

# THE EVOLUTION OF JORDANIAN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

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## Abstract

Research on the internationalization of inclusive policies for students with special needs is still developing alongside the shifting implementation of practice. This analysis seeks to understand the process of adopting inclusive policies in Jordan and the subsequent implementation through a modified comparative case study framework. Current research demonstrates how global forces have led to the adoption of a national inclusive education policy that local programs redefine and negotiate in implementation. The paper uses emerging frameworks from Schuelka (2018b) and existing comparative case study methodology from Bartlett and Vavrus (2006; 2009; 2014; 2017) to structure an in-depth analysis of the macro, mesa and micro levels of inclusive policy adoption and implementation across time. Jordan is a developing nation and in a strategic geographic location, two factors which bring multiple international organizations into its borders. This has had a significant effect on the development of education policy. At the same time, local construction of disability and inclusion continue to marginalize students with disabilities, especially in rural communities. This paper will outline the current state of inclusive education at the international, national and local levels in Jordan based on a review of policy and academic literature.

**Keywords:** inclusion; comparative case study; Jordan; special needs education

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International promotion of inclusion has led to policy adoption in a large majority of countries; however, the practice of inclusion varies widely within and between nations, making it imperative to understand not only the micro-level practices in schools, but how and why the policy was originally adopted. To better understand the differences between global aspirations and local practices of inclusion, scholars must take both into account when studying specific country contexts (Artiles & Dyson, 2005; Schuelka, 2018). Culture is an ongoing negotiation and reinterpretation of objects, beliefs and circumstances by persons who regularly interact to make meaning of the world not a static set of ideas and beliefs that can be predicted or changed through law (Anderson-Levitt, 2004). World culturalists believe

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there is a predictability in how global norms are spread, and that all ideas can take root regardless of new contexts. This happens, according to world culturalists through international law, development agencies and global governing organizations (Baker, 2014). Inclusion, has long been presented as a global norm; this paper will trace its roots in Jordan to demonstrate how despite promoting the practice as a human right, signifier of a modern and progressive education system as well as, a touchstone for most global development initiatives it remains a practice deeply rooted in classroom and cultural contexts created primarily at a national and local level. International imperatives to adopt inclusion has led to a slew of national-level policies in Jordan that lack adherence in school-based practices according to the limited in-country research (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; AlKhateeb, Hadidi, & AlKhateeb, 2016).

This vertical case study addresses both policy and practice, understanding that neither exist in isolation. Utilizing a unique interpretation of vertical case study structures I will conduct an analysis of policy and practice at multiple levels, while also addressing Jordanian education policy through time. While this paper follows inclusion from international conception to the Jordanian adoption and into classrooms, the goal is not to separate these levels of implementation but rather to show the relationship between them.

The Jordanian government has demonstrated a political commitment to inclusive policies, yet research in the country demonstrates that services, research and intervention efforts are significantly lacking (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; AlKhateeb, Hadidi, & AlKhateeb, 2016; Al-Natour, AlKhamra, Al-Smadi, 2008). The spread of inclusion into Jordanian law demonstrates the limits of world culture as it attempts to spread educational initiatives deeply dependent on historical, social and economic contexts. Tracing the history of inclusion through global and national policy analysis demonstrates common definitions and goals in law yet the literature review of inclusion in practice highlights how it is reimagined, and changed to meet the local context. The limited scope of current research presents a narrow view of inclusion policy and practice, but it is imperative to critique these in order to set a path for future research. By analyzing the policies and practices together, over time, this paper documents the global mandates, subsequent national-level commitments to inclusion, as well as the ensuing practices within schools. Ultimately a duality of challenges is exposed in the country, that better explains the ambiguous policy to practice gap often noted in inclusion literature. The goal of this paper is to answer the research questions; what are the international and regional factors that have influenced Jordanian adoption of inclusion practices and how are Jordanian inclusionary laws being resourced and implemented by local schools? In order to address these, I will present a history of the adoption of inclusion in Jordan through an analysis of global (macro) policies, national (mesa) policies, and local (micro) inclusion implementation.

### **Demographics**

Jordan is located in the Middle East, bordered by Syria to the north, Iraq to the east, Palestine and Israel to the west, and Saudi Arabia to the south. The majority of Jordan's population is young and lives in cities; 21% is between 10 and 19 years old, and 84% live in an urban area. The gross national income per capita, based on the US dollar, is \$5,160; the Jordanian government receives 8% of their gross national income as official development assistance. They spend 4.9% of gross domestic product on education, although this number fluctuates when compared across datasets and there is no currently available data for 2016 (UNESCO, 2019; World Bank, 2015). Within Jordan's borders are 9.46 million people, including Palestinian, Syrian and Iraqi refugees many of whom attend Jordanian schools,

exacerbating an already overburdened system (Human Rights Watch, 2016; United Nations Statistical Division, 2016).

The government is a constitutional monarchy in which the upper house of Parliament is appointed by the King and the lower house is elected. The country is divided into 12 governorates with governors appointed by the King. There are 25 ministries conducting the day-to-day governance of the country. The responsibility for special education services is spread among the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Ministry of Youth (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; UNCRPD, 2015).

