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## Diversity And Inclusion Management: A Focus On Teachers' Development

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**ABSTRACT:** "If a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference They are the father, The mother and the teacher"-----  
**A.P.J.AbdulKalam.**([https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/a\\_p\\_j\\_abdul\\_kalam\\_178502](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/a_p_j_abdul_kalam_178502))

Student diversity is an issue worth addressing in education practices across countries. The concept of inclusion is based on the principle of providing equitable access to education and supporting tolerance to all. It embraces student diversity. Inclusive education and related practices are currently crucial for all policy makers, school boards, administrators, teachers, parents and students. The term inclusion refers to a wide range of human diversity with respects to ability, language, age, gender and other forms of human differences. In an inclusive classroom teachers should be aware of the diversity of students and work with students to create a collaborative learning environment. But there are some concerns that the policy of inclusion is difficult to be implemented because teachers are not sufficiently well-trained and prepared to maintain student diversity in inclusive ways. Inclusion involves the ways in which teachers respond to individual differences during teaching, the choices they make regarding delivery of specialist knowledge in the classroom. It is therefore important to understand the factors associated with teachers' ability and willingness to accommodate with students diversity in the classroom as to facilitate inclusion. The present article concerns the factors associated with successful implementation of inclusive practices. More specifically, this article considers teachers' competencies concerning the accommodation with students' diversity.

**KEYWORDS:** Diversity, Inclusive Education, Teachers' Development.

**INTRODUCTION:** " The desire for our children's well -being has always being the most universally cherished aspiration off mankind". ----- (Kofi Annan in the *We the Children*, UNICEF, June 2001 as cited in Kumar,2014,p.126).

Inclusive education is a philosophy based on the principle of quality education for all without any sort of discrimination. It encompasses all children, focusing particularly on children from marginalized section, such as: children from socio-culturally vulnerable group and children with special educational needs. The journey of inclusive education begins with the Salamanca Statement (1994). This statement proclaimed that:

- ❖ Every child has a fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.
- ❖ Every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.
- ❖ Education system should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide diversity of these characteristics and needs.
- ❖ Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them within a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs.
- ❖ Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

(Source: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000098427>- Salamanca statement and Framework of Action on Special Needs Education, p. viii-ix)

Inclusive education is not merely a reform of special education, rather it is an attempt to meet the unique needs of every child. It is aimed at eliminating exclusion and lack of responses to students' diversity. Therefore, inclusive education is essential to achieve high quality education for all learners and development of an inclusive society.

### CONCEPT OF STUDENT DIVERSITY:

In our increasingly diverse and multicultural society, it has become imperative that a teacher should have competencies in classroom management strategies. Students' diversity means collective differences among students. Differences in culture, intellectual abilities, language, socio-economic conditions, physical appearance etc. Diversity in classroom management generates a positive inclination to inclusivity by creating a sense of belongingness. The concept of diversity subsumes the sections that are identified as marginalised. It fosters open-mindedness, understanding, compassion and inclusiveness among students. Therefore, diversity should be appreciating and valuing. Teachers must provide students with a classroom environment that is conducive to learning diversity.

**DIMENSIONS OF STUDENTS DIVERSITY:** Diversity is about welcoming everyone by offering mutual solidarity and support. It has many dimensions namely:

1. Social
2. Economic
3. Linguistic
4. Technological
5. Intellectual

(Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/laralundang/diversity-of-learners-seminar-presentation>)

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION:** Classroom is a multidimensional section of society where diversity exists. It plays an important role in students' experiences and engagement.

It is a universal understanding that students of any classroom will have varying capabilities and abilities. If a classroom is inclusive it means that it understands and accepts diversity. The principle of inclusion not only accepts diversity but also embodies it so that each student can achieve their full capabilities. The concept of inclusive education based on the principle of equality and equity regardless of any perceived differences. To meet the diverse needs of the learners and to make educational institutions more learning friendly it requires to equip the teachers with an integrated knowledge of diverse classroom management. In this backdrop an attempt has been made to discuss the importance of teachers' professional development to address and manage students' diversity in the classroom.

