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Review of Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD in Nigeria and Germany

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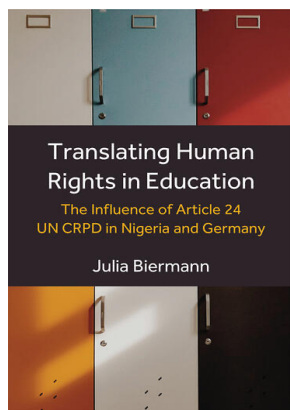
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ABSTRACT

Both low-income and high-income countries have historically marginalized disabled children and youths. Inclusive education has been championed as a means to remove educational barriers, eliminate discrimination, and improve the outcomes of disabled persons. The book “Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD in Nigeria and Germany” makes an important contribution to the field of inclusive education by examining two countries with very different educational systems, levels of economic development, and historical context. This book provides a nuanced analysis of the translation of human rights principles into practical educational policies and practices within these two diverse national contexts. It is an essential resource for scholars, policymakers, educators, and advocates dedicated to inclusive education.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Disability; Social change; Special education; UN CRPD Article 24; Nigeria; Germany; Policy actors

Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD in Nigeria and Germany by Julia Biermann is a comprehensive work offering profound insights in the field of inclusive education. I will not refer to this book as an “easy read.” The book demands a nuanced understanding of policy-making, special education, discursive formation, social science research methods, and to a lesser extent, economics. This is not surprising given that this book is based on the author’s doctoral dissertation. While the target audience is not explicitly defined, the interviews, serving as data for analysis, hint at



its relevance to federal policy actors, civic society members, and human rights groups. However, the book extends its value to faculty, researchers, and graduate students specializing in inclusive education, disability studies, and human rights as well as administrators, directors of disability offices, and K–12 educators. The book, organized logically into six chapters, meticulously examines the discourse surrounding the inclusion of disabled individuals in the educational systems of Nigeria and Germany, contextualized within Article 24 of the UN CRPD.

Chapter 1, “Introduction: Translating Human Rights in Education,” introduces the readers to Article 24 of the UN CRPD, which requires 184 state parties to ensure inclusive education systems for persons with disabilities. This pivotal chapter delves into the historical journey of inclusive education as a fundamental human right. It meticulously dissects the nuances of Article 24, elucidating its role in legitimizing research, fostering reforms in special education, and catalyzing the transformation of diverse school systems towards inclusivity. This chapter also sets the stage by outlining the methodology employed in subsequent chapters, offering readers a roadmap for the analytical journey ahead.

Chapter 2, titled “The Translation of Article 24 UN CRPD: Institutional Change in Educational Discourse,” provides the conceptual and theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of the Nigerian and German educational systems. The author introduces a translational model of institutional change, weaving together the intricate connections between global rights packages, institutional challenges, and the channels through which global norms and local ideas intersect. The chapter distinguishes the challenges faced by low-income and high-income countries in overcoming exclusion and segregated systems of education for disabled children. Low-income countries have limited capacity to provide for the education of disabled children because of a lack of adequate human, financial, and physical resources. High-income countries, on the other hand, are criticized for providing sub-par education to disabled children in the form of lower expectations, stigmatization, and offering less-valuable credentials.

Chapter 3, titled “Nigeria: Inclusive Education as a Strategy of Education for All by Special Education,” presents the Nigerian case study. The analysis reveals the institutional reality of the exclusion of disabled children in Nigeria, with state actors deeming the joint inclusion of children with and without disabilities in regular classrooms currently impracticable due to financial and resource constraints. The chapter also introduces the concept of the “inclusive education ladder” advocated by state actors, which consists of four stages ranging from exclusion to segregation (special schools), separation (special classes), and eventual inclusion (regular classes/joint learning). The chapter underscores the prevailing financial and resource constraints, portraying Article 24 as a distant international ideal rather than a practical catalyst for change in Nigeria.

Chapter 4, titled “Germany: Inclusive Education as a Source of Conflict over School Structures to Preserve Special Education,” presents the German case study. The analysis reveals the institutional reality of ability-based segregation, with varying perspectives among policy actors regarding joint learning and the scope of necessary

changes. Divergent views emerge regarding the perception of disability as a facet of human diversity that can be accommodated within regular schools, with some policy actors deeming joint learning impractical. Furthermore, there is disagreement regarding the extent of changes required to achieve inclusive education. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) advocate for the elimination of special schooling to integrate all children into regular schools, which the author terms the “transformative line of argumentation.” On the other hand, the federal government and its agencies advocate for a gradual approach to change, referred to by the author as the “conservative line of argumentation.” The chapter explores the negotiation of reforms in structural, legal, and professional dimensions to enable teachers to facilitate joint learning through multi-professional teams. Ultimately, disabled children in Germany remain within a system that perpetuates segregation, mirroring the inertia observed in Nigeria.

Chapter 5, titled “Comparing Translations: The Special Educationalization of Inclusion”, conducts a comparative analysis of Nigerian and German translations of Article 24 of the UN CRPD at both the discursive and institutional levels. It scrutinizes distinctions in their discourses, characterizing the German approach as a “direct translation” and the Nigerian approach as an “indirect translation”. While Nigeria advocates for the inclusive expansion of the formal school system, Germany emphasizes joint learning for children with and without disabilities in regular schools. Both nations partially comply with Article 24, acknowledging inclusivity for disabled children but rejecting the concept of “all schools for all”. The discourses negotiate educational change around the ability–capacity expectation, addressing the participation of disabled children in regular education and the capacity of school systems to accommodate special education. Both promote the “special educationalization of inclusion”, highlighting the intersection between special education practice and the human rights paradigm. At the institutional level, the chapter unveils the myth of the inevitability of special education and the discursive strategy of decoupling for compliance.

Chapter 6, “Conclusion: The Global-Local Nexus in Human Rights Translations,” summarizes the barriers of institutional change in the context of Article 24. The author argues that ability selection in schools is the root cause of exclusion and disability-based inequity in education. Biermann concludes by stating that “however, to dismantle barriers that impede equal access and participation, the solution cannot be to deny differences in abilities or the real needs of children in hope to end their exclusion. On the contrary, the focus on different abilities and needs must be strengthened to accommodate all children living in the community” (p. 130).

“Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD in Nigeria and Germany” presents a profound and thorough analysis of the Nigerian–German discourse, unraveling the challenges each system faces in pursuing inclusivity for disabled children. Through this comparative lens, the book illuminates the intricate interplay of economic factors, cultural norms, and educational policies that shape inclusive practices. It provides a nuanced understanding of how diverse socioeconomic conditions influence the execution of inclusive education and the experiences of disabled individuals in these contrasting environments. To enhance the book’s practical utility, it could benefit from a section offering recommendations to policymakers in both countries. The absence of policy suggestions in the final chapter was notable, leaving readers anticipating the author’s insights on practical steps for achieving inclusion in the distinct realities of Nigeria

and Germany. Recommendations on collaborative efforts, funding strategies, and visionary leadership for inclusive schools, particularly considering resource limitations in Nigeria, would fortify the book's impact. Additionally, given the technical nature of the content, a glossary could enhance accessibility for both novice and expert readers. Despite this, the book excels in offering crucial implications and avenues for future research. It contributes significantly by providing a robust theoretical and conceptual framework for understanding educational systems in diverse contexts. The translational model introduced in Chapter Two and the evolutionary education ladder presented in Chapter Three offers valuable tools for examining inclusive practices at both policy and institutional levels. In a field often underexplored, *Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD In Nigeria and Germany*, pushes the field of inclusive education forward.

Author bio

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