially ended. Hearing and visual impairments were the two main categories in those schools. It was not until 1980 that training for special education teachers was

made available (Kritzer, 2012). After the 1980s, students with disabilities were able to attend regular classrooms (Deng & Zhu, 2007). In the 1990s, teacher institutions were required to offer training in special education courses (Kritzer, 2012). Meanwhile, Chinese special education has expanded to serve a variety of disabilities and proliferated at different levels.

The Chinese government passed the Law on Protection of Persons with Disabilities to provide general and constitutional protection (CDPF, 2008a). In 2008, China supported the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by adopting the international human rights treaty that promotes inclusion and mainstream education accessible for children with disabilities (CRPD, 2012).

With the purpose of securing educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities, REPD was amended to protect the rights of students with nine-year compulsory education (CDPF, 2008a). Extra supports are provided for students based on their individual needs when attending the College Entrance Examination (“The State Council: The People’s Republic of China,” 2017). According to the 2017 legislative amendment, educational expenditures for students with disabilities were brought into government financial budget management in order to increase support for special education. The Chinese government rapidly increased financial support to special education from RMB 55 million in 2013 to RMB 410 million in year in 2014 (MOEPRC, 2015).

### The Chinese Educational System for Children with Disabilities

Both the Compulsory Education Law of the People’s Republic of China and the Regulations on Education for People with Disabilities safeguard the lawful rights and interests of students with disabilities (China’s Leader in Online Legal Research [CLLR], 2017; CDPF, 2008b). Children at the age of six start their nine-year compulsory education (CLLR, 2017; CDPF, 2008b). Based on their actual conditions, school-age students with disabilities have four main ways of enrolling in school: 1) They can attend a nearby regular school; or 2) the county level government designated regular school if they are able to receive general education, but needs some special aids; 3) If they are not capable to adapt to general education and need special education support, they can attend special schools as their choice because there is insufficient support provided by regular schools; and 4) The county level government would provide support such as distance education and individual tutoring if they could not attend any types of schools (CDPF, 2008b). (See Figure 1.) Special education aims to meet the needs of students with severe problems or disabilities. Through education, students with disabilities can make a great effort for more equitable opportunities in society. In 2008, China had 1,640 schools with an enrollment of 417,400 students for special education (“Education in China,” 2010).

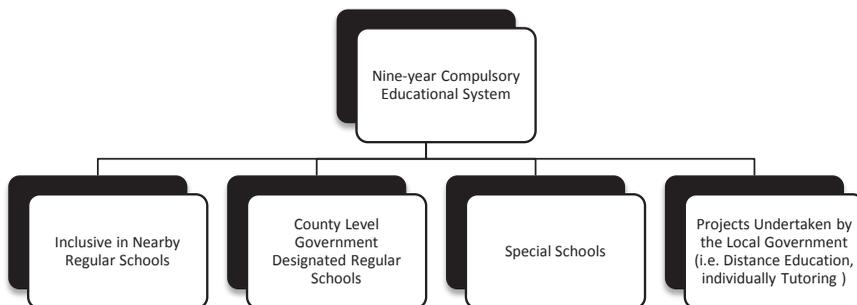


Figure 1. The nine-year compulsory education system has been implemented by the government authority in China. Adapted from Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China (2008); CDPF (2008a).

## Special Education in Thailand

In Thailand, the first school for individuals with blindness was established in Bangkok in 1935 with the support of Ms. Genevieve Caulfield, an American lady with blindness (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). Children with other disabilities beside blindness were refused admission. They did not have an opportunity to attend schools like other children without disabilities. Until the 1950's the government began to support special education for children with visual, hearing, physical, and intellectual impairments. Since then, children with disabilities have had an opportunity to attend special education schools (Kritzer, 2012). In 1975, the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted to mandate free and appropriate public education to all children with disabilities. The first public special education school was established in 1951 at Sommanus Temple School to serve children with hearing impairment (Amatayakul, Tammasaeng, & Punong-ong, 1995).

The Rehabilitation of Disabled Person Act 1991 was the first law on disability. The law was not supported by government funding. Some schools do not include children with disabilities. General education teachers had insufficient knowledge, lacked training and feared of teaching children with disabilities. The National Education Act (NEA) of 1999 was passed and safeguarded the right of individuals with disabilities to education. The provision of education stated that individuals with disabilities shall be provided free of charge at birth or at first diagnosis. The persons shall have the right to access the facilities, media, services, and other forms of educational aid in conformity with the criteria and procedures specified in the ministerial regulations (Office of the Educational Council, the Ministry of Education Kingdom of Thailand, 2004).

