

# PROGRESS TOWARD AGENDA 2030

A Mid Term Review of the  
Status of Inclusive Education  
in Global Contexts

**Edited by** Danielle Lane,  
Nicholas Catania and Sarah Semon

**Series Editor** Chris Forlin

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

**VOLUME 21**

# PROGRESS TOWARD AGENDA 2030

# INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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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.

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# A MIDPOINT REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS TOWARDS AGENDA 2030: INCLUSION FOR *ALL*

Danielle Lane, Nicholas Catania and Sarah Semon

Throughout modern history and across the globe, individuals from marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, have experienced exclusion, failed attempts at inclusion and education systems that are ill-equipped to meet their needs. While in current times there are some spaces and places where stakeholders hold the best of intentions and attempt to create an inclusive system for *all*, there are many contexts in which individuals from marginalized groups continue to experience oppressive practices, policies and systems. It is nearly impossible to identify a single factor that contributes to the variations in inclusive practices across the globe (funding, policy, time, COVID-19, lack of professional development, etc.); however, it is clear there is much to learn, to improve and to understand from what is occurring in these varied locales in order to realize true inclusion for students. During a recent webinar, the Director of the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education Cor J.W. Meijer said it best in stating:

No one has all the answers and we know that no single country in the world has a fully inclusive system. Inclusion and inclusive education will never be achieved in full and we are always aiming for improvements and developments. Changes in thinking over time influence our understanding of what inclusion and inclusive education mean. (2022)

The editors of this volume recognize true inclusion may never be reached as there will always be more we can do to facilitate an equitable education system and society for *all*. That said, as scholars in the field of inclusive education, we are uniquely positioned to support the facilitation of meaningful knowledge exchange regarding the current state of inclusion across the globe in an attempt to continue moving towards the ultimate goal of inclusion for *all*. To do so, we have invited stakeholders to share their understandings of inclusive education in their own

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geopolitical contexts. Specifically, this text provides perspectives representative of a total of 18 geopolitical contexts. Each chapter highlights the current status of the implementation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) in the author(s) given context. This 2015 initiative is preceded by multiple international policies aimed at supporting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds (see [Table 1](#)).

Like the policies and initiatives preceding it, Agenda 2030 and SDG 4 aim to further international efforts related to inclusion. Specifically, the goal calls for ‘inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030’ ([UNESCO, 2017](#), p. 3). Further, according to the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, the goal includes a total of 10 targets:

- 4.1 ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- 4.2 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- 4.3 ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- 4.4 substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship
- 4.5 eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- 4.6 ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- 4.7 ensure that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development
- 4.a build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- 4.b substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

**Table 1.** International Policies Related to Inclusion.

International Policy/Initiative	Key Principles/Objectives
Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning,</li> <li>• Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs,</li> <li>• Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs,</li> <li>• Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs,</li> <li>• Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994, p. 3).</li> </ul>
Dakar Framework for Action Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments 2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;</li> <li>• Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children who are in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality the end;</li> <li>• Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills training;</li> <li>• Increase by 2015 levels of adult literacy by 50%, especially for women, and provide all the equitable access to adult basic education and lifelong learning;</li> <li>• Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and by 2015 to achieve gender equality in education, a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to quality basic education with the same opportunities to get good results;</li> <li>• Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring the parameters are achieved for all learning outcomes are measurable, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills for everyday life (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8).</li> </ul>
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006/2007	<p>The purpose of the present Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental</p>

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued)

International Policy/Initiative	Key Principles/Objectives
	<p>freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity (United Nations, 2006, p. 4).</p> <p>The principles of the present Convention shall be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;</li> <li>• Non-discrimination;</li> <li>• Full and effective participation and inclusion in society; (d) Respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity;</li> <li>• Equality of opportunity;</li> <li>• Accessibility;</li> <li>• Equality between men and women;</li> <li>• Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities (United Nations, 2006, p. 5).</li> </ul>

Note: All language included in Table 1 is derived directly from each policy.

4.c substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states (UNESCO, 2015, pp. 35–52).

The message of SDG 4 and its related targets is clear, ‘every learner matters and matters equally’ (UNESCO, 2017, p. 12).

Aforementioned, the reality of the implementation of inclusive education and SDG 4 across the globe is not uniform. From an international policy perspective, there are nations with varying commitments to policies such as the Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. For example, there are (1) nations that have not signed the Convention, (2) those who have signed, but not ratified the Convention, (3) those who have not signed, but have ratified the Convention, (4) those who have signed and ratified the Convention and (5) those that have ratified the Convention and its Optional Protocol (United Nations, 2023). This varying level of commitment to international policies aimed at increasing inclusive practices for individuals with disabilities parallels the notion that nations are at varying stages in beliefs, values, policies, procedures and implementation of efforts to support and facilitate inclusive education for *all*. From an ideological perspective, there are nations across the globe who function through a medical model of disability, others aiming to move towards a social model and others who are doing their best to employ a social model of disability and a few moving beyond both models. From a discourse perspective, different people have different understandings and meanings of inclusion (Ainscow, 2020) and there are a wide range of acronyms used within the field of

inclusive education. For example, in the United States the term Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is used to describe the legal document guiding a student with disabilities' education whereas in the United Kingdom the term Educational, Health and Care Plan is used to describe the same type of document. While it is beyond the scope of this introduction to highlight all of the variations that exist in the field of inclusive education, we share these examples to demonstrate the spectrum of understandings and implementation that exists in relation to inclusive education.

