

Diversifying Classrooms for Children with Special Needs Through an Inclusive Lens

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ABSTRACT

The classroom serves as a miniature of society. It is the setting where the diversity of the native community is reflected. The foundation for fostering diversity is inclusive education. Many groups, especially children with special needs, face barriers to their education. Safeguarding with traditional measures or developing distinct frameworks and schools for children with special needs could not effectively address these difficulties. Instead, a truly innovative approach is needed, one that challenges what is conventional and aims to develop instructional frameworks that can respond to and support a wide range of educational institutions. As a result, we need transition to an inclusive approach to address the learning needs of all students. This study investigates how classroom diversity among children with special needs is encouraged by inclusive education. In total, 15 studies were reviewed using the narrative review approach. In this study, we found that classroom diversity impacts the academic achievement and social skills of children with special needs. Furthermore, it enhances academic self-esteem and develops critical thinking skills among these children. It is thus vitally imperative that we adopt an inclusive approach when dealing with diversifying classrooms for children with special needs.

Keywords: *Children with Special Needs, Classroom Diversity, Education for All, Inclusive Education*

The idea of inclusive education was first outlined in the 1994 Salamanca statement and framework for special needs education. All governments have been urged to “embrace, as a matter of legislation or arrangement, the rule of comprehensive education, enlisting all children in conventional schools unless there are compelling reasons for doing anything else” (Manivannan, 2000). Inclusion is based on the belief that all children should be able to study together, regardless of their differences or disabilities. It affects all students, not only those with impairments, and other marginalized groups (Thomas, 2013; Haug, 2017). An essential tenet of inclusive education is that each pupil is an individual with distinct talents, advantages, abilities, and adaptation requirements. There should be equal access and an individual solution for students with special educational needs within the context of general education. Inclusive education affirmatively addresses

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disparities and diversity, acknowledging the importance of such differences and the learning opportunities provided by such diversity. However, in the late nineteenth century, the world was faced with a situation where education for all was far away from reality, and still today, this problem has not been resolved. Many groups, especially children with special needs, face barriers to their education. These problems could not be solved simply by preserving traditional policies or by developing separate systems and schools for children with special needs. Instead, a unique approach is needed that ages differences as normal and tries to develop education systems that could respond to and promote diversity among educational institutions. That is why inclusive education has gained a lot of credibility, especially in the last three decades. This method brings all students together in one classroom and school, regardless of their strengths and weaknesses in any area. It seeks to maximize the potential of all students, which fosters diversity among learners. India is sanctified with a rich heritage of diversity. This diversity covers culture, religion, language, climate, geography, social structure, abilities, etc. It is often wondered if children going through the current educational process will ever have the opportunity to experience and get to know the real India. Thus, school classrooms should reflect diversity, as it is in our country. Children need to grow up to recognize, experience, respect, and consider diversity. Education consists of growing up to know the environment in which we live in all its dimensions. Disability is part of India's social fabric, and its various processes and programs must include people with disabilities. A classroom that reflects the diversity of our country has the potential to nurture a future generation capable of leading the United India. A school that values diversity is inclusive. It treats students, faculty, and parents as a learning community. It assumes that in the right atmosphere, motivation, and meaningful action, all children can learn with effective instruction. Lastly, member schools base their curriculum and daily learning on the most recent pedagogical and learning-related expertise (Department of Education and Science, 2007). The objective of inclusion and how it may appear to be most directly participatory is to have a series of seamless interactions in respecting diversity (Benjamin, 2002) and a partially inclusive application of inclusion (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). Teachers are expected to "celebrate" variety and uniqueness as part of an inclusion curriculum (Slee, 2003 & Slee, 2006). Consequently, inclusive schools play a crucial role in recognizing and celebrating difference. Students in our schools come from a variety of distinct categories, including general, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, children from various minority backgrounds, children with special needs, and others. Promoting diversity is crucial, especially for pupils with special needs. Therefore, it is necessary to see education through an inclusive lens in order to meet the educational requirements of children from various backgrounds. The purpose of this article is to examine the significance and scope of inclusive education. Further, it emphasizes the importance of employing an inclusive approach to promote and safeguard the diversity of children with special educational needs in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This article addresses the role inclusive education plays in protecting and promoting diversity for children with special needs in the classroom. To achieve this purpose, the researcher employed a narrative review strategy. For the purpose of finding articles on inclusive education and classroom diversity, Google Scholar and Scopus were utilized. The investigators first collected 100 articles, depending on the scope and purpose of this study. Afterward, articles were reviewed according to the established criteria such that only papers and book chapters that addressed the diversity of children with special needs were selected. After this process, 15 articles were selected for the final review process. Out of these, 10 articles were qualitative in nature, and the remaining 5 were quantitative data-based articles.

