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# Global trends in meeting the educational rights of children with disabilities: From international institutions to local responses

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**Global trends in meeting the educational rights of children with disabilities:  
From international institutions to local responses**

**Keywords:**

Disability, Inclusion, Education, International

**Abstract:**

The 2006 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was an important and landmark treaty recognizing the human rights of persons with disabilities. In this article we focus on the educational rights of children with disabilities as directed by the Convention, specifically the right to receive an inclusive education. We view inclusive education as a convergence of education and disability rights initiatives within the UN and explain what this means in practice. In the second half of the paper, inclusive education is discussed in the context of the Global South and we observe the interplay between global and local interpretations of this model. We conclude with the argument that international human rights treaties matter; with the understanding that they must be locally and culturally actualized. International institutions can encourage South-South collaboration and local ownership of pragmatic solutions. Such encouragement may decrease accusations of cultural imperialism and facilitate local innovation in inclusive education.

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## Introduction

Disability is a daily lived-experience that is not particular to any one gender, ethnicity, or religion. People with disabilities are disproportionately poor compared to their non-disabled peers (Elwan, 1999). Of the approximately 650 million people living with a disability in the world, 80% are among the world's poorest (United Nations [UN], 2007). For children with disabilities, being included in education has been a struggle. In countries with high poverty levels, 90 – 98% of children with disabilities do not attend school in any form (UN, 2007). Even in countries with low incidences of poverty, children with disabilities may be segregated from their peers and often receive substandard educational services. Castells (2000) describes marginalized groups such as people with disabilities as being a part of a 'fourth-world' in today's capitalist global society, meaning they exist as culturally and economically marginalized groups in dispersed societies.

UN discourse on the rights of persons with disabilities began abstractly with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but only in 2006 with the passage of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) did an international document lay out a specific and progressive framework for the human rights of persons with disabilities. The CRPD placed special emphasis on the educational rights of children with disabilities. While separate streams of discourse on disability rights and educational rights have existed side-by-side in some form since the inception of the UN system, the CRPD represents a merging of these two in a powerful and novel way.

In article 24 of the CRPD, the rights of children with disabilities are clearly established, stating that such children are not to be excluded from education on the basis of disability or ability to pay (UN, 2006). The CRPD also pushes a specific kind of educational delivery system for children with disabilities, as illustrated by the following quotation: "States Parties shall ensure that [...] Persons with disabilities can access an *inclusive*, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live" (UN, 2006, article 24, emphasis added). Inclusive education is a concept that is still trying to be understood and defined in both the international and local contexts. While the CRPD can be effective in advancing the right to an inclusive education, the lack of consensus on the meaning of inclusive education can have major impacts on the efficacy of such a human right, especially for policy-makers and practitioners who interpret CRPD directives

The structure of this article is three-fold. First, we will discuss how the education and disability rights discourse streams came together in the CRPD. This analysis will take a historical and descriptive look at major UN initiatives and their interpretations. Second, we will explain the concept of inclusive education as understood by both the UN and inclusive education advocates and scholars. Third, and most importantly, we will discuss dilemmas, contentions, and strategies for successful inclusive education systems with a focus on the Global South. The purpose of this article is to provide readers with a greater understanding of inclusive education and to examine the interaction of global and local interpretations within this framework.

## The United Nations, education, and disability

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), conceived by the UN in its infancy, has only one specific mention of disability. The right to security is given “in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood” (UN, 1948, article 25). In general, all of the rights contained within the UDHR can be thought to include persons with disabilities. The UDHR explains that:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. (UN, 1948, article 2)

We contend that disability be considered to be included in this list in a more contemporary understanding of “birth or other status.”

‘Education’ in the UDHR is understood to be free and compulsory in the elementary ages and a right for all to access (UN, 1948). Interpretation becomes more abstract when the UDHR declares “[p]arents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (UN, 1948, article 26, 3). While very likely an unintended interpretation of the right for parents to choose an education for their child, the UDHR may inadvertently sanction parents self-segregating their children from other children (e.g., some parents may move their children to schools where children with disabilities are not present).

