

PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION VOLUME 13

**PROMOTING SOCIAL
INCLUSION: CO-CREATING
ENVIRONMENTS THAT
FOSTER EQUITY AND
BELONGING**

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Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2019

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78769-524-5 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78769-523-8 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78769-525-2 (Epub)

ISSN: 1479-3636 (Series)



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ISO 14001:2004.



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FOREWORD

The adoption internationally of inclusive practice as the most equitable and all-encompassing approach to education and its relation to compliance with various international declarations and conventions underpins the importance of this series for people working at all levels of education and schooling in both developed and less-developed countries. There is little doubt that inclusive education is complex and diverse and that there are enormous disparities in understanding and application at both inter- and intra-country levels. A broad perspective on inclusive education throughout this series is taken, encompassing a wide range of contemporary viewpoints, ideas and research for enabling the development of more inclusive schools, education systems and communities.

Volumes in this series on *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* contribute to the academic and professional discourse by providing a collection of philosophies and practices that can be reviewed considering local contextual and cultural situations in order to assist governments, educators, peripatetic staffs and other professionals to provide the best education for all children. Each volume in the series focuses on a key aspect of inclusive education and provides critical chapters by contributing leaders in the field who discuss theoretical positions, quality research and impacts on school and classroom practice. Different volumes address issues relating to the diversity of student need within heterogeneous classrooms and the preparation of teachers and other staffs to work in inclusive schools. Systemic changes and practice in schools encompass a wide perspective of learners to provide ideas on reframing education to ensure that it is inclusive of all. Evidence-based research practices underpin a plethora of suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners, incorporating current ways of thinking about and implementing inclusive education.

While many barriers have been identified that may potentially inhibit the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series aims to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcome them. Adopting a thematic approach for each volume, readers will be able to quickly locate a collection of research and practice related to a topic of interest. By transforming schools into inclusive communities of practice, all children can have the opportunity to access and participate in quality and equitable education to enable them to obtain the skills to become contributory global citizens. This series, therefore, is highly recommended to support education decision-makers, practitioners, researchers and academics who have a professional interest in the inclusion of children and youth who are marginalized in inclusive schools and classrooms.

Volume 13 in this series focuses on the key importance of social inclusion. While substantial research has underpinned the need for modifications or differentiation of the curriculum and pedagogy to enable all learners to be included, there has been considerably less emphasis on the necessity to ensure all children and their families are socially included. As affirmed throughout this book, social inclusion does not simply happen by placing students with diverse needs into regular classes. Indeed, this integrated approach to inclusion has been proven to be ineffective and unsustainable. Yet, in many schools, teachers are uncertain as to the best approach to take to ensure all students are fully included socially and have a strong sense of belonging within a caring and accepting community. This is highlighted in the book as particularly problematic when students present with social, emotional or behavioural issues that teachers find challenging to deal with, and many best practice approaches are provided for supporting them. It is evident from the stories that are told by parents throughout the book that aligned with this is the challenge to work with families to support them and their children to be accepted, valued members of a school community where no one is alienated or marginalized because of their difference.

This latest volume is, therefore, a critical addition to the series. The volume is divided into four sections to provide an emphasis for the reader on different aspects of social inclusion. The first section provides a strong foundation for the need for structured social inclusion based upon a rights and choice background. A variety of social inclusion programmes and practices across the age groups are proffered in the next section. Good practices to promote dignity and to give voice to people with disabilities are then included. Finally, the importance of social inclusion within the school years is reviewed as essential for preparing students for transition into higher education and the workforce. Preparing students for work and careers and to live harmoniously within an inclusive social community is explored through a series of authentic case studies. Throughout the volume, the authors take the opportunity to give voice to teachers, families and self-advocates, which provides a very deep and meaningful approach where social inclusion and belonging are viewed through an authentic lens. This book is an essential reference guide for all involved with ensuring that inclusive education is grounded upon opportunities to establish a strong sense of identity and belonging within a well-structured socially supportive environment. I strongly recommend it to you.

Chris Forlin
Series Editor