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Thus, the facts were presented using a bottom-up approach to research. This approach is used to draw general conclusions from particular facts. Below are a final articles and chapters we selected for review:

Table 1 Articles and book chapters selected for review purpose

Author	Review Design	Reference
Barlow et al.	Qualitative	[2]
Brown et al.	Quantitative	[4]
Dash, N.	Quantitative	[5]
Djeddah et al.	Qualitative	[8]
Haug, P.	Qualitative	[9]
Lawrence et al.	Qualitative	[11]
Loreman et al.	Quantitative	[12]
Loxley, A & Thomas, G	Qualitative	[13]
Menavannan, M.	Qualitative	[16]
Ramaswamy, B.	Quantitative	[20]
Salahuddin, S.F.	Qualitative	[21]
Slee, R	Qualitative	[24] [25]
Thomas, G.	Qualitative	[28]
World Health Organization	Quantitative	[29]

Inclusive Education and Classroom Diversity

Depending on the exact context, diversity can be viewed in a variety of ways. Broadly stated, diversity refers to the presence of a large variety of occurrences. This could pertain to individuals, opinions, preferences, styles, people, etc. Regarding classrooms, diversity is recognizing that each student has distinctive experiences, strengths, and ideas. In addition to multicultural students, diverse learning styles, distinctive personalities, and the extents of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, sex, financial status, age, capacity, strict or political convictions, conflict zone differences, and other diverse beliefs, these distinctions may also exist. Diversity is the exploration and incorporation of differences to boost classroom learning. The Teacher's responsibility is to promote and preserve this diversity, which makes the classroom the ideal venue for pupils to learn priceless lessons. To ensure that every student in the classroom receives the most benefit, teachers must recognize and treat each student as an exceptional individual. This is the first step in encouraging a diverse school environment. This will provide all pupils with confidence and a sense of belonging. Therefore, teachers must be well-versed in the psychological requirements of both typical and exceptional students.

Why diversity matter in the classroom?

Every student in the classroom brings with them something new and different, including worldviews, circumstances, experiences, social environment, cultural connections, preferences, disgests, personalities, etc. To increase the effectiveness of the learning process, it is important to ensure that each student feels part of the classroom. If students do not feel they have a place or are not valued for their identity, they are less likely to be enthusiastic about participating in the class. Teachers notice a decline in participation, low self-esteem, a short frequency of attention, and a general sense of detachment from students struggling to feel involved. Teachers cannot try to delight all students in a class equally. The teacher sees a decline in interest, low self-confidence, limited ability to concentrate, and a general sense of detachment from students struggling to feel involved. Instructors cannot treat all students

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in a class as equals. The Dakar Global Education Forum recognized the urgency of responding to the needs of these learners: "... The education system must be inclusive, actively seek out children who are not enrolled and respond flexibly to the circumstances and needs of all. Students ..."

Include diversity in the classroom

Teachers want to maximize the participation of all students in the community schools of their choice and to rethink and redesign the policies, curricula, cultures, and practices of schools and learning environments so that different requirements can be met regardless of the origin or nature of these needs. They say that all students can learn and benefit from education and that schools must adapt to the physical, social and cultural needs of students rather than adapt to the needs of schools (Ramaswamy, p. 98). Say in the classroom diversity can be incorporated in different manners and it relies upon the objectives set by the educator to his/her pupils. This is anything but a solitary advance procedure, be that as it may, regardless of whether you are fusing assorted points of view into your course substance or showing pupil's social contrasts, you need to guarantee your classroom is inviting and you've made a conscious, safe condition. Proponents believe that individual differences between students are a source of richness and diversity, which should be supported through a wide and flexible range of responses.

