Situating Disability within Comparative Education:
A Review of the Literature

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Abstract

This paper is an inquiry into where the topic of disability falls within the vast field of comparative education research. It explores the extent to which disability is present in comparative education literature, and in what ways it is represented. A review of literature across the core comparative education peer-reviewed journals was conducted. Findings show that a limited number of studies in comparative education have examined students with disabilities, though numbers have increased in recent years. Additionally, two major themes emerged from the literature: (1) social interpretations of disability, and (2) global versus local. The findings are discussed in terms of implications for inclusive education and future research.

Keywords

disability, comparative education, special needs, inclusive education

Introduction

The field of comparative education is vast and diverse. It has multiple goals, aims, and methods of inquiry (Chabbott & Elliot, 2003; Philips & Schweisfurth, 2010). In an attempt to set boundaries on the field of comparative education, Epstein (2011) described the difficulty in doing this because the field is conflated with other disciplines, including but not limited to sociology, history, philosophy, economics, political science, and psychology. Further, he contended that comparative education is conflated with ancillary fields like international education, global education, intercultural education, and development education, and is plagued with ideological disparity (e.g., Marxist interpretations, liberal Western interpretations). To add to this ambiguity, Epstein described the epistemological line of comparative education scholars as existing on a continuum between positivism and relativism.

Within the wide breadth of comparative education discourse, this paper aims to identify where the topic of disability falls. It asks whether disability is encompassed by this large field, and if so, in what ways it is represented. Thus, the guiding research questions for this inquiry were:
1. To what extent is the topic of disability present in comparative education literature?
2. How is disability represented in comparative education literature?

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Disability Defined

Given that this paper aims to bridge comparative education and the topic of disability, careful consideration was made in choosing a definition of disability that would be internationally representative and culturally sensitive. To reflect an internationally respected understanding of disability, the characterization of disability as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was adopted. Herein, disability is defined as, "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others" (United Nations General Assembly, 2007, Article 1). This definition was selected not only because it reflects an internationally respected understanding of disability, but also because it is inclusive in nature. Specifically, the CRPD definition is inclusive in that it does not limit the analysis to any particular type of disability, such as cognitive impairment or physical disability.

Bridging Disability and Comparative Education

The primary motivation for conducting this literature review was the belief that research on disability can compliment and add value to comparative education scholarship. In terms of where disability might fit into the field of comparative education, a suitable entry point is work on equal opportunity and access to quality education. This stream of research is quite prominent in the field; in their epistemic analysis of the field of comparative education, Cook, Hite, and Epstein (2004) found that equality in education was one of the top five most frequently named themes in comparative education by the comparativists whom they surveyed. An important question to consider, however, is what specific student populations are included under the equality umbrella.

Similar to the findings of Cook et al. (2004), Arnove (2001) also identified equality of educational opportunities and outcomes as a prominent topic when assessing the dominant issues addressed by the field of comparative education which are present in major works of scholarship in the field. Going one step further than Cook et al., Arnove listed women, ethnic minorities, rural populations, and the working class as being especially situated populations for whom this area is most appropriate. In alignment with the abovementioned definition of disability as a barrier to equal participation in society, this article presupposes that disability constitutes another population that should be added to this list of marginalized populations for comparativists researching equality of education to study.

Given recent global initiatives such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability is increasingly being understood as a human rights issue (World Health Organization, 2011). Akin to women, ethnic minorities, rural populations, and the working class, individuals with disabilities comprise a marginalized group whose rights to an education can be in jeopardy. In fact, compared to other marginalized populations studied within comparative education, the vulnerability of individuals with disabilities is exceedingly high. Among all of the marginalized populations, UNESCO (2010) considers disability to be "one of the least visible but most potent factors in educational marginalization" (p. 181).

An improved understanding of the scope of comparative education research that has been conducted thus far on individuals with disabilities is vital in order to uncover the potential of this type of work

and to guide future scholarship. The topic of disability compliments the field of comparative education with its direct relevance to the prominent research subject of equality of educational opportunities for marginalized populations. Further, incorporating disability into comparative education research will expand the categories of marginalized populations that has been focused on previously, thereby contributing to the growth and advancement of the field. This article sets out to serve as a starting point in this endeavour by exploring the presence and representation of disability within comparative education literature.

Procedure

A literature review was conducted to address the two aforementioned research questions:

> 1. To what extent is the topic of disability present in comparative education literature?
> 2. How is disability represented in comparative education literature?

Four peer-reviewed journals in the field of comparative education were identified to be included in the literature search using multiple inclusion criteria. First, the journal must be explicitly dedicated to the field of comparative education to meet the primary aim of this paper of situating disability within the field of comparative education. This was determined by reviewing the published aims and scope of journals. Second, the journal must be peer-reviewed to ensure a high level of academic rigor and accountability. Third, journal impact factors were used as a proxy to demonstrate relative importance in the field. The journal must have an impact factor indexed in the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) Web of Knowledge℠ Journal Citation Reports® (JCR®) database. Journals identified using these inclusion criteria included the *Comparative Education Review, Comparative Education, Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education,* and the *International Journal of Educational Development.* The respective impact factors of the target journals are listed in order of highest to lowest in Table 1.

Table 1

Impact Factors of Target Comparative Education Journals

Journal Title	Impact Factor
Comparative Education Review	1.132
International Journal of Educational Development	1.000
Comparative Education	0.625
Compare: A Journal of Comparative Education	0.458

Note. Journal impact factors were obtained from 2013 release of the ISI Web of Knowledge℠ Journal Citation Reports® Social Sciences Edition which includes 2012 citation data (Thompson Reuters, 2013).

