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### Inclusive education: Foundation of happy community

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**Abstract:** Every individual is born unique, possessing distinct abilities and potential. Education, as a fundamental human right, forms the cornerstone of a balanced, stable, healthy, and harmonious society. It empowers individuals, strengthens communities, and nurtures the values necessary for collective progress. Recognizing its significance, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act, 2009) was enacted by the Government of India to ensure equitable access to quality education for all children. Inclusive education envisions a system where every learner—irrespective of socio-economic background, gender, ability, or cultural differences—is welcomed into regular schools without discrimination. It promotes an educational environment rooted in equity, diversity, mutual respect, trust, and empathy. Such an environment not only supports academic growth but also nurtures emotional intelligence, positive attitudes, social skills, and a spirit of cooperation. By valuing each learner's individuality, inclusive education enables students to realize their dreams and contribute meaningfully to society. An inclusive society is built when all its members are given equal opportunities to participate in civic, social, economic, and political life at local, national, and global levels. A truly happy society is one where people feel respected, valued, and trusted, and where their basic needs are met with dignity. Education plays a transformative role in achieving this vision. It expands human horizons, empowers marginalized and differently-abled individuals, and provides the tools necessary for self-reliance and social participation. Quality inclusive education, therefore, serves as the foundation of a dynamic, equitable, and compassionate society. As Nelson Mandela wisely stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." By embracing inclusive education, we take a meaningful step toward building a world that is not only educated, but also just, peaceful, and truly happy.

**Keywords:** Education, RTE Act, Inclusive education, Happiness, Happy society.

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**Introduction:** India is a land of vibrant diversity. Its richness lies not only in its geography but also in the remarkable differences among its people—language, religion, caste, creed, gender, tribe, culture, physical and mental abilities, income, education, occupation, family background, and socio-economic conditions. Stark contrasts exist between rural and urban populations, rich and poor, literate and illiterate, skilled and unskilled workers, as well as among majority and minority communities, including tribal groups and other socially and economically marginalized sections. Such diversity, while a source of strength, may also generate differences in opinion and social tension if not nurtured thoughtfully. The ideal of “unity in diversity” therefore signifies diversity without fragmentation and unity without uniformity. In the contemporary era, rapid advancements in science and technology, along with globalization, liberalization, privatization, and digitization, have transformed individual and social life. Worldwide competition now influences nearly every sphere of human existence. In this intense race for success, individuals strive to secure better opportunities and greater material comfort. However, this pursuit has often complicated life, weakening bonds of love, trust, empathy, and mutual respect. Although social media has connected people virtually across the globe, many experience loneliness, stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. Lifestyle-related health problems and emotional distress have become increasingly common.

Happiness, therefore, assumes central importance in both individual and societal well-being. It is a state of emotional fulfilment and life satisfaction. As described by psychologists, happiness involves frequent positive emotions, infrequent negative emotions, and a general sense of satisfaction with life. Happy individuals tend to display positive attitudes, better work performance, stronger relationships, resilience in stressful situations, and higher levels of self-regulation. A society that ignores the happiness of its citizens cannot function harmoniously. Happiness and success are deeply interconnected—each reinforcing the other in a continuous cycle of growth and achievement. Inclusion plays a vital role in fostering such happiness. Inclusion exists when traditionally marginalized individuals and groups experience a sense of belonging and are empowered to participate fully and meaningfully in society. Every individual is born with immense potential, and education serves as the most powerful means to nurture and develop these capabilities. A society cannot flourish if large segments of its population remain excluded. Thus, inclusive education has emerged globally as a pressing necessity.