The 1970s witnessed a string of disability-focused UN mandates. The Declaration of the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons was issued in 1971 and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons was issued in 1975. Rioux and Valentine (2006) critically describe these early efforts as “rights circumscribed by disability” (p. 59). In 1976, UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim announced 1981 to be the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP). The IYDP was an important step in focusing attention on issues of full participation and equality in society for persons with disabilities (UN Enable, 2011). Malhotra (2006), as an example of the impact of UN initiatives, identifies the IYDP as having a major impact in the formation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982.

At the same time that the nascent disability rights movement began to gain traction, educational priorities at the UN began to shift. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) began to favor health and nutrition initiatives over education, partially due to lack of focus and direction in education and partially due to the health interests of UNICEF’s leader Henry Labouisse (Jones, 2006). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) still provided technical support in education for states, but support for UNESCO from Western countries declined precipitously in the 1980s (Mundy, 1998). The World Bank conducted studies related to education and development beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. These efforts were criticized by some for its introduction of neoliberal policies such as school fees into state educational institutions that perpetuated educational inequality (Carnoy, 1995; Heyneman, 2003; Vavrus, 2005). Schools that increased fees became only available for those that could afford their services, which often meant that children with disabilities were excluded from participation due to family fears of low returns on what was considered an increasingly costly investment. In short, the World Bank’s educational policies in the 1970s and 1980s were *not* rights-based and had the effect of further marginalizing the already-marginalized through delimiting access to affordable education (Tomasevski, 2005).

The 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA) brought UNICEF, UNESCO, and the World Bank together to offer a more unified message on UN education

policy. The Declaration and Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs, the document to emerge from the EFA conference, established education as a fundamental right for everyone, regardless of physical, social, economic and psychological condition. It also stated that the learning needs of children with disabilities require special attention and that steps should be taken to provide equal access to education (UN Inter-Agency Commission, 1990). However, the goals of EFA were not specifically mandated just for persons with disabilities. This became clear in 2000 when the EFA goals were reassessed at the Dakar World Education Forum and only included vague allusions to the rights of persons of disabilities to an education. For example, article 7.3 states, “[We hereby commit ourselves to] ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes” (UNESCO, 2000, article 7.3). Disability rights can be interpreted from such a phrase, but are not explicitly identified.

The UNESCO Salamanca Conference in 1994 was the first statement and framework that specifically focused on the education of persons with disabilities. Using the EFA initiatives as an outline, the conference was a major proponent of including children with disabilities within the regular education system (UNESCO, 1994). This synthesis of rights for and in education especially for youth with disabilities was a new development in international discourse and introduced the term ‘inclusion’ that was to become part of the modern international policy-speak for disability policy.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) declared the EFA to be among the UN’s top priorities. However, the MDGs neglected to specifically mention persons with disabilities beyond the language of “equal access to all levels of education” (UN, 2000, article 19). It was clear that a more comprehensive international framework was needed to address the rights of persons with disabilities. Interestingly, the CRPD’s influence can be observed through the evolution of the MDGs. For example, there has been a concerted effort to place disability as a key issue within the MDGs, along with an increased recognition that disability and poverty are tightly intertwined. A 2009 report to the Secretary-General also urges a specific focus on gender and disability (UN, 2009). The process of syncing MDGs with the CRPD is on-going, as evidenced by a recent resolution adopted by the General Assembly on prioritizing disability towards 2015 and beyond (UN, 2011).

### **Constructed meanings of inclusive education**

Inclusive education has evolved from different attempts to engage students with disabilities, such as ‘mainstreaming’ or ‘integration.’ However, mainstreaming and integration are not entirely analogous to the ‘inclusion’ that the international community speaks of today. There can often be misunderstandings about what ‘inclusive education’ means. In this section, we will describe the history of this term in international language and provide examples of how both international and national organizations, and important researchers in the field, have chosen to define it.

The term ‘integration’ was used in the 1970s. Integration emphasized justice and social rights of formerly marginalized groups, particularly students with disabilities. Inclusion means a broader vision and a higher ambition to develop schools that are able to reach and develop all children as individuals (Vislie, 2003). To put it another way, ‘integration’ means the right to step in the school door and ‘inclusion’ means the right to participate in a meaningful way once you are inside. Further, integration leaves the onus of participation on the individual with the

disability, while inclusion promotes education systems that are more dynamic and responsive to all children.