In 2008, the Education Provision for People with Disabilities Act was enacted in Thailand which moved special education toward inclusivity. The law mandated that (1) inclusive education became one of the options for the education of students with disabilities; (2) individuals with disabilities had the right to be included at every level of the educational system ranging from early intervention and 12 years of fundamental education to college level; (3) it was unlawful for schools to deny admission to students with disabilities, and (4) students with disabilities should be provided with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) at least on basis of yearly update (Rajkijjanubaksa, 2008). The Bureau of Special Education Administration (BSEA) oversees the education of students with disabilities. There are nine categories of disability under the law:

The administration recognizes nine types of disability: (1) hearing impairment, (2) mental impairment, (3) visual impairment, (4) physical or health-related impairment, (5) learning disabilities, (6) autism, (7) emotional and behavioral disorders, (8) speech and language disorders, and (9) multiple disabilities (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). To receive special education services, each child with disabilities needed to be registered and assessed. The assessment is conducted by family physicians, as opposed to school personnel. The Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) has to be developed with the child's strengths and needs (Kritzer, 2012). After the IEP has been developed for individual students with disabilities, schools must allocate a budget for special education services and materials, establish teacher training providing effective instructions, provide assistive technology, and strengthen school policy for integrating children with disabilities into regular classroom (Kritzer, 2012).

The Ministry of Education is the major organization to ensure that education is provided to all children in Thailand. Its BSEA takes responsibility for providing services for children with special needs across the country, including special education centers, special schools, and regular integrated primary and secondary schools. Additionally, there are 76 Special Education Centers (SEC) across all provinces in Thailand. The SEC is in charge in all special education services that include identification of children with disabilities in the community, collaboration with parents,

child assessment, IEP development, school placement, early intervention at home or at the SEC, and appropriate services for children with disabilities who are out-of-school (Kritzer, 2012).

### The Thai Educational System for Children with Disabilities

The following chart explains eligible school aged children with disabilities can be provided with related services such as hearing aids, wheelchairs and communicative electronic devices. There are seven education placement options for Thai children with disabilities that include (1) Inclusive education in regular classroom; (2) special schools; (3) home school; (4) community/private organization; (5) hospital; (6) special education centers, and (7) informal education centers (Hill & Sukbunpant, 2013). (See Figure 2.)

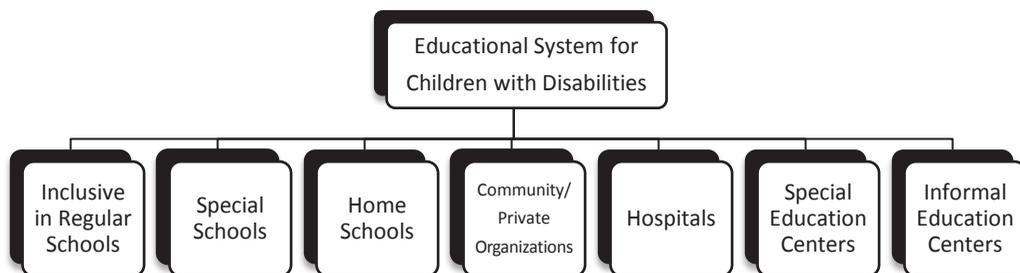


Figure 2. The structure of education placement options for children with disabilities in Thailand. Adapted from Hill & Sukbunpant (2013).

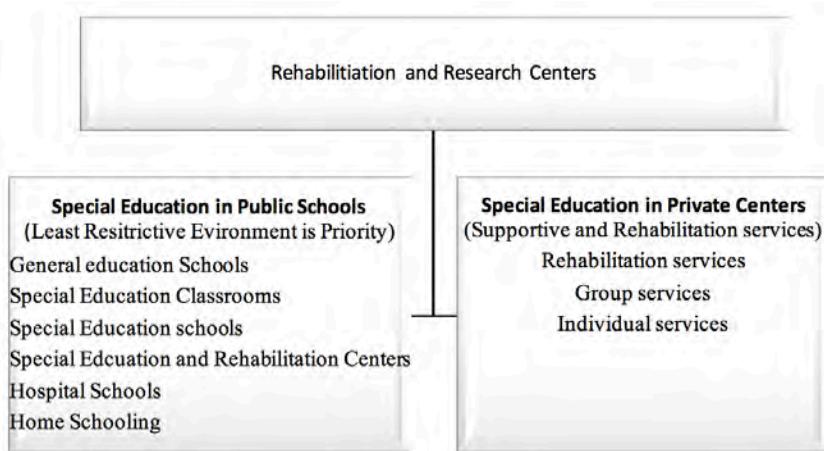
There are 43 special schools that provide services for specific disabilities from kindergarten to high school. These disabilities include intellectual disability, hearing, visual, and physical impairments. In practice, students with all types of disabilities are accepted in these schools. The BSEA, Office of Basic Education Commission (OBEC) is the main agency responsible for the provision of education for children with disabilities (Hill & Sukbunpant, 2013). The educational policy has expanded the incorporation of services for children with disabilities and has made efforts to include children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Carter, 2006).

