

A Four Country Comparison: Special Education in the United States, China, India and Thailand

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ABSTRACT

There are few systems of special education that are as comprehensive as the one in place in the United States. This paper compares the special education services available to students with disabilities in China, India and Thailand with the services for students with disabilities in the United States. The first part of the paper is a review of the literature on special education in the aforementioned countries. This is followed by a survey conducted in 1st through 5th grade classrooms in each country. Results show while the United States has by far the most uniform and comprehensive service, followed by Thailand with progressive services in their university demonstration schools. China and India, however, have little in place to assist struggling students in their highly populated classrooms.

Keywords: comparative special education, inclusion, special education in Asia

INTRODUCTION

Obtaining services for students with special needs has historically been a challenge. The United States is an example of one of the most comprehensive systems of special education, while other countries have evolving systems for serving students

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32 with disabilities. This paper compares the special education “systems” of the United
33 States, with the way that services are provided in the developing nations of China,
34 Thailand and India. A survey is conducted comparing the support that “struggling
35 students” receive in the aforementioned countries.

36 **Special Education in the United States**

37 Since 1975, and advent of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act [1] the
38 United States has guaranteed a *free* and *appropriate* education for all students with
39 disabilities. Under this act, there are 13 recognized categories of disability, and they
40 are autism, developmental delay, visual impairment, hearing impairment, emotional
41 disturbance, traumatic brain injury, language and speech disorders, deaf-blindness,
42 multiple handicap, physically handicapped, mental retardation, other health impaired
43 and specific learning disability. Of these categories, by far the highest percentage of
44 students are those with learning disabilities [2].

45 There is a very uniform process in which struggling students in the United States are
46 identified as qualifying for special education services. An assessment plan is sent
47 home to obtain parents’ permission to assess their child. Once the parent signs the
48 form, and gives consent, the school has 60 days to do all of the testing and have a
49 meeting on the results. After testing has been completed, an Individualized
50 Educational Program (IEP) meeting is held.

51 At the IEP meeting, the testing results are presented to the members of the IEP
52 Team. This team consists of an Administrator (Principal or Designee), school
53 psychologist, special education teacher, the parent of the child, the school nurse, and
54 other personnel when appropriate (such as a counselor or behavior therapist if the

55 child has serious discipline issues or a language and speech (LAS) specialist if the
56 child has articulation or language processing issues). The assessment reports of the
57 school psychologist, special education teacher, school nurse, and LAS (if necessary)
58 are presented. The first thing that is decided is whether the child has a disability and
59 qualifies for special education services. If the child is found to be eligible, an IEP is
60 written for that child. The IEP consists of several parts: goals, services provided,
61 related services if necessary, accommodations and/or modifications, assistive
62 technology, transportation, extended school year and transition (if the child is age 16
63 or older).

64 The services that are provided as a result of the IEP are extensive. Academic and/or
65 functional goals are developed for the student, taking them from their present level
66 of performance to at least one year's growth in that area. The student is placed in
67 their *least restrictive environment*(LRE), as close to their same age peers as possible
68 while still being able to receive an appropriate education. For some students, the
69 LRE is the general education classroom with support from a special education
70 teacher. For other students who are considerably below grade level academically,
71 the LRE might be a segregated special education classroom on the site of the public
72 school. For still other students, the LRE might be a mixed placement in which the
73 child spends all but an hour or two in a general education classroom, but goes to a
74 resource room for pull-out services in areas of need.

75 The child might also require *related services* to progress academically and/or
76 socially. These services might include counseling, adaptive physical education (for

77 those with fine motor or gross motor issues), speech, occupational therapy, vision
78 and/ or hearing services. No matter what disability the child has, he or she is entitled
79 to an education that is adequate for progress to occur.

80 A child is also entitled to necessary academic accommodations and/or modifications,
81 both for instruction as well as when it comes to high-stakes testing. An
82 accommodation is something that is provided the child but does not invalidate the
83 test results. For instance, children with vision issues can be provided tests in larger
84 print. Sometimes, however, it is not appropriate to only provide a testing
85 accommodation. Some children need modifications. An example would be testing a
86 5th grader using a 3rd grade test.