As mentioned in the previous section, the Salamanca Conference in 1994 was instrumental in entering the idea of inclusive education into the international discourse on marginalized groups, particularly children with disabilities. The Salamanca Conference defined inclusive education as follows:

[...] schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups. (UNESCO, 1994, p. 3)

This position from UNESCO represents a rights-based approach to education for marginalized populations. UNESCO's definition of inclusive education focuses on the broadest sense of the word, and not just specifically focused on children with disabilities. This is important to point out, as some groups correlate the inclusive education movements with the disability rights movement only. According to UNESCO, inclusive education is a far broader approach than just focusing on disability.

Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson (2006) recognize that many definitions of inclusion exist, and their research has put these definitions into a typology of six different ways of thinking about inclusion. First, inclusion can be interpreted as being primarily concerned with students with disabilities in school. This, of course, is a dominant interpretation of the meaning of inclusive education but may be too narrow in scope because an inclusive educational philosophy pertains to all children. Second, inclusion is a response to disciplinary exclusion. This interpretation seeks to place inclusion in opposition to exclusion, but also links it to those who were not successful at school. Inclusive education is seen as a means to bring students facing disciplinary exclusion through expulsion or suspension back into educational participation. The third interpretation is related to the second in that inclusion can be seen as a means to combat social exclusion, discrimination, and social disadvantage. Fourth, inclusion can be interpreted as a promotion for the comprehensive or common school. This interpretation suggests that schools can be locations of social equality and incubators of democratic civic virtue. Here, the philosophy behind inclusive education supports schools as a welcoming place for all children. In supporting this kind of welcoming environment, schools are in a position to teach socially inclusive values and democratic participation through practice and example. Fifth, inclusion is analogous to 'EFA'. This understanding is, of course, strongly linked to UN statements and initiatives and emphasizes the right to education. This interpretation may confuse the terms 'integration' and 'inclusion' in that inclusion represents a shift in school philosophy and not just in who is allowed into school. Finally, inclusion can be understood as a value system intricately linked to education and society. In this way, "inclusion is seen as a never-ending process. Thus, an inclusive school is one that is on the move rather than one that has reached a perfect state" (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006, p. 25).

It is important to emphasize the point that inclusion is an on-going process and not just a place to attain, one that "aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem" (UNESCO, 2003, p. 7). The CRPD also views inclusion as an active process against exclusion. This becomes clear in the establishment of the right *not* to be excluded from the

general education system (UN, 2006, article 24, 2). While the CRPD does not explicitly indicate *what* an inclusive education should look like, support documents from the UN shed some light on the UN's interpretation of the concept. In the handbook for parliamentarians titled *From Exclusion to Equality* (UN, 2007), the UN proposes the following tenets of inclusive education:

- Suitable equipment and teaching materials is provided
- Teaching methods and curricula embrace the needs of all learners and promote social diversity
- Teachers are trained to teach in a classroom of differentiated learners, and encouraged to support each other
- A full range of supports is provided by schools to meet the diverse needs of all students

This publication also suggests that inclusive philosophy not be limited to curriculum and teaching, but that it is also helpful in thinking about physical accessibility within the school building and transportation to and from school.

Another major consideration when interpreting the concept of inclusion is that inclusive education does *not* mean separate schools. We acknowledge that there is an important distinction contained within the CRPD between inclusive education principles and specialized education for those children with deafness and/or blindness. Inclusion International (2009) suggests that the right to an inclusive education has been confused with the simple right to an education for a child with a disability, which could lead policymakers to support separate and specialized schools in the name of 'inclusive' education. Groups such as Disabled Peoples International and the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) advocate for the option of separate schooling for students who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind. The WFD (2007), for example, believes in the separate school option not because they do not believe in social inclusion, but because they worry that inclusion can become "a simple placement in a regular school without meaningful interaction with classmates and professionals at all times is tantamount to exclusion of the Deaf learner from education and society" (p. iii). This perspective appears towards the end of article 24 in the CRPD, where paragraph 3, section C, maintains the option to attend specialized schools as long as it is an environment that maximizes academic and social development (UN, 2006).