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and Education Full Text electronic bibliographic databases were used to search within the four target comparative education journals for relevant research studies. The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles published in the English language, and those published within the past thirteen years (2000 to 2013). This time frame was selected to capture the essence of the

current zeitgeist, thereby determining how disability is presently situated within comparative education literature for Research Question 2. Multiple search terms related to disability and the education of students with disabilities were used to capture as many relevant articles as possible. The exact keyword search terms consisted of "disabilities," "mainstreaming," "special needs," "inclusive education," "inclusion," and "inclusive school." Boolean logic was applied by using the Boolean operator *or* to retrieve studies that contained one or more of the specified search terms (Fink, 2005). Applying Boolean logic was done to expand the breadth of the search to maximize the likelihood of retrieving all of the articles that discussed disability using any of the above keywords within the target journals. Likewise, a truncation character was added to the search terms "disability" and "mainstreaming" to retrieve all possible stems of those keyword search terms. To explain, searching disab* retrieved articles with the keywords disability, disabled, disabilities, or disabling, while searching mainstream* retrieved articles with the keywords mainstreamed, mainstreaming, and so on.

After relevant comparative education journal articles which incorporated the topic of disability were identified and collected, the articles were read in their entirety and subsequently coded for shared themes to answer Research Question 2. Themes were developed using a two-step process. Step one involved noting initial impressions and creating tentative themes that emerged from the articles after an initial reading of the articles. Step two consisted of re-reading the articles and refining the themes based on similarities across the other articles reviewed to develop common themes. This search for themes was guided by applying Ely's (1991) definition of a theme as "a statement of meaning that runs through all or most of the pertinent data" (p. 150). Thus, the articles

were read and re-read in an attempt to identify which themes emerged to reflect how disability was situated in the comparative education articles, thereby constituting common threads across the studies and their reflections of the topic of disability.

Results and Discussion

Results are presented and discussed for each of the two research questions. First, Research Question 1 is addressed by examining findings on the extent to which disability is present in comparative education literature. Next, attending to Research Question 2, the different ways in which disability is represented in comparative education literature is reviewed by exploring the two common themes that emerged from the articles reviewed.
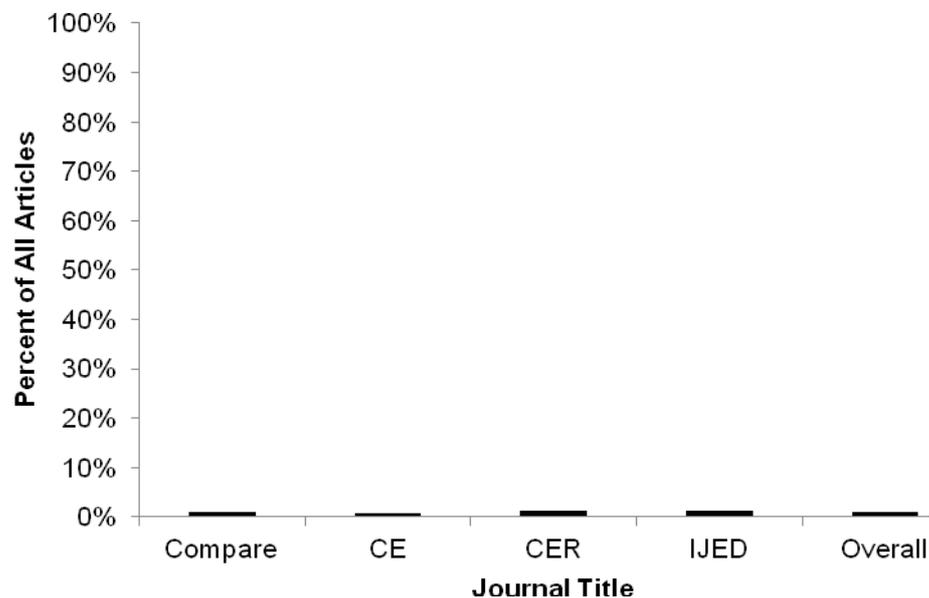
The Presence of Disability in Comparative Education Literature

The initial search resulted in a total of 34 research articles: 3 articles from *Comparative Education Review,* 3 articles from *Comparative Education,* 13 articles from *Compare,* and 15 articles from the *International Journal of Educational Development.* Of the original 34 articles, 9 from *Compare* and 6 from the *International Journal of Educational Development* were excluded from the analysis because a closer examination revealed that disability was not a topic within those articles. To explain, instead of looking at the mainstreaming of students with disabilities, 6 of the excluded articles focused on gender mainstreaming and 4 focused on the inclusion of out-of-school children, child workers, pastoralists, or refugees. The other 5 articles were excluded because although they focused on inclusive schooling and social difference or diversity within educational systems, there was no explicit mention of students with disabilities or special needs as being a form of difference or as members of an inclusive system. So, overall, 19 articles across the target

comparative education journals were identified as encompassing the topic of disability.

In general, the limited number of studies identified suggests that few studies in comparative education examine students with disabilities. The degree to which disability as a topic was present in comparative education literature was enhanced by looking at the relative proportion of articles discussing disability. Percentages of the number of articles published on disability in each target journal out of the total number of articles published by each journal from 2000 to 2013 are illustrated in Figure 1. Additionally, the percentage of the cumulative number of articles published on disability out of the total number of articles published across all target journals is also illustrated in Figure 1. All proportions are extremely low, with rates of 0.81% for Comparative Education, 0.92% for Compare, 1.23% for Comparative Education Review, 1.26% for the International Journal of Educational Development, and 1.08% overall.

