The History of Special Education: The Changes That Made Special Education:

A Meta-Synthesis

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I. ABSTRACT

For centuries we have been documenting the world around us, taking note of every change. Most of the changes are small and over looked, but once they are coupled with a few other small changes they become something big and meaningful. Special education has a history just like that, it started with people wanting change, people advocating, acts and laws being wrote and pushed through Congress. Before the world knew it all these small tasks combined together in history to create a momentous event in history. No longer were students with disabilities forced to stay at home, they could now attend public school, and with the years to follow rights. Rights to have education just the same as any other student. The right to learn in environment that is best for them. The right to funding to help provide the services they need. The right to learn. This meta-synthesis of the literature on history of special education investigates the changes that took place throughout education to create special education and the services and programs that help better our students.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Winston Churchill said "to improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often." Education is constantly changing, striving to improve, finding new ways to help students reach their full potential. Special education in itself had to jump over hurdles and through hoops to get the recognition and funding it deserved to get started. Prior to this, all students were clumped together forced to face the challenges of school the same as everyone else. It was not until President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 that students with disabilities and economic disadvantages finally got support. Johnson stated when he signed the bill "by passing this bill, we bridge the gap between helplessness and hope for more than 5 million educationally deprived children. I believe deeply no law I have signed or will ever sign means more to the future of America" (SEDL's Building Knowledge to Support Learning, 1965). This was only the turning point for education to get the kick start of support it needed.

With the ever changing world around us, there are always new ideas popping up. In education new ideas mean new policies that must be instated. New policies created with the student's best interest in mind. Some of the policies are textbook, perfect, precise and exactly what is needed. Others require a little more work to get them working correctly. There are countless factors that play into a new policy being integrated into a classroom. These are things that affect the students as well as the teacher and the school. Having the proper funding, resources, staffing, and proper training to implement the new policies. Even once these policy get

off the ground and start taking place there still is the factor on how they will affect the school, teacher and most importantly the student.

Now to take a more in depth look of the common reoccurring themes throughout education that continuously keeps leading to new policies being created. What is the final turning point that gets these policies thought of in the first place then finally acted on? What fuels these new policies? My research is going to take a look into what causes these policies and what the outcome was. Focusing on the major educational policies that have changed education as we know it today.

1.2 AUTHOR'S BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCES

Even as a young child I have been interested in history. I was fascinated to learn about the changes that occurred in different cultures and areas around the world. United States history is my passion, every summer I would beg my parents to drive me to a new and different historical location so that I could experience it firsthand. Once there the history would engulf me. As I continued to grow up history still was huge part of my life, but education also sparked my interest. I spent every summer since 9th grade being a camp counselor and teaching swimming lessons up until two years ago. Having the opportunity to work with children from all walks of life was rewarding and most of enjoyable. I loved seeing a child figure out how to do something for the first time, the look on their face is something you never forget. As my senior year of high school approached I knew exactly what I wanted to be; a social studies teacher. I would still get to pursue my love for history and have the opportunity to work with students every day.

Upon my senior year of undergraduate school I started doing my practicum. I decide to leave the Midwest behind and moved to Alaska to find a new adventure in life. I was like a kid in a candy store when I stepped off the plane to see all the mountains and ocean around me. I knew Alaska was going to become my new home. After finishing my practicum and loving every second of it, I started subbing around the school district. During my year of subbing I got to experience copious amounts of classrooms and the opportunity to work with students of every learning level. One of my favorite substituting jobs was working in a resource room. I found it to be a new challenge, but enjoyable one. I loved learning about new techniques to help students with a learning disabilities, and finding new ways to teach that I would have never thought about before (universal design of learning). Working is special education classrooms sparked my interest in learning more about the special education program. Which in return lead me to the Special Education Program here at the University of Alaska Southeast.