While Baumgart and Giangreco (1996) rightfully assert that inclusive education means education for *all* and not just for *some*, the CRPD makes clear that choices should be available. Most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on inclusive education support a position that is consistent to the CRPD: every child with a disability has the right to choose an inclusive option (Inclusion International, 2009). Inclusive education has implications to the educational system beyond just the knowledge transfer of subject matter. A balance should be sought between supporting the educational needs of the deaf and/or blind through specialized language systems (i.e., sign language, braille) and the social-emotional needs of the child. These choices are best negotiated between the school, parent, *and* the child with a disability.

### **Putting global inclusive policy into local practice**

The focus of disability proclamations on children can have unique consequences for nations. Unlike adults, children often do not have—or are not given—the capacity to advocate for their own needs. Frequently, parents speak for the needs of children. In countries with historically inclusive approaches to education, parents are often the main impetus in fostering dialogue around children's right to education.

At the same time, all nations in the world specifically devote resources to educating their children. Such resource allocation has moved historical narratives about whether all children should be educated to a more nuanced question of *how* children should be educated. There are children who are excluded from schooling in every country in the world, but nations have moved toward comprehensive approaches such as “education for all” and education-related MDGs. Nations which have worked to remove barriers to schooling for the general population are now questioning how best to educate their most marginalized children, including children with disabilities. This will be discussed below.

Historically, children with disabilities have been treated as a local or family issue and not thought of in the name of economic ‘development.’ During the process of post-colonization nation-building, formalized services for persons with disabilities in many countries were still minimal (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002). Ingstad and Whyte (1995) posit that such services were difficult to justify for “non-productive” members of society when overall needs were so great. In other words, post-colonial Africa, Latin America, and Asia focused on how to rebuild after years of oppressive policy, and children with disabilities were not always viewed as a priority in the rebuilding effort. Due to the lack of formalized state services, much of the service provision for people with disabilities in the Global South was organized by religious groups (Kliwer & Fitzgerald, 2001), NGOs (Ingstad & Whyte, 1995) or charitable organizations within a given state (Csapo, 1987). Formalized services in the past—where available—were typically residential/custodial, and similar to historical state-run institutions in the Global North (Kliwer & Fitzgerald, 2001). Rehabilitative services that were available were congregated in urban areas and largely inaccessible to the rural poor (Helander, 1992).

In response to these challenges, many nations attempted to meet the educational needs of children with disabilities within the constraints of available resources. The concept of ‘inclusive education’ (i.e., removing physical and educational barriers so that students with disabilities can learn alongside their non-disabled peers and access a high-quality curriculum) became an attractive way for nations to seemingly solve big challenges in education with small shifts in practice. Like all educational innovations, success varied. In some of the specific cases described below, variable success could be explained by the level of purposeful action taken by education authorities and stakeholders.

Geographical and infrastructural challenges can sometimes promote inclusive education practices by default. Costa Rica, for example, has been educating its children with disabilities for nearly sixty years (Stough, 2003). Costa Rican teachers and parents provided inclusive services because the infrastructure of the nation did not allow for children in the mountains to access specialist services. In this model, resources were scarce, but progressive policies such as the Fundamental Law of Education established the right to an education for Costa Rican youth with disabilities (Stough, 2003). The Costa Rican example is a clear case of policies from the government affecting the structure and philosophy of schools by provoking local innovative responses to the challenge of inclusion. In Pakistan, inclusive education was more accurately described by Miles and Miles (1993) as “casual integration” (p. 210). This was especially true in rural areas where parents simply sent children to school with no special support. Access to schooling was not the issue, but there was no specific work to remove barriers that may have been caused by teacher attitudes, inappropriate curriculum, or inaccessible buildings. In areas where educational understandings of disability were insufficient, students either assimilated into school or dropped out.



Poverty can act either as a detriment or a catalyst for improving inclusive special education services (Stubbs, 1997). When highly-trained professionals are absent and resources are scarce, communities—including parents, teachers, and extended families—become disability experts (Miles, 1999). This can be seen as beneficial in that such decentralization allows communities to focus its limited resources more efficiently. However, this situation can also perpetuate marginalization of youth with disabilities based on un-challenged cultural discrimination of such a group. Stubbs (1997) cites the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Laos) and Lesotho, two of the poorest countries in the world that are now implementing inclusive education with very little formalized support, as examples of how inclusive education can work in poor countries. Research has demonstrated that depending exclusively on untrained stakeholders to uphold the complex set of interactions needed to provide effective inclusive education is not adequate (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Peters, 2007). Inclusive education requires a more comprehensive approach. Johnstone and Chapman (2009), for example, found that only a fraction of teachers in Lesotho understood how to work with children with disabilities, and that the largest predictor of successful inclusive pedagogy was formal training of teachers. In the case of Lesotho, those teachers that had an understanding of how to promote excellence in a classroom with diverse learning abilities were most successful. Those teachers with no formal learning in this area were either frustrated or ineffective in their interactions with students with disabilities.