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Inclusive education does not mean checking students with special needs into the regular classroom. We have to accept their diversity, respect their individuality, create opportunity for their participation in all activities of the school and provide support to both children and teachers so that children improve their performance. In an inclusive classroom, teachers are aware of the diversity of students and work with students to build a safe and collaborative learning environment. Teachers use multiple methods such as peer tutoring, team teaching, collaboration and consultation, curriculum adaptation and Individualized education Programme (IEP), etc. to redeem course content and provide students with heterogeneity of opportunities to share what they know. Inclusive classrooms comprehend student's pick up in different ways and have valuable perspectives to bring to the content being learned. Apart from these there are several ways through which Teachers can promote and foster diversity in the classroom. Some of them are as follows:

Understand the students: All the students in school are unique individuals, so that truth ought to be utilized to form a differing and inclusive school culture. In most cases, regular teachers tend to categorize and address children with special needs by a label. Inclusion does not accept labels of any kind. Labels create a sense of belongingness, inferiority, and stigmatization (Dash, p.70). One of the most excellent means to develop an inclusive environment within the classroom is by understanding each student. An Educator ought to take the time to recognize the qualities, issues, identity characteristics, and learning styles of the students within the classroom. Continuously summon into intellect that all students learn in an unexpected way, so by taking the time to know each pupil, it will moreover make the teaching process easier. We must also decide that diversity (ability, race, etc.) is valuable, it is not just a reality to be tolerated, accepted, and accommodated... it is a reality to be valued (York, et al., 1993 cited by Ramaswamy, p.110). Cultural background is particularly important when the language assessment devices that are currently available are considered. Ideally, a child should be assimilated with others in the self-same language community. There should be distinct norms for each language community. Unfortunately, the norm

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samples of most language tests are heterogeneous, and scores on these tests may not be valid indicators of a child's language ability.

Include Diverse Teaching Learning Materials: Inclusion means the full inclusion of children with different abilities (both gifted and disabled) in all aspects of education that other children can use and enjoy (Loreman and Deppeler, 2001). These are “normal” schools and classrooms that adapt and change to meet the needs of all children and to celebrate and appreciate differences (Dash, 21). Whenever possible, teachers should try to mix teaching materials that embody the rich qualities of the world. Occasionally include material that addresses multiple perspectives and perspectives. It reflects on material that touches on, for example, nationality, race, disability, fundamentals, different dialects, abilities, identities, age, current businesses, socio-economic aspects. Including diverse learning, the material could certainly be a path. bring diversity to the four walls of the class. Accessible and flexible curricula can be the key to creating “schools for all”. The curriculum must be flexible so that it allows for adaptation to individual needs and encourages teachers to look for solutions that can be tailored to the needs and abilities of each student (Kaur, p. In a short time, a teacher can find many different things for students.

Equal Access to Opportunities: In every school, there is a diverse background of students present. The primary responsibility of a teacher is to make arrangements for an equal chance for every student in the class. So, he can take part in and contribute to what's going on in the classroom. If a teacher perceives that some students aren't contributing as much as others, it's best to find a way to get them more involved. It might be helpful to introduce activities, lesson plans, assignments, and projects which make everyone's participation compulsory. Part of supporting diversity in the classroom is forming a space for students and educators to talk about how issues of discrimination affect them on a personal, classroom- and school-wide level. Thus, the more diversity is a topic of discussion in your school, the fewer students and teachers will hesitate to address it.

Connect with parents and community: The goal of inclusion is to ensure that all children, regardless of any individual differences they may have, are fully included in the mainstream of life. But we do not know the time frame when all children will be fully included in the mainstream of school and community (Dash, p.22). Schools are an essential part of the community and should reflect and celebrate their diversity. Teachers can communicate goals for diversity in the classroom to the student's parents. They can ask if they have any questions or concerns, and then listen. Invite them to recognize domains in the curriculum or in the school life that they feel could benefit from more of a cynosure on diversity. When students meet members of their group, they get to see examples of people who are successful in their profession from different backgrounds and may be encouraged to think about their future differently. Family adherents and community members can be vital resources-when informed, invigorated, assigned and prepared in potent ways. When guiding and leading families to work that is respectful of their child, efforts should not be spared. It is often a great challenge to get the families of the most marginalized learners involved (Kaur, p.160).

Meet Diverse Learning Needs: Diversity goes beyond just quantifiable factors like ethnicity, socio-economic status or gender. It also extends to the way that students learn in the classroom whether that is through an accelerated learning course or with supports for learning disabilities. In diverse classroom, uniform standards cannot be applicable. So, we should start working with teachers to help them to establish divergent approaches for students with different learning needs. Inclusion is the provision of services to students with

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special needs in the neighborhood schools with necessary support services and supplementary aids for both children and teachers. It means meeting the needs of all children with and without disabilities for a free and quality public education in the least restrictive and most effective environment of neighborhood schools (Dash, p.22).

