

# Chapter 11

## Global Inclusive Education: Challenges for the Future



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*You may say I'm a dreamer But I'm not the only one I hope  
some day you'll join us And the world will be as one. John  
Lennon: Imagine.*

**Abstract** The final chapter brings together and summarises some of the most important ideas that have been presented throughout the book, deploying the Global Inclusion Perspective as both a tool and a challenge for the future of a more inclusive and fairer education for everyone. The chapter includes six main challenges to face using the Global Inclusive Education perspective. These challenges are: inclusive education and social justice have to be a shared commitment to radically breaking with the functions historically assigned to schools; the need to identify, analyse, questioning and co-construct concrete and precise alternatives to all forms of segregation; teacher's training needs to be rooted in inclusive education; the urgent need for a rethinking of school innovation, leadership and educational improvement from the inclusive, equity and social justice perspective supported by new models of educational assessment that are not based on competitiveness, instrumentality, rankings and exclusion; it is essential that the approach to the study of inclusion in the various educational contexts avoids simply describing and accumulating quantitative data; and finally, the Global Inclusive Education perspective leads us to a political and research objective where global and intersectional approaches need to be taken: classroom, school, families and community.

**Keywords** Global inclusive education · Equity · Social justice · Research · Leadership · Inclusion · Exclusion

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J. Collet et al. (eds.), *Global Inclusive Education*, Inclusive Learning and  
Educational Equity 8, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11476-2\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11476-2_11)

## Introduction

In this chapter, we would like to reflect on the contributions of the different authors, bringing them together to outline some of the most important ideas that have been presented in the book, deploying the Global Inclusive Education (GIE) perspective as both a tool and a challenge for the future of a more inclusive and fairer education for everyone.

A fairer education is one of the three main reasons put forward by Pujolàs (2006) in favour of an inclusive education. Pujolàs, who was one of the main promoters of the movement for inclusive education in Catalonia (Baena et al., 2020), explained that inclusive education is fair, necessary and possible. All three reasons have been discussed in detail in the pages of this book. However, faced with the reality of our country and that of so many others, it is necessary to radically insist on the need for an inclusive and socially just education. Not so much for reasons related to excellence (as we saw in Chap. 1) or economics (UNESCO, 2020) but for the need to consider it, together with Pujolàs, a challenge for the present and the future: what kind of world do we want to live in? If the answer to this question is a world without war or famine, without people dying at sea or at the borders, without rape, aggression, discrimination or exclusion of any kind or reason, an equitable world, sustainable in every area, a world where difference is not only respected but also appreciated, a world where, as Pujolàs proposed, the values of peace, coexistence, solidarity, tolerance, respect, democracy and dialogue, and the values that *keep the future alive* (Booth, 2005) prevail, we need an education that encourages the development of children in this direction. An education where these values are integrated into everyday life and become a personal and social habit that shapes a new DNA in reprogrammed schools based on inclusive educational practices from the classroom to the community.

This book is a small sample of the possibility of carrying out these practices and of rethinking education from a more inclusive and socially just perspective. But, as Professor Mel Ainscow points out in the foreword: *context matters*. And so, as was done in Chap. 2, we would like to use a real situation to bring together some of these ideas, given that in every situation of inclusion or exclusion, every level set out in this book intervenes intersectionally, and this will also help us to put into context and illustrate some of the ideas presented in this book.

## The Fallacy of Inclusion in the Daily Life of Educational Experiences

The situation we present occurs frequently in schools in Spain and other countries (Boaler et al., 2000; Francis et al., 2020). A school organization strategy is used that consists in separating children and adolescents based on their academic level (Tarabini, 2018). A concrete example of this was collected by Soldevila (2015) in an