### Special Education in Turkey

In Turkey, services and principles of special education were first regulated in 1983. This law ensured that all individuals who were qualified to receive special education services were provided services based on needs and capabilities (Ozel Egitime Muhtac Cocuklar Kanunu, 1983). The principles of this law demonstrate that special education law in Turkey is similar to special education law in western countries, such as in the United States. Although the attitude toward individuals with disabilities was rooted in Islamic culture, which promoted respect for individuals with disabilities, there was no movement regarding the education of individuals with disabilities until the end of the 19th century (Gunduz, 2014). Looking at history, some institutions were developed to treat individuals with disabilities since the 8th century during the Ottoman Empire, the origin of modern Turkey (Gunduz, 2014). The movements for the education of individuals with disabilities started with the establishment of schools for individuals with blindness and deafness at the end of the 19th century (Demirbas & Tnariverdi, 2012). After the establishment of modern Turkey in 1923, a number of schools for individuals with visual and hearing impairments were established. However, until the 1950s, the treatment of individuals with disabilities was considered a health issue (Gunduz, 2014).

In the 1950s, the special education branch office was created at the Headquarters of Elementary Education in order to regulate special education services for people with disabilities. The special education services were organized and operated by this branch until 1980 (Akcamete, 2010). In 1983, the Headquarters of Special Education in the Ministry of National Education was replaced with the Special Education and Counseling Department which was then replaced by the current Headquarters of Special Education (Akcamete, 2010). Today’s special education system is mostly based on “Ozel Egitime Muhtac Cocuklar Kanunu,” and a legislative decree “Kanun Hukmunde Kararname (KHK) No 573.” Both of these laws and legislative decrees were milestones for the current special education system in Turkey. Furthermore, recent special education services were provided with the involvement of different ministries such as the Ministry of National Education, the Prime Minister’s Office, and Ministry of Family and Social Services (Demirbas & Tanriverdi, 2012).

### The Turkish Educational System for Children with Disabilities



*Figure 3.* The special education in Turkey is organized by Rehabilitation and Research Centers (RAM) under National Ministry of Education. Each province in Turkey has at least one RAM that is responsible for diagnosis and placement of the child. These centers collaborate with the schools regarding the organization and implementation of special education services. There are public and private institutions for the placement. The public placement is conducted based on the least to the most restrictive environment. Private placements are owned by individuals and aim to provide supportive services and rehabilitation. The cost of services in the private placement is paid by the government (National Ministry of Education, 2017).

## DISCUSSION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

### Policy and Practice in China

The data of the Sixth Nationwide Population Census and the Second National Sample Survey in China showed that the number of individuals with Disabilities was approximately 85 million by the end of 2010 (CDPF, 2012b). In order to protect the equal rights of individuals with disabilities, the Chinese government issued the Law on Protection of Persons with Disabilities on

Dec. 28<sup>th</sup>, 1990. It was implemented on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1991, and amended on Apr. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008. This law, which was general and constitutional, aimed at providing comprehensive protection in the areas of rehabilitation, education, employment, social security, and cultural life (CDPF, 2008a). In a provision of education, the Chinese government issued several regulations to enhance support to students with disabilities.

First, the REPD in 1994 and its Revision in 2011 had the purpose to secure educational opportunities and to protect the rights of students with nine-year compulsory education (CDPF, 2008a; China Education Center Ltd [CEC], 2012; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2006). Besides, it emphasized the delivery of pre-school education and vocational education for students with disabilities. Chinese high schools, universities and colleges cannot deny a student's admission because of his or her disabilities (CDPF, 2008b). Duan (2015) reported that there were 9,542 students with disabilities entering universities and colleges by the year of 2014. Among them, 7,864 registered into regular universities or colleges. However, individuals with learning disabilities were not protected by these regulations (CDPF, 2008b). Second, the Chinese Ministry of Education announced the Regulations on College Entrance Exam for Students with Disabilities in the year of 2015. Based on this regulation, extra supports were provided for students based on their individual needs when attending the College Entrance Examination. For example, exam paper in Braille or in big font size would be available for students with visual impairment. Students with visual impairment or upper limb disabilities could prolong the time to taken on an exam up to 150% or 130% of the original time (CDPF, 2015).