Figure 1. Percentage of comparative education journal articles published on disability out of total articles published from 2000 to 2013, by journal and overall.

It is encouraging, however, to see a relative increase in the number of articles that comparative education journals are publishing on disability in more recent years (see Figure 2). This implies that individuals with disabilities, who constitute a group that has been historically marginalized and overlooked, are slowly gaining an increased presence in the comparative education literature. That being said, there is ample room for improvement, and a clear need for future work representing this disadvantaged population.
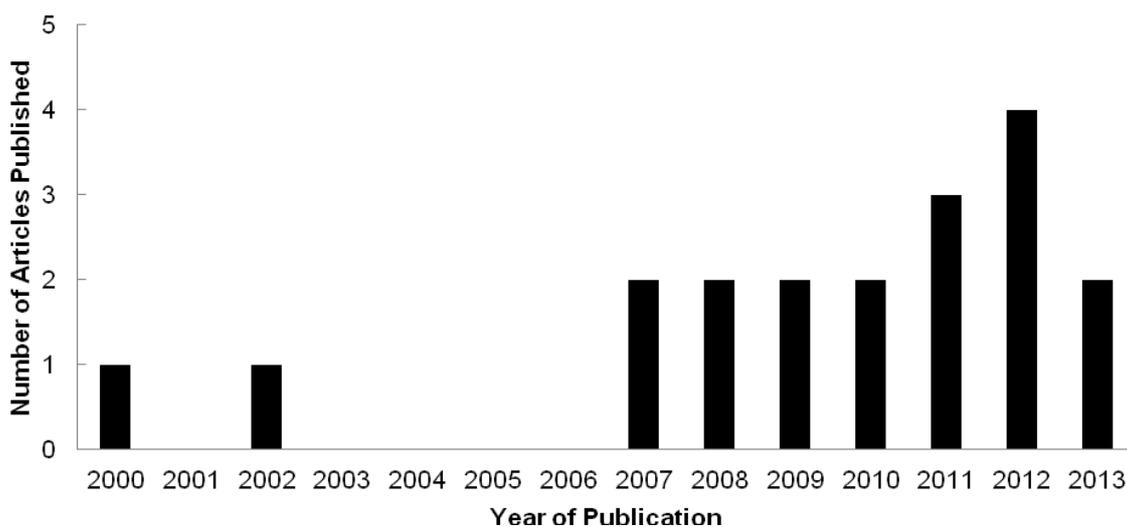
Figure 2. Distribution of comparative education articles on disability published by year.

The Representation of Disability in Comparative Education Literature

Of the 19 articles that examined students with disabilities, the ways in which disability was situated within the literature varied. The studies had different research questions and foci, used different research traditions and designs, and produced different findings, all of which are summarized in the Appendix. These surface level differences, however, are peripheral to the focus of the present study. Instead, this review of the literature was focused on identifying themes which highlight the ways in which disability was represented within the comparative education articles. Two major themes emerged from the literature: (1) Social Interpretations of Disability, and (2) Global versus Local. The first theme is narrower in its scope in that it is specific to disability studies, while the latter is much broader and is a dominant theme in the field of comparative education more generally. The ways in which both themes were represented in the literature will now be reported and discussed.

Theme one: Social interpretations of disability

One theme that emerged from the articles reviewed was that disability appeared to be socially constructed and dependent on the particular cultural context(s) where the research took place. In other words, a common thread across the articles was the absence of a universally agreed upon definition of disability that was being uniformly applied in each of the studies. Instead, the way in which disability was conceived differed depending on the respective cultural context(s) under study. Viewing disability in this manner as a social construct is consistent with a prominent theory of disability studies called the social model of disability, also referred to as social interpretation (Abberley, 1987; Finkelstein, 1980). Thus, Theme One has been designated as Social Interpretations of Disability. The meaning of this theme will be elaborated upon below, as will the ways in which the theme manifested itself within the articles reviewed by using illustrative examples.

The traditional social model of disability focuses on "social biases against people whose bodies function differently than what is considered 'normal,' and beliefs and practices resulting from and interacting with biases that serve to discriminate…such practices do more than discriminate; they oppress" (Gabel, 2005, p. 4). This social model runs counter to and outright rejects the highly individualized clinical or medical model, in which disability is perceived as innate individual differences. In fact, subscribers to the social interpretation view argue that the medical model focuses on the individual level at the expense of examining larger socio-political processes of disablement (Gabel, 2005). Within the realm of social interpretation, a cultural element has been set forth by scholars such as Peters (2010), who has argued that disability is a phenomenon emerging and resulting from the values and practices embedded within culture. Peters pointed to evidence in the small but growing body of comparative disability studies work on the cultural construction of disability. The majority of the articles reviewed here provide additional support to this claim that disability is socially and culturally constructed, and the ways in which they do so are detailed below.

