
UNIT 11 MANAGING DIVERSITY IN CLASSROOM*

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

“To keep the golden rule, we have to put ourselves in other people’s place if we had the imagination to do that.... fewer bitter judgments would pass our lips. Fewer racial, national, and class prejudices would stain our lives.”
-Harry Emerson Fosdick

Today Indian education has come a long way with a much higher number of children getting access to education. Correspondingly, there has been increasing number of learners from diverse backgrounds entering the classrooms. It is a phenomenon that is rapidly manifesting in the present day. Everyone who comes to the classroom is unique having special attributes, and personality traits. The individual differences that we notice in each child may be attributed to his/her cultural, social, economic, and political background. We need to understand these differences in order to embrace diversity.

Diversity needs to be expected, respected, and celebrated. The classroom is an ideal platform to engage young students in discussions regarding diversity and instill values such as tolerance, acceptance empathy and compassion. Such efforts will make them future ready with the right knowledge, skills, competencies, and attitudes to participate fully in the processes of social, economic, and political development in the present day. However, it can be

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incredibly challenging. It is difficult in drawing a clear demarcation between equality and equity in classrooms. Should students be provided the same education or an education catering to their individual needs? Should the focus be on equality or equity? These and many other questions arise when dealing with diverse set of students. The teacher has tremendous responsibility to recognize and accommodate all of these in the classroom. Students on their part are uncertain whether they would be accepted or if they will 'fit in' the class.

This unit addresses several questions related to diversity in classrooms such as: What do you mean by diversity? What are the types of diversity? How to distinguish between equity and equality? What is self and its relationship with others? What is the power relationship in a classroom? What are the strategies to address diversity issues?

11.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concept of diversity;
- describe the nature of diversity in classrooms;
- explain power structures among students;
- distinguish between equity and equality;
- discuss the role of teachers, & institutions in ensuring equality & equity;
- compare self in relation to others;
- reflect on and share experiences /memories of diversity in classroom;
- identify some strategies for managing diversity in classrooms; and
- appreciate diversity in classrooms.

11.3 MEANING AND NATURE OF DIVERSITY

Let us peep into a typical a classroom and discuss the case of two students.

Case 1

Ankit and Bhargav have been enrolled in B.A Programme. Ankit belongs to an affluent educated family. His mother is a teacher in a private school and father works in MNC. Ankit had access to computer/laptop and other technological devices before coming to class. His classmate Bhargav, on the other hand, is a son of a farmer, who hails from Bastar District of Chhattisgarh and belongs to a poor economic background. He has not had any access to technology before coming to class. Ankit could receive a head start in his course as he had his schooling in a reputed private school in Delhi, whereas Bhargav has been lagging behind in academic progress. In the social circle, too, Ankit has made friendship with many students of his class, whereas Bhargav is mostly withdrawn and keeps to himself.

This is an example of diversity arising out of socioeconomic background.

11.3.1 Diversity in Classrooms

The word diversity is derived from the French word '*diversite*' which means 'making dissimilar'. According to Webster's Dictionary, 'Diversity is the condition of having or being composed of different elements especially the inclusion of different types of people or organization. So, when the word diversity is used in social context, it indicates a group of people or individuals who are different from each other in some way or the other. It also implies collective differences among people, those differences which distinguishes one group from another. These differences may be related to culture, language, gender, religion, physical appearance social and economic status, family structure, abilities, values, and beliefs. If viewed from the perspective of uniformity, diversity is the antonym of uniformity. Whereas uniformity is derived from 'Uni' and 'form' that is one form, or similar, diversity means variety. At the educational level, diversity is an umbrella term that refers to students who are different from one another. It means the understanding that each student is unique and recognizing that individual differences exist among students. Diversity is valuing such differences among students and the ways in which these differences can contribute to making learning environment in classrooms more vibrant, rich and productive. It also implies that we acknowledge that differences cannot be categorized into watertight compartments, nor are they fixed. It is celebrating individual differences and celebrating the varied dimensions of diversity in each learner. It is a way to explore and incorporate these differences which would lead to enriched learning. From such explanations it becomes clear that diversity as a concept encompasses acceptance and respect for all students. It promotes equity, equality and inclusiveness in the education institutions.

11.3.2 Nature of Diversity

There is an astounding variety in virtually every aspect of Indian society. Diversity with respect to cultural, linguistic, regional, economic, religious, class gender, and caste groups, have permeated even to the classrooms. Teachers encounter a diverse set of students. Some differences may be obvious like physical appearances, accent, and gender. However, some may not be so visible outwardly like religion, socio-economic background. Moreover, students also come from different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. They may have different learning styles, different levels of motivation and different opinions about the world around them. Their ideas, perspectives, and values may also differ. All such characteristics make one individual or group different from another. As mentioned earlier, apart the race, ethnicity, and gender innumerable factors, like age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, education, marital status, language, physical appearance, level of motivation, learning styles, etc. also contribute to classroom diversity.

