

A VOLUME IN RESEARCH ON EDUCATION IN AFRICA, THE CARIBBEAN, AND THE MIDDLE EAST

The Education of Minorities in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East

edited by

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and Kagendo Mutua, *Series Editors*

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CHAPTER 1

HOW HAVE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS IN AFRICA, THE CARIBBEAN, AND MIDDLE EAST RESPONDED TO THE EDUCATION OF MINORITIES?

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ABSTRACT

Nations in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East are working towards expansive education. However, discussion on how the educational systems of nations in these world regions respond to—identify and address—education

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of minorities is limited. This chapter explores how social forms such as curriculum, instruction, and policy approaches in educational systems impact the educational experiences of students from minority groups. Insights from research indicate responses to the education of minorities in these regions vary and they are vastly different. Educators have deployed various approaches to support minorities, but challenges persist. Also, the nature and extent of the education of minorities in these regions hinge on ruling governments' priorities, aspirations, and foci. Pathways to actions provide theoretical, empirical, and practical contexts to learn for, from, and about minorities, as well as localizing support to address the needs of minorities in public education.

The education of minorities has been at the forefront of public and educational discussion in recent years in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East, particularly with the rise in debates on the rights of minorities in education. The inclusion of minority groups in curricula in public schools, and the dominance of one group over others continues to be debated. Here, we describe minorities as national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious and other non-dominant groups. They are fewer in number within the populace than are other groupings and seek to preserve and develop their identity and social self-identification. Such minority groups also are diaspora minorities in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East. While the definition of minorities is generally understood, the questions of *what* the education of minorities should look like and *how* minority groups are served in mainstream education in these regions are contested by educators and the public. This area is underexplored in research on education in these world regions.

Education has expanded to serve more of the populace in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East over the past 70 years. Research in curriculum and instruction in these regions has also been rapidly changing. Available reports from these regions often present international perspectives, making it difficult for scholars, practitioners, and students to keep abreast of relevant knowledge, especially as it pertains to the education of minority groups. An increased number of stakeholders such as the national government, the local community, and teacher education programs within Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East have worked to emphasize expansive learning opportunities for all. Educational policy and educators' efforts often involve instituting various approaches aimed at providing relevant schooling and eradicating the marginalization of minority groups, although challenges continue.

The book series, *Research on Education in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East*, provides a comprehensive view of pre-K–16 current and emerging research approaches, educational models, and local relevant knowledge within these regions. Specifically, topics covered in this volume (Book 10) consider enduring and present issues and trends, as well as generative themes related to current research and theory in Africa, the

Caribbean, and the Middle East. The studies in this book consist of eight chapters sequenced by region and provide accessible scholarly reports in pre-K–16 education as they pertain to the experiences of minority groups in local contexts in the regions. Chapters in this book raise key theoretical and analytical questions and provide practical and educationally meaningful insights on the complex processes of education of minorities in the regions of focus. These insights are reflected in the following questions:

1. What approaches to curriculum, instruction, and policies are necessary to engender meaningful education for minorities?
2. How can educators create the contexts to learn for, from, and about minorities?
3. What supports constitute educationally meaningful practices for minorities and how do minorities actually experience such supports?

These are overarching questions that require multiple innovative ways of thinking and connecting findings, representing a new and intentional path to research on education of minorities from the regions.

The new path requires moving away from observing and reporting on the education of minorities as an outsider to embracing the challenge of localizing findings with the goal of providing meaningful and practical education for all students. This path also allows for educators to see research and education in the regions as developmental and within a growth mindset. This book has taken a step in this direction. Here, for example, we recognize and follow-up on the need for researchers and educators in these world regions to provide insights on what kinds of efforts are on the ground and ongoing, what educational research communities should look for, and how to approach some enduring and also new questions regarding the education of minorities in these regions. We also recognize and work to ensure that ideas in this book are open for readers to interpret for themselves and adapt to other contexts with the goal being the implementation of meaningful experiences supporting the education of minorities.

