

Inclusive Education:

To Do

or

Not To Do

**England • Germany • Croatia
Canada • India • Spain • Malta**

Gary Bunch & Angela Valeo

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MARSHA FOREST (1942-2000) INSPIRED OTHERS WITH HER PASSIONATE AND UNCOMPROMISING ADVOCACY FOR INCLUSION. A MARSHA FOREST BOOK COMMUNICATES IN HER SPIRIT.



Gary Bunch is Chair, Marsha Forest Centre and National Director of the recently formed Canadian Association of Inclusive Educators. His teaching career includes experience as a classroom teacher, a school administrator, and a university professor. He has been active in research into inclusive education, and has published books and articles in the same area. Recently, he has gained experience in a number of nations as a consultant in inclusive education.



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Introduction: Lens and Structure

Gary Bunch and Angela Valeo

Society in every nation has long limited opportunities for an appropriate education to persons labeled as disabled. In some countries, many have been excluded completely from education. This exclusion continues. In “economically enlightened” nations, learners experiencing disability have been segregated in special institutions, special schools, and special classes. This, too, continues. Society has considered these learners as second-class citizens. They did not, and still do not, have the rights to education that other learners enjoy.

However, this situation has begun to change. Some far-seeing parents, persons labeled as disabled, educators, and politicians have decided that change must occur. They regard the special education approach as questionable in contemporary society, and as a denial of human rights and social justice. They believe that all, regardless of type or degree of difference, have a right to education together in community settings. Under the leadership of the United Nations, UNESCO, UNICEF, OECD, and the World Bank, and the leadership of an increasing number of organizations and individuals, the educational scene is changing for all regardless of gender, race, linguistic background, economic status, cultural heritage, or ability.

This book focuses on seven nations where change is occurring. It is occurring in different ways and at different stages in each country. However, not everyone in these nations agrees that change is necessary. There is resistance to granting learners with individual educational needs the same educational rights as their typical peers. There is a belief that the two groups cannot learn well together. Those experiencing disabilities are seen as unable to benefit from education in

regular classrooms and as requiring special education to meet their learning needs. Among those who prefer to continue past educational policies are governments, educators, and even some parents. Much time will pass before these governments, educators, and parents decide in favour of the social justice model and learners with individual educational needs in their school systems enjoy the same simple rights as other learners. Change is a process that takes time.

Nonetheless, despite resistance in many quarters, the world is experiencing a revolution in education for learners labeled as disabled. Proof that these learners are, in fact, learners, is growing. But the central argument is not one of achievement levels. It is becoming apparent that the arguments in favour of segregation on the basis of lessened physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental capacity, or even of giftedness, are out-weighted by the arguments of social justice. The authors of the various chapters in this book believe that positive change is necessary and achievable, and a matter of rights and justice. They find the move to inclusive education to be worth their efforts, and the efforts of many others. They agree with the message of the Salamanca Statement of 1994.

We believe and proclaim that...regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

We call upon all governments and urge them to...adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools.

All of those involved in producing this text have experience in inclusion for learners with individual educational needs. Most also have experience with the special education approach. The authors represent both the university and the field. Many have backgrounds

as teachers, school administrators, and/or university faculty. Together they have extensive and intensive experience as researchers and writers. All have contributed to the furtherance of inclusive education in their own nations and in other nations. In this text they examine research, policy, legislation, methods of change, resistance to change, and inclusive pedagogical practices in nations at various stages of movement toward inclusive education systems. Their approach is that of researchers attempting to understand what is happening in terms of change, how it is happening, and why, in some instances, it is not happening.

The nations described in this text are varied in many ways. Five European states, one Asian nation, and one North American nation are represented. The status of inclusive education across the countries represented here is chequered. In some instances, inclusion is barely a ripple across education systems. In others, governmental intent is clear, but in others, intent is clouded. It remains uncommon that entire nations have announced policies of inclusive education. It is more the case that gradual change is occurring, questions are being asked, and that local rather than national change is taking place.

- **England**, a nation in which a number of school systems have moved to inclusion, but also one in which resistance to change remains strong.
- **Croatia**, a former USSR client state, is putting in place the basic infrastructure required to support educational change.
- **Germany**, a recently reunified state with the need to overcome conservative attitudes toward disability and education.
- **Spain**, the nation with which the Salamanca Statement is most closely associated, but also a state yet to move strongly toward inclusion.
- **Malta**, a small nation, but one firmly committed to policies of inclusion and working through how policy might be realized

in practice.

- **India**, a nation huge in population, and one which faces daunting challenges in meeting the many needs of its people. India recently announced a national policy of inclusive education to signal its intent to move forward.
- **Canada**, a nation of tremendous size and modest population, home to the first entire school system to achieve inclusion of every learner, but also a nation split on the issue of educational inclusion for all.

These nations reflect the status of the worldwide social justice movement toward educational communities where all learners are welcome.

The text begins with a passionate and reasoned statement of the social justice basis of inclusive education. Navin Kikabhai, Joe Whittaker, and John Kenworthy are well-known advocates for inclusive education. Their chapter presents the essential arguments for change to inclusive education, the limitations of the traditional special education model, and the powerful barriers to change. This chapter is the lens through which progress toward inclusive education in the seven nations is evaluated in this text.