Although related laws and regulations embodied the concern of the government for the individuals with disabilities, some scholars question the efforts of the implementation. Recently, uneven development in special education has existed among different regions and different categories of disabilities. Based on the Brief Summary on Development of the Work for Persons with Disabilities during the 12<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan Period (2011-2015), statistics on the enrollment situation of students with disabilities only presented three categories of disabilities in both secondary education and higher education, including hearing impairments, visual impairments, and physical disabilities (CDPF, 2012a). On the other hand, learning disabilities were not recognized as a priority concern in China (Deng & Harris, 2008). Wang (2009) argued that the development of special education in China has been hampered by a prejudice against the students with disabilities and limited educational resources. Due to the lack of educational support, low level of social inclusion and infrequent interpersonal activities, the current educational system has hardly satisfied the social esteem needs of students with disabilities. Xu and Malinen (2015) addressed, "These policies often exist only as written documents and are not necessarily even known by the public" (p.151).

### **Policy and Practice in Thailand**

Hill and Sukbunpant (2013) stated that the educational policy and the development of the act and its implementation in Thailand have been driven by global awareness leading to progress toward inclusive education. The National Educational Act 1999 and The Ministry of Education Designation of 1999 broadened educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities through the public relations on inclusive education in school settings. According to Vorapanya and Dunlap (2014), these educational opportunities improve the quality of life and increase social awareness of individuals with disabilities in Thai society. However, Thailand encounters barriers in relation to the provision of qualified educators, appropriate services and outdated practices. Regular schools are required to admit students with disabilities. The in-service training programs for general education teachers and preparation of prospective special education teachers are offered around the country.

Thailand has progressive movement towards acceptance and makes an effort to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities.

Carter (2006) found that criticism about special education services are related to the effectiveness of special education services and the availability of these services. It is challenging for the country to move from special education policy development to practice. Studies have found that school leaders and most teachers in Thailand possessed limited knowledge about inclusive practices (Office of the Education, Religion, and Cultural Development Regional 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001). Vorapanya & Dunlap (2014) stated that it is critical for Thailand to develop the inclusive models that are appropriate for Thai school system. Thailand requires the infrastructure development in order to support teacher training to serve children with disabilities in the areas of identification for special education services and curriculum development. Nevertheless, teachers perceive that it is a work overload to employ the new methods in teaching children with disabilities. The importance of inclusive practices has been addressed to become a norm in Thailand (Umpanroung, 2004).

A study by Grime (2013) showed that teacher training is a key for inclusion. It is crucial for school leaders and teachers to understand the importance of inclusive teacher training in order to take ownership of their development and implement special education in the classroom. Regular classroom teachers need to open constructive and reflective conversation with special education teachers for instructional improvement.

### **Policy and Practice in Turkey**

In Turkey, laws No. 2916 and KHK No. 573 serve as foundational documents for the development of special education in Turkey. The special education law No 2916 is composed of seven main principles of special education. These principles are: (1) Special Education cannot be separated from general education; (2) Every child who needs special education services has a right to get benefit from special education services regardless of type and the severity of their disability; (3) It is important to start special education earlier; (4) Special education services are planned and organized based on a child's characteristics (needs, strengths, weaknesses) and disability. Special education services should be provided close to the child at the most extent; (5) The precautions are taken to educate children with disabilities at educational institutions that are designed for education of children without disabilities (as long as special needs students are capable of being included in general education institutions based on their present level and characteristics); (6) It is important to continue the general vocational education and rehabilitation of students with disabilities; and (7) The education of children with disabilities is organized by the Ministry of Education and implemented by responsible institutions. Special education should be included in elementary education, secondary education, and vocational education (Ozel Egitime Muhtac Cocuklar Kanunu, 1983).

Although law No. 2916 promised big contributions to the education of children with disabilities, the implementation of this law was not very effective (Akcamete, 2010). A commission was created to regulate implementation of law on 2916. As a result of this commission's work, legislative decree KHK No 573 was enacted in 1997 (Kanun Hukmunde Kararname, 1997). KHK No 573 addressed the following principles to be considered in the education of children with special needs. Based on a child's educational performance, the development and the organization of the goals, content, and educational process of inclusive education are prioritized. Special education is implemented based on student's individualized educational plans. The active participation of parents is fundamental. Cooperation with special education organizations is needed regarding the development of special education policies. Special education services are planned with the

involvement of people with disabilities in the society. Along with the enactment of the legislative decree KHK 573 in 1997, the number of students involved in education has been increased quickly. In the school year 2001-2002, 53,306 students with disabilities received education. In seven years, this number has more than doubled with 114,371 in the school year of 2008-2009 (Engelli ve Yasli, 2016).