11.3.3 Types of Diversity

Let us try to understand different types of the diversities that may exist in classroom.

a) Cultural Diversity

One of the major contributors to diversity is culture. Culture by itself is a comprehensive concept which includes values, ethnicity, behavioural styles, language and dialects, communication patterns verbal as well as non-verbal, perspectives, and world views."Cultures have shared beliefs, values, practices, definitions, and other elements that are expressed through family socialization, formal schooling, shared language, social roles, and norms for feeling, thinking, and acting" (Cohen, 2009). Since it is a dynamic term and ever changing, there is no single definition of culture. So, when a learner differs from the mainstream culture in terms of ethnicity, social class, and or language we attribute it to cultural diversity. In our country, every region has its own identity owing to the rich cultural heritage and which is quite different from other regions or other states of the country. The customs, rituals, attire, food, festivals etc. vary from region to region and contribute to their unique identity. It is not unusual to see a Sardar wearing turban, Rajastani wearing a Pagdi and a Kashmiri wearing Pheran. It is this uniqueness of each state and region that contribute to our cultural diversity.

b) Race

Are we not familiar with the turning point in the life of Mahatma Gandhi when he was thrown out of a first class carriage in South Africa? Gandhi was not allowed to travel in the same carriage along with a white man, as the carriage was meant exclusively for the whites. When Gandhi refused to move (he had a valid first class ticket), he was thrown into the platform. That one incident changed the course of his life and he made a strong determination to fight against racial oppression and violence. It is a classic example of apartheid or racial discrimination.

In generic terms, race refers to people of common origin. For example, we talk of Aryan race, Dravidian race etc. The reference to race is usually based on physical or biological criteria, such as skin color, hair color or texture or facial features. However, research shows that genetic variation exists within racial groups rather than between groups. Therefore, racial differences in areas such as academics or intelligence are not based on biological differences but are instead related to economic, historical, and social factors (Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). The definitions and implications of race have undergone changes over time, influenced by the prevailing laws and policies. Racial prejudice still remains a major threat across the world. The ever-increasing protests and agitation in the global scenario are indicative of the prevalence of discrimination against the people of colour.

c) Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to one's social identity based on the culture of origin, ancestry, or affiliation with a cultural group (Pinderhughes, 1989). It is erroneous to assume that ethnicity is the same as **nationality**. Whereas **nationality** refers to a person's status of belonging to a specific nation by birth or citizenship (e.g., an individual may be living in the US but will have Indian nationality because he/ she was born India, ethnicity is defined by aspects of subjective culture such as customs, language, and social ties. Similarly, it is different from race which presumes shared biological or genetic traits, where as ethnicity has connotations of shared cultural traits.

d) Gender

Gender is a social construct of what it means to be male or female in our society and how those genders are interpreted by society. There is a tendency to confuse gender with sex. But it is to be remembered that sex is a biological descriptor determined by chromosomes and internal/ external reproductive organs whereas gender is derived from society. Gender has more to do the societal outlook of how people around view vis-a-vis their sex.

The gender disparities exist at all levels of education. For example, in rural areas the discrimination between male and female children is more prominent, where boys are sent to schools and girls are asked to do household work. The following case would illustrate this:

Case 2

Radha is aged 14 and she is studying in a government school in Farrukhabad, district of Uttar Pradesh. She is a bright student and is ambitious of joining Defence Services.

It so happened that everyday some boys from the neighbourhood would follow her, as she would walk to school. Radha was getting more and more anxious about the eve teasing. She complained about this recurring harassment to her mother. She also asked for permission to join the Martial Arts coaching so that she will be empowered enough to face the challenges.

Alas, her request was turned down and what added to her misery was that her parents refused to send her to school again. Radha's dream of pursuing higher education and getting a job lay shattered.

The problem becomes more serious when gender discrimination is compounded by class, caste, religious and other disadvantages. For instance, in the case of female children in rural village belonging to minority class, their dropout is the highest. Apart from the fact that they happen to be girls and belonging to minority class makes the discrimination more amplified.

Gender differences have some similarities with cultural differences also, at the same time there are dissimilarities too. Traditionally, a female has been considered as the weaker sex. There is ample research evidence to show that the physiological differences between the sexes do not necessarily cause differences in the ability to succeed at school or work. It is misconstrued by culture. Typically, a “male” is portrayed as aggressive, assertive, and competitive in nature whereas, a “female” is described as passive and shy. In schools, boys are encouraged to develop skills in fields like engineering and computer science; for girls, the suggested fields are arts, teaching, nursing etc., subjects that are related to personal aesthetics. Though, society is experiencing a shift but still if we speak about co-curricular activities like sports, boys are encouraged to join boxing, cricket, football etc. and girls generally play kho-kho, badminton etc. In the formal curriculum, discrimination between boys and girls may not be obvious, but the hidden curriculum reinforces stereotyped notion of gender identity through the process of gender socialization. Even now in many societies, the perceived differences between females and males are being executed.

e) **Social Class**

In our society, it is not uncommon to see how upper economic class individuals are likely to attend prestigious schools and institutes than those attended by their lower economic class counterparts. Since they belong to educated families and have higher incomes, they can enjoy greater educational advantages, such as private schooling, coaching etc. This is due to social class diversification. Social class is a social construct and includes a person’s income or material wealth, educational status, and/or occupational status. It may be **defined by the amount of status**, which the members of that class have as compared to members of other social classes. It groups individuals in a stratified hierarchy based on wealth, income, education, occupation, and social network. It can also influence how people belonging to a particular class, feel, act, and fit in. The ever-widening gap between levels of social class has been increasingly contributing to diversity in our society. Let us recall the previous example of Ankit and Bhargav. Ankit belongs to upper economic class, whereas Bhargav is a son of a farmer, belongs to lower economic class. There is a lack of self-worth in Bhargav which makes him reluctant to mingle freely with his peers. Also, there is this gnawing self-doubt if he will be accepted by his peers. Ankit, on the other hand has a large circle of friends and he exudes confidence.