elementary school. In this school, there was a group of children in each class who were only partially part of their assigned class because during the maths lessons, due to the low marks they had in this subject, they were forced to leave the class and join another group with children defined as having learning difficulties or needing support. The composition of this subgroup was very diverse, although it was largely made up of children with migrant backgrounds and low-income families. At this school, like many others, the organizational response to “diversity” was clear and well-established. When the magnitude of the difficulty (attributed to the person) exceeds the teacher’s habitual way of teaching, the response is to provide special treatment and a special teacher. In this way, the traditional, historical and systemic response of separating (Florian, 2013) the person who does not fit within the parameters of “normality” is initiated, making an exclusive use of resources (Soldevila et al., 2017). This is how the response to “diversity” is standardized and legitimized in a segregating way, in schools that can call themselves inclusive as well; that is, some schools that are considered and (self)labelled as inclusive are actually governed by practices and cultures that classify, label and segregate children in response to diversity. Thus, in these schools, diversity is seen as a “problem” that strains a school normality that is designed only for some students. Instead of opting for an inclusive organizational strategy of “active normalization”, which from the start understands “diversity as normality” and globally guides the whole school, the families and community (Simó et al., 2014), many schools continue to see those who are “different” from an imagined normality as a “problem” to solve through specific strategies that are frequently linked to segregation. This should help us to overcome any vision of educational failure or exclusion as something mysterious and/or accidental but rather as something that was constructed in the daily life of schools (Escudero et al., 2009).

One of the bases and strengths of this segregating response to diversity is the logic of sensitivity that, from the perspective of ableism, is used to justify the perspective and forms of care offered to people who, because of their conditions, are outside the boundaries of “normality”. In this way, the need for special education and separation and/or exclusion as a logical and necessary response to any form of difference is reiterated, as we have just seen, using new names and new forms but with justifications from the past (Slee, 2018).

The validity of this segregating perspective is also reflected in the field of research, in new research that was previously located in the paradigm of special education and integration and that is now supposed to be in the paradigm of inclusion but that, in fact, is used to do and say the same as before but under different names (Echeita, 2019). The same occurs in research in the field of inclusion of foreign students. Both critical race theory (Parker & Gillborn, 2020) and research in Spain (García-Castaño & Carrasco, 2011; Simó et al., 2014; Ballestín, 2017), point clearly to new forms of soft racism in schools based on the cultural argument that it is better that they are with students of “their” culture and not mix with the rest, for their own good. Also, in the analysis of educational trajectories, the results and transitions of students from disadvantaged families (Tarabini & Ingram, 2018) show how schools use the social and family reality of these students in a classist way to

justify their early school leaving and poor results, instead of understanding them precisely as the starting point of normality from which to work inclusively for the success of all. Three examples of areas of practice and research we need to pay attention to because of the name change (special education – inclusion; racism – soft racism; classism – neoclassism) have not in many cases involved a real change of perspective towards inclusion, equity and social justice, but only a question of image.

To this reading and analysis of the facts must be added consideration of the school grammars defined in Chap. 1 and the drivers of exclusion identified in Chap. 2, which have a direct impact on this situation. One of the key elements for the analysis of (non) inclusion is that, like in so many other situations, the approach is individualized, focusing only on the person, either because she is a woman; lacks family or economic resources; or comes from another country; has been assigned a diagnostic label; or is simply not motivated by mathematics. This is an approach that is very much in the productivist and exclusionary line of those who are “different” that neoliberal social, economic and educational dynamics, and those of an education of “excellence”, promote everywhere (Ball, 2021), including in Spain (Collet-Sabé, 2017). This approach, moreover, means missing the opportunity for a more global and diversity-friendly response that would benefit everyone. A clear example of this can be found in Spain in the Commissions for Attention to Diversity, an organizational resource at the school level in which pedagogical decisions are coordinated to respond to student diversity. These are usually made up of members of the management team, the school’s own diversity specialists, the external services that advise the school, and the coordinators or representatives of the teaching staff. This same resource can be used to track only specific cases that contrast with the standard of normality or with a preformed image of the “ideal student” (Tarabini, 2016), proposing responses only with regard to the person (since the “problem” has been individualized/personalized), justified by the logic of sensitivity, and thus becoming yet another instrument of labelling and selection. Or, it can be used as a resource for global analysis of situations that hinder the presence, participation and achievement of children, proposing global responses that favour and benefit diversity, thus becoming an instrument that promotes inclusion and social justice. It would allow teachers to expand what is done in the classroom in a way that is accessible to all, avoiding the need to exclude anyone (Florian, 2010). As stated in a UNESCO (2020) report, this ambiguity in resources, support and practices, which can be used both for including and excluding, is one of the main challenges of inclusive education today. Thus, it is necessary to “establish clear definitions of what is meant by inclusion and equity in education and use evidence to identify contextual barriers to the participation and progress of learners” (UNESCO, 2020, p. 37). Or as Ainscow states in lesson 2 of the foreword: “evidence is crucial”. We need to move beyond labels and names in the resources, support and practices, to understand them thoroughly and promote in a concrete and precise way the factors that facilitate inclusion and those that hinder it.