There are several international organizations also operating within the country that have independent special education and inclusive programming, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and private foundations (UNICEF, 2014; UNRWA, 2017). UNRWA contributes a significant amount to the education expenditure, running 174 schools in Jordan for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA, 2017). The following assessment of inclusionary practices is focused only on Jordanian government schools, as the UNRWA schools operate outside the jurisdiction of the Ministries and thus have a different conception and regulation of inclusion (Rodriguez & Dieker, 2018).

There is a sharp decline in enrollment from primary to secondary school. More than 97% of students were enrolled in primary school in 2014 and only 82.4% remained in school through secondary (UNICEF, 2014). The United Nations predicts one-third of all out-of-school children are those with disabilities (UNICEF, 2014). There are no accurate counts of disability in Jordan, with some sources quoting 1% and more recent estimates at 12%; these statistics are based on WHO estimates of the global population of persons with disabilities and reported rates from Jordanian ministries (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; WHO, 2014).

### **Conceptual Framework**

Inclusion practices vary widely around the globe; models are different from country to country as well as, between jurisdictions within a single country. As a result of the lack of cohesion, it is not enough to rely on a single definition when studying inclusion practices. Instead, a rich description of the legislative history and contextual, cultural practices must be developed for each context (Artiles & Dyson, 2005). To understand the implications of global policy on national laws and local contexts in Jordan, I will rely on comparative case study developed by Bartlett and Vavrus (2006; 2009; 2014; 2017), originally referred to as vertical case study. This methodology has been used in educational ethnographies to shed light on the flow between global and local contexts in an ever more internationally governed world. In addition to the comparative structure, underlying the analysis is policy borrowing, reception and translation theory as outlined by Steiner-Khamsi (2008; 2010; 2014; 2016). Education ethnography scholars including Vavrus (2005), Anderson-Levitt (2004) and Schuelka (2014) have contributed to the body of research that aims to understand the borrowing and translation of international policies in practice; these studies will inform my methodology in this analysis of the Jordanian context.

### **Comparative Case Study**

Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) used comparative case study to demonstrate how multiple actors in Tanzania were both impacted by and shaped education policies from the highest levels of government to the coffee-growing communities at the base of Kilimanjaro. They were able to present a comprehensive flow of policy and practice interpretation by tracing

the shifting meanings of a specific policy from international origins to the implications for specific villagers. Schuelka (2018) has applied the comparative case study to inclusionary studies in Bhutan, showing the relevancy of such methodologies across different educational policy-scapes. By doing so Schuelka (2018) answers the call of inclusion researchers across the globe to use a more robust methodology to address the varied interpretations of inclusion on a global scale (Artiles & Dyson, 2005). As inclusion policy is transferred throughout the world by means of policy borrowing governments, administrators and practitioners bring their own context and interpretation, shifting how it is implemented.

Comparative case study provides a methodological framework to study the flow of meaning when an international-level mandate for inclusion is adopted into law and how it is disseminated into local schools (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Schuelka, 2018). It is often depicted with a single vertical axis on which each level of adoption and subsequent interpretation is arranged, micro (local practice), mesa (country level government), macro (international). Vavrus and Bartlett (2006) draw a horizontal axis of study as well, through use of multiple research sites, each community providing local context for international policies. Using data from multiple sites recognizes culture is not monolithic but made of ongoing social interactions in individual communities (Anderson-Levitt, 2012). Most recently, scholars have drawn on cultural, historical activity theory to recognize the simple vertical- horizontal axis is not enough to represent the shifting meanings of a policy (Artiles, Kozleski & Waitoller, 2011; Schuelka, 2018). A more robust visual model includes transversal axis, in addition to the vertical and horizontal, to demonstrate changes over time, because the historicity of a policy and country bears on the modern-day implementation. Taken all together, the comparative case study creates a robust multidimensional understanding of the flow between policy and practice.

This unbounding of case study is useful when considering such a widespread and frequently amorphous education initiative, such as inclusion. One goal of comparative case study is to avoid the silos of binding and holding constant certain factors, instead this methodology acknowledges the flow of ideas through organizations, communities and nation-states (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017; Schuelka, 2018). Using comparative case study inclusion research can advance beyond a macro, top-down, universal approach or a micro, bottom-up, phenomenological study which so often dominates the research (Schuelka, 2018). Bringing this multi-dimensional lens to inclusion in Jordanian schools exposes a dual narrative more complex than theoretical or empirical articles have exposed.

Using comparative case study methodology in this literature review lifts the restrictive lens of large, generalized cultural challenges to inclusion while shedding a clearer light on how and why localities are interpreting the practice differently. Following the international influences, national history and local understandings the case of inclusion in Jordan moves beyond the policy to practice gap and presents a more interconnected understanding of how inclusion manifests. The vertical axis of analysis is structured to describe the macro-mesa elements of international policy and national education policy. The current literature base is used to describe the practices, attitudes and beliefs prevalent in Jordanian schools runs and creates the horizontal or contextual axis. Research in this area is limited, and this paper aims to begin closing the gap in literature that masks the interactions between policy and practice creating significant hurdles for progress.

