

# Managing an Inclusive Learning Environment Through Effective Management of Diverse Learners in India

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## ABSTRACT

Inclusion in education is an important mechanism to ensure that all students, regardless of their diverse backgrounds and abilities, have equal access to quality education. This paper explores the complexities of managing diverse students and creating inclusive learning environments, emphasizing the importance of appropriate strategies for successful inclusion. The primary objectives include identifying barriers to inclusive education, assessing the effects of individualized teaching, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and collaboration, and exploring the role of educators and technology in fostering inclusion. The findings highlight how inclusive education benefits all children via increased social engagement, good classroom relationships, and academic performance. However, successful implementation requires competent teachers, ongoing professional development, and supportive policies. While the process may be challenging, this essay contends that inclusive education ultimately fosters a more cooperative and accepting learning environment for all students. Furthermore, it represents a unique

opportunity to enhance the educational experience of every individual student.

**Keywords:** Diverse Learners, Inclusion, Learning Environment, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

## INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a defining characteristic of global classrooms in today's educational landscape. Students come from diverse cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and socio-economic backgrounds, bringing unique perspectives and challenges to the learning environment. Inclusion is the key to ensuring that all students, regardless of their differences, have equal access to education and are given the chance to succeed. Managing diverse students and creating an inclusive learning environment is a critical responsibility of educators, requiring deliberate strategies and thoughtful planning for successful inclusive education. The concept of the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is based on the principles set forth by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 94-142, which is also referred to as the Education for All Children with Disabilities Act. LRE refers to the practice of educating students with disabilities alongside their non-

disabled peers. Our aim is to provide these students with an opportunity to learn and engage with their peers in a regular educational setting, rather than being segregated in separate classrooms or schools. Inclusion in education should not be seen as merely integrating students with diverse needs into mainstream classrooms as passive participants. Instead, it involves recognizing that all students—whether they have disabilities, are academically gifted, or are emerging bilinguals—have unique needs and strengths. True inclusion means creating classrooms that are supportive, engaging, and conducive to the development of every student. It's about moving beyond mere tolerance to actively valuing and engaging all learners, ensuring that they feel they belong and have the opportunity to succeed. When done correctly, inclusion can positively impact students' social, emotional, and academic growth, while neglecting it can lead to long-term negative consequences.

The beneficial effects of inclusion in education are not just attained by integrating children with various needs, such as general education students, children with disabilities, academically exceptional students, and emerging bilinguals, into the same classroom. Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) suggests that the effectiveness of integration relies on the promotion of equal status among groups, the establishment of shared objectives, the encouragement of collaboration, and the provision of support from authorities. Although there are commonalities in the attempts to diminish social prejudices and promote the inclusion of different learners, it is crucial to acknowledge that children may not see disparities in the same manner as adults. Contrary to adults, who possess comprehension of terms such as "general education," "disability," or "gifted," adolescents often establish their own social environment with distinct methods of categorizing others, which may not

correspond with the way adults see them. This emphasizes the need for a change in how adults see things. Hence, the establishment of a genuinely inclusive setting needs more than mere physical closeness; it entails nurturing a school atmosphere that esteems equity, collaboration, and reciprocal regard.

Teachers are pivotal in shaping both the adherence to societal rules and the social dynamics within the classroom. By effectively balancing authoritative guidance with the facilitation of student autonomy, teachers can create a classroom environment that supports students' social adaptation and aligns with their developmental needs, fostering a peer culture that is both structured and responsive to individual differences. (Farmer, T. W., et.al 2011)

Enshrined in Indian laws including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016, the National Policy on Education, 1986 and the Free and Compulsory Education of Children Act, 2009, inclusion of students with diverse needs in the general education classroom is a fundamental right. We consider the management of social dynamics, incorporating relevant restrictions and a person-in-context of developmental points of view, to be an essential component in promoting such inclusion.