According to Coskun and Boldan (2014), this rapid increase in the number of students increased the needs for special education teachers as well. However, the number of institutions that train special education teachers was insufficient. In order to fulfill the demand for teachers, the state offered a training program within elementary schools that teachers could obtain a special education teaching certificate after one to six months training for special education. However, many of these certified special education teachers are usually not the most capable teachers to teach students with disabilities. Bahceci (2017) explained that special education programs at most universities in Turkey provide a curriculum with heavy special education coursework. In addition, a three-semester practicum is provided either in special education schools or in special education classrooms. A six-month training program is far less when it is compared to the intensive coursework with a three-semester practicum provided by special education departments. Coskun and Boldan (2014) conducted a study in order to find what teachers think about the sufficiency of the special education training program for certification. This study showed that 52.9% of teachers reported the need for more practicum to teach students with disabilities, and 16.9% of teachers reported the need for more coursework for them to be certified as a special education teacher.

## **IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CHINA, THAILAND AND TURKEY**

Practices and challenges for the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in these three countries vary to some extent because of perceptions in society on disability as well as issues associated with educational policies. Additionally, the relevant issues involve the provisions for inclusion, the implementation of the laws, funding, qualified educators, collaboration between teachers and parents, insufficiency of appropriate services, a lack of teacher training programs, a lack of knowledge of disability and awareness of inclusion for individuals with disabilities, and outdated practices.

### **Similarities**

The impact of western culture plays an important role in promoting special education among China, Thailand and Turkey (CRPD, 2012; Hill & Sukbunpant, 2013). Some common traits in the development of special education are found by this comparative analysis of these three countries. All three countries have made compulsory education mandatory and move to positive directions in improving special service delivery to include individuals with disabilities in the education system. Turkey had compulsory special education law in 1983 (Akcamete, 2010), China began in 1986 (Worrell & Tabler, 2009), and Thailand enacted in 1991 (Kritzer, 2014).

Along with the need to develop, China, Thailand, and Turkey recognize that legal safeguard for educational rights of people with disabilities is the only first step, follow-up government support and supervision should be expanded and guaranteed. After the establishment of several regulations, the Chinese government is increasing budget to enhance support to students with disabilities (MOEPRC, 2015). According to Carter (2006), in Thailand, a few improvements in providing the opportunities for individuals with disabilities have been visible. For example, the government policy is progressing and addresses the requirements for the quality of special education services. The

improvement in government policy, the provision of funding and attitudinal changes can potentially augment special education services.

Strengthening social responsibility is another acclaimed fundamental component to promote special education in those three countries. China is determined to meet the parents' request to improve the environment and conditions for families of children with disabilities. Hu, Turnbull, Summers and Wang (2015) addressed the three essential needs to enhance the quality of life: survival needs, sufficiency needs, and enhancement needs. These three categories of needs were subsumed under the sufficiency needs, namely "higher quality education and therapy for the child; home-based education and information for parents; and social inclusion for both parents and the child" (Hu et al, 2015, p.64). Hence, the content of potential plan would focus on the themes of social inclusion and educational support.

In Turkey, teachers being members of the central state bureaucracy are required to disseminate the mandated republican ideology. With this aspect in mind, curriculum structures of teacher training included courses focusing on the basic social science structures of national identity and technical courses. This training empowered teachers with contemporary skills to contribute to the modernization of the country (Turan, 2008).

In conclusion, leaders China, Thailand and Turkey address support for inclusive education specifically for those with disabilities. All three countries' governments have been proactive and have taken steps to ensure that educational programs and support are implemented. In addition, government officials must establish more in-service professional training programs as well as research development program for teachers in general and special education.

## **Challenges**

In China, although the number of special education teachers increased from 37,945 (2009) to 48,125 (2014) (Duan, 2015), the lack of special educators still exists in some categories such as learning disabilities and autism (Guo, 2016). In order to meet students' needs and strengthen the teacher team, Chinese educators have used western inclusive education teaching methods as a source of reference (Deng & Zhu, 2007). Wang (2009) also suggested that Chinese educators should refer to Western experience to create a special education curriculum to suit their own.