f) **Economic Diversity**

Economic differences in our society may be traced back to the caste system where there was a huge divide between the upper castes that had the monopoly over the lower caste. The money power related to caste and class has given rise to economic differences like the rich and the

poor, the haves and the have nots, adding yet another dimension to our diversity. It is related to the great variations in the economic status of people in a country. The rich and wealthy lead a very luxurious life style, which is very different from that of the middle class, the poor or those living below poverty line.

g) Disability

Disability refers to visible or hidden and temporary or permanent conditions that cause barriers or challenges, and impact individuals of every age and social group. Disability can be broadly categorized as Physical, Intellectual, Mental illness and Sensory Disabilities. It is an umbrella term, which includes impairment, activity limitations, and participation restrictions (The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)). **Impairment** is a problem in body function or structure; there can be sensory impairment like hearing impairment, and visual impairment. For example, a child with hearing impairment will not have the capacity to hear sounds; when a child finds it difficult in executing a task or action, there is **activity limitation**. A child afflicted with polio may not be able to walk nor run like other children; while a **participation restriction** is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations such as restrictions in working or engaging in social and recreational activities.

Again, let us take a classroom example of a learning-disabled child who has dyslexia. This student is disadvantaged since he/she cannot cope with the amount of reading and writing that is required in a regular classroom. However, in another situation, like Art or graphic design, the same student would not be disadvantaged because he/ she will feel comfortable drawing, painting etc. which does not involve reading/writing. However, in most cases the talents of such students go unnoticed. They are among the most vulnerable groups who are at the risk of social exclusion. Since they are different from perceived norms of a population, they are subjected to varying degrees or forms of social exclusion. Realizing the seriousness of such situations, many policy reforms by the Indian Government have tried to focus on the education of disabled children and their welfare. RTE provisions, Integrated Education of the Disabled Children (IEDC), Integration of Children with Disabilities (CwD) in regular school, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), and Rashtriya Madhyamic Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) have been some of the significant policy advocacies in the field of inclusive education of CwD/CWSN.

The National Education Policy, 2020 recognizes the importance of creating enabling mechanisms for providing children with special needs (CWSN) or Divyang the same opportunities for obtaining quality education like any other child. Though such attempts have gained

momentum, yet there are miles to go where all such diverse learners participate in the learning process, and are taught using strategies tailored to suit individual learning needs.

h) Religion

By religion, we generally mean belief in supernatural being or entities. Definitions of **religion** mostly include shared systems of beliefs and values, symbols, feelings, actions, experiences, and a source of community unity (Cohen, 2009). Religious beliefs and practices are discussed in relationships with the divine, and faith, all of which differentiate it from culture.

Religion has been playing an important role in Indian society from the very ancient times with people belonging to multi religions. A classroom is a miniature society with students from different faiths like Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Sikh each differing from one another due to the varied rituals and practices that they follow. Yet, they abide by our Constitution which treats all religious groups on equal terms. It professes freedom to all religious groups to hold and practice their beliefs and rituals. Secularism has been embedded in all the national policies on education. The underlying message is that all these religions teach similar values- love and care for one another. It is unfortunate that in the name of religions wars are fought, violence unleashed.

i) Linguistic Diversity

Linguistic diversity has been defined in a broad sense as the 'range of variations exhibited by human languages' (www.terralingua.org). India is a multi lingual country with a flourishing culture of many languages and dialects. According to latest analysis of a census more than 19,500 languages or dialects are spoken in India as mother tongues. But all these languages are not equally widespread or spoken. There are approximately 22 official languages and each language has many dialects. This way language canvas in India is woven intricately with multiple patterns of speech yet they form an organic whole. This linguistic diversity contributes to the richness and variety of languages in our country and yet forms a striking example of unity in diversity.

In the classroom, linguistic diversity refers to learners whose home language is a language other than the medium of instruction. Schools and colleges in India are a classic example of this linguistic diversity that many students experience. Let us take a quick survey of your classroom. You may ask your classmates about their home languages. You may be amazed to note that in a single classroom, there may be more than 20 home languages spoken by your classmates. This Linguistic diversity is an offshoot of cultural diversity. As an example let us talk about Parvati. Parvati's parents have migrated from Tamil Nadu to Delhi and have settled there. Parvati's mother tongue is Tamil, but she goes to a Government school where the medium of instruction is

Hindi. She like many others who are second language learners, having limited proficiency, use bilingual, language, and are mainstream dialect speakers.

Research provides ample evidence that multilingualism has positive effects on cognitive development. It also contributes to enhanced memory and social skills. Yet, at the same time, it may be observed that children like Parvati may talk excitedly within their group who speak in their native language but become shy or inhibited while interacting in official language or in the medium of instruction which is different from their home language. Teachers need to explore ways to use home language/mother tongue as link language in oral domain to teach language and other subjects (NEP,2020). Language influences the way people of a given culture speak with others, the tone, perception of experience, and familiarity/‘*apnapan*’ inherent in conversations among speakers of a common language are a reflection and record of a culture (NEP, 2020). Hence NEP lays much emphasis on learning in Mother tongue /home language , promoting multilingualism and also harnessing the power of language .

By now, you must have understood the various attributes to diversity. However, it is important to acknowledge that diversity goes beyond these measurable factors like ethnicity, socio-economic status, or gender to the much more complex aspects like their learning styles, level of motivation, their support system etc. In addition, more than ever it is recognized that education is the single greatest tool for achieving social justice and equality. Inclusive and equitable education in which every citizen can dream, thrive, and contribute to the nation. NEP 2020 clearly mentions that the education system must aim to benefit India’s children so that no child loses any opportunity to learn and excel because of circumstances of birth or background. The NEP 2020 policy reaffirms that one of the major goals of all education will be bridging the social gaps in access, participation by all students and improving learning outcomes in school education.