Now once again in my life I have the opportunity to research my two passions in life, history and education. Looking into the past about how special education got its start and the hurdles that it has jumped over throughout history. My main goal is to dive into the policies that have changed special education over the years and look at the impact these new policies had on the program and students. With each new policies, comes a new learning curve not only for the student but the teacher as well.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THIS META-SYNTHESIS

The purpose of this meta-synthesis was to look at articles and find common ground to determine what lite the fire to change the current situation in special education to one that better

suites and fits the new needs at hand. With the vast amounts of policy changes that have happened since the 1960's this writing is going to focus on major policy changes that took place from the 1960's to today, by comparing and contrasting the situations and needs that lead to the new policies creations. Looking into why these changes took so long to happen and what fueled the changes in the first place. Lastly the purpose was to look into the affects and outcomes that happened with these big policies and compare and contrast how they end up changing special education for the better or worst.

2 METHODS

2.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

There are 37 articles included in this meta-synthesis that met the following requirements

1. The articles examined and explored issues pertaining policy changes related to public education.

2. The articles reviewed and included explore changes and affects that lead to policy changes in special education.

3. The articles were related to the field of education and were published in peer reviewed journals.

4. To provide the most current and up to date articles were chosen that were published between 2000 and 2014

2.2 Search Procedures

I conducted database searches and ancestral searches were conducted to locate articles for this meta-synthesis.

2.2.1 DATABASE SEARCHES

I piloted searches within two major data sources. The first one being JSTOR and the second being Educational Resources Information Center (RIC Ebscohost) using these key words/terms to retrieve peer reviewed articles.

1. 'Special Education' and 'Policies'

2. 'Special Education' and 'Change'

3. 'Special Education' and 'Evolution'

4. 'Special Education' and 'Historical Changes'

5. 'Special Education' and 'Major policies issues'

Together these databases yielded 37 articles (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Croll & Moses, 2003; Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995; Fan, 2014; Fuchs, Fuchs & Fernstorm, 1993; Gallagher, 1974; Greene, 2007; Grosenick, 1981; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2002; Hocutt, 1996; Itkonen, 2007; Kakalik, 1979; Klingner & Boardman, 2011; Lee, 2005; Lewit & Baker, 1996; Martin, Martin & Terman, 1996; Milofsky, 1986; Mazurek & Winter, 1996; No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2001; Norwich, 1993; O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006;

Odom & Fewell, 1983; Olson & Larson, 1970; Parrish & Chambers, 1996; Parson, 2000;

Pijl & Pijl, 1998; Reschly, 2002; Snow, 1984; Swan, 1984; Terman, Larner, Stevenson &

Behrman, 1996; Vincent, Evans, Lunt & Young, 1996; U.S. Department of Education,

2002; Wang & Reynolds, 1996; Weintraub, 2005; Wiley, 2006; Wilson, 1975).

2.2.2 ANCESTRAL SEARCHES

An ancestral search involves taking a source already deemed worthy of use and looking

deeper into the sources that helped write it (Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995). Conducting ancestral

searches using the reference lists of the previous collected articles. These ancestral searches

yielded 3 additional sources that met the selection criteria (Parsons, 2000; No Child Left Behind

Act of 2001, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

2.3 CODING PROCEDURES

I used a coding form to organize and categorize the research and information found in the

37 articles. I broke the coding down into five categories: 1.) Publication type 2.) Research design

3.) Participants 4.) Data sources 5.) Findings of the studies.

2.3.1 PUBLICATION TYPE

All 37 journal articles were evaluated and classified according to publication type (e.g.

research study, theoretical work, descriptive article, opinion/position work, review of literature,

annotated bibliography or guide). Research study takes information that contains qualitative and

quantitative date gathered and analyzed. Theoretical works use existing literature to analyze,

define, or further expand on a theoretical assumption. Descriptive works describes observation of events, but does not disclose methods to gather and analyze data. Opinion pieces/ position papers lay out an author's expression of opinions about an issue based on experience or findings. Reviews of literature summarizes themes found amongst previously published literature on a given topic (Duke & McCarthy, 2009; Duke & Ward, 2009). Annotated bibliography is a list of cited works on a particular topic, followed by descriptive paragraph explaining, evaluating, or critiquing a source. Guides give instruction, advice, and recommendations with strategies to explain how a practitioners might implement a particular agenda.