Incorporate different teaching styles: Children with diverse abilities have unique needs. They need an approach that will furnish their special needs. Some students may be more visual than others, while some students may be more hands-on in terms of learning. Teachers incorporate different teaching styles to accommodate ways of learning. This not only ensures that each student is learning the material effectively, but also enlarges students' abilities. If students who primarily learn better in one specific should receive education through a different learning method. This will help them to push their limits and step outside of their comfort zones. True inclusion will not be successful unless teachers adjust their process to teaching.

Celebrate diversity: Inclusion has suffered from issues of difference, where teachers are urged to "celebrate" diversity and difference (Julie Allan, p. 65). Diversity is something to talk about and celebrate. The easiest way to bring diversity to the classroom is to recognize it and encourage students to celebrate it. There is a huge amount of diversity in one classroom. Take the opportunity to let students share their diversity with their peers. This allows others to benefit from experiences they may have never known or heard about otherwise. In inclusive classrooms, children are enriched by the opportunity to learn from each other the skills and values necessary for our community. When the right arrangements are in place, inclusion works for all disabled and disabled students in terms of positive attitudes towards each other, increased academic and social skills, and readiness to live in the community (Vandercook et al.,1998).

Encourage Divergent Perspectives: In the classroom, there will be abundant opportunities for students to come together to elucidate problems. Another great way to bring diversity into the classroom is to boost students to come up with different ways to solve the problems that they are provoked with. Encouraging different ways to solve problems allows students to come together and collectively contribute to a range of solutions. This practice also teaches students the precious lesson that there is often no one accurate way to sort out things. If students are stimulated to contribute different solutions to a problem, not only will participation increase in the whole class, but students will also feel as if their input is valuable. They will then be encouraged to challenge themselves to come up with solutions. Classroom-based research has shown that most children with a special need can learn academic skills and attain a reasonable standard in content areas (Dash, p.76).

DISCUSSION

The diversity of students appearing in today's schools is rip-roaring. When most people visualize diversity, they conceive of race and ethnicity. Schools are more racially and ethnically diverse. However, they are becoming more diverse in other ways that concern assessment personnel. In large city school systems throughout India, students speak more than 1000 different languages and dialects as their primary language. Diversity of language has invoked challenges in making instruction and assessment affordable to all students. Students penetrate school these days with a very diverse set of academic background experiences and opportunities. Within the same classroom, students often vary considerably in their academic skill development. A clear challenge for all educational professionals is the design of instruction that will accommodate this vast range of skill development. Teachers

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can design parent training programs to educate parents and encourage them to build a closer relationship with their children. Despite their diversity, parenting programs have proven effective for behavioural problems and are the treatment of choice for conduct disorder (Barlow and Underdown, 2005; Mabe et al., 2005). On the other hand, violence and abuse violence to and by children and adolescents is all too prevalent (World Health Organization, 2002). Bullying, corporal punishment and the victimization of parents by children and adolescents have now been reported worldwide. To understand child abuse, one must extrapolate the enormous cultural diversity in which children and adolescents live. There is a need for imperious attention to country-specific interventions (Djeddah et al., 2000). Thus, Educational systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take account of the wide diversity of these characteristics. The government should restructure the cultures, policies and practices in schools so that they respond to the diversity of students in the locality. It means that Indicators should reflect the diversity of gender, culture, race, and other features of the students in today's school population. We cannot minimize the role of Teaching assistants here. They are most are experienced parents who recognize and are aware of the complex and diverse needs of young people. They can transmit with pupils effectively on an academic or personal level. However, there is an altercation in the way that TAs are perceived. They do not allege to be the teacher and follow the structure of the lesson as set by the teacher, but they are proficient with collaboration to differentiate work for students to suit their educational needs and learning. All teachers must have access to the necessary support and training so that they can adequately serve the diversity of students in their classrooms. In addition to formal in-service training courses, general education teachers can expand their knowledge and expertise by consulting and supporting colleagues with experience and expertise in supporting teaching and learning resources.

CONCLUSION

In India, not only is there diversity in the classroom, but there is also diversity in religion, sects, languages, and so on. As a result, incorporating diversity into the classroom becomes extremely challenging. There are numerous challenges that impede diversity in inclusive classrooms, including (attitudinal barriers, physical barriers, social barriers, and so on). However, the development of inclusive education systems is critical to improving educational quality and recognizing the human rights of all children. Inclusive education can raise the quality bar across education systems by implementing solutions that accommodate to all students' naturally various learning styles while also meeting the special learning demands of select students. They also serve to target and include children from other underprivileged groups, so ensuring inclusion for all. As a result, there is a need to change the will and encourage all forms of variety so that everyone can benefit from a diversified cultural and educational system.

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Conflict of Interest

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