Inclusive education ensures that all learners—regardless of background, ability, or circumstance—learn together in supportive and welcoming environments. It provides equitable learning opportunities for those historically excluded from mainstream systems. In India, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act, 2009) establishes a legal framework guaranteeing free and compulsory education for all children, with special emphasis on children with disabilities under Section 3(2). Further strengthening this vision, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) underscores equity and inclusion by advocating structural reforms, curriculum modifications, infrastructural support, and inclusive pedagogical practices. These progressive measures align closely with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. However, policies alone are insufficient without sincere implementation and public awareness. To build a truly inclusive and happy society, it is essential to cultivate positive attitudes toward diversity and recognize inclusion as a shared responsibility.



Education, therefore, is not merely a means of acquiring knowledge but a transformative force that shapes compassionate individuals and cohesive societies. By embracing inclusive education in spirit and practice, India can strengthen its unity in diversity and move toward the realization of a just, equitable, and happy society.

### **Need for the Study**

The transformation of any society into a progressive and humane one depends upon both quantitative expansion and qualitative improvement in education. Quantity without quality is ineffective, and quality without adequate reach fails to create widespread impact. Therefore, a balanced integration of both is essential for meaningful social development. Inclusive education plays a pivotal role in ensuring quality in education. True quality can only be achieved when equal educational opportunities are accessible to every child, regardless of their abilities, background, or diversity. Likewise, the universalization of education cannot be realized without inclusion. Inclusive education broadens access to formal institutions and ensures that learners—both abled and differently abled—are empowered to participate productively in economic and social life. Inclusion is not merely a policy; it is a philosophy that demands an inclusive society, inclusive schools, inclusive teachers, and an inclusive curriculum. When diversity is respected and nurtured, education becomes a powerful instrument of social equity and justice. Moreover, education is deeply connected with happiness and well-being. A sound education system fosters holistic growth in students—intellectual, emotional, social, and moral. Educated individuals who are empathetic and socially sensitive contribute to building a positive and harmonious society. A happy society reflects equity, fairness, resilience, and collective well-being. Such a society is characterized by a high quality of life, where physical, mental, social, economic, and environmental dimensions are balanced and integrated within a peaceful framework. Happiness at the individual level strengthens families, which in turn strengthens communities and ultimately the nation. Its influence transcends boundaries, contributing to a more equitable and compassionate world.

Furthermore, promoting happiness through inclusive and quality education helps prevent depression, anxiety, and other psychological challenges. By nurturing well-being alongside academic achievement, education becomes not only a means of knowledge acquisition but also a pathway to a fulfilled, balanced, and meaningful life.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Inclusive education and happiness in schooling have increasingly become central themes in contemporary educational discourse. Scholars across the globe have emphasized that education must not only impart knowledge but also cultivate equity, well-being, and social harmony. Thomas and Vaughan (2004) conceptualized inclusive education as a commitment to valuing all children equally. According to them, inclusion ensures that every learner, irrespective of ability or background, actively participates in educational processes and is prepared to take a meaningful role in adult social life. Their perspective highlights inclusion as both a moral imperative and a social necessity. Similarly, Briggs (2004) described inclusive education as a transformative instrument for overall school improvement. He emphasized that inclusion enhances not only academic performance but also strengthens social relationships, peer acceptance, and collaborative learning environments. This broader understanding positions inclusion as a



strategy for holistic school reform. Addressing the concept of diversity, Williams, D. A. (2013) asserted that diversity encompasses both individual uniqueness and shared human characteristics. Diversity, therefore, is not merely demographic variation but a dynamic interaction of differences and similarities that enrich collective growth. Expanding on this idea, Vyas, D. P. (2021) emphasized the need to protect and nurture diversity through fairness, mutual respect, and non-judgmental attitudes. He argued that educational environments that promote cooperation and care foster intellectual strength and innovation through synergy. Such climates attract diverse talents and cultivate creativity grounded in inclusivity. The relationship between education and happiness has also gained scholarly attention. Kallova, N. (2021) proposed that happiness is not merely an outcome but a legitimate aim of education. She suggested that schooling should nurture individuals who not only think and behave ethically but also experience positive emotions and psychological well-being. In the same vein, Blackstone, T. and Rensselaer, K. V. (2021) found a significant correlation between education and happiness, indicating that enriched educational experiences contribute to higher levels of life satisfaction and emotional balance. Focusing specifically on inclusive settings, Yousif, N. B. A. et al. (2021) reported a positive correlation between inclusive education, psychological adjustment, and social interaction. Their study concluded that effective inclusive practices significantly enhance the social and emotional adaptation of students with hearing impairments, reinforcing the psychological benefits of inclusive schooling. However, contrasting findings were presented by Zakaria, N. A. (2017), who observed no significant gender-based differences in self-concept levels among students in inclusive settings. Furthermore, the study found no substantial relationship between the duration of exposure to inclusive education and students' self-concept, suggesting that additional factors may influence personal development outcomes.