2.3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

For all 37 articles I collected I evaluated and classified each research study according to what research design it best falls under: quantitative research, qualitative research or mixed method research. Quantitative research is based on gathering numerical data such as statistics, percentages, etc. Unlike using numbers, qualitative research aims to gather in-depth understanding of human behavior and reasons for such behaviors. Mixed methods research incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methods to express information within a study.

2.3.3 PARTICIPANTS, DATA SOURCES, AND FINDINGS

I identified the participants in each study (e.g. policy, year, effect on teachers, and effect on students). I also identified the data sources that were used in each study (e.g. observations, interviews accounts, surveys). Finally, I summarized the findings of each study (Table 2).

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

I used a modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method previously employed by Duke (2011) and Duke and Ward (2009) to analyze the 37 articles that I included in this meta-synthesis.

3 RESULTS

3.1 PUBLICATION TYPE

For this research I located 37 articles that met my selection criteria. The publication type of each article can be found in Table 1. One of the thirty-six articles included in this meta-synthesis were research studies (Croll & Moses, 2012). Due to the choice in topic research studies were not a main focus. For this meta-synthesis it focused more around

descriptive work on the topic of special education and the changes it faced over time.

Twenty-five of the thirty-six articles used were descriptive works (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Estrin & Nelson-Barber, 1995; Fuchs, Fuchs & Fernstorm, 1993; Gallagher, 1974; Greene, 2007; Grosenick, 1981; Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2002; Hocutt, 1996; Itkonen, 2007; Kakalik, 1979; Lee, 2005; Lewit & Baker, 1996; Martin, Martin & Terman, 1996; Milofsky, 1986; Norwich, 1993; Olson & Larson, 1970; Parrish & Chambers, 1996; Parson, 2000; Pijl & Pijl, 1998; Reschly, 2002; Swan, 1984; Vincent, Evans, Lunt & Young, 1996; Wang & Reynolds, 1996; Weintraub, 2005; Wilson, 1975). Five of the thirty-six were reviews of literature (Fan, 2014; Klingner & Boardman, 2011; Mazurek & Winter, 1996; O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006; Odom & Fewell, 1983). Lastly, four of the thirty-six were guides (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2001; Terman, Larner, Stevenson & Behrman, 1996; U.S. Department of Education, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Table 1

Author(s) and Year of Publication	Publication Type	Abstract/ Summary
Aron & Loprest, 2012	Descriptive Work	Education is important for all children, but even more important for children who face limited social and economic opportunities.
Burrello & Sage, 1981	Descriptive Work	Addresses changes to provide education for all children.

Croll & Moses, 2003	Research study	That special education needs were 1 in 5 in 1981 and are now 1 in 4 in 1998. Learning disabilities were by far the most common.
Croll & Moses, 1998	Descriptive Work	Focuses on the debate and policy of inclusion.
Fan, 2014	Review of Literature	Review of FAPE and IDEA
Fuchs, Fuchs & Fernstorm, 1993	Descriptive work	Debates about where to educate students with disabilities.
Gallagher, 1974	Descriptive Work	Major trends in special education in the U.S.
Greene, 2007	Descriptive Work	Discussion on financial incentives to schools.
Grosenick, 1981	Descriptive Work	
Hanushek, Kain & Rivkin, 2002	Descriptive Work	Focuses on the costs that providing mandated programs for students in special education and their effectiveness.
Hocutt, 1996	Descriptive Work	What are the most effect interventions for students with disabilities.