### ***Policy Transfer***

Inclusive policies in first-generation nations, countries that adopted inclusion practices early, were a result of parental and disability advocacy groups that pushed for

legislative change and ultimately resulted in greater inclusion (Artiles, et al., 2011). Current inclusion policies are heavily borrowed or transferred from first-generation inclusive countries by international institutions to developing nations, with differing effects (Artiles et al., 2011). Second-generation countries are those that adopted inclusion as an official educational policy after the Salamanca Statement and generally have done so using a top-down approach that has left policy and practice at odds (Artiles et al., 2011). While many agencies operating in Jordan, from non-governmental, international governing, and foreign donor governments push for a well-defined and cookie-cutter transfer of inclusion policy, the context of the classroom invariably shifts how it is implemented.

Steiner-Khamsi (2008; 2010; 2014) has extensively studied and analyzed how educational policies are transferred through the economic and hegemonic powers of international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. Jordan has a unique position as a politically stable country in the Middle East and as a result draws a multitude of international actors into its borders. This makes the country a dynamic place to apply the policy transfer theories advanced by Steiner-Khamsi (2008; 2010; 2014) by analyzing the complex policies and practices of inclusion. Countries considered receptive to policy-transfer demonstrate significant political changes, and economic conditions that make education transfer appealing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Jordan exhibits both a political will for change and economic needs; with the monarchy and parliament advocating for a knowledge-based economy by creating a world-class education system. In order to accomplish these goals Jordan is significantly reliant on external funding sources, also making it subject to the powerful strings attached to funding packages (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2013; World Bank 2011; 2017). The borrowing and lending of educational policy is often done for political and economic gains, with Northern countries exporting, at a cost to importing countries, educational initiatives (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). While inclusion has not been a documented money-making education initiative, the global push for inclusion has made it a measure of a modern school system, tying it to other economic gains (Artiles & Dyson 2005). Therefore, throughout this analysis it is important to recognize how international aid to Jordan has potentially directly and indirectly compelled the government to adopt inclusion policies.

Policy transfer theory works congruently with comparative case studies because it attends to the process of policy making, not just the resulting policy, shaping the transverse axis of a comparative study. Both theories require researchers to devote significant study to the history, power flows and influence behind the transfer or borrowing of specific policies (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Policy transfer theories acknowledge the reimagining of policies as they are transferred and using comparative case study, we can open the black box of transfer to reveal how policies shift at each level of implementation.

### **Global Inclusive Education (Macro)**

The Salamanca Statement (1994) is the foundation of the modern inclusive education movement that extends to the most recent 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Salamanca Statement, ratified by 92 governments and 25 organizations, is the first and defining document of inclusion-based policies (Peters, 2007). Many scholars identify the statement as the first coherent step toward global inclusion, which culminated in the passage of the CRPD through awareness campaigns and policy shifts. Article 24 of the CRPD reaffirms the commitments of Salamanca and indicates a broad government level acceptance of inclusion (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2006). According to these foundational documents, the goals of inclusion are to (1) provide a general education that responds to the needs of all learners, including those with disabilities;

(2) implement curricula that meet diverse learner needs, taught by qualified teachers; and (3) allow access to schools in the home community and as a result attain complete social integration (UNGA, 2006). Although the majority of countries have ratified the CRPD and pledged to implement inclusion in their school systems, no uniform set of practices exists (Anastasiou & Keller, 2011; Artiles, et al., 2011; Peters, 2007; Winzer & Mazurek, 2012).

### ***International Path of Inclusion***

The complete history of inclusion policies and practices begins well before the Salamanca Statement. The roots of inclusionary ideals are found in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA, 1948). With the Universal Declaration, the United Nations first recognized and made steps toward including individuals with disabilities by removing societal barriers. This declaration laid the foundation for the practice of inclusion as a human right for students with intellectual disabilities (Artiles et al., 2011).

Twenty years later, the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation in the United Kingdom introduced the idea of the social model of disability (Thomas, 2004). This groundbreaking work began dismantling the medical model of disabilities, which encouraged welfare-based solutions and segregated persons with impairments (Thomas, 2004). The new social model deemphasized individual impairments as a barrier to participation in society and instead identified societal structures that disable people through exclusionary practices (Gabel & Peters, 2004; Thomas, 2004). The changing perspective encouraged advocates and persons with disabilities to push for legislative changes that made communities and schools more inclusive.

This shift in thinking placed the United States and the United Kingdom in particular on the trajectory toward more inclusionary policies and practices in the workplace and education spaces (Gabel & Peters, 2004; Thomas, 2004). Major advocacy efforts by parents, persons with disabilities and professionals in the United States and the United Kingdom led to inclusion legislation, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), in the United States. This landmark legislation established the right of persons with disabilities to have free and appropriate access to schools (US Department of Education, 2002). This cultural shift moved communities to change practices and provide accommodations so persons with disabilities were more included in physical spaces, but also acceptance in daily interactions. This cultural shift and legislative gains in the US, UK and other global north countries now inform education policies engineered by international organizations and leaders.