## Research Gaps

The review of related literature reveals that although considerable research has been conducted on inclusive education and, separately, on happiness and well-being, limited studies have explored the interrelationship between inclusive education and happiness in an integrated manner. Particularly in the Indian context, empirical investigations examining how inclusive educational practices influence students' happiness and overall well-being remain scarce. Even at the international level, studies directly linking inclusive educational environments with the development of happiness as an educational outcome are relatively limited. Most existing research focuses primarily on academic achievement, social adjustment, or psychological adaptation within inclusive settings. While these dimensions are important, the broader construct of happiness—encompassing emotional well-being, life satisfaction, and positive functioning—has not been adequately examined as a central outcome of inclusive education.

Happiness is universally desired and is increasingly recognized as a fundamental goal of human life. Happy individuals contribute to harmonious families, productive communities, and resilient societies. Therefore, promoting happiness is not only beneficial at the personal level but also essential for social development and national progress.

In this context, the present study seeks to bridge the identified gap by examining the connection between inclusive education and happiness. By doing so, it aims to add a new and meaningful dimension to the

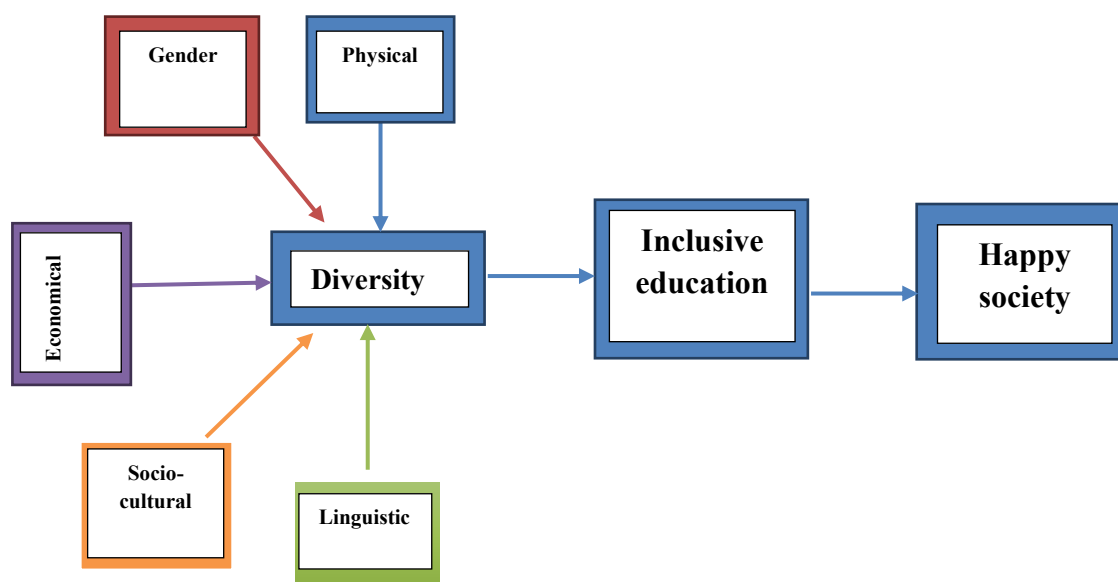
existing body of research, highlighting happiness as a significant educational outcome and reinforcing the role of inclusive education in fostering holistic well-being.