Itkonen, 2007	Descriptive Work	PL 94-142 and the changes it had on the lives of children with disabilities, families, and professionals.
Kakalik, 1979	Descriptive Work	Identifies the major issues related to the cost of special education for children and their families.
Klingner & Boardman, 2011	Descriptive Work	This article discusses the mixed methods when conducting special education research.
Lee, 2005	Descriptive Work	Author shares his personal experiences

		with his own learning disability.
Lewit & Baker, 1996	Descriptive work	Discussion about how for decades public schools were ill-prepared for students with disabilities.
Martin, Martin & Terman, 1996	Descriptive work	State legislatures, Federal courts, and U.S. Congress educational rights.
Milofsky, 1986	Descriptive work	Focuses on the inequalities in society and the roles they play on education.
Mazurek & Winter, 1996	Review of Literature	Review of Grant, 1996 Comparative Education

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 2001	Guide	No Child Left Behind, 2001
Norwich, 1993	Descriptive Work	Focuses on policy issues in the special education realm.
O'Connor & Fernandez, 2006	Review of Literature	Review on National Research Council, 2002 on the impact of poverty.
Odom & Fewell, 1983	Review of Literature	Review of St. Pierre, 1982; Cook & Gruder, 1978; Datta, 1981.
Olson & Larson, 1970	Descriptive work	They explore does one program affect the others? What roles do special educators play in these programs.
Parrish & Chambers, 1996	Descriptive work	Public education budgets and how they are allocated for special education programs.
Parson, 2000	Literature Review	Focuses on student engagement.
Pijl & Pijl, 1998	Descriptive Work	Article debated how to reduce the number of special education placements.

Reschly, 2002	Descriptive Work	Article focuses on three themes, classification, fairness to minority students, and special education outcomes.
Snow, 1984	Review of Literature	Heller, Holtzman & Messick, 1982; Resnick & Finn, 1983
Swan, 1984	Descriptive work	Focuses on state policy in early childhood special education.
Terman, Larner, Stevenson & Behrman, 1996	Guide	Analysis of key issues in special education for students with disabilities.
Vincent, Evans, Lunt & Young, 1996	Descriptive Work	Focuses on the roles special education professionals play in education.
U.S. Department of Education, 2002	Guide	No Child Left Behind
Wang & Reynolds, 1996	Descriptive Work	How to effectively serve disabled children in regular school programs.
Weintraub, 2005	Descriptive Work	Historical accounts of developments and milestones of learning disabilities in courts, legislatures, and Congress.
Wiley, 2006	Descriptive Work	Historical perspectives on special education.
Wilson, 1975	Descriptive Work	Having equality for children with special needs the same as children in general education classes.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN, PARTICIPANTS, DATA SOURCES, AND FINDING OF THE STUDIES

As stated in section 3.1, out of all thirty-six articles only one was a research study (Croll & Moses, 2012). The author, research design, participants, data source and findings are all identified in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Author	Research Design	Participants	Data Sources	Findings
Croll & Moses, 2003	Qualitative	Not stated number by the survey was taken by students and teachers	Surveys	That special education needs were 1 in 5 in 1981 and are now 1 in 4 in 1998. Learning disabilities were by far the most common.

3.2.1   Research Design

The one and only research study used a quantitative research design (Croll & Moses, 2012). They gathered information than compared it to information that they gathered twenty years later.

3.2.2   Participants and Data Sources

The participants from the research study were high school students and teachers who fall under the category of having a learning disability or a professional that provides services

to these students. Surveys were used to collect data from the participants both students and teachers.

3.2.3 Findings of the Study

The finding of the one research study included in this meta-synthesis is summarized as followed.

1. That the placement of students in public schools and the development of curriculum need to fit the needs of all students.

2. Data shows movement in the area of making curriculum fitting the needs of all students. Transition in to universal design of learning. Helping to meet every students needs in the classroom.

3. The studies showed that there are more students now that are now being acknowledge for having special needs, than twenty years prior.