Classroom diversity will benefit students in several ways. They would become more aware of the world outside the four walls of the classroom and empathize more with people who are different from them. It would expand their horizon and promote reflection. They will also be able to look at situations from different perspectives and deal with them more open-mindedly. Yet another advantage is that classroom diversity would help understand the uniqueness in each individual while they remain part of a larger group. Exposure to diversity would prepare students for workplace where they may encounter diversity of all sorts yet will be able to cope with it. They would be able to enter their workplace more confidently, since they have already imbibed the qualities of being tolerant, understanding, and open-minded about differences in people. One of the most important pillars of learning is learn for life. We can prepare our students for this, by encouraging them to talk about diversity and embrace it right from a young age.

Check Your Progress I

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space provided

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit

1) Do you agree that classroom diversity should be celebrated. Why?

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2) What is Linguistic diversity? Why is this most prevalent in our country?

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3) List some characteristics of your cultural background that may be different from that of your classmate.

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11.4 UNDERSTANDING POWER STRUCTURES AMONG STUDENTS

While we are talking of diversity among students, it is also important to understand the power structure in a classroom since no discussion is complete without touching upon the power dynamics that exist in the system. "Power" is a term commonly employed in a wide variety of situations. The definition of the term also varies from one situation to another. We shall examine only that is particularly pertinent to classrooms. The word power is often associated with one's ability to influence another less dominant individual's opinion, behaviour and values (Vlčková, Mareš, & Ježek, 2015). It represents the struggle between unequally positioned individuals, where renders one individual as more powerful than the other. In the classroom, there are many relationships of power i.e. between students and teachers, among students, and between students and the material being studied.

Power distribution in the classroom is mostly created because of access to knowledge, information, material, wealth etc. The most striking among them is the power of the instructor /teacher versus that of the student/learner. Traditionally, organizations like schools and colleges are viewed as having authoritarian structure, with teachers being powerful at the top as transmitters of knowledge, having control of curriculum and powerless students at the bottom as passive recipients. Most often, students are told what to learn, how to learn, when to learn, how to behave and then they are assessed without considering the diverse intelligences that exist in each student. The test /assessment in most cases are 'one size for all'. Based on assessments and test scores/ marks etc., students are categorized as successful or unsuccessful and awarded or punished accordingly. This is a narrow view creating a hierarchy in the classroom where the teacher has more control/ power while students have no say whatsoever. "The traditional view of education, a view that still prevails, holds that learners must submit themselves to teachers" (Menges, 1977, p.5).

However, education has been undergoing rapid change in the recent past. With the paradigm shift in teaching-learning process, the pedagogy has moved away from the teacher-centric to learner-centric with lot of autonomy for them to manage their learning. Teachers still have some control in the classroom to shape their learner's behaviour or deal with their inappropriate behaviour but in a democratic way.

In addition, it has become highly necessary to have a healthy working relationship with students. It means listening to their views/ opinions before making decisions that will affect them, even in assessment practices. Teachers may use specific strategies to provide students with responsible ways to meet their need for power like giving students opportunities to express them, helping them gain recognition, and adopting other classroom positive strategies to help students gain personal empowerment in schools. The point is how to use that power without being autocratic or making students feel inadequate and powerless. Again, power dominance may be seen among students who are physically strong. Often, children who are differentially abled are denied the same right to an equal education and equality of opportunities which are enjoyed by other children in the society. Attitudinal barriers and discriminatory practices adversely affect the full participation of students with disabilities.

Moreover, it is not uncommon to hear about cases of bullying and ragging in institutional premises. Bullying stems from physical advantage or a social advantage enjoyed by some students over the others. Initially it may start in a light mode but sometimes turn ugly when it takes the form of threats, intimidation or repeated cruelty; such practices need to be condemned. All efforts should be made to ensure that students are protected and they have every right to learn and enjoy education without being threatened, terrorized, or picked on. A typical classroom comprises of students from diverse

backgrounds constantly interacting in formal and informal ways. Such interactions have a huge impact on their intellectual, behavioral, and emotional well being. Hence, it is vital to understand the power structure in the classroom.

11.5 UNDERSTANDING EQUITY AND EQUALITY

In common parlance the two terms equity and equality are used interchangeably. However, it is crucial to understand the difference between the two especially when we talk of educational barriers in schools and finding appropriate interventions to overcome them. Equality as the word suggests is the state of being equal –be it providing same opportunities, resources or granting same rights. According to Webster Dictionary, equality is the “quality or state of being equal,” where equal is defined as having the same measurement in quality, nature or status.

Equity, on the other hand, is providing resources, opportunities according to specific circumstances The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines equity as, “something that is equitable,” where equitable is defined as, “dealing fairly and equally with all concerned.” With respect to education, it assumes that students have different needs, therefore, provision should be made based on said needs. In this way, equity ensures that every student has the support they need to be successful. It calls for an understanding of the unique challenges and barriers faced by individual students or by group of students and providing additional support to help them overcome those barriers. The goal is to help achieve fairness in treatment. Equity implies “leveling the playing field” so that fairness happens along the path and everybody gets a chance to be successful. While this in itself may not ensure equal outcomes, we all should strive that every child has equal *opportunity* for success. The differences between the two concepts are explained by depicting two scenes illustrated in figure 11.1.

