The Global Context of Disability

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There is no one definition of inclusion in education that fully captures its meaning for individuals with disabilities. However, inclusion is not a "place," but a philosophy and practice of affording individuals with disabilities the full range of services and resources needed to access an appropriate education such that they make substantial gains in their lives and contribute meaningfully to society. Unfortunately, the reality is that disparate opportunities exist for individuals with disabilities across the world.

This issue of *Global Education Review* examines the global context of disability and how in different geographic locations, socioeconomic factors, domestic policy, and disability perspectives impact access to special education services, and the types of resources and interventions available to individuals with diverse learning needs. Practices in countries including India, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Liberia, and Kenya were studied and implications for meeting the special education needs for children and adults with disabilities and their families are discussed.

In *From Rights to Realities: Confronting the Challenge of Educating Persons With Disabilities in Developing Countries,* Paula J. Beckman, Nicole Abera, Thomas Sabella, Kimberly Podzimek and Lenisa Joseph examine the disconnect between national policies for inclusion and the proportion of individuals with disabilities who are out of school in developing countries. Global poverty, among other factors, was cited as one of the primary barriers to accessing special education services in El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Liberia. Recommendations for improving conditions for individuals with disabilities such as increased awareness, acceptance, and support, along with accessibility and more functional training were discussed.

Zachary Walker and Shobana Musti-Rao also examined the challenges of fostering inclusion for individuals with disabilities in *Inclusion in High-Achieving Singapore: Challenges of Building an Inclusive Society in Policy and Practice.* However, as opposed to the poverty-stricken conditions associated with the lack of access to services described by Beckman and colleagues, Walker and Musti-Rao identified the same exclusionary practices in Singapore, where resources were much more readily available. Despite being a high achieving society, the implementation of the nation's vision for inclusion has been poorly executed according to the authors. The article provides

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recommendations for shifting policy into practice in Singapore.

Barriers to inclusion, and access to needed special education services among individuals with disabilities, are also discussed by Sandra Limaye in her manuscript, *Factors Influencing the Accessibility of Education for Children with Disabilities in India.* Limaye explores the challenges in the infrastructure of the educational system in India, parents' abilities to support their children with special needs, and the overall attitude of society in India towards disability. Limaye reported that just 9% of students from a total number of 164.5 million children with disabilities had completed nine or more years of schooling, indicating extremely high dropout rates for high-school students. According to Limaye, this trend, combined with lack of vocational training for persons with disabilities in India serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and create a greater risk of exclusion from society for persons with disabilities.

In *Career Development for Youth with Disabilities in South Korea: The Intersection of Culture, Theory, and Policy,* Jina Chun, Annemarie Connor, John F. Kosciulek, Trenton Landon, and Jinhee Park also examine the experiences of individuals with disabilities transitioning into young adulthood. While the authors discuss underlying factors that contribute to barriers to school and services for students with disabilities in South Korea, they also provide strategies for enhancing career path opportunities in order to facilitate future employment success.

Investigating the experiences of individuals with disabilities beyond secondary school, Melinda Eichhorn's qualitative study, *Haunted by Math, The Impact of Policy and Practice on Students with Math Learning Disabilities in the Transition to Post-Secondary Education in Mumbai, India,* highlights how the special education practices and policies in

Mumbai, India do not adequately prepare students for post-secondary success in their paths to earning a college degree. Eichhorn's participants were diagnosed with math learning disabilities, and she specifically looks at the lack of instruction received towards acquiring the prerequisite skills needed to complete college level math courses. Policy and practice implications, as well as interventions for high school and post-secondary students, are discussed.

Specific skills of students with disabilities were also examined by Jeremy H. Greenberg, Wendy Lau, and Sandy Lau in their experimental study, *Teaching Appropriate Play to Replace Stereotypy Using a Treatment Package with Students Having Autism.* In this article, the authors investigated the effectiveness of a treatment package to decrease stereotypic behaviors in children with autism spectrum disorder through teaching appropriate play skills. Children with ASD tend to have limited communities of reinforcers, and the study shows how teaching children to appropriately engage in an activity, such as painting, can function to assist in expanding play repertoires and decrease stereotypy. Through this piece, we learn about the success that can be achieved when students with disabilities gain the access they need to high quality, evidence based services.

Alyson Krupar's article, *Being Untaught: How NGO Field Workers Empower Parents of Children with Disabilities in Dadaab***,** provides further evidence how attainment of goals can occur for individuals with disabilities following the implementation of effective interventions. In this article, Krupar examines the role of family members of individuals with disabilities in a refugee camp in Dabaab, India, and their abilities to support their children's needs and rights to attend school.

Finally, Maryam Dalkilic and Jennifer A. Vadeboncoeur's article, *Re-framing Inclusive Education Through the Capability Approach:*

An Elaboration of the Model of Relational Inclusion ties the theme in this issue together by examining various disability perspectives. The highlight of this piece is the authors' framework for a theory of "relational inclusion" which focuses on "differences rather than deficits." Policy and resource recommendations are provided for supporting the enhancement of the capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

Overall, the articles presented in this issue of *Global Education Review* bring forth the struggles and successes faced by families and individuals affected by disabilities, and the role played by circumstances such as poverty, governmental infrastructure, inaccessibility, exclusionary attitudes, family awareness, and the capabilities of diverse learners themselves. Findings from the research, and theories presented in the articles serve to inform the direction of global policies and practices to provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities, to access educational resources and services to the maximum extent possible, and to participate fully in educational environments and society at large.

About the Author(s)

Christine O'Rourke-Lang, PhD, is the Chairperson of the Special Education Department at Mercy College. She received her PhD in Behavior Analysis from Columbia University, has been a Board Certified Behavior Analyst for over 10 years, and is also a New York State Licensed Behavior Analyst and certified Special Education teacher. She teaches graduate level courses within special education and in applied behavior analysis. She has also taught within early childhood and childhood settings for children with special needs. Her concentration within special education focuses on teaching students with autism spectrum disorder. Her research interests involve examining social skill repertoires in children with disabilities as well as behavior management strategies for students at risk.

Roseanne Vallice Levy, PhD, is currently serving as the Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for the School of Education at Mercy College. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Special Education. Her current areas of research include teacher preparation with an emphasis in secondary education; examining the beginning teaching experiences of special education teachers; and the digital age and its impact on pre-service/in-service teachers and K-12 students. She is certified in Special Education and Social Studies and has taught in the special class and co-teach settings. Prior to coming to Mercy College, she taught for several years at the secondary level. She is certified in Special Education and Social Studies and has taught in the special class and co-teach settings.