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the difficulties for managing diverse learners in inclusive classrooms.
2. To identify effective strategies for creating an inclusive learning environment that meets the needs of all students.
3. To discuss the role of educators, policies, and technologies in fostering successful inclusion.
4. To analyze the impact of inclusive practices on student outcomes and overall classroom dynamics.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The management of various learners and the learning environment for inclusion are reviewed in this descriptive study. A comprehensive review of scholarly publications, books, journals, and other academic sources is used to better understand the issue. The study uses a qualitative method to collect and analyze evolved learner management knowledge, theories, and practices in inclusive educational contexts. To give a complete review of inclusion practices and identify effective inclusion methods, this approach was adopted. A comprehensive literature analysis explores successful ways for managing different learners in inclusive educational environments.

## **THE REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

**James P. Burns & James D. Allen (1998)**

Find that effective inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms requires tailored instructional accommodations and classroom management strategies, which benefit students with disabilities and their typical peers. Inclusive education nurtures empathy and social competence in all students, emphasizing the vital role of teacher preparedness in building a successful, inclusive environment.

**Spooner, Algozzine, Wood, and Hicks (2010)** underscored the critical need for future research in the field of inclusive teacher preparation, particularly focusing on the processes and methodologies involved in training high-quality teachers. They argue that a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes "high quality" in teaching is essential, as well as how this concept can be effectively translated into practical pedagogical strategies. This research could provide valuable insights into the best practices for developing teachers who are not only well-prepared to handle diverse classroom environments but also skilled in

applying evidence-based teaching methods that foster inclusivity and promote the success of all students, regardless of their individual needs or backgrounds. The authors suggest that by investigating these areas, the education field can better prepare future teachers to meet the demands of increasingly diverse and inclusive educational settings.

Teachers use several ways to facilitate students' understanding of their own learning profiles, as well as to foster diversity, complementary skill sets, knowledge, and respect for their peers' experiences (Katz, J 2012).

**Yoon & Bauman (2014)** agree that instructors play a crucial role in creating socially inclusive classrooms and highlight the significance of teacher professional development in attaining this objective. Research continually emphasizes the crucial role that adults, especially teachers, play in the social development of children. Teachers, like other significant people in a child's life, have the responsibility of socializing children in accordance with society standards and expectations on appropriate behavior. This highlights the need of teachers receiving continuous professional development in order to successfully cultivate an inclusive and supportive classroom atmosphere.

**Lane, K. L. et al. (2015)** have highlighted the significance of implementing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) that focus on utilizing evidence-based practices tailored to address the diverse academic, behavioural, and social needs of all students in general education classrooms. As these MTSS initiatives progress, it is critical to help teachers comprehend the social experiences of learners with diverse needs and establish inclusive classroom environments that foster the engagement of all students within the peer community.

Teachers often use class meetings and other methods to encourage student participation and the sharing of diverse perspectives to

create a positive learning community that balances individual rights with the collective good. Recently, there has been an expansion of this method to include programming that integrates adaptive dialectical behaviour therapy skills and mental health literacy. This expansion has further improved the efficacy of the model in fostering inclusion and wellness in the classroom (Katz, J.2018)

**In 2019, Nishina, A., Lewis, J. A., et al** explored in the setting of Inclusive school environments can significantly enhance psychological and social adjustment, as well as learning outcomes for students, particularly in the context of increasing ethnic diversity. Promoting social competence and prosocial behaviors among all students is essential for building an inclusive atmosphere. By focusing on these areas, schools can not only improve the individual functioning of students but also create a more inclusive environment that prepares them to navigate diverse educational, community, and workplace settings. Developing the ability to form friendships across ethnic lines equips students with vital skills for future success.

Individuals who engage more deeply with the educational system tend to have more positive attitudes toward inclusion, recognizing its benefits and the progress it can bring to students. Students with special educational needs (SEN) are required to be included in regular classrooms according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In contrast, those who only participate in schooling may only see inclusion in terms of its most noticeable aspect. However, placing students with SEN in mainstream schools based on legal rights does not necessarily lead to positive attitudes towards inclusion (Krischler, M., Powell, J. J., & Pit-Ten Cate, I. M. (2019).

