



Leseprobe aus Leonhardt und Teferra, Inclusive Education in Africa,  
ISBN 978-3-7799-7832-9 © 2024 Beltz Juventa  
in der Verlagsgruppe Beltz, Weinheim Basel  
[http://www.beltz.de/de/nc/verlagsgruppe-beltz/  
gesamtprogramm.html?isbn=978-3-7799-7832-9](http://www.beltz.de/de/nc/verlagsgruppe-beltz/gesamtprogramm.html?isbn=978-3-7799-7832-9)

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Annette Leonhardt/Tirussew Teferra

## Foreword

This book offers a unique insight into inclusive education in Africa. The current status of implementation and future endeavours are highlighted in the contributions forwarded by the authors conducting research in selected African countries. With a view to the anticipated volume, the respective authors were advised to adhere to a structured report based on the following headings:

- Portrait of Disability Prevalence and Access to Education (statistical information)
- National Policy and Strategy Document Review
- Disability Education Landscape Review
- Status of Inclusive Education
- Future Prospects for Inclusive Education.

At the outset, finding potential authors proved more difficult than anticipated. Fortunately we were able to engage authors currently working in and around the subject of inclusive education either in a practical situation or (mostly) the field of scientific research. And happily, we were able to launch the project with the support we received from Ms. Anna Hill Martin (Technical Consultant on Disability-Inclusive Education) of the Inclusive Education Initiative of the World Bank Group (Social Sustainability & Inclusion) and the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service)-offices in Nairobi (Kenya), Ms. Birgit Schindler-Kovats, in Accra (Ghana), Ms. Lena Leumer (supported by Ms. Prof. Dr. Bea Lundt) and in Cairo (Egypt) Ms. Isabell Mering und Ms. Fatma Soliman. The contributions are presented in alphabetical order of the countries included in the book.

Each article is a unit in itself, presenting the situation in the respective country and undoubtedly seen from the angle of the respective author.

The publication at hand will present a candid portrayal of varying positions, considerations, ideas for practice and prospects for the various countries involved. Even if confined to a reader-friendly structure, the authors were nevertheless given a certain amount of scope, with the intention of provoking and stimulating professional debate to further enhance the de-

velopment of inclusive education on a global scale in general and in Africa in particular.

The editorial board would like to thank all contributing authors for their dedicated involvement and conscientious drafting of the articles, as well as their cooperation in general. We wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Frank Engelhardt of BELTZ JUVENTA Publishers in Weinheim (Germany) for his support and engagement in this project. Right from the start he was geared towards an Open-Access-Publication, facilitating the widest possible reader circulation. In this context, our gratitude extends to the efforts of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University (LMU) in Munich (Germany), for setting up an Open Access Fund for the corresponding authors and participating members of the university. A contribution to the publishing fees financed by the LMU Open Access Fund via the German Research Foundation was thus possible.

We would also like to thank our translator and English language editor, Jill Stephens, for the editing and fine-tuning of all the contributions which were written in English and forwarded to her.

Finally, for typesetting and book formatting we are indebted to Frau Hannelore Raudszus and likewise to Frau Christine Woolner for her generous all-round support.

Addis Ababa, July 2023

*Annette Leonhardt/Tirussew Teferra*

Annette Leonhardt

# International Comparative Studies on Inclusive and Special Needs Education

International and intercultural comparative studies on inclusive and special needs education focus on the comparative aspects between one or several countries or even continents, as well as the situation in individual countries or groups of countries e.g. in developing countries, in Europe or parts of Europe such as Central Europe/Eastern Europe or in North/South America. For comparative assessment, these will be brought into relationship with each other, using specific criteria to determine similarities and differences. The desired objective and choice of comparative criteria will determine the comparison results (Beltz Lexikon Pädagogik 2007, p. 750).

## General background information

Roughly one billion persons worldwide live with disabilities, 80% of whom are living in developing countries (BMZ 2019, p. 5). No reliable statistics as to the exact number of disabled persons are available. Notwithstanding, developing countries are required to create structures to enable children with disabilities to receive a suitable education.

An accurate assessment of the number and situation of persons with disabilities in developing countries is increasingly difficult due to the fact that disability is frequently deemed as divine retribution or a consequence of a sin committed by the mother during pregnancy. In extreme cases, this can result in isolation of the child from the public. Likewise, the cause of disability is often attributed to external occurrence (e.g. falling out of bed or an evil look from the neighbour, assumed fault of the midwife or sins committed by the parents).