87 Some students need appropriate assistive technology to progress academically, and
88 this is also written into a child's IEP. An obvious example of assistive technology
89 would be a Braille reader for a child with a visual impairment. However, it might be
90 something as simple as a Hoyle Gripper [3], a device put on a pencil to help children
91 with fine motor issues.

92 Another area addressed at IEP meetings concerns transportation. When a special
93 education service is necessary but not available at a child's neighborhood school, the
94 district will provide transportation for the child to a school with that service.

95 Sometimes a child will be picked up at his or her neighborhood school, transported
96 to another school, and then transported back to the neighborhood school at the end of
97 the day. Other times, if appropriate, and usually when a child has a more involved

98 disability, a child will be transported from their home to another school and back
99 home at the end of the day.

100 Some children qualify for *Extended School Year*. When it appears that having a
101 child be away from school for the entire summer would cause a regression of skills,
102 perhaps due to memory issues, they are entitled to having their IEP services for a
103 portion of the summer months. In the United States, it is typical for a child with a
104 learning disability to receive services for half a day for about six weeks of the
105 summer.

106 Finally, for a child 16 years of age or older, transition must be addressed. Goals are
107 constructed for the child to prepare them for a vocation or, in some cases, college.
108 They might be taught work skills or, if appropriate, independent living skills.

109 The student's IEP remains in effect for one year. At least once a year, the IEP is
110 reviewed to determine if changes need to be made to the child's educational
111 program. Parents are given progress reports several times during the school year (at
112 every grading period) detailing how the student is progressing on his or her special
113 education goals.

114 Every three years, the student must be reevaluated to determine if he or she is still
115 eligible for special education services. This involves having the school psychologist
116 and special education professional complete the same testing again. However, the
117 IEP team may decide, after the second year, that the child's eligibility is unlikely to
118 change and that reevaluation is not necessary.

119 The special education process for struggling students in the United States can be a
120 cumbersome exercise, with much paperwork to keep in order to stay in compliance
121 with existing laws and regulations. However, it has ensured a consistency across the
122 country with regard to the services provided.

123 There is a remarkable consistency in which special education is implemented in the
124 United States. This is due to the very prescriptive law governing special education in
125 the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of
126 2004 [1]. Services are quite similar no matter where one attends school, whether that
127 school be urban or rural, largely middle class or largely poor.

128 **Special Education in China**

129 Special education in China is quite similar to what the United States looked like,
130 with regard to special education, prior to implementing the Education for All
131 Handicapped Children Act [1] in 1975. The only thing consistent about their system
132 is the *lack* of consistency, from school to school, city to city, and province to
133 province.

134 People knowledgeable about special education in China refer to the foundation of the
135 People's Republic of China in 1949 as the start of special education services in that
136 country. At that time, schools for the blind and deaf were founded [4]. However, it
137 wasn't until 1980 that teacher training for special educators began, and until the
138 1990s when teacher training institutions were required to offer special education
139 courses. Prior to this time, children with mental retardation and children with motile
140 disabilities were largely excluded from school due to lack of personnel and
141 resources, and children with other types of disabilities (i.e., learning disability,

142 autism) were not even recognized as having a disability [5]. By 1987, only 55% of
143 students with disabilities were in school compared to a national enrollment rate of
144 97% [6].

145 There were some important laws that have influenced the evolution of special
146 education in China. In 1982, the newly revised constitution of China stated the
147 country's responsibility for educating people with disabilities, the first legal mandate
148 for the provision of special education in China. However, the firm foundation did
149 not come until the National People's Congress adopted the 1986 Compulsory
150 Education Law of the People's Republic of China [4], mandating that *all* children are
151 entitled to nine years of free public education—six years of elementary education
152 and three years of secondary school education.. Special schools were organized for
153 children with visual, hearing and mental impairments. In 1990, the Law on the
154 Protection of the Disabled Persons (1990) was passed, and emphasized that families,
155 work units and community organizations must share the responsibility for caring for
156 individuals with disabilities. In 1994, this law was strengthened by the *Ordinance of*
157 *Educations for Persons with Disabilities* which required a qualification certificate
158 system for the special education teacher [5]. Furthermore, the 1993 Teachers' Law
159 of the People's Republic of China [7] and the Education Law of the People's
160 Republic of China [8] both call for offering educational undertakings for individuals
161 with disabilities.