Comparisons across the articles included in this literature review show that disability is socially defined and conceptualized differently depending on the cultural context of study. One article that illustrates such differences is Peters and Chimedza (2000). The authors described the Zimbabwean idea of the family as a social unit that takes on the burden of responsibility for its members with disabilities. This belief is tied closely to the society's ideas regarding the cause and treatment of disability. To explain, in Zimbabwe disability is viewed as the result of bewitchment by family enemies or as a form of punishment by an ancestral spirit whom is unhappy with the family. As a result, rituals and spiritual ceremonies are held in an effort to cleanse the person with a disability and to dispel the evil spirits from the family. This custom provides the person with a disability support and empathy from the entire family and village, because everyone attends these functions in solidarity to solve a family problem. The collective nature of the burden of disability therefore makes disability a family and village responsibility. Peters and Chimedza went on to contrast this Zimbabwean approach to disability with that of the United States, which they cite as being much more individualistic and paternalistic in nature. The authors explained that in the U.S., disability is viewed as a pathological, innate, individual condition that has to be cured by professionals. So even within a single article, we can begin to see the striking differences between how two cultures (in this case Zimbabwe and the U.S.) socially construct and interpret disability.

Another article that clearly articulated the social construction of disability was that by Singal and Jain (2012). Their analysis of youth with disabilities in India revealed that in terms of individuals' participation and purposeful engagement, it was not exclusively their impairment that created exclusion, but their socio-cultural and economic realities as well, most notably their gender. Singal and Jain found that females could successfully position themselves in the role of providers by participating in the traditional gender roles of cooking, cleaning, and managing the house. Such participation provided a way for these female youth with disabilities to be accepted into social structures, making their disability not as "disabling" within the given social and cultural context.

Preece (2002) serves as a nice contrast to Singal and Jain (2012) to further illustrate how disability is socially constructed within a larger cultural context. Preece critiqued the ways that the Botswana society constructs images of women, men, race, class and disability. She concluded that the social concept of citizenship is predicated on the

idealist notion of a white, middle-class, able-bodied man. Thus, women and individuals with disabilities were rendered invisible. This comparison between articles allows us to see how the Indian and Botswana cultures socially interpret disability, and the different ways that their social conceptions of disability intersect with other social concepts like gender.

Further illustrations of disability as being socially constructed within different cultural contexts can be seen by looking across additional articles included in this literature review. In terms of what constitutes disability, articles on non-Western countries seemed to view disabilities more as visible physical differences, such as sensory impairments and physical disabilities, as opposed to cognitive or emotional differences. A head teacher in Tanzania, for example, reported, "Difficulties such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder and autism do not exist in Africa. They are Western problems" (Polat, 2011, p. 56). Similarly, Deng and Guo (2007) noted that in China some disabilities that are commonly observed in Western countries, such as learning disabilities and autism, are neither recognized as disability types by Chinese society, nor are they diagnosed as such.

Additional evidence for differences in disability definitions is provided by Bines and Lei (2011). In their article, Bines and Lei discussed how the definitional debates in northern countries are moving away from discrete categories of disabilities towards the broader term, 'special educational needs.' Their explanation is as follows:

> Although most provisions in southern countries has focused to date on physical, sensory and intellectual impairments, this broader definition is having some impact, including adoption of similar terminology. However, some significant differences remain between northern and southern countries due to differences in health care and technology. (p. 420)

An example of a country adopting the broad definition that Bines and Lei referred to that was represented in this literature review is Serbia. To illustrate, Kovačević and Maćešić-Petrović (2012) reported,

> Pupils with special (educational) needs are a broad category including pupils with physical, mental and sensory disabilities, but also the pupils with behavioral disorders, pupils with serious chronic diseases, pupils hospitalized or treated at home for long periods of time, pupils from culturally or socially deprived environments, pupils without parental care, affected by war and other disasters, refugee pupils, displaced and abused pupils, as well as talented pupils. (p. 465)

Building on Bines and Lei's (2011) assertion quoted above that health care and technology influences differences in disability definitions across countries, the literature reviewed suggests that a country's education system also appears to be another influential factor. The structure of a nation's education system seems to play an important role in setting the boundaries as to what constitutes a disability and what does not. Regarding Zimbabwe, Chitiyo, Changara, and Chitiyo (2008) mentioned that little attention is paid to students with emotional or behavioural disorders, largely because the special education services that are available in the educational system focus on four categories of disability: hearing, visual, cognitive, and physical. Likewise, Deng and Guo (2007)

explained that in China educational services are restricted to three categories of disability: mental retardation, visual impairments, and hearing impairments. In contrast, van Zanten (2009) found that in Hungary and France the provision for children with special needs was oriented toward pupils with learning and behavioural problems. The classification of children as having special education needs also differs when comparing the U.S. to Germany. Powell (2009) observed that the U.S. categories refer to individual student disabilities, whereas the German categories refer to educational supports, showing how the American system stresses the medical or clinical model of disability. Powell's portrayal of the individualistic U.S. view of disability is consistent with that of Peters and Chimedza (2000) reported above. Collectively, these examples illustrate the different ways that disability is socially defined and classified across different cultures.

Theme two: Global versus local

The second theme that emerged from this literature review was Global versus Local. This theme is intended to reflect how discussions of education within the field of comparative education exist within global and local discourses. To explain, a dichotomy appears to exist, with some in the field siding more with sociology's neo-institutionalism or world culture theory, which posits a common global model of modern mass education (e.g., Boli, 2005; Ramirez & Boli, 1987), while others side more with anthropology or externalization, which emphasizes local variation and agency at the national, district, and classroom levels (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004; Takayama, 2010). Anderson-Levitt (2003) opens the dialogue between these two different perspectives on schooling around the world, encouraging us not to think of them as mutually incompatible, but instead urging that, "If we take seriously both local variability and world culture theory, we recognize that

each perspective on its own misses something crucial" (p. 18). Similarly, Arnove (1999) asserts that a dialectic is at work between the global and the local, and it is important for those in the field of comparative education to understand this interactive process, as well as its tensions and contradictions.