## **Global Inclusive Education (GIE) as an Inclusive and Socially Just Response to Educational Experience**

As we have just seen, for a more inclusive, socially just and human rights-friendly response, we need a more global approach. In addition to the five dimensions already discussed in Chap. 1, we also wish to propose the intersectional nature of GIE. Every situation that occurs in the daily life of schools involves elements related to the classroom, the school, the education policy, the community, the families, the economic and cultural systems and so forth, and that is why the situation we have described has to be approached taking into account as many aspects of analysis and response as is possible, as well as their intersections. Policies, practices and research on inclusive education that individualizes the focus or that is centred solely and exclusively on one area of inclusion will produce incomplete or unwanted educational outcomes (Waitoller et al., 2019). Therefore, in addition to other approaches that propose a global framework (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; Porter & Towell, 2020), we wish to promote the implementation, from the classroom to the community, of those analyses and practices that help dismantle certain grammars and inertia that impede respect for diversity and social justice. The contributions of the authors in this book help us to rethink educational realities from a more global and inclusive perspective.

Returning to the situation we initially proposed *at the classroom level*, the first step would be to break with the individualistic and/or competitive inertia that, as we saw in Chap. 2, the drivers of exclusion generate. This break involves structuring the classroom cooperatively, as proposed by the authors of Chap. 3. This classroom structure enables, first of all, children from an early age to learn the values of respect, tolerance, respect for diversity, solidarity and mutual aid, among others; and it begins to create, from an inclusive perspective, the sense of community. Second, the possibility for children to learn through cooperation (Cooperate to Learn, Learn to Cooperate). And finally, it also provides support for teaching and learning that is respectful of diversity and promotes the presence, participation and achievement of all children in the classroom. Thus, from this structure, children become a support to the learning of their peers, representing a global means of support for diversity. This is also the support perspective of the authors of Chap. 5; a global and universal perspective designed to address the educational needs of all children while respecting diversity. The set of measures they provide, such as co-teaching or Universal Design for Language (UDL), added to the cooperative structure of the classroom, can prevent any child from having to leave the classroom so they can participate and learn the tasks set.

The support approach, therefore, enables a global response to diversity that moves away from segregation by academic level – a separation that is often carried out based on a certain way of understanding and conceiving assessment and the decisions associated with the results, as discussed in Chap. 4. Assessment thus becomes one of the curricular elements that can lead to processes of school, educational and social exclusion. Identifying the different levels that constitute

assessment in coherence with the teaching and learning process, and all the decisions that are associated with it, will allow it to be addressed in its complexity and depth, placing it at the service of inclusion and not of segregation in the classroom and school.

Between the classroom and school appears the figure of the teacher, a figure capable of carrying out the changes described throughout this book and that, as we are seeing, would help us to transform the current situation. We are aware that, as the authors of Chap. 7 point out, it is difficult as teachers cannot address systemic injustices, and being radical teachers capable of generating the disruption necessary to create new and exciting possibilities, of overcoming ‘institutional obstacles’ that affect inclusion and justice, and of leading the necessary changes is no easy task. But as is stated in Chap. 7: *be realistic, demand the impossible*.

At the school level, therefore, in order to break down the institutional obstacles and encourage teachers to carry out the approach we have described, there needs to be coherence and continuity between the improvement of educational practice and the path towards inclusion. Otherwise, we run the risk of committing to innovations that jeopardize and contradict a global perspective of inclusion, creating cracks in it. As discussed in Chap. 6, improving educational practice, innovating it, makes no sense (or should make no sense) unless it is for the purpose of facilitating and promoting inclusion. Similarly, the objective of inclusion in schools should lead, necessarily, to the improvement of educational practice designed and developed in collaboration between teachers and with the participation of the whole educational community.