162 As a result of the previously mentioned laws, and the obvious western influence
163 over time, the face of special education in China is much different today. China is

164 attempting to do much more in the way of educating children with disabilities.

165 China recognizes, by law, six classes of disability: visual, hearing, intellectual,

166 physical, psychiatric and multiple impairments. Surprisingly, the prevalence of

167 people with disabilities appears to be lower in China than other countries. However,

168 this difference might be due to the fact that China does not recognize all of the

169 categories of disability that other countries do, such as Learning Disabilities [4]. In

170 addition, China is an agriculturally based culture and the majority of people live in

171 rural areas. Physical labor is the primary work in these rural areas where people can

172 function productively even if they cannot read or write. Therefore, many people with

173 disabilities (e.g. autism, learning disabilities, and mental retardation) may not even

174 attend school in rural and remote areas [4].

175 Because most of China's population lives in rural areas, the cost of funding special

176 schools for most children with disabilities in these areas is quite prohibitive.

177 Influenced by the trend toward inclusion in western countries, the "Learning in the

178 Regular Classroom" (LRC) movement gained popularity in the early 1990s [9]. The

179 use of this setting to serve students with disabilities has grown astronomically. In

180 1990, there were 105,000 students with disabilities in school and about 18% of them

181 were placed in general education classrooms. In 2003, LRC programs served

182 approximately 67% of all students identified with disabilities in regular schools [5].

183 Children with disabilities are now welcome in Chinese general education

184 classrooms; however, services are at best inconsistent. Eligibility for the LRC

185 placements consists of those students who can adapt to studies and life in public

186 schools. At present, three categories of disability are being served in the regular
187 education setting: visually impaired, hearing impaired, and mental retardation. The
188 most notable achievement made by China's LRC programs is the significant increase
189 in numbers of enrolled children with disabilities.

190 Still, China has several major hurdles to overcome. First is the reality of large class
191 sizes. Typically classes have between 40 and 75 students thus making it extremely
192 difficult to individualize instruction for those students who need it. Additionally,
193 teacher training is problematic as well. Many teachers in ordinary schools have
194 never had training in special education [4]. Students with disabilities are often
195 ignored in the classroom and may not receive appropriate instruction, because the
196 teachers have neither enough time nor adequate knowledge to help them [5, 10].

197 Several challenges face Chinese special education early in this 21st century. For one,
198 the whole-class teaching model has long been dominant in the Chinese classrooms.
199 This model was effective in teaching the information found in the textbooks to
200 students in the prevailing overcrowded classrooms. This type of instruction was
201 believed to better prepare students in the stiff competition for grade promotion and
202 limited college entrances, however the challenge remains for ways in which to
203 address learning diversity under this teaching uniformity and to practice
204 individualized teaching for those students with disabilities [5]. There is a lack of
205 instructional quality and accountability with regard to students with exceptional
206 needs.

207 The achievement of students with disabilities has not been required to be included in
208 official program evaluations, as it is in the United States, and no specific evaluation
209 procedures have been developed. In some “Learning in the Regular Classroom”
210 schools, students with disabilities have been observed sitting alone, isolated from
211 classroom activities, or have even remained at home, despite the fact that their names
212 are on the registration list. This unfortunately common practice has been called
213 “drifting in the regular classroom” [11].

214 There are problems with the procedures used to identify and diagnose children with
215 disabilities. There is a lack of diagnostic technology and experienced professionals.
216 Many of the instruments used are inaccurate translations of commonly given
217 Western instruments such as the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale IV, or the Draw a
218 Person Test, which are usually administered to determine whether a child has mental
219 retardation; no attention is paid to adaptive behavior [11, 4]. In fact, there is a
220 shortage of school psychologists in China who are trained specifically to give these
221 instruments [4].