EDUCATION OF MINORITIES IN AFRICA

Chapters addressing the education of minorities in African contexts include a study from South Africa and one from Lesotho. Cultivating educationally meaningful partnerships is a key consideration as regions in the Global South seek to advance education for minorities. In Chapter 2, Mabaso and Khanare identify students with mild intellectual disabilities (MIDs) in under-resourced historically disadvantaged schools in South Africa as a minority group. They explore the intersections of the roles of contexts,

educators, and parental involvement as a form of partnership necessary to create relevant educational supports for students with MIDs. Indeed, deep collaboration in the education of minorities centering parents' perceptions and beliefs offers the potential to create a network of connections for the minorities we serve in under-resourced contexts.

Chapter 3 builds on the preceding idea as Ramatea and colleagues explore how being in rural areas in Lesotho contributes to and complicates discussions on providing education within an inclusive environment for learners with visual impairments (LVIs) as a minority group. And, how teachers understand strategies to create such environments. While the nation of Lesotho is committed to the education of LVIs as a minority group, limited resources and inadequate teacher preparation to effectively implement this commitment remain a challenge.

EDUCATION OF MINORITIES IN THE CARIBBEAN

The authors in this section turn our attention to a fundamental issue in the Caribbean and elsewhere: "How can elements of curricula, instruction, and evaluation create a new form of minorities and how does the education system serve them?" Educators in Africa, the Caribbean, and Middle East face a delicate situation in considering how to respond to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to create the contexts to learn for, from, and about minorities. In Chapter 4, Madhu looks at the discourses in the Dominican national curriculum around citizenship and nationality for Dominican-born Haitians and immigrants from Haiti. Like other nations in the world regions under consideration, national curricula straddle restrictive national identity and international ideals of nonexclusive education for all students, especially those from diaspora minority groups.

In their work, Mahon and colleagues in Chapter 5 report on what educational measurements in Caribbean nations do and do not do with implications for providing clear and complete special and inclusive education in the region. As educators support expansive education for minorities, such effort demands evidence built on rigorous methods of inquiry and reporting that are sensitive to the contexts from which data are drawn. Effective education for students from minority groups hinges on adequate measurement approaches and tools to guide curricula and instruction.

EDUCATION OF MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Educators in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East seem delighted about the focus on the education of minorities in their regions. Within

the frame of education of minorities, in Chapter 6, Kaviani provides an insight into the education of students from a minority group, the Hazara of Afghanistan. The author highlights how the textbooks used in schools to educate students from these minority groups seek to both attempt to reflect a global public-facing notion of civil ideals as seen in most societies yet also perpetuate an act of exclusion and invisibility about minorities. Actual experiences within education and the content learned by students from minority groups change with ruling governments' priorities, aspirations, and values. Arguably, such an approach may lead to inconsistencies in the knowledge and experience that minority students build from their education. The risks are higher for minorities, especially when there is evolving evidence of defaulting to subversion in education from global ideals about human rights and gender equity, for example.

Chapter 7's author, Billie Eilam, examined how texts provided as learning material influence the choices of Druze students in Israel when depicting women's roles in the society. The application of a traditional-transition to modernity perspective to investigate education of minorities is powerful. The approach and its findings provide an illustration of how curricular offerings impact the kinds of experience that minority students use to build ideas about their world and the world around them.

Chapter 8 is an example illustrating possibilities and challenges in recognizing and educating minorities in the Middle East. Kaviani drew on Zoroastrians in the Islamic Republic of Iran as a case to prompt us to think about and reflect on the impact of curricula produced *by* minorities compared to those produced *for* minorities.

Taken together, the studies provide insights on and challenges to embrace, "How have educational systems in Africa, the Caribbean, and Middle East responded to the education of minorities?" and "What further steps are necessary to further actions based on what we have learned about the education of minorities?" Responses to these questions are vast and varied. The studies point to the need to pay special attention to the education of minorities in nations by providing evidentiary reporting on what such education looks like in localized contexts. Research on education of minorities in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East has theoretical and practical implications that educators must relish if transforming public education is a goal in these regions (Odebiyi et al., 2022).