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** By reviewing the related literature the research can avoid repetition of works. This search of information not only helps the research to avoid useless problem areas, but also gives the researcher an understanding regarding the research methodology. Under this section, the studies relevant for the present research problem have been arranged and discussed from both the Indian and global perspectives.

Hara & Pritchard (2008) conducted a study to find out the challenges diversity and scope for professional development of teachers educators. Results of the study concluded that the major factor contributing to the success in maintaining diversity are spirit of unity, sense of purpose, administrative support and scope for sharing of knowledge.

Jelas (2010) conducted a study to find out a new paradigm for the preparation of teachers particularly in the Malaysian context. Results of the study revealed that teacher training courses should be reformed at all levels to develop a 'whole faculty approach' in teacher education curriculum.

Iprgrave (2011) stated that, school atmosphere is a place where a pupil should have a sense of belonging where they can 'tap their faith performatively' both to develop their own learning and to contribute to the learning of others.

Kumar(2014) concluded that, inclusive classrooms and schools means a place where diversity among learners is appreciated and considered as a learning resource rather than a problem; where children from diverse background are inspired for what they are and can feel safe enough to express whatever they know without fear or discrimination ; and where the curriculum, teaching-learning methods and materials are culturally responsive to meet the individual learning needs and interests of children from different backgrounds. (p.134).

Nourbakhsh(2015) conducted a study on the " education policy and diversity accommodation in India". The study suggests that, educational policies should be developed on the basis of development, national culture and traditional spirit. It was also suggested that, the factors of religion, language, ethnic, rural and urban division should be considered as an essential ingredients in the process of policy formation.

Jackson &Everington (2016) argued that, quality teacher education programme can assist in developing appropriate skills and attitudes to maintain impartial approach in an inclusive classroom.

Sabharwal&Malish (2017) reported few challenges towards inclusive education practices. These challenges are as follows:

1. Wide gap between policies for higher education expansion and institutional capacity to respond to increasing student diversity.
2. Prejudices and stereotyped attitudes etc.

The study further suggested that, institutional leaders and policy makers need to understand the dynamics of growing diversity and recognize diversity as an asset rather than a problem.

Ineke,et.al (2018). Conducted a study on " Promoting Inclusive Education: The Role of Teachers' Competence and Attitudes".Results of the study suggested that teachers' competence and positive attitude towards inclusion are essential for an equitable education system.

Chem (2018) conducted a study to explore the diversity within the classroom. Results of the study suggested that, diversity enriches the classroom, educational outcomes and retention of the students.

Arani(2019) conducted a study to experience the lives of teachers in diverse classroom. The study argued that, teachers' need to be equipped with relevant knowledge, capabilities, values and skills in order to understand diversity issues, perspectives and practices. The study also suggested that, responsive teacher education programme should integrate into the curriculum. Teachers should be equipped with relevant technologies and innovative teaching skills in order to anticipation in handling diversity in the classroom.

Dawa(2020) conducted a study to explore the role of teacher in diversity management in the classroom. The study suggested that, the school need to maintain multicultural environment respecting the individual differences of the students. The study also suggested that, students' ideas, opinions and views need to respect in the classroom.

**RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY:** The above section gives an idea about the studies that are conducted in this field. It contains the studies related to different aspects of classroom diversity with respect to inclusive education. Diversity in the classroom can serve as a catalyst for the development of creativity. This section has given enough indication that the importance of studying student diversity is very widely accepted; but

researches in the field of student diversity in relation with teachers' professional development are very merger. This paper aims to respond the issues related to inclusive classroom management and teachers' professional development.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

1. To develop a general framework for the several issues related with student diversity and inclusive education.
2. To argue for a new paradigm for the preparation of teachers to meet the diversity of the learning needs in an inclusive classroom.
3. To think about various reflective practices as a means for professional development of teachers in responding to diversity.