### Objectives of the study

Following objectives were taken for the present study. These are-

- To identify how education and happiness are inter related.
- To examine how inclusive education can contribute to the foundation of a happy society.
- To explore how inclusive education can meet the diverse need of the individuals and society.

### Conceptual framework of the study



**Figure 1:** Model showing interrelation among diversity, inclusive education and happy society

This model examines the dynamic interrelationship among diversity, inclusive education, and societal well-being. The framework illustrates how recognizing and valuing diversity through inclusive educational practices ultimately contributes to building a harmonious and happy society. Diversity refers to the conscious recognition, appreciation, and celebration of the unique characteristics that distinguish individuals within a society. It reflects a commitment to fostering an environment where differences are respected and individual as well as collective achievements are valued. Diversity encourages collaboration across differences and strengthens social bonds, enabling individuals to work together to eliminate all forms of discrimination and inequality. In this study, diversity is categorized into five major dimensions:

- **Linguistic Diversity** – Variations in language, dialect, and communication styles.



- **Socio-Cultural Diversity** – Differences in culture, traditions, beliefs, customs, and social practices.
- **Economic Diversity** – Variations in socio-economic backgrounds and access to resources.
- **Gender Diversity** – Differences in gender identities, roles, and expressions.
- **Physical Diversity** – Variations in physical abilities, disabilities, and health conditions.

These dimensions collectively shape the social fabric of any community.

Inclusive education represents a transformative approach to teaching and learning that ensures all students, regardless of their differences, learn and participate together. It involves designing schools, classrooms, curricula, and activities in ways that remove barriers to participation and promote equal opportunities for every learner. Inclusion begins when exclusionary practices are eliminated and differences are acknowledged with respect and sensitivity. It creates a learning environment where each student feels accepted, valued, safe, and empowered. By fostering belongingness and mutual respect, inclusive education nurtures empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility among learners. Ultimately, it lays the groundwork for the development of an inclusive community.

An inclusive community emerges when the principles of inclusion extend beyond educational institutions into society at large. Such a community consciously adapts and evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. It ensures meaningful participation, equal access to opportunities, and shared responsibility. Through recognition, support, and equitable practices, an inclusive community safeguards the dignity and rights of every individual. It promotes social justice, strengthens civic engagement, and enhances the overall well-being of its members.

The integration of diversity and inclusive education leads to the creation of inclusive communities, which in turn form the foundation of a happy society. A happy society is characterized by mutual respect, equity, social harmony, reduced discrimination, and collective well-being.

Thus, the conceptual framework suggests a progressive relationship:

**Diversity → Inclusive Education → Inclusive Community → Happy Society**

By valuing diversity and institutionalizing inclusive practices, societies can cultivate unity in diversity, strengthen social cohesion, and foster sustainable happiness and development for all.

## Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore and analyze the interrelationship between diversity, inclusive education, and the foundation of a happy society. The qualitative method was considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of concepts, perspectives, and existing theoretical frameworks related to the study. This research is primarily based on secondary data sources. To achieve the stated objectives, an extensive review of relevant literature was conducted. Various scholarly and credible sources were consulted, including national and international peer-reviewed journals, academic books, project reports, Ph.D. theses, M.Phil. dissertations, research articles, as well as papers presented in academic seminars and conference proceedings.



Through systematic analysis and synthesis of these documented sources, the study draws meaningful insights and develops a comprehensive understanding of the conceptual relationships among the key variables.

## Discussion

### Objective 1: To Identify How Education and Happiness Are Interrelated

To understand the relationship between education and happiness, it is essential to first clarify the concept and functions of education, and then examine how educational attainment influences individual and societal well-being.