While the social model has come under critique in recent years for neglecting the very real impact of impairments on the daily life of individuals with disabilities, it is still relevant in Jordan (Shakespeare, 2014). Throughout legislative initiatives and new projects the need to move towards the social model of disability is explicitly stated (Jordan Information Bureau, 2000; Ministry of Education, 2008; 2013). The laws of Jordan echo the social model's attempt to remove societal barriers for persons with disabilities, but use it as a static framework that neglects the dynamic nature of medical impairments and social barriers. This is ineffective in most places, and is a main critique of models of disability, that it has led to an either-or view of disability which leaves out important discussions and provisions for persons with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2014). In fact, most disabled Jordanians are in favor of a rights-based model that recognizes both the socio-political barriers, but also emphasizes prevention and treatment when appropriate (Nagata, 2008).

After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the next major declaration to promote inclusion was the 1960 Covenant Against Discrimination in Education, which

enshrined the right of access to quality education for all persons. In 1990 the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) began a global effort to ensure the right of education to all individuals and led to 92 nations gathering in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994 to affirm the rights of students with special needs and promote inclusion with the Salamanca Statement (Peters, 2007). The most recent disability-specific mandate is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNGA, 2006). Article 24 of the convention outlines the goals of inclusion and sets standards for global implementation. To date, the adoption of CRPD is the defining moment of the global inclusion movement (Peters, 2007; Winzer & Mazurek, 2012). Inclusion has continued to be highlighted in all subsequent global development efforts, including the 2020 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These modern international efforts to promote inclusion are particularly salient for Jordan, a country that is heavily reliant on international organizations for education aid and support.

### ***Adopting Inclusion***

The United Kingdom and the United States, both first-generation inclusion countries, wield disproportionate power, directly and indirectly, in setting the agenda for international bodies. The significant impacts can be seen in education reforms through grants, public-private partnerships and other award structures that prioritize education initiatives developed in these nations (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; 2008). Jordan receives significant grants and assistance packages owing to its strategic geopolitical location in the middle of the Middle East (Salameh, 2017). Since its economic crisis in the 1990s, Jordan has received large World Bank loans; almost 25% of its GDP between 1963 and 1985 came from military and economic assistance from Western countries eager to influence regional politics (Salameh, 2017). The United States Agency for International Development and the European Union have been integral in providing capacity development loans, in addition to education assistance provided by the World Bank, UNESCO and UNWRA (Clark, 2012; Salameh, 2017).

The influx of money from these various agencies has allowed Jordan to steadily increase the amount of GDP spent on education: 6% in 1990 to 10.8% in 2007 (Abugattas-Majluf, 2012). Research in other developing nations demonstrates the influence of foreign money on education reforms and educational policies adopted by the Jordanian government follow this trend. It is both explicitly stated in policies and also seen through the hegemonic influence of granting institutions, many of which support inclusive education as a mark of a progressive and modern school system and write these expectations into grant agreements and promote an inclusive education agenda in project development schemes.

### **Jordanian Policy (Mesa)**

Jordan has been a signatory on all the major international mandates establishing goals for students with disabilities that have been developed by the UN over the past 60 years. It has also supported regional efforts such as the Covenant of the Rights of the Child in Islam (Organization of the Islamic Conference, 2005; UNCRPD 2015). Following the history of disability rights development internationally, these initiatives have driven policies for persons with disabilities in Jordan over time.

### ***General Education Reform***

The Jordanian education system has been undergoing systematic changes since the Education Reform Law (ERL) of 1952, and these changes have improved the overall quality of the Jordanian education system (Abbas, 2012). The ERL established that students have the

right to an education *free from discrimination* and made the first seven years of school compulsory (Abbas, 2012). This was a tumultuous time in Jordan, their Constitution was formally ratified in 1952, and at the same time of declaring their own independence the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was threatening the creation of this new state. The UN, which had just recently passed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) had also just establish UNRWA to assist Palestinian refugees, many of whom were fleeing to Jordan. This began a long history of involvement of the UN in Jordanian government affairs, including the education sector.

The next country-wide reform was the 1964 Education Law, which began to shape an educational philosophy for Jordan. Drawing on the Jordanian constitution and national values, the 1964 law was meant to create an inclusive school system (Abbas, 2012; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). It expanded access to education, increasing public school enrollment by over 500,000 students, more than half of which were girls (Abbas, 2012). The Ministry of Education (MoE) undertook these reforms and, through decentralization, also began conducting more monitoring and evaluation in schools (Abbas, 2012). The Permanent Education Law 3 (1994) charged the MoE with increasing spending on teacher and school leadership training, developing and utilizing new curriculum in addition to the basic goals (Abbas, 2012).

The primary mission of the MoE (2008) is to develop citizens who (1) believe in Allah and have a clear understanding of Islam, (2) are loyal to country and Arab nations, (3) are aware of their rights, (4) have a balanced personality and openness to others while maintaining their own identity, and (5) have the skills and knowledge to contribute to a knowledge-based economy. To accomplish these goals, the MoE (2008) will (1) provide education for all, (2) create equality and equity in its services through education appropriate for “students’ learning levels,” (3) efficiently provide the administration to run schools, and (4) create and run a school system that is competent both internally and externally. Over the past four years approximately 13% of the government budget is spent by the MoE (UNESCO, 2019) This budget is derived both from Jordanian government revenues, but heavily supplemented by outside loans and grants from the World Bank, USAID and other international governments and governing agencies (World Bank, 2015).