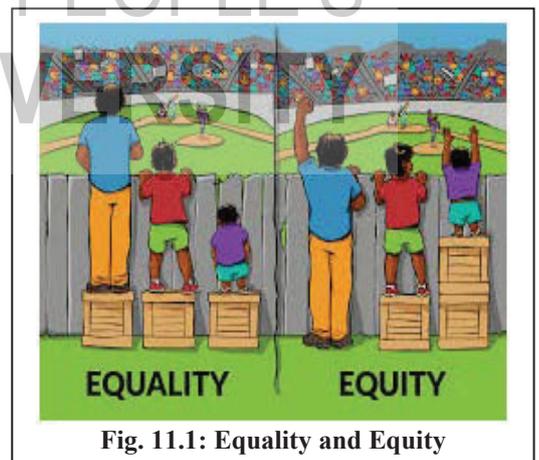


Fig. 11.1: Equality and Equity

There are three spectators with different heights watching a match. The first picture shows that all the three spectators watching the match are standing on the same type platform depicting equality, i.e. every person is getting the opportunity to watch the match. However, the tall adult does not need that platform and the short child is not able to see even while standing on the platform. The second picture depicts equity. The tall person is not standing on a platform but he is still able to watch. The shorter child is given two

platforms with which he is able to watch. This way equity could be established.

Let us try to understand the distinction between the two with a classroom example. In a class there may be students who may be slow in writing, some may need additional aides while writing, while some others will have difficulty in comprehending the topic. Suppose a teacher gives assignment for writing an essay. She may expect only 3 paragraphs instead of 5 from students who have difficulty writing. For those whose pace of writing is slow she may give additional time to complete the assignment or allow completing after school hours; providing cues and tips regarding the topic for those who are not able to understand the topic. Or give additional aides for those who have physical disability like problem of sitting on a chair. In this way, the teacher tries to address the problem of inequity by providing additional resources to those who need.

In the field of education, it can be illustrated by, citing examples of measures taken by certain schools and colleges to augment their online teaching mode. A school may provide tablets for all students to facilitate online classes. But some students may not have internet facilities at home, or they may not be comfortable using tablets. There might be problem of coping with new methods of learning. Schools may treat them as equal by providing same gadgets, but progress and achievement of using the resources would vary to a great extent. The measures are based on the principle of equality but not equity as individual needs are not considered. By ensuring equity in classroom, we can reap many benefits for students and for society as well. Some of the major advantages are:

- Enhancing the quality of classroom environment;
- Understanding student's individual challenges and offering tailored support;
- Opportunity for every child to try and succeed;
- Improving academic achievement;
- Increasing cooperation and collaboration among students;
- Improving mental health conditions, direct correlation with socio emotional quotient;
- Improving physical health and life span; and
- Contributing to economic growth.

However, even with all scientific evidence to support the need for equity, still it remains a complex issue. Teachers and educators have the tremendous responsibility to understand students' individual challenges and provide support by catering to their individual needs. Students, on their part, must make sure that their voices are heard, work in collaboration with fellow students and develop values of compassion and empathy.

Activity -1

Review the examples below. Does the situation described seem fair? How is it unjust? If it does not seem fair, what are some things that could be done to make it more just (equitable?). There might be different solutions to reach an equitable solution.

Situation	Fair? If not, what could be done to make it more just (equitable)?
A city has three times more private schools in its north where the elites are staying than in its south part.	
A girl who has keen interest in boxing is not allowed by her parents to join coaching.	
A private school decides to hold its annual day. But participation is limited to only those children whose parents agree to give donation	
In a panchayat election in the village, women are not allowed to contest.	

Activity-2

Imagine what it would be like to live in a world where everyone is treated the same no matter what it is. Is this a world you would want to live in? Why or why not?

11.6 COMPARING THE SELF IN RELATION TO OTHERS

So far, we have been trying to study diverse set of students in a classroom. Let us pause for a while and look at ourselves.

Suppose you are asked to write “Who am I?” There could be very many different responses. Student A may write his/ her name, student B may write about his/ her lineage like “I belong to the family of so and so”. C may say which place he/ she belongs to. Another student may write about her ambition. Yet another will talk about her/his personality and so on. There will be multiple answers but no answer will be similar.

Let us try another exercise. How would you describe yourself in one sentence? Each one of you should attempt to complete the following:

I am.....

I am sure there will be varied answers like

- A; I am a pretty girl
- B I am a caring friend
- C. I am a good artist
- D:I am a shy student.

Answers may vary from one person to another. These are the various beliefs about oneself. The sense of self refers to the sense of who we are and what makes us different from everyone else. So, the self is not what we are born with but created as we grow up. Then you may wonder who shapes the development of yourself? There are many people including parents, family members, teachers, peers, friends, contribute to shaping your beliefs. The self is the first and foremost of beliefs that we hold for ourselves. Understanding the self implies awareness and ability to understand one's own thought and actions. It also helps to get an insight into our attitudes, our strength and weaknesses, our motive, our interests etc.

Understanding the self is very crucial. Psychologists, Sociologists and great thinkers alike emphasize the importance of knowing oneself. From time immemorial, Indian scriptures have dealt in detail about realization of self, central being of the individual in which the 'Atman' is the innermost self.

