

**MINDING THE MARGINALIZED  
STUDENTS THROUGH INCLUSION,  
JUSTICE, AND HOPE**

# INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION VOLUME 16

**MINDING THE  
MARGINALIZED STUDENTS  
THROUGH INCLUSION,  
JUSTICE, AND HOPE:  
DARING TO TRANSFORM  
EDUCATIONAL INEQUITIES**

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*We are dedicating this book to all students around the world, especially those who are historically and traditionally underserved and marginalized by our educational system's unconscious misrecognition. We are also dedicating this book to all equity-minded educators as an encouragement to continue to view education not just an ordinary human experience but a potent form of social, cultural, and political intervention in the world that must be guided by a humanizing sense of hope, love, and justice.*

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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 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 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 marginalizing in inclusive schools and classrooms.

Volume 16 in the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series goes to the heart of inclusion by considering educational inequalities that exist for a range of potentially marginalized students. The chapter authors still address traditionally marginalized students such as those with special needs and those from culturally diverse backgrounds and race in the move toward inclusion. This volume, however, goes far beyond these groups by considering educational inclusion of less traditional groups such as students who are homeless, foster students, those who are incarcerated, minorities, Indigenous, with language issues, and students of poverty, among others. Inclusion for these students is viewed through an equitable, or more noticeably an inequitable lens, where the concept of social justice is paramount, yet identified as difficult to observe in much of the current practice in schools.

The foreword by Tyrone Howard provides an insightful perspective of his early years of schooling in an evolvingly diverse American community. Yet, despite the inevitable challenges, his memories paint a picture of a community that accepted and responded to diversity with a strong communal focus of providing the best opportunities and a caring attitude toward all children in their schools. Of note is the extraordinarily strong relationship between schools and parents he experienced. Throughout the chapters in this volume, it becomes clear that instead of improving our community school home relationships, for many areas of society, this has resulted in a breakdown in these connections. Unlike the positive community that Tyrone experienced, when everyone lived and worked within the same town, community spirit appears to have been lost in the often disparate and disengaged school home communities.

Presented in four sections, in Part I, the book initially focuses on identifying the groups of students who are potentially marginalized; the issues they face; and the historical backgrounds that have led to the current sense of injustice for these students. Each of these chapters is grounded by the meaningful and heartfelt introduction given by the editors which outlines a motivational and inspiring approach for supporting these learners. Jose and Heidi's passionate conviction to improving lives acknowledges the struggle that will arise but dares the reader to advocate and confront critical issues to be able to maximize the inclusion of all students who are currently on the periphery of education. They posit that without major transformation, inequities will continue to increase, and injustices flourish.

The second section of the book, in Part II, focuses on teacher preparation for inclusion. Each chapter aims to break down the academic and social gap between those who are aiming to teach and support these students, with the different lives and needs of these students. A variety of learning experiences are shared to highlight the real needs of students in the margins and to provide good practice ideas for preparing teachers to support them. In Part III, the focus is on international research-based approaches to transform education to include all students on the margins. There is considerable need to motivate and engage these students, and the chapter authors provide a range of international experiences and ideas to help the reader to do this.

In Part IV, an interpretive perspective is applied across contexts with humanization and hope, to consider what must be done to improve access to and engagement in education for all students. The final chapter utilizes a personal ethnography to highlight issues of oppression, courage, love, forgiveness, humility, understanding, care, and kindness, and what it means to be a person in despair. This very personal reflection and insight into the author's life provides a strong lesson in reviewing power and privilege, racism, and unconscious bias. Through this, Heidi calls upon all readers to become Agents of Hope to ensure a more humanistic approach to caring for those most vulnerable and marginalized in our school communities.

This volume is a passionately presented vital book for all stakeholders aiming to reestablish a community spirit and humanistic approach for improving educational equality for all students. It will appeal to governments and educational systems, school leaders and school communities, and all those involved with addressing the extreme disparities that still exist in the education of many students who remain on the margins of education. It will also be of considerable use to university academics, students, and researchers who are taxed with identifying best practice ways for supporting these students in schools. The thoughtful structure of the book will allow the reader to select chapters that address specific groups of marginalized students. Within each chapter, the reader may explore options derived from research and best practice evidence-based ideas, which are presented by leading international experts in the field for supporting these learners.

Volume 16 will be an important international resource providing immediate access to a wide range of relevant and useful approaches for supporting groups of learners who still struggle to achieve equity in educational opportunities. It identifies the major issues surrounding these challenges and provides carefully structured approaches for enabling more effective decisions to be made to better support these learners. The book will challenge and emotionally charge the reader to reflect upon their own biases and life histories to better include all students who remain in the margin of education. I highly recommend and endorse this book as an excellent addition to the *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education* series.

