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scopus

Impact factor 6.2

Geoscience Journal

ISSN:1000-8527

Indexing:

» Scopus

» Google Scholar

» DOI, Zenodo

» Open Access



www.geoscience.ac



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Strategies to Promote Inclusion and Equity in Offline and Online Learning Environment

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1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Inclusion: Inclusion is a never-ending process to find better ways to deal with diversity. Teaching fraternity should learn how to deal differences positively & effectively. In a present scenario the need of Inclusivity in the education sector has increased due to diverse population and it helps to use creative strategies to deal with Equity.

Inclusion involves those learners who are at risk of underachievement or marginalization and important steps must be taken to improve their achievement and participation within the education system.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Promotes Inclusivity in education and its necessary to remove the barriers which develop limitations to participation of learners in the learning environment. Education laws in India prohibits any exclusion from educational opportunities based on religion, ability, sex, economic condition etc. UNESCO gives special attention to children with special needs and develops equity in a learning environment for them.

1.2 Equity: It is based on the principle of fairness. In education it helps to fulfill the purpose of Inclusion because it considers individual needs. Each learner should get Educational opportunities according to their needs and abilities so that everyone should get equal chance to succeed.

1.3 Equality: Equality is different from equity it simply means deal everyone equally and ignore the differences or individual needs.

2. THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

2.1 Every student has different needs: Each student has different abilities and needs, some learners are good in academics and some good in curricular activities and many learners have different personalities and temperament, motor, and verbal skills. It necessary to promote each one to take

initiative not only in academics other curricular activities also important for their all-round development and inclusive education helps to develop such learning environment for students.

“If a child can’t learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn.”

– Ignacio Estrada.

2.2 Diverse population: In a learning environment there are so many learners who belong to different caste, religion, nationality, race, languages etc. Inclusive education promotes each individual equally to adjust in an education system.

2.3 IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): Some educators have given the name of “least restrictive environment” to inclusive education before this act many students left out from the colleges and schools because of their special needs and differences but a true inclusive education system looks at their differences and needs of all areas of learning.

3. STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

3.1 Include Diverse Content, Materials, and Ideas:

Teachers should prepare lectures, content for discussions, assignments, and exams include language, socio-cultural contexts that show diversity. New ideas should include in conversation during learning in that innovative ways that each student will understand it by their level of comprehension.

3.2 Create an Inclusive Environment

Students during the class communication should be clear from the first day of the session/semester, teacher should talk about what is expected to happen in the classroom, including their expectations for comprehensive interactions.

Develop the rules for interaction in the class, regarding contributing ideas and questions. If a student shows silence or lack of attention in the class retell the entire class of the rules, then talk with the student individually outside of class to help him/her to give participation in the class.

Teacher should try to know (depending on the size of class) student’s individually skills, ideas, experiences which is related to the course and they contribute in it.

Show respect for all questions and comments of learners. Use verbal and non-verbal cues to promote involvement of students to think deeply and critically.

Encourage students to think and ask question freely and try to satisfy their curiosity.

3.3 Try for Uniformity of Access to Instruction and Assistance

Promote impartiality and clarity in evaluation in the work of students. Assistance should be provided outside of class to each learner (e.g., if teacher gives any approach regarding type of work or ideas for exams to few students but it should be repeat for entire classroom).

3.4 Use Feedback to Refine and Improve Strategies

Feedback is necessary to make conversation effective; teacher should take feedback from the learners it helps to modify the teaching methods, style, and materials according to the needs of each learner.

4. EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PROMOTE EQUITY IN THE INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

4.1 Reduce Race and Gender Barriers to Learning

Equity is an essential for inclusive education system and teacher should avoid all barriers like race and gender and teach learner and motivate students without keep in mind their gender and race.

4.2 Diversify the curriculum

Teacher should have control on curriculum and give expose to each learner to different culture and its importance. Planned curriculum according to the students need and a best curriculum is those which has flexibility and can change according to the time.

4.3 Hold every student to high expectations

Students show low expectations when they face discrimination on the bases of marks, gender, and economic conditions. Here, teacher is a person who can hold each student to learn having high expectations, respect, and chance to express.