The BASE model includes three integrated classroom management approaches: Competence Enhancement Behavior Management, Academic Engagement

Enhancement, and Social Dynamics Management. This model aims to create a positive classroom climate that promotes productive academic engagement, fosters the development of new competencies, and leverages peer dynamics to enhance social relationships. By concentrating on shared responsibility, proactive behaviour management, and understanding peer interactions, the BASE model supports students' academic and social growth within an inclusive environment (Farmer, T. W., Hamm, J. V., Lee, D., & Sterrett, B. (2020).

Assessing and evaluating diversity initiatives is crucial for ensuring their effectiveness and sustainability. By making it an ongoing process, institutions can continuously improve their approaches, adapt to changing needs, and maintain accountability. This ensures that diversity initiatives not only meet immediate goals but also foster long-term cultural change within the educational environment. Regular assessments help identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement, promoting a more inclusive and equitable atmosphere (Maki, 2023) & ASSEFA, E. A., & ZENEBE, C. K. (2024).

### **Plan and Strategies:**

Creating an inclusive classroom environment requires a well-structured plan and the implementation of evidence-based strategies. Below are the key components:

**Differentiated Instruction:** This approach involves customizing teaching methods, materials, and assessments to address the diverse needs of students. Differentiated instruction enables educators to offer multiple pathways for students to engage with the content, ensuring that all learners can access the curriculum at their individual levels.

**1. Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** UDL is a framework that emphasizes the design of flexible learning environments that can accommodate the varied needs of all students. It involves providing multiple

means of representation, engagement, and expression to support diverse learning styles.

**2. Collaborative Learning for inclusion:**

Promoting collaborative learning through group activities, peer tutoring, and cooperative projects fosters a strong sense of community within the classroom. It allows students to learn from one another and develop social skills that are essential for inclusion.

- **Collaborative Work:** Develop tasks that need students to cooperate and work together. Engaging in collaborative work facilitates the development of interpersonal connections among students and enables them to acquire knowledge from one another.
  - **Integrated Activities:** Whenever feasible, include pupils in collective endeavors while avoiding their isolation. Ensure that resources and information are made available to all students while being customized to suit their individual abilities.
  - **Peer Tutoring/Training:** Provide instruction to students on the principles of successful communication and inclusive conduct. Offer advice on how to engage with peers who may possess diverse requirements or methods of communication.
  - **Subtle assistance:** Employ assistance techniques that are inconspicuous and easily integrate with typical classroom activities. This technique enables pupils to preserve their dignity and self-assurance.
  - **Consistent communication:** Foster consistent and transparent communication with parents and caregivers on their child's need and growth. Comprehend their viewpoints and favored modes of communication.
- 3. Behavior Management:** Effective behavior management strategies are crucial in an inclusive classroom. This

includes setting clear expectations, using positive reinforcement, and implementing culturally responsive discipline practices to maintain a respectful and supportive learning environment.

**4. Uses of Assistive Technology:** Assistive devices and software can significantly enhance accessibility, enabling students to fully participate in classroom activities and engage with the curriculum more effectively.

**5. Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Continuous professional development is essential for educators to stay informed about best practices in inclusive education. Training programs should focus on cultural competence, differentiated instruction, and the use of technology to support diverse learners.

Establishing regularity and organization, fostering social engagement among students, and working together with others are crucial for cultivating an inclusive classroom setting. Below is a comprehensive analysis of the most successful methods for implementing these strategies:

➤ **Build a regular and organized framework**

Create a consistent daily plan that students can rely on. To ensure sustained interest, it is important to diversify the activities while maintaining a consistent framework. Notify students in advance when there is a need to communicate changes to routines. Utilize visual aids such as social tales or visual timetables to facilitate student understanding of scheduled events.

➤ **Promote and direct the acquisition of knowledge**

**Real-time Feedback:** Provide valuable feedback while the learning is taking place. Gradually decrease this assistance as kids gain greater autonomy.

**Strengths-Based Support:** Acknowledge and commemorate the talents and



accomplishments of pupils. Demonstrate unwavering assistance and motivation to enhance their self-assurance.