222 Teachers are especially challenged in China’s system. In the United States, special
223 education teachers are more likely to be trained through university diploma/degree
224 programs or continued education system in a more systematic and carefully designed
225 way than in China [5]. Furthermore, the task of implementing special education
226 services in China is daunting. Even in the United States, with class sizes about half
227 that of typical Chinese classes and with a paraprofessional or a second teacher
228 assisting in inclusive classrooms, the smooth and full implementation of inclusion is

229 still a challenge. Teachers seemed to have a much heavier instructional and
230 management workload than their counterparts in the United States because
231 paraprofessionals or teacher assistants are not employed, thus further challenging the
232 implementation of individualized instruction [9]. Additionally, because of the highly
233 competitive system of promotion by examination, educators in China are often faced
234 with the push for higher promotion rates into colleges, while simultaneously
235 addressing the needs of their students with disabilities. Within this competitive
236 environment, teachers may not have enough time, energy, or professional knowledge
237 to help students with special needs in their classrooms [12].

238 Another challenging factor concerns transportation. In addition to the financial
239 constraints, transportation has been an influential factor. Inconvenient transportation
240 has meant that it is much more feasible for a child with a disability to attend a local
241 general education school than to attend a centrally located special school even if
242 placement at the special school would be more appropriate [6].

243 Finally, teacher training for special education in China is lacking. Even when
244 training exists, it is noted that an understanding of theory is more highly valued than
245 student teaching competence, and that special education student teaching experience
246 often lasts only about four weeks [9], compared to an entire semester in the United
247 States. That said, most Chinese teachers receive no training in special education. In
248 1991, it was estimated that even if the existing teacher-training institutes could
249 double their graduation rate, it would take more than 1,000 years to educate enough
250 teachers to meet the needs of just the students with mental retardation [11].

251 With all of the challenges listed, the future is still brighter for children with
252 exceptional needs in China. Teachers are being trained in more flexible methods, and
253 in addition to the traditional whole-class lecture model of instruction, a model that
254 combines whole-class teaching, tutoring outside of class, and cooperative learning
255 has been widely applied and is strongly recommended to all teachers participating in
256 “Learning in Regular Classroom” programs [11]. Additionally, parental advocacy is
257 on the rise in China. In the United States, the advocacy efforts of parents (including
258 litigation) were a main factor in bringing about a system of free and appropriate
259 public education, including education in inclusive settings, for children with
260 disabilities. Today in China, parents are beginning to request the same services that
261 parents in the United States demanded more than 25 years ago—the right to an
262 appropriate education for their children of different abilities [6]. Finally, programs
263 to prepare special education teachers are developing rapidly [9].

264 **Special Education in India**

265 India is the largest democracy in the world with an estimated population of
266 1.21 billion. With a diverse population to cater to, the education system has had
267 many phases of development, and the most recent phase is the movement towards
268 inclusion. Nearly 60 years ago, India made a constitutional commitment to provide
269 free and compulsory education to all up to the age of 14. Many disabilities have been
270 recognized and there are now laws on special education for the disabled; most
271 notably the Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995 [13]. However, there are many
272 issues that affect the field of special education, and the way underachievement is
273 confronted in Indian schools.

274 In India, the implementation of education laws is not consistent among
275 different states, because the individual State Governments interpret these laws
276 differently and implement them differently. For example, at one end of the spectrum,
277 there is the state of Kerala with practically every child completing elementary
278 schooling and transitioning to secondary school, and every school having at least five
279 classrooms and five teachers. And at the other end, there is the state of Bihar where
280 only 50% children go to school. The majority of children entering school fail to
281 complete the elementary school cycle, many schools are understaffed and teachers
282 are undertrained and given very little academic support to perform their role [14].

283 Out of approximately 200 million children of school-going age, (ages 6 to
284 14), an estimated 80 million children are found not attending school. It is not known
285 whether some of these children are being homeschooled, or if they are not receiving
286 any education or instruction at all. Children who live in the educationally lowest
287 performing states, are found to be more likely not to have any access to education at
288 all, whether school or otherwise [15]. According to the 2001 Census data, 2% of
289 children in the age group of 6 – 14 have special needs [16]. It is estimated that
290 around 38% of such children are out of school.

291 The Persons with Disability Act of India 1995 [13] classifies disabilities as:
292 visual, hearing, speech, loco-motor or mental. Learning disabilities (LD) are
293 included under the category of ‘mental’, thus associating LD with mental retardation
294 and mental illness [15]. Surveys conducted by the National Center of Promotion of
295 Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) revealed that only 1.2% of persons

296 who are disabled in India have had any form of education. In a school-level survey,
297 NCPEDP found that of 89 schools, 34 did not have a single student with a disability
298 and unfortunately, 18 schools had a policy against giving admission to children with
299 disabilities [17]. Even when a previously excluded child is given access to a
300 mainstream classroom, what happens within that space can be anything but inclusive,
301 if the school quality is poor, they cannot access an inflexible curriculum or they are
302 going to be ignored or bullied by the teacher and/ or peers [15].