4.4 Avoid assumptions about students' backgrounds

For the Development of equity, it is necessary to avoid such assumption about learners by the teacher and treat them equally without any negative thoughts. If a perception of a teacher is positive for each learner she can deal with their differences with love and affection.

4.5 Inclusive Environment should be Established Early

First day that a teacher should create an inclusive platform for learners. It's important to tell the learners that abuse or name-calling, and hostile interactions won't be tolerated. Students must respond to each other with love and respect.

4.6 Use the Classroom Space Dynamically

Seating arrangements play vital role in the class when any activities must be done by the teachers. Teacher should move around and pay attention to each learner. Inclusion in the class can be promoting through learners can be involved from starting with the use of space.

4.7 Accommodate Learning Styles and Disabilities

Style of learning may vary due to individual differences, these differ between females and males, and vary for learners with disabilities. Some strategies to create equity in the class:

- Variety of Information – Each information can be presented in various ways: audio, visual and audio-visual
- Use multiple media sources (e.g., movie clips, interactive presentations, audiobooks, etc.)
- Additional materials to the unit and lesson plan (e.g. glossaries, chart, illustrations and diagrams) can be provided
- Learner accessible technology for example each can increase text size or adjust brightness.
- Read and repeat printed instructions loudly.

4.8 Use Technology Consciously

In today's modern time Information communication technology (ICT) plays crucial role to impart knowledge effectively teacher should deal with learners and teach them according to their pace and abilities with help of technology it will help all kind of learners like gifted and disable learner.

On other hand such technology tools hinder the learning of learner with special needs like dragging, drop, clicks, typing etc. so teacher handle such problems and provide assistive devices to reduce these kinds of destructions.

4.9 Be Aware of Religious Holidays

While planning the academic calendar, religious holidays should keep in mind. Students may need to miss class, exam, or assignment on certain specific special days.

5. EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN THE ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:

Increase the use of technology and its development affect all the areas including education. Distance learning and live classes are now more favorable for many learners due to distance and geographical conditions there are some ways to create equity and inclusion in online learning system are as follow:

- 5.1 Be Accessible:** Ensure that all content like pdfs, charts, images, videos are accessible (i.e., visual content can be translated by a screen-reader and audio content has visual captions)

Ensure that all the content is mobile-friendly or not so that each learner access to it easily.

5.2 Be Flexible: Think about alternative ways that students can engage with a course (flexible methods and activities)

Find different ways that students can show that what they have learned (flexible formative and summative assessments)

5.3 Be Relational: Establishing an interpersonal relationship with students is one of the most fundamental characteristics of effective teaching, it can be particularly important for those learners who have low confidence.

Create opportunities for live, synchronous engagement of the learners.

Continue the conversation with students about what is happening and ask is there any problem in learning or learning materials?

Provide learners to all support and resources according to their abilities.

5.4 Be Identity Conscious: An important feature of equity-minded teaching is that students are not all the same, that they sometimes come with different experiences and that experiences often reflect their social identity (i.e., race, gender, sexual orientation). In a virtual environment, and at this moment, there are many ways that acceptance can be incorporated into curriculum in meaningful ways.

5.5 Be Transparent: In online learning it's more important to keep transparency regarding grading or evaluation of all the learners. Create transparency in assignments and their evaluation.

6. Conclusion: The education system and learning environment is changing drastically, in last decade. With the shift to online learning alongwith offline learning, educational system is now realizing the value of virtual and personalized instruction. Education now operates with a completely different approach. While the end goals remain the same, the strategies for betterment are ever evolving. The many barriers are face with traditional learning can be eliminated in the online learning environment and vice versa.

Tremendous progress has been made to provide the most flexible and focused educational platforms, accessible without interruption. However, there is still an opportunity gap—rather than an achievement gap—in terms of religion, ability, sex, economic condition. This gap highlights the disparities across the globe in the form of dropout rates, standardized test scores, college enrollment and college completion rates. So far, the efforts to close this gap have not been successful but these suggested strategies will continue to strive to promote equity in the access and delivery of education.