Chris Forlin  
*Series Editor*

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## FOREWORD

As a young boy growing up in Compton, California, I had the good fortune of attending schools that had caring teachers, dedicated administrators, and school personnel who lived and worked in the community that they served. A school district that was predominately black in the 1970s and 80s, these educators demonstrated what educational opportunity and excellence could look like for historically marginalized student populations. Compton was a community in the 1970s that was in a state of racial transformation, as an influx of black families migrating from the south emerged, which led to widespread white flight. Not only in neighborhoods but in many schools as well. Mine was a world in which teachers knew parents, attended the same places of worship, shopped in the same stores, had their children attending the same schools they taught in, and in general, there was a synergy between students, families, teachers, and leaders that was palpable. Our fate was their fate. They were familiar with what happened in our communities because they lived in our communities and knew and understood historical and current day realities. The school-home connection for most of us was important. We were rarely seen as others and were never seen as unworthy of the best education could offer. In other words, these educators minded the margins. They took steps to ensure that we never felt less than anyone, that we should always see the brilliance in our potential, and never see the limits in our possibilities. I would later come to realize that while the community where I grew up and the schools I attended were long on care, love, and support, they were short on material resources. Dated textbooks, outdated and irrelevant curriculum, crumbling infrastructure, and aging buildings were the norm. Inequality was a reality economically. As I later went on to study education, I have learned that inequality has been part of the American landscape since its inception. Racial inequality and injustice have been prevalent in the United States from day one. For the better part of four centuries, the nation-state, that is the United States, has had racial inequity baked into its fabric, laws, policies, and ideas. Despite modest progress where issues of inclusion and recognition are concerned, the harsh reality is that in the quest to become a more perfect union, the failure to come to grips with its original sin-racism, the United States remains far from recognizing its lofty ideals of justice, fairness, and equality. Perhaps no other institution in the United States has exemplified racial inequality than schools (Spring, 2016). Often cited as the proverbial equalizer, schools have often served as an incubator of racial ideology steeped in excluding the histories, struggles, and stories of black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Schools have been the anchor in promoting an American ideology that promotes rugged individualism, survival of the fittest, manifest destiny, white

supremacy, the platitudes of capitalism, and the importance of patriarchy (Horsman, 1986). Needless to say, schools have always been sites of creating, sustaining, and reproducing ideals that have contributed to our caste system (Wilkerson, 2020).

Our goal as educators must be to eradicate deficit-based ideas about those on the margins and to radically imagine a student-centered educational system that has love, justice, and equity at its core. Where the teaching of all students is the standard, and anything less is repudiated and rejected. Connections and empathy need to be a staple in reimagined schools. The reimagining of educational systems needs to be equity centered in that it recognizes that one size fits all approaches do not work for those on the margins. In his infamous “Talk to Teachers,” Baldwin’s (1963) suggests that educators must be prepared to “go for broke” to meet the needs of minoritized students and to realize the intense and brutal resistance that they will experience when educators are prepared to do so. To that end, going for broke in today’s context entails understanding how COVID-19 has had devastating effects for millions of Students of Color in 2020 (Dorn, Hancock, Sarakatsannis, & Viruleg, 2020). As disproportionate numbers of the pandemic have taken an incredibly devastating and deadly toll on black, Hispanic, and Indigenous communities, our response must be immediate and comprehensive. Not only has the pandemic robbed many of lives and livelihoods, family members, and loved ones, but school shutdowns have denied millions of students on the margins the opportunity to receive the education they need to build a brighter future. A recent report by McKinsey and Company revealed that Students of Color could be six-to-twelve months behind academically, compared with four-to-eight months for white students. While all students are suffering, those who came into the pandemic historically disadvantaged, with the fewest academic opportunities and material resources are on track to emerge from the pandemic with the greatest learning loss, and will be left even further behind. Now is the time to rethink our approaches about how we support and educate our most vulnerable students, reimagine how we know and understand our students, reconsider how we care about them, and most importantly think boldly and imaginatively about how we act on their behalf. In this moment, there must be a willingness to put equity at the center of learning and teaching for all students. Going for broke also means to recognize the ongoing racial unrest that resurfaced in 2020. The deaths of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd appears to have ignited a new and younger generation of school-aged freedom fighters, who are demanding justice, fighting against racial inequality, and demanding that schools and society do better. In this book, an impressive group of scholars, thinkers, practitioners, and doers have responded to the call by placing an unapologetic emphasis on some of our most vulnerable student populations. This work is unapologetic in its advocacy on how we can and must meet the needs of historically underserved students such as English language learners, students with special needs, students who are experiencing homelessness, youth who are in foster care, Latinx students, African-American students, students living in chronic poverty, and others.

The educators that I had in Compton often saw something in us that we did not see in ourselves. They challenged us to be better, encouraged us to dream big,



and to not be defined by the circumstances that we saw around us such as inequality and uneven opportunity. When those educators saw us, they saw themselves. Thus, our success would reflect their success, and our shortcomings were their shortcomings. There was a connectedness that was irreplaceable. Again, they minded the margins. Much in the way that Jose L alas and Heidi Strikwerda have assembled a group of scholars who offer thought-provoking works, evidenced-based research, and culturally meaningful practice to inform those working in today's schools that they must mind the margins. As growing inequality persists, racial stratification intensifies, and the pervasiveness of students struggling with mental health challenges remains, a new way is needed, a new mindset is required, and a new way of creating a humanizing pedagogy is required. This book offers hope, direction, insight, and evidence of how it can be done and how it is being done. The question is do we have the will, courage, and conviction to do better for our students on the margins?

Tyrone C. Howard, University of California, Los Angeles

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