303 From the population of school-going children, an estimated 14% of children
304 have learning disabilities in India [17]. Underachievement in elementary level
305 children in India is found to be mainly related to poor socioeconomic background,
306 lack of facilities at home and in school, and school-related functioning of the
307 underachievers themselves. Another factor is that in India, the national average
308 teacher-pupil ratio is 1:42[14], thus inhibiting meaningful individual interactions
309 between teacher and student, thus contributing directly to the underachievement and
310 high dropout rate in the lower primary grades.

311 In India, inclusive education is a recent phase of the education system. The
312 adoption of inclusive education was found to be partly related to government
313 pressure, partly to middle or upper class parental pressure for their own children with
314 disabilities to be educated in the mainstream, and partly due to the need of private
315 schools to be seen as innovative in a highly competitive market [15]. The
316 implementation of inclusive education is sporadic and not standardized across the
317 school system. Some sure signs of the sporadic implementation of inclusive

318 education are that disability budgets remain under-used in many government
319 programs and jobs reserved for disabled persons remain unfilled because of a
320 shortage of qualified candidates from that category [15].

321 As a measure to address underachievement in schools, The National Institute
322 of Open Schooling (NIOS) was established by the Ministry of Human Resource
323 Development of the Government of India in 1989. This organization seeks to provide
324 an alternative, and less challenging form of education for those performing below
325 grade level, and to provide education inexpensively to remote and rural areas. This
326 facility is also available for those living in urban areas. However the objective is to
327 provide education as a welfare measure to underachievers, rather than raise the skill
328 levels of those children to perform at grade level.

329 In India, teacher education emphasizes developing teachers' awareness of children
330 with disabilities, and how to 'diagnose' them, rather than how to include such
331 children in the classroom [18]. Studies on teacher behavior show that teachers are
332 not adequately trained to modify their behavior towards underachieving students.
333 These studies show that although there are steps being taken towards inclusion, much
334 remains to be done to address the needs of children who underachieve in class. While
335 there are laws to address special education, there are many inconsistencies in the way
336 those laws are interpreted.

337 **Special Education in Thailand**

338 Historically, educational services for children with disabilities were provided by
339 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The first special school for the Blind was
340 established in 1939. Other children with disabilities were still rejected from school.

341 That meant they stayed at home and did not have an opportunity to go to school like
342 peers without disabilities. Not until the 1950s did the government first fund special
343 schools for children with visual, hearing, physical, and intellectual impairments.
344 Since then, children with disabilities have had an opportunity to be educated in these
345 special schools. In the 1990s, an increasing number of children with disabilities who
346 needed educational services has led to a significant change in government supports
347 to individuals with disabilities. The Rehabilitation of Disabled Person Act of 1991
348 [19] was passed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. It is the first Thai
349 law specially targeted to provide greater participation, and equality of persons with
350 disabilities. These persons are eligible to receive appropriate basic education,
351 occupational education and higher education based on the national education plan.
352 The rights of persons with disabilities were strengthened and expanded with the
353 National Education Act (NEA) of 1999 [20]. This act requires that all Thai citizens
354 shall have equal rights and opportunities to receive at least 12 years of a free, quality
355 education provided by the government. Public schools are mandated to provide free
356 education for students from kindergarten to high school. This provision makes
357 “Education for All” available in Thailand. The National Education Act of 1999
358 makes clear reference to children with disabilities as well.
359 In 2008, The Education for People with Disabilities Act [21] was enacted. It is the
360 most important law for children with disabilities ever passed in Thailand. Under this
361 act, children with disabilities have the same right to education as children without
362 disabilities including educational materials, facilities, assistive devices, and home

363 schooling at no cost supported by the government. It is also illegal for parents to *not*
364 enroll their child if their child is at age of seven or older.