3.3 EMERGENT THEMES

Four themes that have made relevant prevalence from my analysis of the 37 articles included in this meta-synthesis. The emergent themes include: (A) Supporting and developing programs and services, (B) Allocating funds to programs, (C) Advocacy for children with disabilities, (D) Laws and Acts for children with special needs. These four themes and their formulated meanings are represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Theme	Formulated Meaning
Supporting and Developing Programs and Services	- Local and State governments to provide free and appropriate education to all students. - Implementing programs and services to meet students' needs and the needs of their families.
Allocating Funds to Programs	- Provide funds to enable state and local education agencies to comply with new requirements - Program funding have grown since 1975. - Student populations has increased since 1975.

	• Center for Special Education Finance determine a student with special needs will need anywhere from $10,558 to $20,095.
Advocacy for Children with Disabilities	• Assuring that all students with disabilities receive public education that meets their unique needs. • To protect the rights of students with disabilities and their parents. • To help state and local education agencies provide education of all children. • Rights of children with disabilities and their families.
Laws and Acts for children with Special Needs	• Laws provide training for professionals and teachers who worked with students who have disabilities • Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guaranteed civil rights for the disabled • Education for All Handicapped Children's Act of 1975 established the right of children with disabilities to receive a free, appropriate public education • Americans with Disabilities Act barred discrimination in employment, public services, transportations, public accommodations, and telecommunication. • Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) commitment to ensure equality of opportunities, full participation, independent living, and economic sufficiency for individuals.

	● No Child Left Behind Act required accountability for academic performance of all children.

4 DISCUSSION

In this section I have summarized the prominent four themes from my analysis of the 37 articles included in this meta-synthesis. These emergent themes were then connected to my own experiences in the special education field.

4.1 SUPPORTING AND DEVELOPING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The creation of special education programs has been a long road of struggles up until 1965 when the Unites States started recognizing students with disabilities. In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, this act allowed students with disabilities and economic disadvantages support. This however, did not solve all the problems or struggles that were being faced by these students. This would be a continuous on-going battle that over time new programs will be developed, and new services will be available.

With the help of parents, students and other advocates, special education has been able to create programs that have help students thrive in school and beyond. Throughout the years some of these programs that have set fire to the special education are Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA requires states to provide special education and related services to students who need them. IDEA greatest development as a program is the fact that every student is entitled to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). FAPE goes hand in hand with Individualized Education Program (IEP). Federal and State educational agencies require schools to develop and implement an IEP for students who meet the criteria, but parents also have the option to refuse special education services. The overlying product of the development of programs and supporting them is that every student that needs the services of special education can now receive them. Students and families are now receiving services that would have never been possible prior to 1965. In the last 50 years new policies, programs, and services have been developing new ways to better help all students in education.

4.2   ALLOCATING FUNDS TO PROGRAMS

With new programs and services getting started new funding also had to be put aside to guarantee these programs would be able to operate. With special education programs growing with every passing year more and more money needs to get set aside to ensure the programs can run to their full potential. Special education has seen the biggest growth since IDEA was passed in 1975, more and more students are now enrolled in the programs. A portion of the money that funds special education programs comes from the Federal government. Depending on the special education program a school offers will depend on the amount of funding they will receive.

This can cause problems though for school. Schools that do not receive enough funding are forced to make up the difference on their own. This places pressure not only on the school and the district, but the community members who live in that school district who see a rise in their taxes. As previously state only a portion of funding comes from the Federal government, the other funding is split between the state and the school district. Therefore, depending on how well your state and district manage their money can determine the amount of funding for special education.

4.3 ADVOCACY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's families were doing everything that they could to get some help with education for their child. Prior to these times children who had disabilities were sent away, or kept at home. They were not allowed to be in public schools, to public schools it was a burden to have these students in their school. Well in the 1950's and 1960's families with children who had disabilities began association to advocate for rights for their children when it came to education.