Now, let us try to understand the term 'self concept'. The collection of all the beliefs about us is our self-concept. Each one of you must be having a mental picture of who you are. As mentioned earlier, you may think of yourself as a good friend, an intelligent student, a kind neighbor, a pretty girl, a caring friend, etc. These are your attributes and characteristics which forms your self-concept. Therefore, self-concept becomes the cognitive image that each individual hold of himself/herself. Self-concept refers 'to the composite ideas, feelings, and attitudes people have about themselves' (Hilgard, Atkinson, and Atkinson, 1979: p.605). According to Purkey (1988), self-concept is "the sum of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence." It can be explained that self concept is an all-encompassing term including one's beliefs, traits, characteristics, goals, objectives, ambitions, values, etc. It is the sum of all the knowledge about the self or awareness about oneself. Identities are the building blocks of self-concept and these identities are developed because of interpersonal communication. Self- concept consists of three types of identities: personal, interpersonal, and social-role identities but all interrelated.

Personal Identities: They are intrapersonal identities that are conceptualized as *within* the individual and only indirectly acquired as a result of interaction with other people.

Interpersonal Identities: As the term interpersonal indicates that it involves interaction between people. It refers to those self-perceptions that reflect our own interpersonal style of communicating- that is, how we see ourselves relating to others in our interpersonal lives.

Social Role Identities: The identities of this type refer to those self-perceptions that are derived from culturally defined roles and the behaviours that have been specified by that culture or subculture.

Self- concept reflects the Individual's efforts to understand and find meaning in himself/ herself. At the same time, it is important to remember that self- concept is not static, it is in a state of flux ever changing with the change in life experiences. If, the experiences are positive that person would have positive self-concept. If, on the other hand, the life experiences have been negative his/her self concept would be weak and the mind would be riddled with self doubts. Also, it is important to remember that one's self concept is impacted to a great extent by people around. It is constantly shaped by the current interplay of individual and society.

If you are asked a question, 'Are you intelligent or stupid?' you will take a pause to look around you. Your answer to a great extent is shaped by what others opinion of you. It can be your friends, peers. teachers, colleagues, parents. family members, relatives etc.. Now you can understand that the concept of self is not formed in isolation but by the constant and continuous interactions with others.

In a classroom if a student is repeatedly told by the teacher that she is /he is dull, the student would internalize it and align his/ herself concept with it and start believing that she/he is indeed dull. This aspect is reiterated in the concept of the **looking-glass self**. It states that, *part of how we see ourselves comes from our perception of how others see us* (Cooley, 1902). Self-concept would include physical, psychological, and social attributes, which are influenced by the individual's attitudes, habits, beliefs, and ideas. It also involves self-evaluation or self perception. According to Carl Rogers, one of the founders of humanistic psychology self-concept includes three components.

i) Self-Image

Self image is the way we see ourselves. Self-image is formed by what we know about ourselves physically (e.g. black hair, tall, dark), our social roles (e.g. daughter, sister. wife), and our personality traits (e.g. generous serious, kind). You must remember that such self image do not necessarily match reality.

ii) Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is an important attribute of one's personality. This is done by comparing ourselves with others as well as others' responses to us. Sometimes it is referred as self-worth which indicate the extent to which we like, accept, or approve of ourselves, or how much we value ourselves or the sense of worth you attach to yourself. Some of you may have high esteem and hold a positive view of yourselves. (For example, I am a smart student, I am so beautiful). Such people tend to be optimistic, confident and are likely to do what they think is right. Again, taking pride in ones'work, accomplishment, or achievement is a sign of positive self-esteem. People with low self-esteem, on the other hand, are

generally pessimistic and lack confidence. (I am not intelligent; I am so stupid).

iii) Ideal Self

The ideal self is what we would like to be. If your self-image matches with your ideal self it will lead to high self-esteem and would help to realize your potential to the maximum. On the other hand, if your self-image does not match with your ideal self it can have a negative impact on your self-esteem and come in the way of self actualization. Understanding about self becomes very crucial, especially while making decisions about one's career, education plans, life choice and goals. Once you have analyzed your strengths you will be able to work on them and enhance them. Similarly, once you recognize your weaknesses you may try to overcome them so as to succeed in life. Hence, the need to understand yourself your innate potentials and think of ways to nurture them and also taken care of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual needs.

Understanding about oneself will also help to understand others. When you know yourself well, you know others well. Understanding others is central to the development of positive and satisfying relationship. Goleman (1995) suggested, that 'understanding others is more than just sensing other people's feelings and emotions. It also means taking a genuine **interest** in them and their concern when you know yourself well, you know others well'.

Understanding others becomes central to the development of positive and satisfying relationship. This is lucidly explained in the popular transactional analysis theory, developed by Eric Berne. *Transactional Analysis* (TA) is a popular psychological theory that elucidates about how each individual think, act and feel in diverse ways. You know that when two people meet, they interact with each other and engage in social transactions, where in one respond to another. This social interaction is described as Transactional Analysis. TA enables us better understand ourselves by analyzing our transactions with the people whom we interact closely. Transaction therefore can be said as conversation/interaction between two people.

TA is based on 3 principles:

- i) We all have **three 'ego states'** (Parent, Adult, and Child)
- ii) We all have **transactions** (with other people, or internally with ourselves)
- iii) We all (unconsciously) **activate our ego states** in our transactions, which can lead to conflict, negative emotions, pain, etc.