In Thailand, in spite of the fact that inclusive education has been introduced to the Thai education system over two decades, Thailand is in the early stages of implementation and encounters challenges (Vorapanya & Diane, 2014). The rapid pace of the policy implementation resulted in some difficulties associated with the provision of qualified educators and appropriate services to overcome outdated practices (Carter, 2006). Several studies found that Thai teachers in inclusive classrooms lack knowledge in special education and have insufficient training and behavioral management skills to teach children with disabilities (Meechalard, 2003; Onbun-uea & Morrison, 2008; Pisansombat, 2000; Sorathaworn, 2003; Sukkoon, 2003). Surawattananun (1999) found that school principals had insufficient knowledge and experience to develop inclusive programs although they recognized the benefit of inclusion to children with autism. Indusuta (2003) also found that the preschool teachers who had prior training or experience with children with autism in an inclusive school had incompetent skills to construct assessment tools. With these complications concerning the teaching skills competency in inclusive settings, Thailand will have to make effort in improving the quality of special education services and increasing service availability. The implementation of government policies is critical.

Currently, each region of Thailand has special schools for students with disabilities. Inclusive education has been promoted to include students with disabilities in the regular schools.

With this policy, at least one public school in each of the 76 provinces provides a mainstream class for students with disabilities. However, the country also struggles with limited facilities outside major cities, high poverty rates, and resistance to change in long-standing traditions. Environmental barriers, lack of accessible transportation, services, and accommodations for individuals with disabilities continue to exist. The barriers that impede positive changes are a low rate of compliance with the disability law, and negative attitudes of service providers and society toward individuals with disabilities (Cheausuwantavee & Cheausuwantavee, 2012). Societal perceptions interfere with law enforcement, resource distribution, family involvement, and program accessibility for students with disabilities (Hill & Sukbunpant, 2013). At present, the policy appears to create different levels of implementation depending on the evaluation processes used and the individuals reporting on progress. The enforcement of policies become challenging. A lack of teacher training programs and negative views on people with special needs are other obstacles. In addition, the majority of children with special needs are from families who are living at or below the poverty line, which makes it difficult for them to reach special education facilities in metropolitan areas. In mainstream schools, teachers lack training to deal with students with special needs.

Based on laws No. 2916 and KHK No. 573 in Turkey, it is supportive for inclusive education in Turkey. However, some studies demonstrate that implementation of inclusive education is not very effective in Turkey (Eres, 2010; Karnas & Bayar, 2013b). The problems of the implementation of special education services can be analyzed based on different domains such as appropriate evaluation and diagnosis of students, development of IEPs, implementation of inclusive education and so on. Regarding the special education law and legislative decree, the Turkish special education system fully supports the requirement of special education. However, when it comes to implementation of inclusive education there are some problems including scarcity of trained teachers, general education teachers' pessimistic perspective on inclusive education, and insufficient collaboration between parents and teachers (Karnas & Bayar, 2013a).

In conclusion, the three countries have made progresses and positive movements to improve inclusive education system in their countries. Nevertheless, they have encountered similar challenges: bureaucratization in planning and implementing social changes, societal perception of disability, distribution of resources, and special education service delivery. Importantly, all three countries are in need of teacher training programs in special education.

## **PLANNING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN CHINA**

Within the development of new technology, especially the development of Internet and smart phones, online delivery platforms have been developed quickly in recent years (Chen, 2014; Zancanaro, Nunes, & Domingues, 2017). For example, Lien and Cao (2014) mentioned that the usage of social media has increased sharply in China today. Social media has not only changed people's communication methods, but also brought a number of common trends to individuals' learning habits. Therefore, the potential plan for promoting inclusive education in China will be based on virtual environment. WeChat and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) will be employed in this plan. Above all, potential plans for promoting inclusive education in China will consist of two main components. First, WeChat Public Platform will be prepared for popularization of universal instructional design, and raising the public awareness of inclusive education and special education. Second, MOOCs will be used in teacher training programs.

WeChat is a "mobile instant text and voice messaging communication service developed by Tencent Holdings Ltd. in China on Jan. 21, 2011" (Lien & Cao, 2014, p.104). It has been widely used among Chinese people. According to the WeChat Consumer Report (2016), in 2016, nearly

10 million WeChat Public Platform accounts existed, and 0.7 million articles were published per day. Comparing with TV, newspapers or computer, WeChat was a better way for people to acquire new information (“WeChat Consumer Report,” 2016). On the other hand, WeChat has influenced Chinese people’s reading habits and helped them to increase the reading quantity. Over 41% of users shared valuable articles from WeChat Public Platform to WeChat Moments, where their WeChat friends could see it (“WeChat Consumer Report,” 2016).