### ***Inclusive Education Reforms***

Jordan has passed significant pieces of legislation targeting persons with disabilities, in addition to acknowledging their rights in the previously discussed national education legislation. In 1993, Law 12 for the Welfare of Handicapped Persons was passed and established the responsible ministries; Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, and the Higher Council of Affairs of Persons with Disabilities (Jordan Information Bureau, 2000). In its opening paragraphs Law 12 acknowledges the historical influences already discussed in this analysis:

The philosophy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan with regard to its disabled citizens springs forth from Arab-Islamic values, the Jordanian constitution, the National Charter, the Laws governing education and higher education, the World Declaration on Human Rights, and the International Declaration on Disabled Persons [...] (Article 3, Law 12 Welfare for Handicapped Persons, retrieved from Jordan Information Bureau, 2000)

Within this law the right of students with disabilities to access schools and receive a free and

appropriate education is reiterated by making public schools physically and academically accessible. Law 12 made permanent a provisional law written and passed in 1989, a direct result of the UN's 1981 International Year of Persons with Disabilities, which inspired advocacy efforts by the monarchy and Western-backed nongovernmental organizations (Turmusani, 1999). While the law enshrined these values and promoted an inclusionary school system, there was limited money and limited school-based support for the policy, so very little change was seen.

It was not until 2007 that a second disability rights-specific policy was enacted. Law 31 on the Right of Persons with Disabilities was passed by the Parliament immediately following the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons. In addition to reestablishing many of the nondiscriminatory policies and free education provisions of the 1993 law, Law 31 also initially established the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCRPD) to promote and enforce disability rights throughout the country. The Council is staffed by members of each government ministry, persons with disabilities, their families, and "distinguished-persons" in the area of disabilities, as well as members of the Paralympic Committee (HCRPD, 2018). Both Laws 12 and 31 were written and passed in concert with international pushes for inclusive education, yet current research in schools shows neither has significantly affected the implementation (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008).

Several agencies are responsible for carrying out these laws. The MoE is one-half of the administration that controls special education policy and practice in Jordan (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). In 1979 the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) was established, and a major task for this ministry is to attend to the needs of persons with disabilities, as students and as adults (UNCRPD, 2015). The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCRPD) was officially created in 2007 and is not only responsible for coordination between the MoE and MoSD but also the Ministry of Health and other concerned agencies (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; UNCRPD, 2015). While these laws are progressive they do not provide clear directives or procedures for implementing inclusive practices or consequences for lack of implementation (Sakarneh, 2014).

Most recently, Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 20 in 2017 was passed and is now in effect (Law No. 20, 2019). The law addresses multiple facets of full inclusion in daily living for persons with disabilities. Article 17 through 22 are specific to the educational rights of students with disabilities, but like previous laws, lack legislative details that would make the law effective. Language such as "lack of reasonable accommodations" leaves it up to the various bureaucracies to determine what is reasonable because the court system does not support legal challenges by parents or advocates. Responsibility for inclusion of students with disabilities in schools remains under the jurisdiction of the MoE, while HCRPD supports and consults in order to ensure appropriate and free educational opportunities. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Development are tasked with providing therapies necessary to support students in inclusive educational settings.

A large showing of public support for inclusion has not been seen in Jordan, where there is limited parental or advocate involvement at all levels of the education system (Abbas, 2012; Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014). A World Bank funded education project aimed at increasing the capacity of Jordanian students to contribute to a knowledge-based economy also includes provisions to increase parental participation and inclusive education (Abbas, 2012; MoE, 2008; World Bank, 2011; 2017). The forum called for higher engagement from the community and greater accountability through evaluation and teacher-training

programs, all of which were lacking in general and in special education practices (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; MoE, 2008; World Bank, 2011; 2017). These efforts remain largely siloed and have little impact on wider societal changes, where attitudes towards disabilities remain negative (Nagata, 2008).

McBride and Al Khateeb (2010) cite the lack of consistent funding, coordination between ministries and no clear standards or benchmarks for teachers or students as barriers to inclusive education efforts. Research from across Jordan refers to vague direction from the ministries and discord between the multiple government agencies that impede inclusion in schools (Al-Natour et al., 2015; El-Zraigat & Smadi, 2012; Sakarneh, 2014). In one interview the director of the special education division of the MoE stated “we do not have written goals for the Directorate” (El-Zraigat & Smadi, 2012). The generalities of the laws in Jordan have created a vacuum of meaning for teachers and schools, leaving individual localities to develop and implement their own inclusive programs.

The lack of governmental coordination is confounded by a cultural and historical loyalty to the tribe, or personal connections which actually govern much of Jordanian society in day-to-day matters (Al Oudat & Alshboul, 2010; Bani Salameh & El-Edwan, 2016). Historically, Jordan has struggled to create a cohesive state structure, many scholars believing it is held together due to the King’s autocratic control and necessity, not due to a shared national identity (Al Oudat & Alshboul, 2010). As such there is tension between the government and citizens, which has become more fragile in the wake of the Arab Spring, economic downturns and ongoing pressures on the country by regional conflicts that flood its cities with refugees. Some scholars point to the historical and cultural practice of *wasta* (literally meaning, go between; broadly defined as social connections) as fueling this more person driven approach to governance and business (Barnetta, Yandleb, Naufalc, 2012; Brandstaetter, Bamber, & Weir, 2016). The impact of *wasta* has only just begun to be studied in business, applying these studies to the education sector might explain why the slew of federal laws regulating inclusion have very little impact on daily teaching and learning due to the reliance on individual school administration and cultures to develop inclusive practices.