Within the articles, inclusive education policy and practice was a prominent topic that often revealed how globally circulating ideas are relevant to and intersect with local practices. Upon reviewing the literature, I found that much insight into the global versus local dichotomy could be gained by examining the ways in which the articles described and evaluated the experience of education for students with disabilities in particular national and cultural contexts. Accordingly, the discussion of the global versus local theme that follows will use the portrayal of inclusive education policy and practice in the literature to illustrate how Theme Two was manifested.

Of the articles where inclusive education for students with disabilities was a topic, the majority introduced inclusive education as a global idea in the papers' introduction and theoretical background sections. For example, before moving into the bulk of his paper explaining a participatory action research project on inclusion in Tanzania, Polat (2011) acknowledged the significant shift from special education to inclusive education around the globe. Similarly, Kovačević and Maćešić-Petrović (2012) opened their paper by referring to inclusive education as a "contemporary concept" before moving to the local level and describing how Serbia defines inclusive education. The global theme is also apparent in the article by Kendall and O'Gara (2007) who also situate their paper within the larger international inclusion discourse by speaking about how the global community recognizes the rights of all children and endorses inclusive education policies like Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (United

Nations General Assembly, 2000). These international inclusion policies and others, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations General Assembly, 1989), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations General Assembly, 2007), were also featured in additional articles reviewed, including Bines and Lei (2011), Fleisch, Schindler, and Perry (2012), Lynch et al. (2001), Miles et al. (2012), Oh and van der Stouwe (2008), Polat (2011), and Powell (2009). Furthermore, Norwich (2010) explicitly stated how inclusive education as a global force framed his entire study: "This study is set within the international policy context where standards and inclusive education are pursed" (p. 116). Thus, it is clear that many of the articles reviewed overtly situated their local work on inclusive education within the global inclusive education discourse.

In the majority of the articles, the transmission of inclusive education ideas, policies, and practices from the global to the local was not contested. For instance, Polat (2011) explained that the educational systems of most African countries have been influenced by income-rich countries. He noted that this cultural transmission of an inclusive education system creates difficulties in the use and application of terms and concepts like "inclusion," but never questioned whether such a system should be transferred in the first place. A positive view of exchanges between the global and local was also put forth by Miles et al. (2012), who spoke to the facilitation role that alliances and networking relationships can have among disability-focused organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and mainstream development organizations in the development of culturally relevant inclusion policies and practices. Bines and Lei (2011) also advocated for a

global-local partnership, collaboration, and joint commitment, as they recommended localized development approaches in developed and developing countries as being necessary for the success of inclusive education globally.

Two articles, however, by Urwick and Elliott (2010) and Le Fanu (2013), stood out from the others in that they openly questioned and criticized the appropriateness of the global inclusive education movement in particular local contexts, specifically in low-income countries. Urwick and Elliott argued that the internationalization of educational goals and rights overlooks the diversity of national situations. The authors contested what they referred to as the orthodox view of inclusive schooling. They agreed that national educational systems should provide for all kinds of special education needs, but did not endorse the orthodox view that regular schools should be adapted or reformed to accommodate and support all students with special education needs. Urwick and Elliott challenged the globally held assumption that inclusion can be effective for all learners in all educational contexts, contending that it applies only to "ideal" contexts instead of "very real" contexts. The context that Urwick and Elliot based their argument on was Lesotho, a low-income country that began with ambitious inclusion goals, but has failed to meet the needs of children with disabilities. They argued that inclusive schooling cannot succeed in the conditions of low-income countries like Lesotho because, "Although the key principles and values associated with inclusion are widely accepted...political and economic realities often mitigate against its effective operation for all" (p. 146). In the context of Lesotho, the nation's political and economic realities lead to a preponderance of unqualified teachers, large classes, and inadequate facilities, learning materials, and supervisory support.

Moving to the second article that challenged the global in support of a more

local focus, Le Fanu (2013) found that the conceptualization of inclusive education in Papua New Guinea's new inclusion policy initiative was primarily an 'exogenous' phenomenon (i.e., imposed from outside the country). Le Fanu's linguistic analysis of policy documents revealed that the inclusive precepts in the country's new inclusion curriculum were derived from Australian and American texts, thereby prioritizing Western education ideology and liberal-democratic values over local cultural ways of knowing and understanding. Furthermore, observations of primary schools found evidence of curriculum non-conformity. While Papua New Guinea's new inclusion curriculum was designed to promote the democratization, socialization, and systematization of teaching and learning, this study found that teacher practice exhibited hierarchism, atomization, and simplification of teaching and learning. Le Fanu criticized policymakers for being 'out of touch' with local realities and urged the international development community to become more inclusive in their approach by understanding the local social worlds where they operate in order to avoid such disappointing results in the future.

Overall, analysis of the global versus local dichotomy in the representation of inclusive education revealed that the authors of most of the papers reviewed aimed to situate their work on inclusive education within the global discourse. Such authors seemed to assume that the transmission of inclusive policies and practices from the global to the local level was appropriate and desirable. Two notable exceptions to this pattern were Urwick and Elliott (2010) and Le Fanu (2013), who sided more with the local side in comparative education's global versus local debate. So while the global versus local theme ran through many articles on the topic of inclusive education, the way in which it was manifested in the articles was not entirely uniform.