WeChat has played a role in new plans since it has a strong mass base in China. Lien and Cao (2014) noted that “Chinese users see WeChat as a tool to receive and share important and timely information” (p. 109). Similar to other social medias (i.e. Facebook, twitter, etc.), WeChat is introduced into Chinese higher education as an educational technology tool to adapt to new social trends (Forgie, Duff & Ross, 2013; Zeng, Deng, Wang & Liu, 2016). Because of its user-generated data / content as well as the characteristics of convenience and promptness, WeChat becomes an important method in promoting teachers’ professional development (Zheng, Liu, Lin & Li, 2018). Both external factors (i.e. communication with peers or professors) and internal factors (i.e. self-consciousness or perseverance) make contribution to encourage teachers to go through the process (Zheng et al., 2018). The article-based summaries will be published via the WeChat Public Platform account as the potential plan. To promote inclusive education and to raise people’s awareness, the peer-reviewed articles will be translated from English into simple Chinese language so that people can read them regardless of their educational backgrounds. The articles translated into Chinese version must be interesting, valuable, and emotional touching (“WeChat Consumer Report,” 2016) in order to attract the WeChat users to share these articles to the public as well as to help promote inclusive education in China.

In recent years, online courses have been growing (Atchley, Wingenbach & Akers, 2013). The MOOC-based distance education is one of the online education models that have been developing rapidly in China. Many colleges and universities in China used it as a new teaching method as a virtual learning platform that offers free courses (Zou, 2016). With the characteristics of online education, the MOOCs could expand the teaching scale and lower teaching costs (Wainer & Ingersoll, 2013). Meanwhile, online courses could satisfy participants’ lifestyles by “allowing them to juggle personal commitments, to manage time conflicts, and to access course materials from a variety of locations” (Zhang & Kenny, 2010, p. 17).

Because special educators are too few in China (Guo, 2016), the implementation of MOOCs is recommended and proposed with two steps: to initiate partnerships between Chinese and American educational institutions; and to establish cooperative Online Teaching Training Programs (OTTP). With this proposal, faculty members from American institutions will perform their roles in the OTTP as the co-instructors with Chinese faculty. American faculty will share their knowledge and teaching skills by taking video clips and uploading them to the MOOCs platform. Chinese faculty and students can use those materials without limitations of locations and time difference as distance learning. However, the implementation of MOOCs must be in an alignment with the laws; special education laws, government funding and policies; responsive system of governance; and public relation campaigns on disability knowledge, awareness, and inclusion for people with disabilities. More in-service professional training programs for general and special educators and research development programs in special education are in need.

## **PLANNING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THAILAND**

Bevan-Brown, Heung, Jelas and Phongaksorn (2014) reported that inclusion is important to Thailand for several reasons: having equal opportunities to access quality education without

discrimination; social cohesion; and promoting diversity and social acceptance for individuals with disabilities. Importantly, inclusion would respond to achieving the international mandated goal of education for all. With international perspectives and considerations in promoting inclusive education in Thailand, Hauwadhanasuk, Karnas, and Zhuang (2016) presented the international collaboration with strategic planning that are beneficial toward the improvement of special education services and gradually promote inclusive education in Thailand. (See Figure 4.) This plan is aimed to initiate international collaboration between the government sectors and educational institutions in Thailand and in the U.S. The international collaboration plan includes creating special education professional development programs; professional exchange programs; research collaboration and scholarship; international conferences and research symposium; and scholarships and grants for special education/disability education. In addition, Special Education Initiatives to promote special education and disability knowledge, awareness, and inclusion for people with disabilities are addressed in the plan.



*Figure 4.* International Collaboration Strategic Plan implemented at a higher education institute in the U.S. to promote professional development programs, scholarships and research collaboration. Adapted from An Educational Plan for Inclusive Education in Thailand presented in the 46<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Society for Educational Planning (ISEP) by Hauwadhanasuk, Karnas, & Zhuang, 2016.

Recommendations for the next steps in service delivery in Thailand are addressed for the country to continue efforts in the following areas: (1) expanding availability of special education services, (2) ensuring implementation of governmental policies, (3) establishing more special education training programs, (4) incorporating more research with international educational institutions to improve quality of special education programs, and (5) launching public campaigns to promote disability knowledge, awareness, and inclusion for people with special needs. Thailand has made movements toward improving the quality of special education services. The implementation of special education and legal requirements are addressed. Along with this, there is a need for increased training for educators who will work with children with disabilities in inclusive settings so that they can provide the individualized education required for student success. Some general strategies that could be beneficial toward the improvement of special education services could involve the development of financial incentives for special educators to be willing to provide services within rural/disadvantaged areas of the country. These incentives would also need to be

supported by funding to improve on the facilities within these rural areas where textbooks and teaching and learning materials are extremely limited.