Education is a lifelong process that involves the transmission of knowledge, skills, values, and character traits. It plays a transformative role in shaping an individual's personality and guiding overall development. As a dynamic force in human life, education influences intellectual, emotional, social, and moral growth. It enables individuals to acquire meaningful experiences and organize them into purposeful life activities. Through education, innate capacities and hidden potentialities are nurtured and developed. Beyond the acquisition of information, education connects individuals with ethical and social values. It elevates them to internalize these values and extend them from the personal sphere to the broader social context. Thus, education functions not only as a tool for personal advancement but also as a mechanism for social transformation.

Education plays a crucial role in enhancing life skills such as communication, relationship building, problem-solving, and time management. An educated individual is more likely to secure stable employment and achieve financial independence, which contributes significantly to life satisfaction. Empirical studies consistently indicate that individuals with higher levels of education report greater satisfaction in various domains of life, including income, employment opportunities, community engagement, housing conditions, and overall well-being. Higher educational attainment also enables individuals to set realistic goals and achieve them effectively. It fosters self-confidence, motivation, and a sense of accomplishment. Education strengthens cognitive abilities while simultaneously enhancing practical skills and social awareness. As a result, individuals experience improved quality of life and a heightened sense of purpose, both of which are fundamental components of happiness. The strong linkage between education and happiness is also reflected in national development models. In the 21st century, the Government of Bhutan introduced the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), sometimes referred to as Gross Domestic Happiness, as an alternative measure of national progress. Rather than focusing solely on economic growth, GNH evaluates holistic well-being through nine domains: psychological well-being, health, time use, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards. Notably, education is recognized as one of the central pillars of this framework, underscoring its vital role in promoting individual and collective happiness.

Therefore, education and happiness are deeply interconnected. Education enhances capabilities, expands opportunities, strengthens self-worth, and contributes to both personal fulfillment and societal harmony. Consequently, fostering quality education is not only a developmental priority but also a pathway toward achieving sustainable happiness.



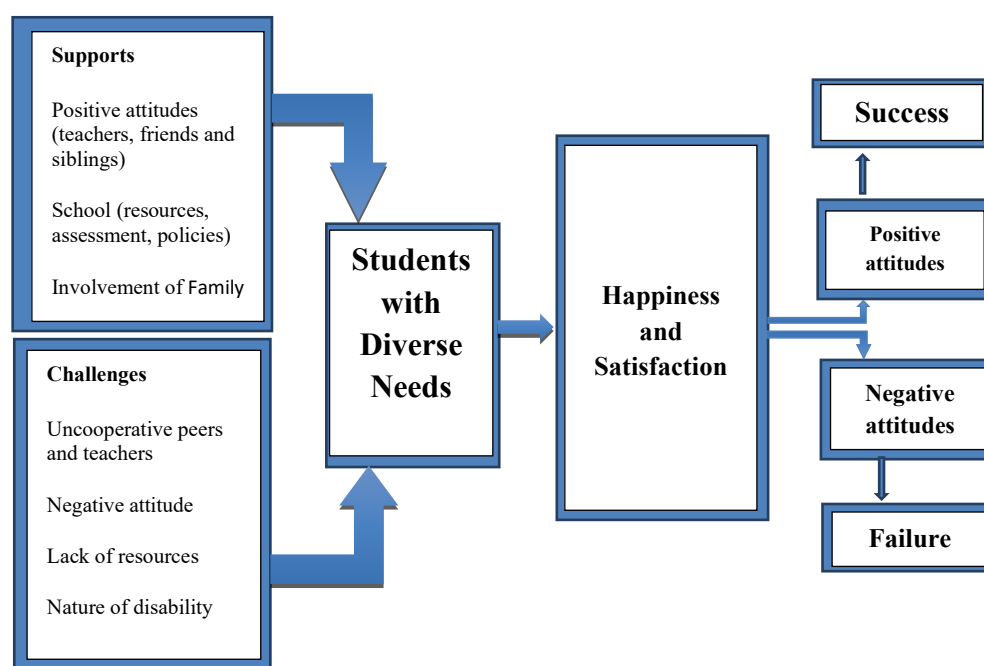
Source: [ophi.org.uk/policy/bhutan-gnh-index](http://ophi.org.uk/policy/bhutan-gnh-index)