365 In order to receive special education services, each child with disabilities needs to be
366 registered and assessed. In Thailand, this is done by family physicians, as opposed to
367 school personnel. Then, an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is developed
368 according to the child's strengths and needs. The EPDA specifies nine categories of
369 disabilities including (a) physical impairment, (b) visual impairment, (c) hearing
370 impairment, (d) intellectual disabilities, (e) emotional and behavioral disorder, (f)
371 multiple disabilities, (g) autism, (h) learning disabilities, (j) speech and
372 communication disorder. Children who fall into at least one of these categories are
373 eligible to receive special education services. Although the legislation is enforced, it
374 has been difficult for schools to implement all substantial changes to the education
375 system in all areas of the country.

376 Schools must now provide for children with disabilities by (a) allocating a budget for
377 schools to provide services and purchase materials for children with disabilities, (b)
378 requiring teachers not to refuse to teach a child with a disability, (c) supporting well
379 trained personnel to teach children with disabilities, (d) providing effective
380 instruction to children who are eligible for this service, (e) implementing an IEP for
381 each child, (f) funding a center to improve assistive technology and software for
382 children with disabilities, and (g) strengthening policy of integrating children with
383 disabilities within regular schools [21].

384 The Ministry of Education is the major organization to ensure that education
385 is provided to all children in Thailand. Its Bureau of Special Education
386 Administration (BSEA) takes charge in providing services for children with special
387 needs across the country. Since the idea of moving towards inclusion gained
388 recognition in 2004, the ministry has provided various types of schools to serve
389 children with disabilities including (a) special education centers, (b) special schools,
390 and (c) regular integrated primary and secondary schools [22]. Additionally, there
391 are 76 Special Education Centers (SEC) across all provinces in Thailand. The SEC is
392 responsible for all special education services including identification of children with
393 disabilities in the community, collaboration with parents, child assessment, IEP
394 development, school placement, and early intervention at home or at the SEC. By
395 law, all children with disabilities are able to receive education in the general
396 education curriculum in regular schools upon parents' request. A school must
397 complete an IEP, or refer a child to be assessed by the SEC. Funding is provided to
398 schools only when the IEP has been approved. Not only responsible for providing
399 services for children with special needs in the school settings, the SEC also searches
400 for out-of-school children with disabilities in order to provide appropriate services as
401 well as provide trainings such as 15-day training sessions for parents whose children
402 have disabilities. However, the SEC has also encountered major challenges for not
403 having sufficient qualified personnel.

404 Special schools are also provided for children with several types of disabilities
405 including children with visual impairment, children with hearing impairments,

406 children with mental retardation, and children who have behavioral and emotional
407 disorders. In accordance with the NEA 1999 and 2002 regulations, the number of
408 special schools especially for children with mental retardation and other types of
409 disabilities has gradually increased. In 2004, there were 43 special schools for
410 children with mental retardation, hearing impairment, and autism run by the Ministry
411 of Education across the country. Also, these regulations resulted in a remarkable
412 increase in the number of children and youth with disabilities being educated in
413 regular schools through efforts of parents, professionals, educators, and other
414 advocates.

415 **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

416 Due to differing contexts and laws, it is difficult to compare the “systems” of special
417 education in the United States, China, Thailand and India. However, one can look at
418 how “struggling students” are served in their general education classrooms in the
419 countries studied. Some students might receive some help in the general education
420 classroom (inclusion), while others might receive help through a “pull-out” model.
421 Moreover, many struggling students receive little if any help. The goal of this study
422 is to look at the variables of class size, inclusion and pullout in the countries studied.

423 **METHODS**

424 A survey was conducted in two Chinese elementary schools, two Thai
425 elementary schools, two Indian elementary schools, and three elementary schools in
426 the United States. First through fifth grade teachers participated voluntarily and
427 were asked the following survey questions:

428 How many students are in your class?

429 Does an expert come into your class to assist you with struggling students?
430 Do struggling students leave your room for help from an expert in a “special”
431 room?