These were not easy task with conflicting opinions on how to best meet the needs of these students. Parents advocating what they think would be best for their student and child, while the government would have different ideas on how to assess the problem at hand. Advocating has been and will continue to be a very passionate topic for parents with children who have disabilities.

As the last 50 years have progressed so has the advocating for children with disabilities. Before standing outside Congress and picketing with sign and collecting signatures to petition for new policies seemed like the only way to make progress. Today advocating has been taking to a whole new with everything from doing 5k/Walks/Runs to throwing a concert. Today there is no way that is too big or too small to advocate for equal rights and programs for students with disabilities. The passion for changing the past into something even better for the future is a fire that is growing.

4.4   Laws and Acts for children with Special Needs

For the past 50 years there has been programs, policies and acts that have changed the face of special education as we know it. What started out as trying to put students with special needs in general education classes or kicking them out of school all together has transformed into specialized programs that can help meet the needs of any student. There have been copious of laws and acts that helped special education become what it is today. Within the next few paragraphs I am going to outline a few of the more well-known and historical turning points.

The first major act to focus on would be Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This act was the first to guarantee civil rights for students with disabilities who are attending any federally funded

schools. This act focuses mostly on the section 504, which applies to people throughout their entire life time not just while they are students in school.

The Americans with Disability Act blossomed from the 1964 Civil Rights Act. This act passed in 1990 banned discrimination in employment, public services, and transportation against individuals who have a disability. The main focus of this act was to ensure equality in school settings for students with disabilities.

As briefly mentioned before the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 biggest aspect was creating individualized and transition plans for individuals with disabilities to help better suite their needs while in school and after. This act also requires schools to provide educational services to each and every child that include children with disabilities the same as any other child.

And lastly, which has made its debut fairly recent in the special education world is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) or also known as The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001. This act has been something of controversy over the last couple years. When this act was first passed it called for all students, including those with disabilities to be proficient 100% in reading and math by 2012. Well 2012 has come and gone and plans to revamp the act have been going on since the act has passed. With other acts trying to coincide with NCLB such as Assistive Technology Act of 2004 and IDEA 2004 which help change the way children are identified and what types of aid they can receive.

With every new policy, program or act that is created. There is also new changes to adapt to, learn from, and change to help continue to make forward progress to help students of all learning abilities to achieve to their fullest potential.

5 CONCLUSION

Through researching articles about the historical aspect of special education each article would unfold new and exciting information about the legacy that created special education as we know it today. The bottom underlying theme throughout all the article dealt with change. Sometimes the change turned out to be a wonderful and helpful thing for families and students with disabilities. And other times it cause mass controversy about how things should change and why.

Since the beginning of education, there have always been topics that cause mass controversy among people. No matter the controversy special education has fought its way through time with advocacy and support from people who truly care about it. It has not been an easy road, it took years and years just to come to the conclusion in 1965 that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was something we needed to make a difference in education. To help not only students with disabilities but also students who faced economic disadvantages. It was then in history that we could final see a true change being made.

However, for the next 50 years I uncovered through copious articles that this was not a change that would change the world over night. This was just a small fire that was being lit, that over the years will eventual grow into an unstoppable wildfire. I do believe we have reached this point now in special education. It took years to take off, but with every passing year, a new policy, a new act, or a new program was created to help us take a step forward in being able to better serve our students.

If you open up the newspaper or any magazine that has to do with education, there is always something changing inside. People are out advocating, out trying to change the world of education. We have seen what a change 50 years has done is special education, just imagine 50 years from now. The technology we will have to help our students hear, read, speak, and learn. Just imagine the changes in the classroom to make it a better learning environment, just imagine. If there is one thing that I can walk away from researching for this meta-synthesis it is that tomorrow education will be better than it was today. I said at the begin history is one of my passions, watching and researching the change in the world, I cannot wait to see what the next 50 years brings to special education.

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