Furthermore, international collaborative teaching programs should be created to provide opportunities for special education teachers with professional development programs. This innovative international collaborative teaching program could involve increasing in-service for all teachers and training on collaborative techniques between special and regular education teachers domestically and globally. The level and quality of special education services in Thailand have been well addressed in government policy and make progress toward the actualization of these policies. Progress in development will continue to be slow towards improving special education services within the country until government policy, provision of funding, and attitudinal change can take place. Finally, it is essential to acknowledge people in Thailand to be aware that individuals with disabilities have abilities to learn and succeed in their lives with the support of the people in the communities. Disability awareness must be promoted through government and private sectors as well as local communities across the country.

### **PLANNING FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN TURKEY**

In Turkey, the rate of students with special needs who participate in inclusive education has been increasing. In 2001, only 54% of students with special need were included in general education classrooms. This rate was 61% in 2008 and 70% in 2016 (Engelli ve Yasli, 2016). These data indicated that general education teachers have more students with disabilities in their classrooms. These teachers do not have enough training in special education unless they have taken some special education courses during their college. One study interviewed general education and special education teachers regarding their perspectives on inclusive education, and found Turkish general education teachers thought that self-contained classroom would be better for special needs students. It was because general education teachers did not have enough training on how to teach students with special needs in the inclusive classroom (Karnas & Bayar, 2013b).

Collaboration between teachers and parents is critical when it involves special education services. Teachers do not have effective communication among themselves and with families. Even though some general education and special education teachers believe that collaboration is important, in fact, they do not often collaborate with each other (Karnas & Bayar, 2013a). Furthermore, parents of children with disabilities in Turkey lack knowledge and education. They are not familiar with special education policy to get involved in their children's education. Therefore, these parents are not aware of the importance of their involvement in their child's education. They believe that teachers always make the better decisions. With these reasons, parents rarely involve or make any change in the education of their children. Lack of collaboration between teachers and parents could result in ineffective inclusive education for the children.

In the last two decades, the number of universities/colleges that have special education programs has been increasing (Yuksekogretim Kurulu, 2017). As a result, there have been more teachers graduated from special education programs are extremely limited. Therefore, the state may encourage general education teachers, who obtained a short-term training in special education and currently teach students with special needs, to switch back to their teaching in general education classroom. The state should then provide the teaching placement in inclusive classroom for teachers who graduated special education major.

The curricula of university programs such as elementary education, science education, math education, and social sciences education are not developed to support inclusive education. Many universities do not offer any special education courses (e.g. Dogu Akdeniz University). As

the number of students with special needs has been increasing in general education classrooms, teachers who graduated from these universities were not equipped with special education knowledge and strategies to teach students with special needs (Karnas & Bayar, 2013b). It is critical that the education departments of the universities should enrich the curriculum to support inclusive education. Collaboration is one of the most important factors that are necessary for effective inclusive education (Fisher, Frey, & Thousand, 2003). Due to insufficient collaboration among teachers as well as between teachers and families (Karnas & Bayar, 2013a), school districts should develop training programs that emphasize the importance of collaboration among teachers and between teachers and parents.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding special education in China, Thailand and Turkey can help educators from other countries to value the culture of people helping one another to strengthen support for students of special needs, as well as the move towards reform of the special education system. Although the development processes of Chinese, Thai, and Turkish special education are challenging, China is at the early stage of awareness of the educational needs of individuals with disabilities so that educational system hardly satisfies the special needs of children. However, the prospects for the future are promising. On the other hand, Thailand is farther along as there are examples of progressive special education programs throughout the country (Kritzer, 2012). In comparison to the United States, Turkey has insufficient special education. Therefore, it is problematic for some principles to be implemented. For example, the law ensures active parent participation in education; however, many parents do not have sufficient knowledge and education to make contributions to their children's education. However, Turkey has shown a rapid increase in special education in the last decade. The number of certified teachers and special education classrooms in public schools has increased rapidly. The educational policies in Thailand and in Turkey have addressed issues regarding children with disabilities. The prospects for individuals with disabilities to promote inclusive education in these three countries are in progress. While China, Thailand, and Turkey are addressing the issues of inclusive education, this education topic is a global issue. Educators and governmental officials from all over the world must collaborate to promote and support educational plans that deal with the positive aspects of inclusive education.

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