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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION VOLUME 21

**PROGRESS TOWARD
AGENDA 2030: A MID TERM
REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN
GLOBAL CONTEXTS**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*In memory of Dr Lori Reese.
A colleague, friend, and champion for students.
It was an incredible honor to be part of your story.
May your passion and impact on the field be felt for years to come.*

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SERIES EDITOR PREFACE

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 intracountry 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 by considering local, contextual, and cultural situations 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 constrain the implementation of effective inclusive practices, this series aims to identify such key concerns and offer practical and best practice approaches to overcoming 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 potentially marginalizing in inclusive schools and classrooms.

Volume 22 on *Progress Toward Agenda 2030: The Midway Status of Inclusive Education in Global Contexts* provides a timely, significant, and genuinely realistic overview of how countries are progressing toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and the UN's Agenda 2030. Each chapter represents one region's status, with the volume covering in total 18 geopolitical contexts. Authors critically review inclusive education within their unique environments and discuss sociopolitical challenges they experience in relation to policy and practice. The complexity of meeting the international expectations is evident and the consequence of identifying locally appropriate ways to achieve these is palpable throughout.

Of important note is that this update was written at the midpoint of Agenda 2030 implementation (2015–2030) with this volume being constructed in 2022 and released in 2023. Of the 10 targets set in the SDG4, it is apparent from these different regions that some are already on track to meet one or two of them, some are likely to be achievable, while others are posited as not expected to be fulfilled by 2030.

Each chapter provides an insightful review of their distinctive contexts and highlights a range of advances that they are employing to move toward achieving these goals. An underlying issue that emerges throughout is the importance of commitment at all levels of government, both nationally, locally, and within school communities. Although it is generally acknowledged that full inclusion is unlikely to be achievable for all regions or all children and youth, to advance inclusion for the increasingly diverse student populations requires a major re-evaluation of values and beliefs, aligned with intensified support structures, to provide the most amenable situations to enable inclusion.

While mention is given to the challenges of working through the unprecedented pandemic in some countries, it needs to be acknowledged that this inevitably impacted all regions and has certainly hindered the progress toward Agenda 2030 to varying degrees. In addition, many less developed countries continue to face a range of other widespread medical issues, environmental challenges, poverty, famine, and conflicts. Addressing the needs of all children in these situations may not be only embedded within traditional educational environments, but transcends this to inclusion at family, community, and village levels.

Policies that endorse inclusion at a national level infrequently have little meaning for communities who are struggling to live with such challenges. Yet it is often reported that these local communities provide some of the most inclusive practices within their immediate environments and capabilities. Many of the authors in this volume, while acknowledging the commitment of their country to signing the international declarations and the development of national inclusive policies, underline the policy practice gap that still exists. Local implementation of inclusion remains very challenging in many regions with schools struggling to meet the policy expectations without appropriate infrastructures and support. Many authors emphasize that changes are needed to address the enormous gap between the expectations of policymakers and the capabilities of practitioners if inclusion is to be effective and the Agenda 2030 to be attained, at least in part.

Considering their own contexts, expectations, and challenges, authors provide insightful recommendations for the future of inclusion within their regions.

Volume 22 provides a significant and pertinent contribution to the international dialogue about the way forward when dealing with complex, diverse, and far-reaching global issues across different regions. By looking in depth at how regions are progressing inclusion midway toward 2030, this provides an opportunity to empower leaders to undertake a serious critical review and reflection of existing practices in order to explore further significant improvements that are needed to enhance progress toward this international goal. Volume 22 makes an excellent and very timely addition to the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series.

Chris Forlin
Series Editor

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FOREWORD

At the heart of inclusion is the belief in every individual's potential for success and a commitment to providing equitable opportunities for learning, growth, and achievement. By supporting the success of others, we affirm their belonging, and in return we are gifted the satisfaction of sharing in their achievements. Teachers and mentors in particular journey closely with their students as their successes often intertwine.

In this way, I am honored to proudly support and share in the success of my former doctoral students and this volume's editors, Drs Dani Lane, Nicholas Catania, and Sarah Semon. Each of them has courageously forged personal and professional paths toward acceptance, understanding, and growth for themselves and their students, broadening dialogues of diversity, equity, and inclusion beyond established boundaries. They view inclusion through a social justice lens, focusing on systemic barriers that impede opportunities for students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, children living in poverty, students with disabilities, LGBTQ youth, and individuals whose identities intersect in multiple ways.

As teacher educators, Drs Lane, Catania, and Semon have collectively helped prepare countless pre-service and in-service teachers to implement best practices in inclusive education. Their efforts have directly contributed to the ability of diverse communities to access high-quality, technologically adept teachers and school leaders prepared to address structural, attitudinal, and knowledge barriers inhibiting success for children and youth.

Through their national and international research and teaching collaborations, this volume's editors have shared in mutually beneficial experiences with students, teachers, school leaders, and scholars globally to impact learning and dialogue around inclusive policy and practice. Perspectives shared in this volume by international scholars regarding the historical and current status of inclusion in various contexts worldwide expand discussions further, offering wide-ranging opportunities for new and continuing discourse.

The chapter authors, representing more than 18 regions, present the state of inclusion in their respective contexts, providing authentic views of progress toward the inclusive education Agenda 2030. Sociopolitical concerns including questions regarding the role of centralized governments in influencing inclusive services are addressed along with discussions about how specific happenings such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the world financial crisis, and instances of political unrest have affected policy development and implementation.

We have witnessed the evolution toward more inclusive schools and communities in the United States over the past several decades, and it's interesting to note the developmental parallels toward inclusive policies and practices in many

of the countries represented in this volume. Moreover, as discussed by the authors, attitudinal barriers toward persons with disabilities are gradually lessening. Universally, these biases, which are often culturally rooted, remain the greatest obstacle to equal access and opportunity, warranting significant attention within and beyond this work.

In sum, this volume provides a unique and comprehensive look at the status of progress toward worldwide quality education from the perspectives of scholars rooted in the experiences. With deep pride, I salute this volume's editors and admire their foresight in leading the effort to provide readers with an unprecedented diversity of viewpoints, including those from authors whose countries are not often represented in the inclusion literature. Congratulations on this achievement, Drs Lane, Catania, and Semon. May your success continue to inspire others in the ways it has done for me.

Ann Cranston-Gingras, PhD

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We (Drs Lane, Catania, and Semon) share a unified belief that the work we do in inclusive education is collaborative, multifaceted, context-driven, and ever-evolving. As such, we could not complete this project alone. As the saying goes, “it takes a village” and we cannot thank our “village” enough for their support and contributions.

To those who work in the field of inclusive education, we thank you for your tireless work to support the basic human rights of students who are marginalized, including those with disabilities.

To our contributing authors, we thank you for sharing your unique understandings of inclusion for students with disabilities in your context.

To our peer reviewers, we thank you for your time and expertise on inclusive education, which were instrumental in bringing this work to press.

To Dr Chris Forlin, we thank you for the incredible opportunity to edit this volume and to share the voices of stakeholders in inclusive education from nations across the globe.

To Dr Ann Cranston-Gingras, we thank you for your continued support and guidance on our journey toward a more inclusive tomorrow.

To Dr Phyllis Jones, we thank you for igniting the spark and passion that brought this work to life.