### **School and Social Context (Micro)**

Given the ongoing development of national policy and adherence to international initiatives, it would appear Jordan has a robust system of inclusion. However, based on available literature, the practice of inclusion is not being implemented with fidelity due to unclear directives, lack of resources and cultural beliefs about disabilities. Utilizing available Jordanian literature, it is possible to discern how inclusion manifests in context, which is frequently different than the ideals laid out in international or national law. These limited empirical studies on practice in Jordan are analyzed in the context of the previous macro and mesa elements. This provides insight into how teachers and schools are defining and implementing internationally based inclusion policies within local contexts. When these policies were adopted in Jordan, available resources, the prevalent community attitudes, and teacher training created a unique interpretation and limited implementation. This analysis comprises the horizontal axis of the comparative case study, demonstrating a multisite analysis through literature review, necessary because culture is created through daily interactions, exchanges of information, available resources and power dynamics within a specific locality (Anderson-Levitt, 2012). This complex system of making-meaning necessitates multisite research, to understand how different localities understand inclusion in different ways. The literature review creates a facsimile of multisite analysis that provides a more cohesive understanding of inclusion.

Including current practices recognizes that parents, teachers and students are all stakeholders and the policy process is not a static top-down implementation but a flow of meaning, negotiation and interpretation at each level (Schuelka, 2018; Sutton & Levinson, 2001). What becomes clear through an analysis of these empirical studies and academic essays is there is not a gap between policy and practice, but differing interpretations due to cultural constructions of disability, teacher capacities and the availability of resources in the community.

### **Resources**

Many impacting factors have been identified, including limited financial and physical resources, insufficient or reliable data on disability, and community barriers and limited coordination between agencies (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). All of these influence how teachers within the education system negotiate inclusion and impact educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Challenges arising from financial and physical resources are not uncommon, and frequently create barriers to inclusion, which are unrecognized by agencies promoting the policy (McBride & Al Khateeb, 2010; Schuelka & Johnstone, 2012). Resource scarcity is frequently an impediment to achieving inclusive education throughout the globe; in Jordan it is pervasive, as suggested in recent analyses of the Jordanian education system (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; McBride & Al Khateeb, 2010; UNCRPD, 2015).

The lack of reliable statistical data on students with disabilities, stemming from inadequate diagnostic tools and community attitudes, is a problem across the world, especially in developing nations (Bines & Lei, 2011; Fujiura, Rutkowski-Kmitta & Owen, 2010; Tomlinson et al., 2014). Insufficient data hampers the efforts of governmental and non-governmental agencies in serving students with special needs and their families. Appropriate financial or personnel resources cannot be allocated if population data is missing and having no accurate count of individuals with disabilities in Jordan masks the magnitude of the problem. Government surveys from 2004 predict just over 50,000 persons in Jordan have been diagnosed with a disability (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). This is far below the best global estimate of persons with disabilities, which is 5-10% of any given population (WHO, 2011). Using that estimate would indicate Jordan has at minimum 800,000 persons with a physical or intellectual disability (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; UNCRPD, 2015).

The high rates of consanguineous marriages and resulting increased rates of genetic disorders is likely to increase the number of people with disabilities (Alkhateeb, Hadidi & Alkhateeb, 2016; Gharaibeh 2009). While in Jordan the rate of consanguineous marriages has declined from approximately 57% in the 1990s to 35% in 2012, the poor resources for identifying resulting genetic disabilities contributes to the lack of clear data that would demonstrate a higher demand for better special education services in schools (Gharaibeh, 2009; Islam, Ababneh & Khan, 2018).

There are seventeen centers around the country established to diagnose disabilities but they are not fulfilling their obligations due to a lack of diagnostic materials and specialists (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). Stigma in the community also contributes to fewer people with disabilities being identified through community or government agencies as families feel a shame that can lead to hiding persons with disabilities (Hadidi & AlKhateeb, 2014; UNCRPD, 2015; Gharaibeh, 2009). The problems are exacerbated for students with less visible disabilities such as learning disabilities, attention-deficit hyper-activity disorder and emotional or behavioral disorders. These individuals are

frequently undiagnosed and do not receive any services; special education teachers are having to make eligibility decisions for students with learning disabilities without formal testing procedures or input from other professionals (Al Shoura, 2015). Without the necessary financial capacity, many other resources remain scarce and impact the school's ability to provide inclusive settings.