The paradigm shift in literature and action is instructive of how inclusive education has evolved as a movement. In its early stages, inclusive education was seen as effective if it matched with locally constructed understandings of education and if people had positive attitudes toward inclusive ideals. In China, for example, kindergarten and pre-school classes are developmental and less competitive than upper levels of education; therefore, inclusive education efforts have begun during these years (Callaway, 1999; McCaabe, 2003). In Viet Nam and Laos, inclusive practices appeared to mesh well with socialist ideologies (Stubbs, 1997; Villa, Tac, Muc, Ryan, Thuy, Weill, & Thousand, 2003), so were generally accepted. Throughout the 1990s, mere acceptance of the inclusive model was considered a victory for disability advocates.

However, as the United Nations and global advocacy organizations continued to push the inclusive agenda, nations that were committed to inclusive education began to see the need to address inclusive education more comprehensively. In 2009, then Minister of Education in Trinidad and Tobago Esther LeGendre (2009) stated that:

The Ministry sees inclusive education as part of the nation’s promotion of diversity, citizenship and economic and social well-being. Inclusive education for Trinidad and Tobago means that no child should be excluded from education and that each child should be able to participate actively in all domains of society. This means that our education system must be receptive to diversity and is physically, pedagogically and socially accessible to all children. Inclusivity relates to the ability of the school system to enable learners to be successful at school to the extent of their personal capability.

This more comprehensive and expectations-based approach demonstrates that inclusive education rhetoric has moved beyond the acceptance that children attending school together is enough. Rather, inclusive education is now often viewed as an approach to modifying systems to be more effective for all children. In the case of Trinidad and Tobago, this view has meant investing tremendous resources in training teachers and providing new cohorts of specialist teachers designed to support children with disabilities in regular classrooms (Cambridge,

Thomas, & Huggins, 2006). In other countries, such as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, communist era “defectologists”—professionals dealing with youth with disabilities—are being re-named as “special needs teachers” and being re-deployed from special schools for students with disabilities to play support roles in regular schools (UNICEF, in press).

Collaborations on inclusive education projects between the Global North and Global South have been effective if they focus on local empowerment and decision-making. In Bangladesh, supplemental physical and pedagogical resources have been leveraged through partnerships with NGOs. The Bangladesh Protobondhi Foundation, for example, runs schools where general and special educators design the lessons, plan service delivery, and implement the assessments together. Some of the other tenets of this model include:

- Child-centered pedagogy, with attention to individual learning and participation
- Peer teaching and support (“buddy”) systems
- Staff training and continuous support
- Parent-teacher collaboration
- Community early childhood education programs
- Family-focused approach (embracing family-guided decision making and paying attention to family issues, needs, and empowerment)

In Honduras, resources from the World Bank, community-based organizations, NGOs, and a partnership with the University of Vermont have been leveraged to create schools with multi-grade teaching, intercultural, and bilingual education (Peters, 2003). Community-based education programs (with support from the World Bank) and strong parent-school collaboration are central facets to the *Escuela Nueva* inclusive education schools (Peters, 2003). This work has been supported by a strong policy emphasis on educational equity. The Honduran government has made it clear that regular education rights and services should be made available without any discrimination to people regardless of personal characteristics or abilities (Amadio, 2009). The *escuela nueva* principle of education is a model that has traveled around South America and is a prime example of South-South collaboration (Luchesi, 2004).

New laws are being written to align with international initiatives, as well as a reexamination of neglected *a priori* rights affirmed in national constitutions. For example, Serbia’s *Law on the Fundamentals of the Education System* requires that all students be included without discrimination:

Equality and accessibility of education and pedagogy without discrimination and segregation based on gender, social, cultural, ethnic, religious or other background, place of residence or domicile, financial or health status, developmental impairments and disabilities. (Article 3.1)

As of 2014, this law is being implemented through school finance mechanisms, which provides supplemental funding on a per pupil basis to students who have historically been marginalized in the Serbian education system (UNICEF, in press).