The basis of transactional analysis is to identify which ego states are present in your transactions. Once you identify, you will become more conscious of your thoughts and behaviors, which in turn will help you to have better, more constructive transactions with the people closest to you. It can be used to address one's interactions and communications with the purpose of establishing and reinforcing the idea that everyone is valuable and has the capacity for positive change and personal growth. If we consciously

consider our feelings, we can make a conscious choice: to act on them or not. For this, we must recognize our emotional state and then, using rational thought, make a conscious decision to change. Based upon the work of Dr. Eric Berne (1961) on TA, Harris published *I'm OK – You're OK: A Practical Guide to Transaction Analysis* in 1969. In that, Harris described life positions as basic beliefs about oneself and others. These positions are used to justify decisions and behaviour. The ok matrix given below is also known as life positions. In the ok matrix there are four positions.

<i>I am Not OK</i> <i>You are Ok</i> <i>One down Position</i>	<i>I am OK</i> <i>You are Ok</i> <i>Healthy Position</i>
<i>I am Not OK</i> <i>You are Not Ok</i> <i>Hopeless position</i>	<i>I am OK</i> <i>You are Not Ok</i> <i>One Up position</i>

Fig.11.2: OK matrix

- ***I am not OK – You are OK***

When a person thinks I'm not OK but you are OK, then the person is putting himself/herself in an inferior position with respect to others. This position may be due to having low self worth formed at an early age by dominance of parents, teachers, or peers. Individuals in this position have a particularly low self-esteem and will put others before them. They may always try to please others, because one feels powerless and inferior when compared to others and not confident that they can do what others can do.

- ***I am OK – You are not OK***

In this position, the person will feel superior in some ways compared to others and consider others as not OK. Such persons may be contemptuous of others and will be quick to anger. Many managers, parents and others in authority fall in this position assuming that they are better, and others are not OK.

- ***I am OK – You're OK***

This position is potentially a healthy position. When the person considers himself/herself OK and also considers others as OK, then there is neither feeling of inferiority or superiority. Here, the person is comfortable with other people as well as himself/herself. Individuals in this position are confident, cheerful, positive, and work amicably with others to solve problems.

- ***I'm not OK – You're not OK.***

This is a relatively helpless position, as nothing seems worthwhile. The person neither likes to take help from others, nor can s/he help

himself/herself. Individuals in such a position may withdraw themselves. They may sink into depression or experience emotional disturbances.

Understanding oneself and others, therefore is a critical aspect in interpersonal relationship and has deep connotations. The Transactional analysis helps to understand the behaviour of other person so that communication becomes effective. It also helps to motivate, guide and direct other persons. In classrooms, we should try to understand each other through various strategies, accept students, their feelings, their background, and their behavior. It is important for teachers to guide them how to set realistic expectations of themselves and work towards their goal.

Spending time on meditation and retrospection are proved to be highly beneficial for proper development. As students, you all must spend a few minutes to be alone withdrawn from outward cues, look within, and concentrate on the inner self. Yoga and meditation are excellent ways to connect with the self. In addition, you may set aside some time, hopefully every day, to honestly look at yourself and reflect on your goals, analyze what is working and what is not working or acting as a hindrance to achieve your goal. Committing to mindful habits like these can bring you closer to success. By learning to like yourself and developing positive thoughts about yourself and others, improve the quality of interpersonal relationships.

Check Your Progress 2

Notes: a) Write your answer in the space provided after each item.

b) Compare your answer with the one given at the end of the unit

1) How is self- concept formed?

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2) Give examples of unequal power distribution in classroom.

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3) What are the life positions in Transactional Analysis?

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11.7 STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING DIVERSITY IN CLASSROOM

By now you must have realized that diversity is created by individuals and groups from a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences. You would also appreciate the need to support and protect diversity to create cooperative and caring community where students feel safe and secure.

However, managing such diverse and heterogeneous classrooms is a major challenge for teachers because of its complex nature. More than simply acknowledging and/or tolerating differences, it is essential to create positive learning environments and instructional strategies that support each child to realize its fullest potential.

Some strategies to address classroom diversity are:

- **Recognizing the increasing Diversity of classrooms:** There is a need to recognize the changing social composition of learners in the classroom resulting from the increased nature of diversity. It also poses a need redesign curriculum, teaching-learning practices and processes, learning materials, assessment methods etc. so that they meet the different learning needs of children from diverse backgrounds.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction refers to such practices wherein different students are provided with different avenues to learning whether it is for knowledge acquisition, skill acquisition, or for processing, information, or making sense of ideas. It involves identification of students' perceptual strengths and teaching accordingly. If students are taught based on their strengths and interests, they will feel engaged and interested in what they are learning, differentiated instruction have direct impact on cognitive skills as well as other valuable skills such as social skills and positive working habits. In this technique, teachers proactively modify the curriculum, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, and student products to address the needs of individual students and small groups of students to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in the classroom (Hillier, 2011).The underlying philosophy is that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, irrespective of individual differences.
- **Interactive pedagogy:** Pedagogy should move from a transmission mode to a more affirming participatory mode. This would provide a window for interaction between the teacher and the students Also teachers can help students see learning tasks as meaningful. Instead of treating students as 'others', teachers may establish a bond.
- **Scaffolding:** By providing “scaffolding” teachers can link the academically challenging curriculum to the cultural resources that students bring to classrooms. By scaffolding, the teacher breaks up the learning /content into chunks or small units and provides a tool, or

structure, with each chunk. For example, if the objective is to make students read a text, the teacher might preview the text and discuss key vocabulary or divide the text into smaller units and then read and discuss the lesson.