The first hurdle to get students with disabilities into schools is often structural, due to physical barriers. For example, blind or deaf students attend special schools during the primary grades and then matriculate to secondary facilities that do not have adequate accessibility to the physical building (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014). This physical access is not only important for the obvious reasons but the availability of accessible buildings has been shown to increase acceptance of inclusion among Jordanian teachers (Al-Zyoudi, 2006). In the same attitudinal survey, the majority of teachers note the largest barrier to inclusion was lack of space in classrooms for wheelchairs, ramps and other building modifications and indicated they had favorable views of inclusion of students with physical disabilities (Al-Zyoudi, 2006). These attitudes reveal an underlying truth in Jordan, noted in several studies that inclusion is defined as pertaining to students with physical disabilities, not learning or intellectual disabilities (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014; Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Bines & Lei, 2011).

In addition to the physical structure, the location of school buildings can also impact inclusive practices. Locality is a physical barrier for many students with disabilities, as urban centers house the majority of services and schools (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014). Students living in remote rural locations do not have regular bus service to urban centers, and existing rural schools face teacher shortages (Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014). A low and inaccurate count of how many students with disabilities live in rural areas, unable to access inclusive schools with appropriate supports lessens the pressure for the government to supply them with additional resources. Additionally, many of the NGO efforts to increase student enrolment are concentrated in urban areas, where there are large numbers of refugees. Northern cities and Amman have higher concentrations of donor organizations providing outreach and inclusive services than the rural areas in the east and southern portions of the country.

### ***Teacher Attitudes***

Teacher attitudes, abilities and training contribute to the policy process by interpreting and defining practice within the schools. Consideration of how these professionals carry out the inclusionary policies of Jordan should inform policy, research and training going forward. Like many developing nations, teachers in Jordan cite lack of training, poor resources, and a reluctance to include students with special education needs (AlKhateeb, Hadidi, & AlKhateeb, 2016; Bines & Lei, 2011). Universities introduced special education teacher training programs in the 1980s and there are now nine universities, both public and private, that offer degrees aimed at graduating special education teachers (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008). These are primarily four-year degree programs that provide education on general disability, teaching practices and diagnosis. Despite the availability of university training programs and scholars in the field of special education, attitudes toward inclusion remain skeptical and experiences of teachers indicates ongoing marginalization of students and special education teachers (AlKhateeb, Hadidi, & AlKhateeb, 2016).

The majority of general education teachers still feel ill-equipped to manage students with disabilities either due to training or time constraints. (AlKhateeb, Hadidi, & AlKhateeb, 2016; Al-Natour et al., 2015). Echoing statements that could have been made in any general

education classroom, teachers in Jordan acknowledged they know differentiated instruction is a best practice in inclusive classrooms but lack the time to develop and prepare lessons accordingly, while others decry insufficient training to apply the methods (Siam & Al-Natour, 2016). A separate mixed-methods study showed even when general education teachers have access to special educators there is a low level of collaboration between the professionals (Al-Natour, et al., 2015). Al-Natour et al. (2015) acknowledge the 1993 law creating inclusionary requirements but found that this was interpreted by the state level directorates as necessitating resource rooms for students. Some of this is compounded by rigid teacher-centered classrooms, where there is high pressure for Jordanian teachers to strictly adhere to the national curriculum, leaving little time, ability or willingness to develop more student-centered lessons (McBride & Al Khateeb, 2010)

Similar results are seen in survey research on special educator's attitudes towards inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD); only 19% of the teachers had received training about inclusive education. However, bigger predictors of their acceptance were age, level of education, and type of school, as to whether they had positive attitudes towards inclusion (Abu-Hamour & Muhaidat, 2013). Al-Hiary, Almakani and Tabbal (2015) surveyed preservice teachers enrolled in special education programs at Jordanian colleges and universities. The majority of teachers surveyed expressed dissatisfaction with their training programs and insufficient university educators. Survey research throughout the Middle East presents similar issues, but no studies have addressed the underlying issues of how educators define inclusion or construct an understanding of disability. This is an important gap in the literature, understanding how inclusion is defined and implemented on a daily basis could lead to stronger programming to increase services.

Interviews conducted with preservice early childhood teachers by Fayez et al. (2011) supports not only the concerns expressed above by teachers, but also provides initial insight into how inclusion is defined. Many of the students interviewed express acceptance and eagerness to practice inclusion in their future classrooms; however further questioning reveals they are only referring to physical and mild learning disabilities. Fayez et al. (2011) recommend further research should be conducted examining teacher preparation programs and training opportunities to increase teacher confidence. In addition to these measures, focusing on the underlying belief structures that create a definition of inclusion that only pertains to students with physical and learning disabilities needs to be conducted, some of those beliefs lie in historical-cultural values (Fayez et al., 2011).

### ***Community Attitudes***

Community and familial acceptance and attitudes towards persons with disabilities are widely varied but often include feelings of shame, which can present an obstacle to the families seeking help or educational opportunities (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; Al-Shoura & Ahmad, 2014). It is likely these same views have contributed to the negative attitudes of general education teachers towards inclusion and the marginalization of special education teachers. More research is needed to determine the effect of community beliefs on both general and special education teachers. Jordanian parents traditionally believe they should not intrude in their child's school, which means parents of students with disabilities are largely absent from the education process (Abbas, 2012; Abu-Hamour & Al-Hmouz, 2014). As previously discussed, parents and communities in many first-generation inclusion countries brought about change through advocacy efforts to include and educate their children (Artiles et al., 2011). In Jordan the lack of parental involvement for students with

disabilities constitutes a major barrier for progress as there is no one to advocate for the students when the government fails to enforce education policies.