Conclusions

The overarching aim of this literature review was to better understand where disability falls within the vast field of comparative education. To engage in this inquiry, the following research questions were addressed:

1. To what extent is the topic of disability present in comparative education literature?
2. How is disability represented in comparative education literature?

Regarding Research Question 1, only 19 peer-reviewed articles published between the years of 2000 to 2013 in the leading journals of comparative education were identified as encompassing the topic of disability. Furthermore, the percentages of articles published on disability out of the total number of articles published by the comparative education journals reviewed were extremely low, ranging from 0.81% to 1.26% across each journal, and was only 1.08% overall. Be that as it may, is positive to see that the numbers of comparative education articles on disability have increased in recent years, and hopefully this trend continues.

In terms of Research Question 2, further analysis of the articles reviewed revealed two central themes: (1) Social Interpretations of Disability, and (2) Global versus Local. Regarding the first theme, comparisons across the articles demonstrated that disability is conceptualized differently depending on the cultural context of the study. Examples of the ways in which disability is socially constructed and interpreted in different nations were compared and contrasted, including Zimbabwe, the United States, India, Botswana, Tanzania, China, the Republic of Serbia, Hungary, France and Germany. Regarding the second theme, most articles that discussed inclusive education for students with disabilities subscribed to an international orthodox view of inclusive schooling. There were a couple of notable exceptions, however,

that stressed the importance of considering local conditions.

Implications for Inclusive Education

The findings of this comparative education literature review have numerous implications for inclusive education locally and globally. Concerning the implications of Theme One, the ways in which disability was represented in the literature as social interpretations dependent on cultural contexts should be considered by policymakers and practitioners when planning and implementing inclusive education initiatives. Croft (2013) noted that the action required to address the injustices associated with disability is situated by the way that disability is defined. The actions associated with inclusive education are no exception. To ensure that quality, sustainable improvements can be made in the inclusion of students with disabilities around the world, reform leaders should take into account how disability is socially constructed by the general public in the context where they are working. Failure to do so can result in incongruent educational policy and practice.

An example of how divergent social interpretations of a concept related to disability can have negative ramifications of the disconnection between policy and practice is provided by the case of Papua New Guinea in the Le Fanu (2013) article. Le Fanu found that Papua New Guinea's new inclusion curriculum was designed to promote the democratization, socialization, and systematization of teaching and learning, but these ideals were not realized in schools. Instead, teacher practice exhibited hierarchism, atomization, and simplification of teaching and learning. There were marked inconsistencies between the conceptualization of inclusion in the policy documents compared to that of teachers working in local schools and classrooms. To alleviate this disconnect, Le Fanu called for more responsive and participatory approaches to be used by international development agencies promoting inclusive education, particularly in low-income countries.

The recommendations of this article corresponded with those by Le Fanu (2013). One way to increase the likelihood that the social conceptualization of disability and the inclusion of this population are in harmony with policy and practice within a given culture is to apply a participatory approach. A participatory framework encourages professional engagement and reflection (Dyer, 2005), providing teachers with the opportunity to reflect on the ways they perceive students with disabilities and how they could make improvements in the ways they include these students in their classrooms. Likewise, policymakers would have the opportunity to reflect on whether inclusion policies are aligned with local perceptions and address culturally relevant challenges associated with disability. Opening the dialogue between policymakers and teachers who are tasked with enacting inclusion policy would afford policymakers the opportunity to make policy informed by local practice, thereby increasing the authenticity of the policy. In turn, teacher pedagogy and classroom practice would be informed by policy that is responsive to their needs, thereby improving the sustainability of the policy. Incorporating a participatory approach to inclusive education policy and practice by promoting greater exchange between policymakers and teachers could be advantageous when either creating a new inclusion policy or modifying an existing one. Doing so would result in an inclusive education policy that is designed to reflect the social conception of disability and counteract local barriers and challenges associated with disability.

Considering the implications of Theme Two, future comparative education research on inclusive education should continue to incorporate multiple global and local

perspectives. It was positive to see a divergence in perspectives in the analysis of the global versus local dichotomy across the articles reviewed. This finding was aligned with the sentiment of Anderson-Levitt (2003) and Arnove (1999), who stressed the importance of understanding the interaction between the global and the local and seeing the unique value that both perspectives provide. Moving forward, it will be important to maintain a presence of global and local perspectives in further studies on the topic of inclusive education in the field of comparative education.

Additionally, inclusive education policymakers at all levels should be aware of the global versus local dichotomy and should aim to understand how global and local perspectives interact in their respective contexts if they want their initiatives to succeed. Turning once again to Le Fanu (2013), this article criticized how policymakers prioritized exogenous global discourses over endogenous local ways of knowing in Papua New Guinea's new inclusive curriculum. Le Fanu argued that the inclusion curriculum would have been more effective if the policy process incorporated more community involvement and was more culturally oriented. Such an insight would not have been possible without broadening one's awareness beyond the national context to identify how global forces were impacting local educational processes. Using a global lens to examine local contexts contributes to a greater understanding of the potential and limitations of educational systems (Arnove, 1999). Policymakers should apply a global lens as recommended by Arnove and as was done by Le Fanu to identify the possibilities and limitations in their local educational system concerning the inclusion of students with disabilities.

