# Chapter 14
# Inclusive Education Leadership in Non–Western Contexts:
## Towards Developing a New "Heuristic" Inclusive Education Leadership Framework

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## ABSTRACT

*Inclusive education is universally accepted as a useful policy to promote the learning of all students in one classroom. While actual teaching practices are pivotal to achieving the goal of having all students study in one classroom regardless of any difficulties and differences they may have, the 'change agents' in schools are leaders who are expected to lead the process. Over the years, there has been discussion on the contributions of school leaders towards the successful practice of inclusive education. However, efforts towards the implementation of inclusive education in especially developing countries have stalled. Indeed, the process towards practicing inclusive education has been led by developed countries that have provided resources and a 'policy blueprint' for developing countries. In this chapter, the authors demonstrate how 'Western leadership' frameworks are unworkable in developing countries and recommend an alternative framework for training inclusive leaders.*

## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has been accepted widely as a useful policy or philosophy to promote the education of all children including those living with a form of disability in neighboring schools (Ainscow & Miles, 2009; Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Globally, there exist inequality, discrimination and marginalization among people within the society (Anthony, 2011; Ashman, 2015; Baffoe, 2013; Sharma et al., 2017; WHO, 2011). Contemporary development discourse has acknowledged such inequalities and offered guidelines towards ensuring that all persons are able to enjoy their fundamental rights to essential services such as education (WHO, 2011). Following this, discussions during the Salamanca Conference on Special Needs emphasized the need for countries to facilitate the teaching of students including those with disabilities in a school located within their communities (UNESCO, 1994). This call was revisited by the United Nations (2007) during the formulation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The document exhorted countries to demonstrate commitment towards the education and development of children with disabilities. Thus, the introduction of inclusive education has been perceived as an attempt to ensure that all children are given equal opportunity to participate in education. Inclusive education creates a culture that welcomes, values, and respects diversity and that has a strong commitment to supporting the presence and equal participation of all students regardless of their differences (Ainscow & Miles, 2009; UNESCO, 1994).

There are two schools of thoughts underpinning the implementation of inclusive education: The narrow and broad view about the implementation of inclusive education (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Sharma et al., 2017). The broad view is defined as the efforts of educators to make schools accessible to all children regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, and religion (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Within this discourse, there is no room for discrimination as the learning needs of all students must be inculcated in the education system (Ashman, 2015; Heward, 2013). However, the narrow view advances argument for the promotion of inclusive education for a specific group such as children with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2017). This school of thought suggests the need for discussions on inclusive education to be referenced to a particular group (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). For example, generalizing the implementation of inclusive education suggest catering for all which may distract the focus on a particular group of people (Sharma et al., 2017). In particular, in relation to individuals with disabilities, it is believed that their needs are usually relegated to the background in many societies (Anthony, 2011; Kamenopoulou & Dukpa, 2018; Opoku, 2022; Sharma et al., 2013, 2017). In view of this, the implementation of inclusive education from a broader lens would connote limited attention given to the educational needs of students with disabilities.

The narrow focus of practicing inclusive education for a particular group denotes a deliberate effort to extend accessible education to all. This has brought into prominence the important role of school leaders towards steering and creating an inclusive school environment for a narrow group such as children with disabilities. Several studies have emphasized that school leaders who are in charge of the administration and management of schools have a vital role to play in the effective implementation of inclusive education (Poon-McBrayer, 2017; Sider et al., 2021; Thurlow et al., 2019). It requires strong leadership to ensure that inclusive cultures are visibly present in schools and adopts participatory approaches that include all stakeholders and collaborative problem-solving (Rayner, 2009). Visionary school leaders provide strong administrative support by setting a vision of inclusion by identifying concerns, taking responsibility and accountability for the learning of all students (Poon-McBrayer, 2017). They provide professional development for teachers, create opportunities for teacher collaboration and effectively

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