**Figure 2:** Gross National Happiness Index

## **Objective 2: To Examine How Inclusive Education Contributes to the Foundation of a Happy Society**

In a genuinely inclusive environment, every individual feels safe, respected, and valued. Inclusive education involves thoughtfully designing schools, classrooms, and learning activities so that all students learn and participate together, irrespective of their differences. By fostering belongingness, equality, and mutual respect, inclusive education nurtures social harmony and collective well-being, thereby laying the foundation for a happy society.

Figure 3 presents the conceptual framework developed to address this objective.



Source: [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

**Figure 3: Framework of inclusive education contribute foundation of happy society**

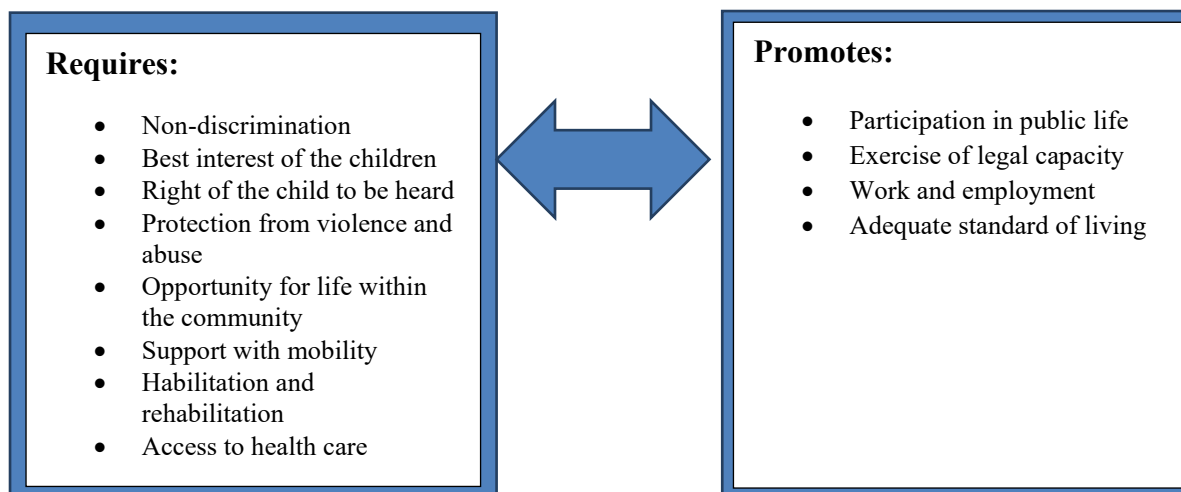
This framework explains how the supports and challenges experienced by students with diverse needs influence their individual happiness within an inclusive environment. As illustrated in Figure 3, parents, teachers, and peers play a pivotal role in shaping a happy society by supporting learners with diverse abilities. When appropriate academic, emotional, and social support is provided, students are more likely to achieve success and life satisfaction. Conversely, persistent barriers and lack of support may hinder their well-being and development. Inclusive education encourages children to participate in shared activities where they interact with peers of the same age but with different abilities. Such interaction fosters friendship, mutual respect, and social integration. Schools, libraries, and community institutions must actively promote inclusive activities that recognize individual interests and celebrate diversity. It is equally important that children are aware of their right to an inclusive education system. Schools bear primary responsibility for implementing inclusive practices. They are expected to prioritize general education settings while providing necessary special education services and support. Teachers facilitate inclusion by adapting teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learning styles, modifying assignments when necessary, and promoting respect, cooperation, and friendship among students.