Andreas Hinz, a leading German advocate for inclusive education, outlines the complex structures of education in his nation. His examination of the manner in which present educational and political structures limit inclusive policy and practice also highlights structural and conceptual barriers to change. Andreas draws a picture of the strong leadership toward inclusion of some parents, a few legislators, and a small group of educational leaders in various parts of Germany. His analysis of emergent theories developed to understand and support movement toward what is termed "joint" education in Germany, emphasizes the need for deep thought into how social justice might be achieved in education.

Lelia Kis-Glavas and Maja Ljubic sketch the beginnings of inclusive education in Croatia. They deal succinctly and clearly with the progress of legislative and policy change from strict segregation of learners with individual needs to laws and regulations which are more supportive of eventual inclusion. Lelia and Maja pay particular attention to the changing nature of research into education of students with individual educational needs. There is progressive change from investigation of the special education model of integrating only selected students, to investigation of inclusive policy and its meaning in terms of development of an inclusive education system for all.

Canada is the third nation considered in terms of educational inclusion. Canada is a country with no federal input into elementary and secondary education, and little federal impact, other than financial, on early childhood or post-secondary education. Each provincial and territorial jurisdiction develops its own educational policies and practices, whether they are inclusive or segregatory in nature. Marcia Rioux and Kathryn Underwood pick up on the research emphasis of Hinz, Kis-Glavas, and Ljubic. They focus on Canada's eastern seaboard provinces (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador) in terms of the educational policies of these jurisdictions, and on research undertaken by university faculty, parent groups, and others. Gary Bunch and Nadira Persaud and then Bunch and Kevin Finnegan undertake critical reviews of policies and practice in Canada's western provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba and the northern territories of Yukon, Northwest Territory, and Nunavut, and in the central province of Ontario respectively. They speak of questionable understandings and useage of the term "inclusion" in the western provinces and Ontario as they go about maintaining the special education model, while the territories develop inclusive education policies and practices as they move away from the special education model. Lastly, Robert Dore, Serge Wagner, and Isabel Dore take a brief, but close, look at Canadian

legal decisions dealing with a learner's right to choose an inclusive education. Dore, Wagner, and Dore point to the fact that all jurisdictions have the authority to move to inclusion if they so decide, but also have the power to limit right to placement in the regular classroom. The majority of Canadian provinces have elected this latter choice. Canadian courts have taken a conservative position on the rights of students experiencing disabilities.

Movement toward inclusion in the populous nation of India is examined by Priti Joshi, a professor at the University of Delhi and an insightful auditor of this movement. Priti provides concise analyses of the intended positive changes of the Indian federal government and the manifold barriers to such change. She deals with the challenge of enormous population and relatively modest resources, the traditional negative attitude toward persons with disabilities, the resistance for them to attend education at all, the support programs the government of India has put in place and their degrees of success, and the growth of research to assist understanding of the nature of the task of change. Priti deals with all of these from the base of intimate knowledge of Indian education systems and how they operate.

Pedro Berruezo of the University of Murcia in Spain presents insights on how lessons of inclusion learned in another country might be applied in Spain. First Pedro sketches a picture of the concepts of inclusion in education and their relation to wider concepts of inclusion. Then his focus shifts to values and principles other nations find in inclusive education. Lastly, he presents a series of discussions focused on how aspects of inclusive education he observed in Canada might apply to Spanish schools. He has outlined a blueprint for the initiation of change for Spain.

The following two chapters chart how the school systems in the county of Nottingham in England and the island nation of Malta have moved to inclusion. Sue and Gerv Leyden take the reader step by step

through how the Nottingham school system moved from entrenched special education policy and practice to progressive inclusive policy and practice. Sue and Gerv do a masterful job of sketching how change came to the Nottingham area. Their description of how municipal leaders, educators, parents, and psychologists combined their efforts to achieve meaningful positive change is clear and informative. Deliberate moves based in reviews of ways and means by select committees and committed leaders tell the tale of how a ground-plan was laid and the success of its implementation.

Paul Bartolo and George Borg of Malta were instrumental, among others, in the movement of the government of Malta to a strong policy of inclusion. Almost, no other nation has moved to enact such strong legislation and to invest such substantial resources in support of inclusive education. Both political parties of Malta support inclusive education and both have worked through legislation and regulations to further its implementation. Paul and George's encapsulation of the political mandate received by educators in Malta and the firm and united desire for positive change among politicians, advocates, academics, senior educational administrators, and others stimulates careful thought. Of particular interest are the various strategies being put into place to meet continuing challenges, and to further develop inclusion across this island nation. Of interest, as well, are strategies of continuing resistance to acceptance of inclusion by some groups.

The lens guiding examination of events in each of the seven nations is that of human rights and social justice as provided in the first chapter. Our evaluation of progress begins with nations which have moved minimally toward inclusive policy and practice, then discussion moves to nations which have moved substantially, if only partially, and finally moves to a nation with growing experience with melding practice to an established policy of inclusion in education.

Taken together, the various discussions presented in this book

run the gamut from developed to developing nations, from nations of huge size and population to others small in population and geographic size, from nations from the north and the south, from nations with established special education systems to nations to nations primarily dependent on special schools, from nations with recent experience of war to nations long at peace. These nations serve as research snapshots of what is occurring around the globe as movement toward inclusive education and social justice for learners experiencing disability attract increasing attention and action. There is much to be learned from the experiences of these seven nations. There is much to be learned, as well, from reading of strategies some nations practice to resist inclusion, and of strategies other nations have put in place to move toward their objective of inclusion for all.

*Gary Bunch & Angela Valeo
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