### **CHALLENGES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES:**

Inclusive Education model was propagated many years ago. Unfortunately, our education system is not able to implement it. In fact, in recent decades various studies have revealed that in the classroom in contemporary academic institutions in India, students are subject to various forms of discrimination. Recognizing the complexity of this issue RTE Act 2009, NCF 2005, NCFTE, 2009 and in several government reports an attempt has been made to address the issue. Many factors related with teaching environment that may impact the extent to which inclusive practice can be successfully implemented. Some specific challenges in this regard are as follows:

1. Recognizing the increasing diverse needs of the learners.
2. Developing and maintaining support systems for diverse learners.
3. Absence of teachers' personal and professional beliefs in diversity management.
4. Maintaining teachers' quality in the teacher workforce.
5. Diversity implementation challenges.
6. Absence of inclusive practices.
7. Developing a reinforcing and welcoming classroom environment.
8. Lack of acceptance of differences.
9. Absence of teacher preparedness for inclusive education.
10. Teachers' lack of competency in communication skills and multi disciplinary works.

Based on the above section, it can be concluded that teachers' lack of competency in managing inclusive classroom is a serious problem as it makes them feel negative towards inclusive education. To overcome this problem orientation in inclusive education is necessary. Teacher training programmes should be modified in order to inculcate the concept of student diversity among teachers.

**DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVE TEACHING:** Inclusive education is the most appropriate means of responding to student diversity. Teachers can play pivotal role in inclusive education. Their holistic support and focused involvement are necessary for quality learning. There are various ways that a teacher can use to maintain and manage diversity in the classroom. These are as follows:

1. Biasness and stereotypes should be avoided.
2. Treat each student as an individual.
3. Introduce the concept of diversity in the classroom.
4. Become more informed about child pedagogy and student diversity.
5. Give assignments that recognize students' diverse needs.
6. Adopt a culturally responsive approach for all students in the classroom.
7. A Teacher should encourage acceptance and prepare students to thrive in an exponentially diverse world.
8. Students should feel appreciated by and comfortable with the teachers.
9. Incorporate diversity in to the lesson plan.
10. Teachers' should act as a facilitator and encourage students' freedom and flexibility.
11. Teachers' should adopt flexible teaching strategies responsive to different perspectives.
12. Scope for meaningful involvement and equal access to education for all students.
13. Engaging issues of diversity in the curriculum.
14. Students' learning needs should be addressed in a timely way to ensure discovery learning.

15. Monitor individual student growth on the basis of each student level's of achievement.
16. Ability grouping and guidance programmes.
17. Individualized and adaptive instruction should be provided to the students.
18. Stimulating learning environment should be provided.
19. The work of teaching should be integrative, flexible and disciplinary.
20. Teachers should be well trained regarding various teaching techniques for mixed abilities classes.
21. Teachers need to be knowledgeable about the resources and the support system which are available in their institutions.
22. Induction programmes for the teachers should be designed to take into account the complex issues concerning with student diversity.

**CONCLUSION:**The education sector in India has experienced an unprecedented expansion in recent decades. This expansion is accompanied by a massive growth in student diversity. Although there are several constitutional provisions, it can be argued that there is a wide gap between policies and institutional capacity to promote student diversity. The present study has an implication for all the stakeholders ( teachers, students, parents, educational administrators). As we all know that " Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man".....Swami Vivekananda. This manifestation only can achieved by an integral educational approach. Finally, it can be concluded that diversity is a means of achieving the ultimate goal of education. It actively promote inclusiveness. Finally, we have understand that inclusion is a philosophy which is situated in the context of diversity. It is diversity that can generate a positive inclination to inclusivity by fostering a feeling of oneness in each of the members of a pluralistic society.

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