## Methodology for international observations

Bürli (2016) uses the scientific comparison model for special needs comparison. According to the author, comparisons can be conducted on a *vertical-historical* axis (previous conditions are compared according to current status) or by means of a *horizontal-simultaneous* comparison, whereby (different) spatial factors (e.g., intercultural, international and intranational) are presented in the foreground (ibid. p. 178). Whereas until approx. end of the 1980s description and comparison featured in the foreground, today the focus is on the idea of cooperation (e.g. networking or the implementation of action programmes). Here the main goal is to facilitate transnational support and mutual exchange. Intercultural, international quality assurance and optimisation are secondary goals (Bürli 2020, p. 140). As a result, “solutions to problems are to be embedded in a spatial, temporal and sociocultural network of relationships” (Bürli 2016, p. 178).

Comparative observations and studies on an international scale are frequently hindered by the varying terminology used for comparative assessments in various countries- and often within the country itself. A lack of standard semantic terminology often leads to a distortion of the original meaning, communicating a wider or narrower interpretation of the desired meaning.

## Status of Ratification and Signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities in African Countries

Since the entry into force of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD) 185 and 164 countries have ratified and signed the treaty respectively (status as from May 2022) ([www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)). Since then, not only new developments in mainstream and special education worldwide can be observed, but, with the exception of Africa, also structural changes in special needs education to facilitate inclusion, whereby ‘special’ schools are rare (apart from isolated schools for the Deaf or Blind or students with mental and physical challenges). For many students with disabilities, school attendance – if at all possible – has been invariably ‘inclusive’. And in the absence of individual support or monitoring, the dropout quota is extremely high. Measures to address or at least minimise the problem are desperately needed.

An overview of ratification and signing of the UNCRPD is presented below. The countries selected for the book are highlighted.

**Table 1: Ratification and Signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by African Countries**

State	ratified in:	signed in:
Álgeria	2007	2009
Angola		2014 (Accession*)
Benin	2008	2012
Botswana		2021 (Accession)
Burkina Faso	2007	2009
Burundi	2007	2014
Cabo Verde	2007	2011
Cameroon	2008	
Central African Republic	2007	2016
Chad	2012	2019
Comoros	2007	2016
Congo	2007	2014
Côte d'Ivoire	2007	2014
Democratic Republic of the Congo		2015 (Accession)
Egypt	2007	2008
Equatorial Guinea		2022 (Accession)
Eswatini	2007	2012
Ethiopia	2007	2010
Gabon	2007	2007
Gambia		2015 (Accession)
Ghana	2007	2012
Guinea	2007	2008
Guinea-Bissau	2013	2014
Kenya	2007	2008
Lesotho		2008 (Accession)

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\* “Accession” is the act whereby a state accepts the offer or the opportunity to become a party to a treaty already negotiated and signed by other states. It has the same legal effect as ratification. Accession usually occurs after the treaty has entered into force. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his function as depositary, has also accepted accessions to some conventions before their entry into force. The conditions under which accession may occur and the procedure involved depend on the provisions of the treaty. A treaty might provide for the accession of all other states or for a limited and defined number of states. In the absence of such a provision, accession can only occur where the negotiating states were agreed or subsequently agree on it in the case of the state in question.” [Arts. 2 (1) (b) and 15, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969] aus: [https://treaties.un.org/pages/Overview.aspx?path=overview/glossary/page1\\_en.xml](https://treaties.un.org/pages/Overview.aspx?path=overview/glossary/page1_en.xml).

State	ratified in:	signed in:
Madagascar	2007	2015
Malawi	2007	2009
Mali	2007	2008
Mauritania		2012 (Accession)
Mauritius	2007	2010
Morocco	2007	2009
Mozambique	2007	2012
Namibia	2007	2007
Niger	2007	2008
Nigeria	2007	2010
Rwanda		2008 (Accession)
Sao Tome and Principe		2015 (Accession)
Senegal	2007	2010
Seychelles	2007	2009
Sierra Leone	2007	2010
Somalia	2018	2019
South Africa	2007	2007
Sudan	2007	2009
Togo	2008	2011
Tunisia	2007	2008
Uganda	2007	2008
United Republic of Tanzania	2007	2009
Zambia	2008	2010
Zimbabwe		2013 (Accession)

([www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](http://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html))  
(status as from August 2022)

Of the countries presented in the table, ca. three quarters (about 75%) had already ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by 2007. The opening for the signing of the treaty in 2007 triggered a worldwide scientific and educational debate on “inclusion” (particularly at school level), although the term had already been introduced and documented in the Salamanca Declaration of 1994. The remarks made about “education” (Article 24) led to a cross-border professional exchange of views. Multinational comparative studies shifted into focus again.