To transform approaches to the education of minorities in these regions in the face of social, cultural, and systemic challenges, two changes in approaches are necessary. First, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are seeing different dynamics in what it means to educate all students. For instance, some educational systems in these regions changed curricula, instruction, and/or assessments in public schools that directly impacted all students. While such impacts may be greater for students from minority groups,

discussion about how such changes take cognizance of minorities in the regions is limited. Understanding the functions of curriculum and instruction in providing educational opportunities and addressing the inclusion and possible marginalization of minorities in public education systems in these world regions continues to be challenging if not problematic, so these areas need transformation. Second, educators from these regions have focused on advocating for recognizing minority groups in education and creating and adapting curriculum content and pedagogy to reflect the diverse backgrounds and needs of their minority students. Parallel to public school curricula, some minority groups have created and introduced curricula and pedagogy to maintain, honor, and develop their group's identity. The scope of these efforts is large and covers different levels of education from early childhood to university and other forms of tertiary education. It also covers a wide range of social forms such as policy, curricular framing, ethnicity, class, modernity, and ability/disability. And, as discussed earlier, these efforts involve possibilities and challenges as discourses on the education of minorities are complex. Another lesson from these studies is that mainstream reports may be far removed from how minorities actually experience the educational contexts in the regions. A priority for researchers and educators is to curate evidence-based understanding of and actions on the education of minorities in these regions, where doing so may seem impossible. We embrace this challenge and implore our readers to join us in the collective effort to transform public education for all learners. For society to work, public education must facilitate full scale participation enabling all learners to thrive. To do so, we must focus on intentionally understanding and meaningfully facilitating the education of minorities.

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- Odebiyi, O. M., Sunal, C. S., & Mutua, K. (2022). How have government policies and mandates affected public education in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East? In C. S. Sunal, O. M. Odebiyi, & K. Mutua (Eds.), *Transforming public education in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Middle East* (pp. 1–9). Information Age Publishing.

CHAPTER 2

PARTNERSHIPS THAT MATTER IN EDUCATING MARGINALIZED LEARNERS WITH MILD INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

A qualitative descriptive analysis of the psycho-social-education status of children with mild intellectual disabilities (hereafter, MIDs) in historically disadvantaged and under-resourced schools in South Africa is provided drawing findings from the empirical data and recommendations from Joyce Epstein's school-family partnership framework. The South African Education White

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Paper 6 policy document on inclusive education brought to the forefront the role of context, the role of educators, and parental involvement in creating enabling learning environments and relevant support for MIDs in the South African schooling system. In seeking to contribute to the existing debates regarding the support of minority groups (in this case, the Black parents of children with MIDs in under-resourced South African schools, this chapter positions parents as protagonists and partners in the efforts to address the psycho-social-educational needs of children with MIDs. The chapter presents the results of a study carried out in the Gauteng province of South Africa, regarding the perceptions and beliefs of parents about their involvement and support in the education of children with MIDs in under-resourced schools.

The primary focus of inclusive education throughout the world is to ensure that all learners regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds, gender, sex, race, culture, and disabilities, have access to quality education, care, and development (Maddock & Maroun, 2018; Pasha, 2012). As such the concept of inclusive education is a key phenomenon that cuts across national boundaries as the aim is to improve the holistic well-being of all the children and their families. The literature on the role of inclusive education in the lives of children with disabilities can be traced back to the widely cited case of *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia* (1972), in which the United States District Court for the District of Columbia held that students with disabilities are entitled to an education (Ross, 2022). Inclusive education includes a vision of society in which active participation of all people is vital; access to quality education and distribution of resources is equitable, and learners are physically and psychologically safe and secure, and as well as to empower people to rise to the economic and social challenges imposed by the 21st century (Department of Education [DoE], 2014). In their systematic review on the inclusion of children with disabilities, Kamran and Bano (2023) found collaboration among various stakeholders to be a prominent aspect of inclusive education. The literature underscores the importance of the involvement of parents of children with disabilities and families who are marginalized in their communities and society at large. In particular, the involvement of parents must focus on areas such as creating a “barrier-free learning environment... and the mobilization of parents behind inclusion” (DoE, 2001, p. 56), and respect for cultural diversity. Focusing on the theories of parental involvement and learning and how they contribute to teaching and learning help us to understand the learning process. Parental involvement helps to equip teachers with prior knowledge that is essential in teaching learners with disabilities. Furthermore, teachers can be exposed to home or local skills and resources that parents use their children at home or in their community.