In addition to the classroom and school dimensions, the role and participation of the *families and community* is key to moving towards inclusive practices, cultures and policies, as well as to helping break with the realities of exclusion and inequality between schools (school segregation), within schools (school experience and learnings), and in all non-formal and informal education (inequality of opportunities). The need for this synergy between all forms of education and all agents is already pointed out in lessons 5 (involve the wider community) and 6 (everybody has to work together) presented in Ainscow’s foreword. Families play a key role in supporting or combating the different forms of segregation, both external (school choice) and internal (level, ability, etc.). But they also play an important role in other dimensions, as set out in Chap. 8, such as the relationship with different families in contexts like school family associations, extracurricular activities, informal spaces, and in the maintenance or suppression of special education schools. All types of families, especially the most vulnerable and “invisible” (Beneyto et al., 2019), should participate in all educational aspects and can become one of the most powerful levers of change towards inclusion. It is a question of considering inclusion and equity *with* the families, not for them. Further, as shown in Chap. 9, if the whole neighbourhood, town or city lacks an inclusive curriculum, the many difficulties and invisible barriers in non-formal and informal education can prevent the success of the commitments to inclusion, equity and social justice. For this reason, we propose a critical analysis of the processes of social learning within particular and local contexts as a starting point for the inclusive and equitable transformation

of the hidden curricula of towns and cities, the internet, extracurricular activities, urban planning, and so forth. It is precisely in non-formal and informal education that segregations and inequalities become taken for granted and thus more harmful. Finally, Chap. 10 discusses the need to take into account the voice of the protagonists, of the children, young people, families and community, in all aspects of education. If we wish to move towards democratic and inclusive society, this can only be done, as Dewey pointed out over a century ago, by building concrete, practical and everyday habits of participation, of connection, of shared life between diverse and unequal people and of mutually heard voices. Only in this way can we move towards an inclusion that is not top-down but emerges from a daily educational life where everyone's voice is heard and taken into account.

## Challenges for the Future

In this section, we would like to summarize the goals that should be considered for the future. We therefore need to think about the purpose of schooling as a key issue of social justice and inclusion (Lingard & Mills, 2007). Despite advances in recent years, the future of inclusive education is not and will not be easy because schools were designed to (re)produce inequalities, classify and segregate (Ball & Collet-Sabé, 2021). Approaches to inclusive education are forced to develop in a social and political framework where exclusion remains part of the DNA of school education (Slee, 2018); which is reinforced by capitalism and neoliberalism that provide the basis on which to grow and consolidate segregation and exclusion from different mechanisms and tendencies (Mills, 2018; Waitoller, 2020); where exclusion is also a business (Tomlinson, 2012); and where the most important goals are profits, excellence and a good position in the rankings at any price, setting aside ethics, the common good and solidarity (Ovejero, 2014; Collet-Sabé & Grinberg, 2022).

This situation forces us to think about structural and global changes, a profound and radical change of education systems, of the DNA that shapes them and of certain school grammars in order to break with the system that Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr described back in 1849, and which still seems to accompany us: “plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose” (the more things change, the more they remain the same). That is why we would like to propose goals that allow us to leave behind the legacies of the past and promote reforms that go beyond the general statements that have been circulating for years (Calderón, 2018).

On this path towards inclusive education, as Murillo and Duk (2021) suggest, “we still need Freire”, the critical hope he proposed, to consider education as politics and to emphasize the oppressed. Thus, returning to the question, What kind of world do we want to live in? from the GIE perspective we wish to put forward objectives shared by researchers, educational professionals, politicians, families and communities regarding political, educational and research challenges that we organize around the following six points:

1. Inclusive and social justice cannot be a matter only for teachers who are radical, for those who have a relative with a disability, who lack financial resources, are mistreated, have a certain skin colour or religion, are empathetic and so forth. It must be a matter shared by all members of society. This involves **radically breaking with the functions historically assigned to schools**, placing limits on a system that seeks to dominate and oppress all those who are not part of the elites that have shaped it. Collectively, we must find socio-psycho-pedagogical ways to prevent oppression and inequality from being (re)produced in schools, the community and society. It is urgent that education serve the interests of humanity and that we learn through the implementation and analysis of new ways of challenging a system that values economic rather than human needs. Excuses and half-truths are no longer valid; it is time to position oneself either in favour of justice or being complicit in inequality.
2. **Identification, visibility, analysis, questioning of, and co-construction of concrete and precise alternatives to all forms of school segregation, structured around exclusion criteria of social class gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, region and so forth.** As has been discussed throughout this book, the GIE perspective enables us to detect these segregating practices from the classroom to the community and in the multiple intersections of classroom, school, families, extracurricular activities and community. It also offers, from research, educational practices and politics, the challenge of identifying, questioning and transforming them together. In order to move towards social justice – remembering that the biggest challenge is the ambiguity of resources, support and practices that can be deployed both to include and to exclude.
3. In order to transform school practices and cultures, in line with that presented in the first six chapters, **teacher training needs to be rooted in inclusive education.** A powerful training in inclusive education is a political commitment based on both values and research that seeks to transform the identity of all teachers in all areas, as well as all school staff (administrative staff, social educators, support teachers and so forth) to transform them into active agents against segregation and for a real, effective and global inclusion, as set out in Chap. 7. Inclusion cannot just be a matter for teachers who are specialists in inclusion, but the framework underlying the training of all teachers and educational leaders.
4. In many countries, regions and municipalities, great efforts are being made to innovate in education. However, sometimes these processes implicitly or explicitly seek an excellence that is often excluding. If the goal is to use educational innovation to improve one's position in an outdated, segregating, competition-based ranking such as PISA or in state and regional school assessments and rankings, children from disadvantaged families, immigrants and those with (dis)abilities get in the way and irritate. **There is an urgent need for a rethinking of innovation, leadership and educational improvement that is truly inclusive, supported by new models of educational assessment that are not based on competitiveness, instrumentality, rankings and exclusion.** Again, research, schools and politics need to work together to build new paradigms of innovation, leadership and educational assessment as proposed in Chaps. 2, 4 and 6.



5. **It is essential that the approach to the study of inclusion in the various educational contexts avoids simply describing and accumulating quantitative data.** Such approaches do not enable an interpretation that helps to understand and improve processes that, as the GIE perspective argues, are built on a complex base. Thus, research on educational inclusion must necessarily incorporate a holistic and non-fragmented vision, one of process and not just results. It needs to be committed to contexts, to experiences and to society, designed with the ultimate goal of promoting a collective awareness that translates into decision-making at different levels and of a different nature that fosters progress in the difficult and at the same time hopeful path towards inclusion.
6. Finally, **inclusion, equity, social justice and the fight against obstacles to them and segregationist dynamics need to be considered in more global terms beyond the classroom and school.** As presented in Chaps. 8, 9 and 10, the dynamics of educational inequality and exclusion outside schools, in extra-curricular activities and informal education (internet, village, town or city etc.) are still more powerful and flagrant than in the formal sphere. **The GIE perspective leads us to a political and research objective where global and intersectional approaches need to be taken: classroom, school, families and community.** This objective needs to gather together the voices of the various children and young people, families, teachers and community. From the GIE perspective, we cannot continue to see inclusion as being *for* or *about* others. Educational innovation, educational policy and educational research must be participatory, that is, done *with* children, teachers, families and the community. Otherwise, it cannot be truly inclusive and transformative.

To conclude this final chapter, we would like to remind the reader that the general proposal of the GIE perspective is that inclusive education must start from a broad and global perspective of diversity. A school that is defined for everyone must include everyone without exception, for any reason, covering all human characteristics, without structural, political, cultural or economic limits. The path to be taken must therefore focus not on fragmentation and individualization, for example only on disability, or gender, or poverty, or ethnicity and so forth, as has often been the case (also in research) but seek, as Echeita (2019, pp. 8–9) puts it:

a common framework (which does not mean simple and one-dimensional) both for understanding situations and for research and the necessary educational transformation (...) from these crossroads and blend [of different frameworks] and the resulting synergies, it would perhaps be reasonable to expect a stronger and clearer impulse against the powerful forces of educational injustice and inequity and their devastating effects on the *rights* of all children to quality education; real quality, with no further adjectives.

An approach, therefore, where diversity is the new normal, without any type of categories, an approach based on human rights, children's rights and social justice and that therefore works to eliminate situations of exclusion and include everyone in the broadest sense of the word and in the most global sense of intervention, from the classroom to the community.

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