Empower students by providing them the ability to exercise choice and exert control over their educational experience, enabling them to make decisions and articulate their viewpoints. It fosters a feeling of ownership in regards to their education and promotes self-reliance.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Research indicates that inclusive education benefits all students, not just those with disabilities or other special needs. When implemented effectively, inclusive practices lead to improved academic performance, better social interactions, and a more positive classroom climate. However, the success of inclusion depends on several factors:

- 1. Teacher Preparedness:** Teachers who are well-prepared and trained in inclusive practices are more likely to succeed in managing diverse classrooms. Professional development and access to resources are key to building teacher confidence and competence in this area.
- 2. Student Engagement:** Inclusive classrooms that employ differentiated instruction and UDL strategies tend to have higher levels of student engagement. When students feel that their needs are being met, they are more motivated to participate and succeed.
- 3. Challenges in Implementation:** These include large class sizes, limited resources, and the need for ongoing support and training for teachers. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from school administrators, policymakers, and the broader educational community.
- 4. Impact on Classroom Dynamics:** Inclusion positively influences classroom dynamics by fostering a culture of respect, empathy, and collaboration. Students

develop an understanding and respect for diversity, as well as the ability to collaborate effectively, therefore equipping them for a multicultural society outside of the educational setting.

The article highlights the significant challenges and opportunities associated with the inclusion of students with special needs into mainstream classrooms. Key findings include:

- 1. Diverse Classroom Management:** Teachers face the challenge of managing increasingly diverse classrooms, particularly when integrating students with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, and mild intellectual disabilities. Efficient classroom management and teaching practices are essential for creating an inclusive environment that promotes the success of all students.
- 2. Instructional Accommodations:** The use of specific instructional accommodations is essential for helping students with special needs process information more effectively. Strategies such as providing visual aids, breaking down tasks, and teaching organizational skills are shown to improve learning outcomes for these students.
- 3. Social Skills Development:** The role of social skills development is important aspect for students with special needs. The evidence indicates that strategies such as peer tutoring, self-monitoring, and positive reinforcement are effective in helping these students integrate into mainstream classrooms. These strategies not only aid in their successful inclusion but also enhance their ability to interact positively with their peers, fostering a more supportive and inclusive educational environment.
- 4. Mutual Benefits of Inclusion:** Inclusive education benefits both children with special needs and their peers in

mainstream classrooms. When mainstream students participate in inclusive settings, they develop empathy, improve social skills, and gain a deeper appreciation for diversity. These experiences help them become more understanding and respectful people. The mutual benefits of inclusive education underscore its importance, as it creates a learning environment where all students, regardless of their ability, can thrive together.

## CONCLUSION

Managing diverse learners and creating an inclusive learning environment is both a challenge and an opportunity for educators. By adopting strategies such as differentiated instruction, UDL, collaborative learning, and effective behavior management, teachers can create classrooms where all students feel valued and supported. The role of teacher training, assistive technology, and supportive policies cannot be overstated in achieving successful inclusion. Ultimately, inclusive education improves the educational experience for all children, not just those with special needs. As schools continue to embrace diversity, the commitment to inclusion must remain at the forefront of educational practice.

It also involves training and redefining the roles of special educators, counsellors, school psychologists, and other professionals to serve as intervention specialists. These specialists would assess the functioning of the classroom ecology and assist teachers in adapting supports and strategies that are responsive to the needs of all students, as well as the broader classroom collective (Farmer, et al., 2016). The ITEP (Integrated Teacher Education Program) and I-SITEP (Integrated Special Teacher Education Program) are initiatives launched by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI). These

two esteemed organizations have come together to enhance teacher education in India. The programs aim to prepare teachers for inclusive classrooms by integrating general and special education training, ensuring that educators are equipped to address the diverse needs of all students. While these changes in training and support may require time, efforts in this direction will empower teachers and school personnel to harness the potential of social dynamics management. This will ultimately support including learners with diverse needs and foster positive educational environments for all students.

## Declaration by Authors

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