There is no available research in English of campaigns to address community acceptance of persons with disabilities in second-generation inclusion countries. Survey research across many Arab countries has concluded pervasive negative attitudes towards disability (Alkhateeb, Hadidi, Alkhateeb, 2016). Jordanian communities both rural and urban, across the socioeconomic divide demonstrate negative attitudes toward disability as measured on the Scale of Attitudes towards Disabled Persons (Nagata, 2008). Community programs such as Special Olympics that might contribute to changing attitudes, does operate within Jordan. However, there is no available monitoring and evaluation reports that could increase understanding of how these programs attract students and their families to programs, despite community stigma towards people with disabilities. Qualitative research to understand the belief systems about disability and intervention research to determine effective programs that could decrease stigma must be undertaken. Such future research that addresses these questions could greatly improve the education of students with disabilities.

### ***Discussion***

Jordan's pivotal position within the Middle East and the world at large, has brought it into regular contact with international influences for decades. Like many countries in the developing world, Jordan has adopted inclusion as part of larger education reforms intended to increase access for all students. The comparative literature review has revealed while the structure of inclusion has transferred into Jordanian laws, the policies have neglected to include pragmatic details of how to implement the practice (McBride & Al Khateeb, 2010; Sakarneh, 2014). The policy to practice gap cited in systemwide analyses such as that undertaken by McBride and Al Kahteab (2010), cannot be solved through either-or research that only addresses resources or attitudes, but must explore both resources and cultural beliefs as attitudes impacting inclusion.

While the empirical research indicates schools are facing a lack of resources and training, it also demonstrates those inadequacies in the system contribute to the negative attitudes of teachers. Academic essays addressing disability in Jordan, and the wider Middle East, indicate negative attitudes are a result of long held cultural beliefs, this comparative literature review demonstrates the challenges are more complex. Multiple studies revealed teachers were unwilling and reluctant to implement inclusion because they did not feel they were prepared with adequate resources and training, but did not cite cultural beliefs (Al Jabery & Zumberg, 2008; Al-Natour et al., 2015; Amr, 2011; Siam & Al-Natour, 2016). Empirical studies indicated the availability of resources influences teacher attitudes, however interviews with teachers conducted by Sakarneh (2014) indicate there is a cultural dimension to how teachers make sense of their roles and perceive students with special needs.

The academic essays that cite cultural barriers to inclusion, are not empirically based and do not explore how these attitudes are developed or maintained (Hadidi & Al Kahteab, 2015). Throughout the literature, including empirical research, these negative attitudes are alluded to by the authors, but not supported by interview or observational data. Instead, resource scarcity seems to be the greatest barrier to inclusion. This comparative literature review has revealed the governing policies for inclusion in Jordan are not robust, but ambiguous reiterations of international guidelines. It is possible this is a result of longstanding beliefs about disability, but more empirical evidence from in-depth qualitative studies of governing bodies must be undertaken that focus on the attitudes and beliefs of ministerial bodies. It is clear there is a complicated flow between government policy and

implementation, that is influenced by multiple factors and warrants more extensive research into the flow of meaning between policy makers and teachers.

### **Conclusion**

By employing a comparative lens to Jordanian inclusive policies and practice it is possible to track the influence of international initiatives for inclusive education and also international development aid that has influenced the adoption of inclusion in Jordan. The unique geopolitical space that Jordan exists in has created enormous opportunity for influential education agencies to advocate for inclusionary policy and practice. Thus far, however, the survey and limited case study research demonstrates limited efficacy if measured by the international and national laws governing the practice in a top-down approach. Currently, the practice is under resourced and this contributes to a broad interpretation of inclusion that results in limited or non-existent services. More insight needs to be gained from teachers and schools about their success in creating parental advocates, community inclusion and classroom practices.

It is clear that Jordanian government policies are supportive of special education programming in the schools and their goal is inclusion, but implementation is limited by inadequate resources, training, lack of community support and physical resources. These challenges are not unique to Jordan; educational policies adopted across nations often face similar challenges. Creating and utilizing a more localized solution to special education would likely create better results (Bines & Lei, 2011; Schuelka & Johnstone, 2012). Past research efforts in Jordan have highlighted problems affecting inclusionary education through analysis of resource barriers and surveys of teachers; however, there is little evidence of intervention research that might improve education for students with special needs in Jordan. Alkhateeb, Hadidi and AlKhateeb (2016) and Keller and Al-Hendawi (2014) cite the lack of empirical research available in both English and Arabic that address inclusionary initiatives in Middle Eastern nations generally. This indicates that there is very little local knowledge being disseminated. Current policies inspired by international efforts and research have done little to make a difference outside of the halls of government. To better implement and improve special education services, donor organizations and the Jordanian government need to focus their resources towards developing local advocacy efforts, parental supports and ongoing teacher training efforts, which have shown to be effective in other developing country contexts (Schuelka & Johnstone, 2012). The next steps in research need to be ethnographic education study to develop a contextual understanding of inclusion in Jordan in order to generate knowledge that attends to both the cultural influences and the resource needs of inclusionary education.

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