There is no “magic bullet” to providing successful inclusive education services. As noted in the examples above, each country is guided by its own culture and overall education strategy. In many cases, inclusivity fits well within larger efforts to reduce discrimination within societies. As noted from the literature, however, there appears to be a shift in place towards greater inclusivity built into the institution of education within each country’s policies and structure. This shift may be a natural evolution of policy development or may be a reflection of greater

emphasis on the rights of persons with disabilities. In either case, inclusive education is no longer a casual effort to have children learn together. In many countries, it is becoming a catalyst to overhauling educational systems and ensuring equity for all children. Through teacher development, resource deployment, leveraging of partnerships, and creative staffing and funding mechanisms, many countries are beginning to develop an infrastructure for inclusion. Such infrastructure builds on theory developed by Peters, Johnstone, and Ferguson (2005), which stated that disability rights can only be met if particular supports (in law and practice) are present.

Inclusive education, in practice and in principle, is a policy born in the Western countries of the United States, the United Kingdom and Scandinavia (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn, & Christensen, 2006). Because it is situated in a Western cultural-historical place, inclusive education may be perceived as a transfer from the Global North to the Global South. While ethnographic and anthropological methods may be more effective in exploring the interplay between cultural constructions of inclusivity and disability (Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2011), institutions such as the UN and other international development organizations can promote a more balanced approach: promoting South-South collaboration and a multi-directional transfer of ideas. In our final pages, we present broad notions of how inclusive education infrastructure (within local contexts) can promote next steps in realizing the education goals of the CRPD.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we argue that international discourse on the right of persons with disabilities to an inclusive education has become both convergent and widely (locally) problematized over time. In the twenty-first century the distinction between local problems and global problems has become tenuous. The actions of people across the world affect each other sometimes in tangible ways, but often through abstract and intangible forces.

This is to say that international human rights treaties can make a difference, although sometimes those impacts are difficult to detect. Goodman and Jinks (2005) argue that through the process of acculturation, international human rights treaties can influence positive social change in three ways. First, ratification of such human rights initiatives provide a space for dialogue and political opportunity for marginalized groups. Second, ratification of a human rights treaty can inspire citizens to hold the state accountable to its documented obligations. For example, ratification of the CRPD could have been a symbolic gesture by a state in the international arena, but now the state can be pressured by its citizens who desire such human rights to be recognized for themselves or others. Third, ratification of a human rights treaty by a state also puts international pressure to be accountable from other states. If a ratification is seen as shallow and symbolic, the global political capital of that state decreases as other member states question the genuine nature of any of the state's international gestures. Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui (2005) suggest that state ratification of human rights treaties, even if impossible to enforce, make a difference socially and culturally because they empower citizens to pressure states to follow through on their promises.

In effect, states can become pressured from both the international and local; this is most certainly an effective strategy in implementing the CRPD. Great efforts have been focused on empowering persons with disabilities by raising their expectations and the expectations held by the community. As parents come to believe that education for their child with a disability is not only appropriate but may also be delivered best in a school of their peers, they become strong

advocates for the rights promised to their children in the CRPD. Such a chain of events, however, is completely dependent on whether parents are aware of the CRPD or any other mechanism for supporting the educational rights of their children. Inclusive education has grown organically in some places as a response to resource-poor communities and in others where the state's desired economic and social outcomes have aligned with the outcomes of inclusive education. To this end, Alur and Bach's (2010) example of a "top down, bottom up" (p. 51) approach may be the most effective in promoting inclusive education.

As we have demonstrated, many countries' government institutions and civil society organizations in the Global South are responding to international trends in inclusive education in pragmatic ways. However, many countries do not have institutional structures similar to the countries of Western Europe or the United States from which inclusive education policies began. While human rights treaties are important in fostering global dialogue and recognizing the existence of a problematic condition, the realization of effective solutions must be born locally. To this end, the institutional support of national governments and local advocacy organizations can play pivotal roles in developing locally relevant inclusive approaches for the twenty-first century.

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