Limitations and Future Directions

As stated in the introduction, this article serves as a starting point to explore the presence and representation of disability within comparative education literature. Consequently, this study has some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the scope of this literature review was restricted to four comparative education journals. These target journals were selected using stringent inclusion criteria detailed in the procedure section above to ensure a high level of academic rigor, accountability, and relative importance in the field to meet the primary aim of this paper of situating disability within the field of comparative education. While these journals are considered to be the leading peer-reviewed journals in the field, it is possible that additional studies were omitted. Future work should extend the present study reviewing research in additional comparative and international education journals beyond those reviewed here.

A related limitation is that this review was limited to journals published in the English language for practical reasons due to the language competency of the researcher. It has been acknowledged that English-language journals in the field of comparative education privilege a different set of topics that are communicable in English compared to non-English journals (Post, 2012), which applies to the present study. To address this limitation, future work should examine the presence and representation of disability in comparative education journals that are published in languages other than English.

A final limitation is the range of years covered by the present literature review. The search was limited to articles published within the past thirteen years (2000 to 2013) to capture the essence of the current

zeitgeist for Research Question 2. Future research can extend this work by examining the presence and representation of disability in comparative education journals in articles that have been published prior to the year 2000. An additional element to augment such an analysis would be to compare and contrast how disability has been situated within comparative education literature over time. One might apply a historical perspective similar to Munyi's (2012) endeavour to trace the temporal development and formation of international perceptions towards individuals with disabilities. It would be interesting to see whether the social perceptions of disability identified in the present review of comparative education literature have evolved or shifted over time.

Overall, the present study found that although disability is not yet prominently featured in the major journals of comparative education, when disability is discussed, it is commonly represented as a social interpretation dependent on cultural context, and policies related to the education of students with disabilities are often positioned within a global dialogue. Further research on students with disabilities should continue to be published in comparative education journals to increase the visibility of this marginalized population within the general comparative education academic discourse.

Additionally, because disability is socially and culturally constructed, work done in this area must clearly communicate to readers how disability is defined in the particular context(s) where the research was being carried out. While this literature review was able to highlight differences in disability definitions across most articles, not all articles provided a definition of disability (e.g., Fleisch et al., 2012). When a definition is missing from disability and comparative education scholarship, this limits the interpretation of results reported and the potential for data

comparison. Thus, future research on disability in comparative education journals should provide clear definitions of disability to avoid confusions in language or terminology, and ultimately meaning. Being sensitive to the cultural understandings and interpretations of disability of those directly involved and represented in one's research, as well as of those of a diverse international readership, will be important as continued work brings the voices, perspectives, and lived realities of students with disabilities to the comparative education arena.

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Appendix

Summary of Articles Reviewed

Study	Question/Focus	Research Tradition	Research Design	Findings
Bines & Lei (2011)	Examined issues and challenges of developing countries in terms of disability definitions, data, policies, service delivery, finance, and capacity development.	Policy and document analysis	Reviewed national inclusion policies and World Vision report on 28 developing countries.	Differences in healthcare, technology, and definitions of disability and special needs exist between northern and southern contexts. Argue for localized approaches to inclusive education development.
Chitiyo et al. (2008)	Examined the impact of providing special education services like psychosocial support (PSS) to children who are orphaned by AIDS on their schooling outcomes.	Correlational design	Twenty children aged 10-14 years were provided PSS for 8 months in four primary schools in rural wards in Mberengwa district of Zimbabwe. Pre- and post-intervention interviews and observations were conducted.	PSS resulted in improvements in several areas, including schoolwork during and after the intervention period.

Croft (2013)	Examined whether a national survey of disability prevalence is a necessary and feasible starting point when promoting the inclusion of children with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries.	Theoretical document analysis	Reviewed literature, survey instruments, and international development and research projects to analyze what information is needed about disability in education systems and difficulties in measuring childhood disability.	In many contexts a national survey of disability prevalence is not the most useful starting point for educating children with disabilities.
Deng & Guo (2007)	Examined how Chinese Local Special Education Administrators (LSEAs) understand the ideology of inclusive education and the "Learning in Regular Classrooms" (LRC) model.	Qualitative	Semi-structured interviews of LSEAs from one rural district and one urban district of a mid-China province.	LSEAs morally believe that children with disabilities are entitled to the same right of education as their nondisabled peers, but worry about social awareness and acceptance.
Fleisch et al. (2012)	Examined the extent to which children aged 5 to 15 in South Africa were out of school and the role of disability.	Secondary data analysis	Analyzed the Community Survey 2007 data collected by Statistics South Africa of 949,105 individuals from 246,618 households.	Children with disabilities have higher non-attendance ratios than those without disabilities in South Africa.
Kendall & O'Gara (2007)	Examined school and community capacities to care for, socialize, and educate vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS.	Ethnographic case studies	Case studies of schools and HIV/AIDS vulnerable children in Kenya, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.	Malawi and Zimbabwe cases show that elimination of fees, passive open door policies and exhortations are insufficient policy measures to bring and keep these children in school. The Kenya case shows that investments in long term, well-resourced local partnerships can be effective.

