

Julia Biermann. (2022). *Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD in Nigeria and Germany*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. ISBN: 978-0-472-05528-9

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In the international discourse on the global mandate on inclusive education, Julia Biermann's *Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UNCRPD in Nigeria and Germany* stands out as a contemporary work that sheds light on the tensions of implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in diverse geographical milieus.

Her research explores human rights and inclusion in the context of international and comparative education, with a specific interest in the global education agenda. Her work delves into the intricacies of Article 24 of the CRPD and Target 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), investigating how these elements contribute to institutional transformations within diverse educational systems. In this groundbreaking work, *Translating Human Rights in Education*, based on her 2018 doctoral thesis titled *Comparing Article 24 UN CRPD's Influence on Inclusive Education in Nigeria and Germany: Institutional Change in Educational Discourse*, Biermann meticulously scrutinizes the implementation of Article 24 in two contrasting contexts of the global South and North – Nigeria and Germany respectively. As readers journey through the intricately woven exposé of educational reforms in both countries, they become immersed in the analysis of the complex challenges and pitfalls hindering the successful implementation of Article 24 in diverse cultural contexts.

The book consists of six chapters. In the first chapter of the book, she delves into the intricacies of 'translations' – the process of transporting global treaties within a variety of local contexts. The importance of inclusive education ideals in Article 24 lies in its critical role in promoting educational equity for all learners, particularly children with disabilities. In the second chapter, Biermann introduces the analytical framework that underpins her comparative study on how Article 24 is interpreted and applied in Nigeria and Germany. She incorporates the concept of 'vernacularization,' developed by scholars Sally Engle Merry and Peggy Levitt, to elucidate the process through which global treaties are received, interpreted, and institutionalized by local actors into local contexts. This concept is crucial for comprehending the 'translation' of global treaties as a form of discourse analysis. It accentuates the process through which local policy actors interpret and incorporate the ideas encapsulated in global treaties within local institutional settings, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of this integration. This chapter is particularly important because it lays the conceptual framework of how the human rights ideals of Article 24 operate and their implications for shaping local inclusive educational policies and practices, thereby setting the stage for a thorough and nuanced discussion in the rest of the book. In subsequent chapters, Biermann meticulously explores the historical setting of educating children with disabilities in Nigeria and Germany. Notably, Nigeria's context is marked by exclusion, while Germany's history reflects a tendency toward segregation. Throughout these chapters, Biermann concentrates on the critical task of translating the overarching human rights principles elucidated in Article 24 into tangible and transformative shifts within the education systems of both Nigeria and Germany. Her examination sheds light on the challenges each country faces as it endeavors to align its educational practices with the inclusive ideals outlined in Article 24. In the Nigerian experiment, which highlights the

country's status as having one of the largest populations of out-of-school children globally, there is a detailed examination of how federal education policy actors adapt Article 24 to address issues of exclusion of children with disabilities from general education. Nigerian policymakers integrated Special Education Needs (SEN) principles into the education system, but this led to more segregation through separate special schools, highlighting the challenges in implementing inclusive education policies and balancing inclusion with specialized support for children with disabilities in Nigeria. Biermann delves into the nuanced analysis of Germany's educational landscape. In alignment with Germany's historical legacy of separation, federal education policy actors interpret Article 24 in a manner that exacerbates the segregation of children with disabilities. Within this context, the translation of Article 24 takes on a distinct character, reflecting a deficit perspective that casts children with disabilities as incapable of deriving benefits from inclusive general education. This portrayal underscores the enduring challenges and biases embedded in the German educational system, perpetuating a narrative that hinders the realization of inclusive schools for children with disabilities. In the concluding parts, Biermann delves into the challenges surrounding the implementation of Article 24 in both Nigeria and Germany, tracing these difficulties back to the institutionalization of the special education system – a longstanding Western practice of ability grouping.

As the countdown to the SDG Agenda 2030 enters its final stretch, the task of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all learners persists as a pervasive challenge worldwide. Biermann's exposition in this book not only contextualizes the provisions of Article 24 as human rights but also critically examines their role and potential in guaranteeing equitable educational opportunities for all learners. The CRPD has been defined as “the first treaty to affirm the right to inclusive education for all children and

adults with disabilities” (Kanter et al., 2010, p. 21). Biermann’s work contributes to the academic discourse on Article 24 and offers a compelling exploration of the intersection between the global mandate on inclusive education and localized educational policies and practices.

In this book, Biermann highlights the challenges of translating global treaties into different contexts, emphasizing the complexities arising from diverse sociocultural norms. She criticizes prevailing ideas tied to selective abilities and progress-oriented thinking, which hinder the transformative change envisioned by Article 24 in democratizing educational opportunities for children with disabilities. A significant challenge in implementing Article 24, as she notes, stems from the special education perspective endorsed by the Salamanca Statement of 1994. This perspective complicates the realization of inclusive education by introducing a special needs requirement for mainstreaming children with disabilities in schools. The Salamanca Statement, though initially aimed at promoting inclusive practices, inadvertently introduced a criterion that could potentially impede the seamless participation of children with disabilities in general education settings. This highlights the complexity of translating inclusive education principles into effective policies on the ground.

Unfortunately, as Biermann argues, the special education perspective obligates children with disabilities to conform to a normalized standard to qualify for mainstream education, posing a significant challenge to Article 24 implementation in local contexts.

The book's organization is another notable strength, providing a logical progression of ideas. The introductory section offers a compelling overview of the preceding sections, creating a cohesive narrative that enhances the overall clarity of the text. The incorporation of diverse cultural perspectives and viewpoints on the evolution of education in both countries enriches

the discussion, providing a more nuanced and inclusive examination of the topic.

Furthermore, the author's inclusion of current and relevant sources demonstrates a commitment to up-to-date scholarship, enhancing the credibility and relevance of the work in the rapidly evolving landscape of the global mandate on inclusive education. Overall, the strength of this book lies in its meticulous research, clear presentation, and the author's ability to position Article 24 as a pact that respects and encourages diverse cultural perspectives in developing and implementing the inclusive education mandate for children with disabilities.

A noteworthy perspective not captured in Biermann's work is the profound impact of colonialism on the implementation of Article 24 in Nigeria. Exploring the historical legacies of colonial rule could allow for a comprehensive analysis of how colonial policies and structures may have influenced the current challenges and complexities in realizing inclusive education for children with disabilities in the Nigerian context. By delving into these historical nuances, Biermann's work could offer valuable insights into the enduring effects of colonialism on education and disability policies, enriching the discourse on the intricacies of Article 24 implementation in post-colonial Nigeria. This has the potential to significantly differentiate the implementation of Article 24 between Nigeria and Germany, revealing additional challenges that postcolonial nations must consider while translating the global mandate on inclusive education in their respective contexts. For instance, would education policy actors in Nigeria take a different path if they were aware of the colonial impact of special education? This aspect warrants further exploration for a more comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors at play.

Overall, this book sheds light on the challenges faced in implementing Article 24 in the context of inclusive education in Nigeria and Germany. The book not only explores the

difficulties and pitfalls associated with these implementations but also provides readers with a contemporary perspective and an in-depth analysis of the intricate issues surrounding inclusive education reforms in both countries. In addition, this book serves as a beacon of hope and a call to action for implementing Article 24 in diverse settings for countries committed to creating inclusive educational spaces. As the author eloquently demonstrates, the journey toward inclusive education is both a moral imperative and an investment in a brighter, more compassionate future. In embracing the principles outlined in *Translating Human Rights in Education*, readers are empowered to become catalysts for change, contributing to a society where education is truly inclusive, ensuring that all learners are truly included.

References

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