With these understandings in mind, we encourage you to embark on a global journey that highlights the current status of inclusive education in a multitude of social-political contexts. As you turn the page to the end of one chapter and the beginning of another, we ask you to consider the unique contexts of the new chapter you are preparing to read. No two chapters in this text highlight synonymous experiences as each author, or team of authors, share their own understandings of the implementation challenges to inclusive education in their given context. The challenges described in many of these chapters are unprecedented in recent times – from the global pandemic and environmental crises to the coup d'état and other threats to democracy. While considering these factors, each chapter aims to demonstrate the state of inclusive education in relation to the UN's Agenda 2030 initiative and SDG 4 by sharing the history of inclusion, the current policies and state of inclusion, and the barriers and levers that continue to drive their nation towards inclusion. Collectively, we share these international perspectives in hopes that as you turn each page you learn from the past and the current state of inclusive education in order to continue striving for a more inclusive future for *all*.

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# PROGRESS TOWARDS EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN ENGLAND

Philippa Gordon-Gould

## ABSTRACT

*This chapter focusses on contradictions within existing legislation to develop an equitable and effective educational system for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It highlights tensions between the underlying aims of the legislation and the implementation of policies, specifically on admissions and exclusions with reference to the current government proposals for an increase in Alternative Provision (AP). It considers the response of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) to ensure an acceptable practice of inclusion while raising overall standards of attainment. It also considers the Government Green paper response to increasing pressure from parents for more appropriate levels of support for their children with SEND.*

**Keywords:** Inclusion; alternative provision; Green paper; White paper; special educational needs (SEND); education; health and care plans (EHCPs)

## INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that disability cannot be a reason or criteria for lack of access to development programming and the realisation of human rights (The World Bank, 2022). To what extent does the implementation of the policies of inclusion in England promote the development of the human rights of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)? What do we consider to be the essential rights of the child? As the

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mantra of inclusion persists through school and government policy, the question remains whether the present concept of school inclusion is synonymous with the protection of those rights.

## LEGISLATION AND THE COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING HIGH LEVELS OF INCLUSION

England's progress towards inclusion has been affected by a wide number of factors since the reforms of 2014, some of which in practice have moved in contradictory directions. These have included legislation involving policies aimed at upholding the rights of all disabled children to an inclusive education. However, their implementation has lacked sufficient scrutiny about how they were to be resourced, implemented and coordinated with other services. Since 2014, the Government has lacked mechanisms by which multi-service professionals involved could be successfully coordinated and held accountable. Also significant, has been the growth of Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT) and the government's ambition to raise standards through their expansion in size and number until all schools are included in the enterprise by 2030 (Plaster, 2022). The Government aimed to consolidate plans for SEND reform in anticipation of a reduction in overall costs and particularly to reduce the number of costly parental disputes with the Local Authority. In practice, the costs of making appropriate provision in mainstream schools has been seriously underestimated, undermining the government's original ambitions towards effective inclusion (Adams, 2019; Keer, 2021a, October, 28; MacBeath et al., n.d.).

The difficulties experienced in meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have been encountered by all the main stakeholders involved, such as teachers including headteachers, specialist therapeutic staff and parents. This chapter considers some of the policies and legislation driving the implementation that contributed to many of these difficulties in England. The Children and Families Act (CAFA, 2014), and the SEND Codes of Practice 2014 and 2015 (DfE, 2015) which were essentially revisions of earlier SEN Codes of Practice introduced in 1994 and 2001, contain certain statutory elements of the 2014 Children and Families Act, the Equality Act of 2010 and the Education Act (1996). They were introduced following an earlier period of public consultation relating to the Government Green Paper of 2011 (DfE, 2011). However, following growing public complaints about the ineffectiveness of SEND provision and unsatisfactory implementation since their introduction, a comprehensive Parliamentary Education Select Committee SEND Review (2018) was set up to investigate their findings. The Review Committee Report (House of Commons Education Committee Report (ECR), 2019) was severely critical of both the implementation and poor levels of accountability across the education system.

In recognition of the need to make radical revisions to the reforms, the Government issued its most recent proposals in a Green Paper (Department for Education (DfE) 2022a, March 30) for public consultation from 29 March to 22