## Research methods and perspectives

Varying research methods are used for international and intercultural comparative studies in the field of special needs education and inclusive education. Both hermeneutic and empirical approaches are possible. Erdélyi (2012), who processed these for international and intercultural comparison of special needs education, differentiates between descriptive (assessment of the situation in the country), comparative (identification of similarities and differences), normative (inclusion of international experience) and cooperative (finding opportunities for cooperation) methods.

The sources of information are very broad, ranging from basic sources and case studies reported in literature and professional discourse to study trips and various periods of stay in the place of observation. There are also personal and foreign experiences or combinations of both.

Last not least is the accessibility of the research field. Each of the above mentioned procedures has its advantages and drawbacks.

International research studies face several challenges: the central problems include accessibility to and context situation of data, country structures (education, health and social systems), varying semantic treatment and translation (Bürli 1997), but also personal experience, moral values and norms of the comparatists.

The diversity of current research subjects is huge. Addressing this issue would require suitable research methods. Likewise, there is a need for systematic, organisational structures.

## Worldwide Trend: from the special school to schools for all

Education of children and adolescents with disabilities or special needs is increasingly shifting from the special school to the all-inclusive. This trend can be observed worldwide but mainly in countries of Europe (see Leonhardt & Pospischil 2018) and several industrial nations\* outside Europe (see e.g. Felder 2018, Leonhardt 2022) are restructuring their school systems. Until recently these students attended highly differentiated special needs schools. These countries are now striving to create an all-inclusive structure

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\* Industrial nations (or countries) is to be understood as countries with highly developed industries and technologies – as opposed to agricultural or developing, emerging economies. Among numerous other factors, common denominators include high income per capita, a high level of education and a (mostly) stable currency as well as a high standard of technology (Utopia 2019).

in mainstream schools whereas in many African countries, existing inclusive schools are undergoing structural changes to accommodate more students with disabilities or students with special needs in the currently existing mainstream schools. The first step in this direction was already taken following the Salamanca Conference in 1994, gaining impetus following The UN Convention on Rights of Disabled Persons in 2006.

Creation of inclusive school systems largely depends on the availability of professional staff. How unevenly distributed this appears on the globe is exemplified by the overview of professional teachers for the Hearing Impaired, as presented in the World Report on Hearing in 2021:

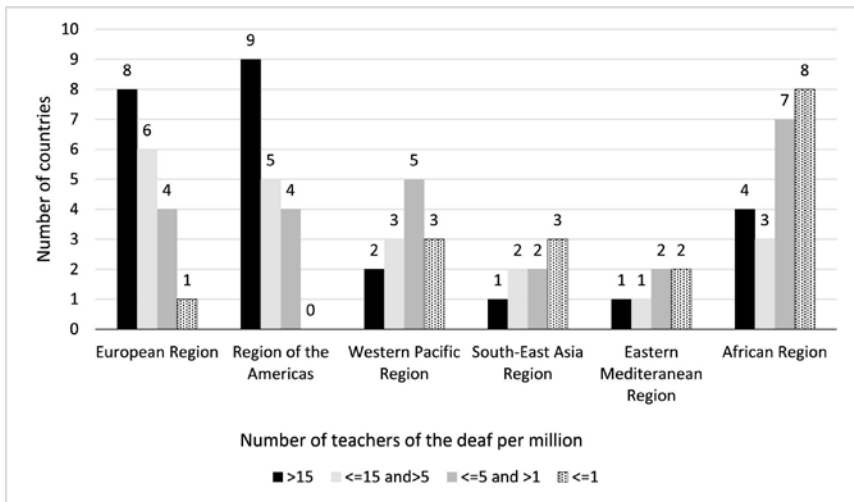


Figure 1: Distribution of teachers for the Hearing Impaired in WHO regions (WHO 2021, p. 168)

This situation applies to all specialist teaching staff. In many African countries teacher training programmes or special needs education are currently available; very few, however, offering qualifications for the individual disability.

## Outlook

Compared with industrial nations, African countries have a very different history of schooling for children and adolescents with disabilities as well as different policies towards inclusive education. These are based on their experience, viewpoints and sustained effort to implement inclusive education. Many African countries display not only a great openness but also a

creative talent for practical application which can also be of great interest for industrial nations in the process of implementation.

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