432 Results

433 While results of this survey can only be generalized to this limited research sample,
434 China and India had much higher mean class sizes than did the United States and
435 Thailand. The Tukey test for results shown in Table 1 indicated that the difference
436 in mean class size between China and India (59.46 vs. 58.24) was not significant, $p =$
437 .881. The difference in mean class size between China and Thailand (59.46 vs.
438 29.85) was significant, $p < .001$. The difference in mean class size between China
439 and United States (59.46 vs. 22.62) was significant, $p < .001$. The difference in mean
440 class size between India and Thailand (58.24 vs. 29.85) was significant, $p < .001$.
441 The difference in mean class size between India and United States (58.24 vs. 22.62)
442 was significant, $p < .001$. The difference in mean class size between Thailand and
443 United States (29.85 vs. 22.62) was significant, $p < .05$ (see Table 1).

444 Table 1. Mean Class Size by Country, Standard Deviation, and Number of
445 Classrooms

446				
447				
448	Country	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
449	China	59.46	8.42	26
450	India	58.24	3.21	17
451	Thailand	29.85	2.85	13
452	United States	22.62	2.65	26

453 *Note.* The difference among the four means (59.46 vs. 58.24 vs. 29.85 vs. 22.62)
454 was significant, $F(3, 78) = 282.93$, $p < .001$.

455

The United States had by far the highest percentage of classrooms studied implementing inclusion, with 73.9% compared to 46.2% for Thailand. None of the Chinese or Indian classrooms included in the survey had any implementation of inclusion (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of Classrooms by Country, Percentage Implementing Inclusion

Country	Number of Classrooms	Percentage
Implementing Inclusion		
United States	26	73.9%
China	26	0%
India	17	0%
Thailand	13	46.2%

Note. The difference between the four percentages (73.9 vs. 0 vs. 0 vs. 46.2) was significant, *chi-square* (3, $N=82$) = 36.83, $p < .001$.

As far as the implementation of pullout, 88.5% of the United States classrooms used this technique compared to 53.8% usage in Thailand. None of the Chinese or Indian classrooms included in the survey had any implementation of pullout (see Table 3).

Table 3. Number of Classrooms by Country, Percentage Implementing Pullout

Country	Number of Classrooms	Percentage
Implementing Pullout		
United States	26	88.5%
China	26	0%
India	17	0%
Thailand	13	53.8%

Note. The difference between the four percentages (88.5 vs. 0 vs. 0 vs. 53.8) was significant, *chi-square* (3, $N=82$) = 56.64, $p < .001$.

As far as the implementation of either inclusion or pullout, 100% of the United States classrooms used either or both of these techniques compared to 53.8% usage

in Thailand. None of the Chinese or Indian classrooms included in the survey had any implementation of inclusion or pullout (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of Classrooms by Country, Percentage Implementing Inclusion and/or Pullout

Country and/or Pullout	Number of Classrooms	Percentage Implementing Inclusion
United States	26	100%
China	26	0%
India	17	0%
Thailand	13	53.8%

Note. The difference between the four percentages (100 vs. 0 vs. 0 vs. 53.8) was significant, *chi-square* (3, *N*=82) = 68.57, *p* < .001.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Although there is widespread evidence of large class sizes across the continent of Asia, this cannot be verified through various ministry of education websites. Therefore, results of this study must be limited to the samples surveyed.

DISCUSSION

It was first intended that this be a paper comparing the special education systems of the countries under study, but that proved quite difficult as the United States was the only country with a highly consistent, regulated system. China, India and Thailand had “pockets” of progressive special education, but there was no uniformity from city to city, or urban to rural regions. So, one could only look at how teachers in these various countries were supported in their efforts to teach “struggling students”.

Moreover, statistics on class size, staffing and staff qualifications are not available

513 on the Thailand, China and India ministry of education websites, so one can only
514 compare the schools in the study sample.

515 The United States has a system in place in which identified students with disabilities
516 are provided the special and related services that they need to progress academically.
517 In China and India, teachers deal with very large class sizes, and there is no support
518 personnel that assist with them, whether it be in a general education classroom
519 (inclusion) or a special education classroom (pullout). Thailand is different. In
520 Thailand, progressive special education exists in about 20% of their schools;
521 specifically those schools that are attached to universities as “demonstration”
522 schools.

523 To conclude, the developing nations of China and India are at the stage where
524 awareness of the needs of individuals is beginning to occur, and the prospects for the
525 future are promising. Thailand, on the other hand, is farther along as there are
526 examples of progressive special education spreading throughout the country. The
527 prospects for individuals with disabilities in these countries are, indeed, improving.

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