Kovačević & Maćešić-Petrović (2012)	Examined the problems faced by children with special needs in regular schools, their attitudes toward school, their relations with peers and teachers, and teacher attitudes towards inclusive education in Serbia.	Descriptive study	500 teachers in 20 regular elementary schools in the Republic of Siberia completed questionnaires about their attitudes towards inclusive education and students with special needs' achievement, educational problems, and attitudes toward school, peers, and teachers.	Pupils with special needs are integrated in regular classes in Serbia but face numerous educational problems. Teacher attitudes towards inclusive education are changing.
Le Fanu (2013)	Examined the conceptualization, generation, and mediation of inclusion within the new inclusion curriculum introduced in Papua New Guinea.	Multi-level case study	Analyzed curriculum documents using 'process-tracking' and 'inter-textual' techniques, and conducted extensive classroom observation in two primary schools in the Eastern Highlands.	The new inclusion curriculum was designed to promote the democratization, socialization, and systematization of teaching and learning, but this did not happen in the case study schools. Instead, teacher practice exhibited hierarchism, atomization, and simplification of teaching and learning.
Lynch et al. (2011)	Examined the training, access to equipment, caseload, and daily duties undertaken by specialist itinerant teachers supporting the inclusion of children with visual impairment.	Participatory action research	Analyzed questionnaires and research journals kept over 2-months from 38 professionals in the Kenya Integrated Education Program (KIEP) from 5 districts.	All itinerant teachers reported having some credited training in special education, rural teachers had less access to equipment, caseload size varied and ranged from 0-26 years, and the majority of teachers' daily duties consisted of managing and teaching their own class at their base school.
Miles et al. (2012)	Examined the role of networking in reducing the marginalization of people with disabilities from education in Bangladesh.	Mixed methods	Semi-structured interviews and focus groups of representatives from disability-focused organizations, self-help groups, and inclusive education trainers.	Building networks between people with disabilities and disability-focused organizations reduces marginalization from education.

Norwich (2010)	Examined the perspectives of education practitioners in the UK, USA, and the Netherlands about whether they recognized a curriculum dilemma of difference for students with disabilities and how they justified their position about the dilemma.	Mixed methods	Semi-structured interviews of 132 education practitioners and administrators in the UK, USA, and the Netherlands about their perspectives to a curriculum dilemma about the consequences of having a common or differentiated for children with disabilities.	A majority in each country recognized the dilemma about curriculum commonality-differentiation, that this continued over a decade and that there were similarities across the country in how the dilemma was recognized and resolved.
Oh & van der Stouwe (2008)	Analyzed the effect of inclusion and diversity in education in a conflict situation in Burmese refugee camps in Thailand.	Participatory research	Conducted inclusion assessment, interviews, workshops, meetings, and collected statistical data from six camps along the Thai-Burmese border.	Initiatives to promote inclusion in the camps are happening, but challenges do exist. Physical barriers to school facilities make it difficult for special-needs students to gain access to schooling.
Peters & Chimedza (2000)	Examined the approaches by disabled people in Zimbabwe to educational praxis, and compare the Zimbabwean experiences to the growth of the disability rights movement in the United States.	Critical ethnography	Conducted field work across Zimbabwe.	The approach in the United States has historically emphasized transformation of societal values and educational practices through litigation and thus lacks the power of the Zimbabwean experience, with its emphasis on transformation through conscientization and its recognition of unity in diversity.
Polat (2011)	Discussed the theoretical relationship between inclusion and social justice.	Participatory action research	Project involves 8 primary schools in Dar es Salaam and Pwani regions of Tanzania and aims to develop an Index of Inclusion in Tanzania.	Some progress has been made towards inclusive, just, and quality education in Tanzania but there is still a long way to go.
Powell (2009)	Compared the genesis, expansion, and persistence of special education as a multi-track, separating system in the United States and as a dual-track, segregating	Institutional analysis	Compared German and American special education institutionalization.	Although the trend toward more school integration and inclusive education is unmistakable, the development remains far more gradual in Germany than in the

	system in Germany.			U.S.
Preece (2002)	Critical appraisal of citizenship and governance in relation to gender, discussing implications for disability.	Theoretical analysis	Draws on post-structuralism to examine the relationship between power and discourse in citizenship and governance in Botswana.	Argues for a broader, more inclusive, ethical definition of active citizenship that empowers women and the disabled to play a more active role in governance.
Singal & Jain (2012)	Examined the participation and purposeful engagement in education of youth with disabilities in India	Narrative analysis	Interviews with youth aged 15 to 30 with physical, visual, and hearing impairments with a history of special provisions in education in urban and rural Dewas, a district in Madhya Pradesh, on the impact of education on their lives	Exclusions faced by youth with disabilities in India were determined by the socio-cultural and economic realities (e.g., gender roles) of their lives, not by their impairment.
Urwick & Elliott (2010)	Questioned the relevance of the international orthodoxy to include all children with special educational needs in regular schools and classrooms to the educational systems of low-income countries.	Policy analysis	Examined an inclusion policy in Lesotho, a low-income country that began with ambition goals but failed to meet the needs of children with disabilities, and then outlines an alternative strategy.	Argues that low-income countries cannot progress from virtually no educational provision for disabilities to fully integrated provision. Specialized facilities and selected schools are necessary for children with disabilities to have meaningful learning opportunities.
van Zanten 2009	Examined how competitive processes affect different school activities, including provision for children with special needs.	Case studies	Conducted case studies in 14 schools in six local European contexts (London, Paris, Lille, Charleroi, Budapest, and Lisbon) for 18-months, interviewing teachers and parents, observing meetings and activities, and analyzing school websites and documents.	Choice and competition can either have positive effects by developing attractive options for special needs students, or negative effects because the most vulnerable schools in the marketplace may not develop policies towards children with special needs to avoid being stigmatized as difficult schools.