


# Chapter 17


## Tracing Inclusive Education in Cameroon: A Genealogical Analysis of Policies and Practices

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### ABSTRACT

*Inclusive education has emerged as a crucial element of global educational reforms, advocating for the right of every child to access quality education irrespective of their abilities, backgrounds, or socio-economic conditions. In the context of Cameroon, the success of inclusive education is largely influenced by the implementation of related policies and the attitudes of key stakeholders such as policymakers, school administrators, teachers, parents, learners, and the broader community. This chapter examines the implementation of inclusive education policies and factors shaping attitudes towards inclusive education in Cameroon, focusing on stakeholders' beliefs, experiences, and understanding of disability and inclusion. Using secondary data and following a genealogical analysis, the chapter suggests that more resources should be allocated for an effective implementation of inclusion; furthermore, pos-*

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*itive attitudes must be promoted to achieve a better academic and social outcomes for all students.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Inclusive education has emerged as a crucial element of global educational reforms, advocating for the right of every child to access quality education irrespective of their abilities, backgrounds, or socio-economic conditions (UNESCO, 2020). The concept of inclusive education is rooted in the broader framework of human rights, social justice, and equity, and its implementation is seen as a key indicator of a nation's commitment to ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their physical, cognitive, or social differences, are afforded equal opportunities to learn and thrive within mainstream educational systems (Anastasiou et al., 2021). This vision aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015). As the world moves towards these goals, developing countries like Cameroon face both unique challenges and opportunities in actualising inclusive education.

Cameroon, a lower-middle-income country in Central Africa, is distinguished by its vast cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity (Nkengbeza, 2020). This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for inclusive education, as it necessitates a sensitive and flexible approach that accommodates the varying needs of learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as those with disabilities (Fombonne et al., 2022). While the legal and policy frameworks surrounding inclusive education in Cameroon have evolved considerably, the practical implementation of these frameworks remains inconsistent. Furthermore, the socio-political landscape, marked by regional disparities and conflict, often exacerbates these challenges, creating significant barriers to inclusion, particularly for children with disabilities (Bamu & Sirotkin, 2020).

Inclusive education goes beyond merely integrating students with disabilities into mainstream schools; it demands a systemic transformation that includes changing school cultures, policies, and practices to reflect the diverse needs of all learners (UNESCO, 2020). In Cameroon, the shift towards inclusive education has gained momentum over the last two decades, driven by both international pressures and local advocacy efforts (Mba & Muwana, 2020; Mbibeh, 2013). However, the success of this shift largely depends on the attitudes, perceptions, and actions of various stakeholders within the educational system (Forlin et al., 2009; Tanyi & Nga, 2021).

Stakeholders in the context of inclusive education include a wide range of individuals and groups, such as policymakers, school administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community members. Each of these groups plays a pivotal role in

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