- **Cooperative collaborative learning:** Cooperative collaborative learning is a very popular and cost-effective strategy. The basic idea is to promote cooperation and interdependence among students while underlining the importance of personal responsibility. Such practices seem to have positive effects on student learning. The project method very popularly used in schools and colleges is based on the principle of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning strategies provides learners with essential opportunities to interact in meaningful, purposeful, and interesting ways. By working as a team, students can build their self-esteem. It also helps them develop scholastic as well as non-scholastic skills.
- **Accepting different perspectives:** Challenging students to consider different perspectives can teach students how to interact with their peers on a social level and equip them with skills they will use for the rest of their life. It will also teach them how to make logical conclusions.
- **Tap into students' backgrounds:** Understanding students' home cultures will enable a better understanding of children's behavior in and out of the classroom. Teachers must try to involve parents more and more.
- **Holistic approach:** Instead of rote drill and practice, integrated holistic approaches may be considered to make learning worthwhile and interesting paying attention to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
- **Teacher Capacity Building:** Educators and trainers are powerful agents of change for establishing equity in classrooms. For this, they must be equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. They must also have the requisite motivation and commitment.
- **Equitable participation:** Teachers must oversee that classroom conversations are structured in such a way that each student gets opportunity to participate. Ground rules or specific guidelines for participation can be made in consultation with students and taking their suggestions.
- **Capitalize on multiple intelligences:** If teachers acknowledge multiple intelligence among students, it encourages a wider range of students to successfully participate in classroom learning (Brualdi, 1998).

Education Institutions have a major responsibility to deal with diversity through:

- **Appropriate Curriculum:** Schools and colleges must provide an academically challenging curriculum that includes attention to the development of higher-level cognitive skills and 21st century skills.

Also, contributions of various ethnic groups. may be integrated into the curriculum. For example, Children's Literature that has stories/poems drawn from a variety of religious and spiritual traditions, folklores etc. would make interesting reading. Care should be taken to ensure that curriculum content is free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, casteism, and sexism. At the same time, it should have scope for social interaction among teachers, administrators and students based on mutual trust and understanding.

- **Zero tolerance to discrimination:** Schools/institutions/ must take a strong stand showing zero tolerance over bullying, teasing, and other disparaging behaviour, at any time in the school/ college/campus.
- **Integrating inclusive Education:** Integrating inclusive Education into pre-service and in-service teacher education and into training of schoolteachers at all levels would undoubtedly improve the ability of the faculty to deal with diversity issues in classes.
- **Technology Integration:** Schools should facilitate Technology integration. The use of multimedia and other technology would enable active engagement of students. By integrating visual and auditory inputs, teachers would be able to create sustained interest in students digitized books are found to be incredibly useful in increasing access, saving space, and achieving cost effective efficiency.
- **Parental involvement:** Parental involvement is a valuable aspect. Understanding students' home cultures through regular interaction with parents would help to better comprehend student behavior. It is essential to tap into students' backgrounds to deal with individual problems.
- **Strengthening of SMC/SMDC:** Community members and parents or guardians may be encouraged to become actively involved in students' education and in making important decisions related to programmes.
- **Dispel myths and stereotypes:** All stakeholders must be encouraged to take collective responsibility to dispel stereotypes that are major hindrances in accepting diversity. The new NEP 2020 has taken cognizance of this need by laying stress on demystifying such stereotype.

Above all, the national policies may reiterate that equality and equity with respect to access and outcomes are highly essential for quality of the education system and reaching the Sustainable Developmental Goals. Quality is not confined to improving the quality of school infrastructure or improved access to education. Diversity is much more than just teaching or preaching, it is also about practicing in classrooms. Quality is reflected in the various ways by which the diverse learners are nurtured to maximize their potential.

Let us accept individual differences, let us celebrate diversity.

11.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the concept of classroom diversity, the different types of diversity and the major differences between equity and equality. We have also discussed the relationship between the self with others while focusing on concept of self and its identities. We also saw the power structure that constitutes the classroom. You have also been introduced to the various strategies to address classroom diversity. Use of technological interventions has also been explained. It is worthwhile to remember that all our attempts should be focused on accepting diversity and celebrating it.

11.9 UNIT- END EXERCISES

- 1) Do you think diversity in classrooms should be accepted and celebrated? Why/Why not?
- 2) Draw out the major differences between equity and equality.
- 3) How does equity ensure enhanced achievement?
- 4) 'Part of how we see ourselves comes from our perception of how others see us.' Do you agree with this statement? Justify your answer.
- 5) Mention some of the strategies which can be used to address diversity.
- 6) Do you agree that classroom diversity should be celebrated? Why/ why Not?
- 7) What is Linguistic diversity? Why is this most prevalent in our country?

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11.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Diversity should be celebrated. It will benefit students in many ways. It is a potential tool for achieving social justice and equality, inclusive and equitable education. It will prepare students for life.
- 2) Linguistic diversity in classroom is when learners whose home language is a language as the medium of instruction. In India, this diversity is very prominent as there are approximately 22 official languages and furthermore dialects. There is rich variety in our folk lores, poems and literature.
- 3) You may mention about different customs like greeting a guest, rituals observed in marriage ceremony, attire usually worn, food which are consumed normally, festival celebration, etc.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Self - concept is formed by individual perceptions of his/her own behavior, abilities, and unique characteristics. It generally embodies one's beliefs, traits, characteristics, goals, objectives, ambitions, values, etc. It is the sum total of one's knowledge about the self or we can say awareness about oneself.
- 2) Some examples are male dominance, bullying, classroom hierarchy, authoritarian teachers.
- 3) I am not Ok You are Ok, I am Ok You are Ok, I am Ok You are not Ok, I am Ok You are not Ok.



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