However, inclusion is not solely the responsibility of schools. Families play an equally vital role in strengthening inclusive practices. Parents act as advocates and facilitators for their children's participation in both school and community life. By encouraging involvement in diverse activities, fostering positive relationships, and nurturing discipline and resilience, families help build children's self-esteem, confidence, and independence. Parents also have the right and responsibility to ensure appropriate educational services for their children and to raise social awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusive education.

Together, the collaborative efforts of schools, families, and communities create supportive environments that enhance the happiness and overall well-being of children with diverse needs.

### **Objective 3: To Explore How Inclusive Education Meets the Diverse Needs of Individuals and Society**

Inclusive education is a transformative approach that ensures all learners have equal access to quality education, regardless of their abilities, challenges, or socio-cultural backgrounds. It recognizes individual differences, responds to diverse learning needs, and promotes equity by providing appropriate support within a shared learning environment. By valuing diversity and removing barriers to participation, inclusive systems create equal opportunities for growth and development. Inclusive education is deeply rooted in human rights principles, particularly the right to education. Since all human rights are interconnected, the fulfillment of the right to education contributes to the realization of other fundamental rights, such as dignity, participation, and equality. Thus, inclusive education not only addresses individual needs but also strengthens social cohesion, justice, and collective well-being within society



Source: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

Inclusive education ensures that every learner experiences a genuine sense of belonging within a supportive and respectful environment. While separating students who require special support may appear practical, such segregation can unintentionally reinforce feelings of difference and lower self-worth. In contrast, inclusive education brings learners of diverse abilities and backgrounds together, enriching both academic experiences and social-emotional development.



Inclusive education benefits all students in several meaningful ways:

- **Fosters diversity and empathy:** Learning alongside peers with varied abilities and backgrounds nurtures respect, understanding, and appreciation of differences, strengthening empathy and social harmony.
- **Promotes equal opportunities and social cohesion:** Inclusive schools create equitable learning environments where every student has a fair chance to succeed and develop teamwork skills.
- **Enhances academic and personal growth:** Shared learning environments boost confidence, self-esteem, and motivation, especially for students with diverse needs, while improving overall academic engagement.
- **Improves communication skills:** Interaction with peers of different abilities enhances active listening, self-expression, and respect for diverse communication styles.
- **Reduces discrimination and bullying:** By cultivating respect and awareness, inclusive education minimizes identity-based harassment and fosters a safer school climate.
- **Supports individual learning styles:** Flexible teaching approaches—visual, auditory, and experiential—ensure that each learner can engage meaningfully according to their strengths.

### Inclusive Teaching Strategies

To create truly inclusive classrooms, teachers require continuous support and practical strategies, such as:

- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** A flexible teaching framework that removes learning barriers and accommodates diverse needs from the outset.
- **Collaborative and cooperative learning:** Group-based tasks that encourage teamwork, shared responsibility, and peer support.
- **Collaborative partnerships:** Strong coordination among teachers, parents, and support staff to implement individualized learning plans and ensure holistic development.
- **Flexible instructional formats:** Using varied teaching methods to address different learning preferences.
- **Diverse assessment methods:** Adapting evaluation techniques so all students can demonstrate their understanding effectively.

### Conclusion

Promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion is both challenging and essential in a pluralistic society. Inclusive education represents progress that responds to the real and varied needs of individuals. Achieving true inclusion requires a transformation in societal attitudes—moving from segregation toward acceptance, empathy, and respect across gender, caste, religion, and other differences.



When attitudes change, practices follow. Inclusive environments generate acceptance, tolerance, and mutual understanding. By empowering every learner to realize their full potential, inclusive education fosters confidence, satisfaction, and motivation. Ultimately, when individuals feel valued and fulfilled, they contribute positively to society—laying the foundation for a harmonious and happy community.

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