

Understanding diversity

— Unit 2 : Handwritten Study Notes —

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2.1 Concept & Types of Diversity

◆ What is Diversity?

Diversity = presence of a **variety of qualities, characteristics & experiences** within a group/society. It recognises that people are unique — different backgrounds, perspectives, ways of being.

◆ Famous definitions

"...diversity makes for a rich tapestry — all threads equal in value."

— Maya Angelou → equal worth of every different thread

"Diversity: the art of thinking independently, together."

— Malcolm Forbes → individual views converging

"...not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic."

— Jimmy Carter → pieces keep their own shape, not blended away

"Not our differences that divide us — our failure to accept them does."

— Audre Lorde

"Unity in diversity = beauty & test of civilisation."

— Mahatma Gandhi

◆ Nature of Diversity

- **Ubiquitous** — found in every human society, not an exception
- **Dynamic** — changes with migration, culture-contact, changing norms
- **Intersectional** — identities overlap (eg. a woman + a culture + a disability, together)
- **Valuable** — boosts innovation, creativity & problem-solving when used well
- **Requires inclusivity** — recognising diversity is not enough, must actively include
- **Can bring challenges** — communication gaps, bias, misunderstanding

◆ Types of Diversity

1. **Gender Diversity** — variety of gender identities/expressions (men, women, non-binary, transgender...); includes biological sex + socially-built roles & behaviours.
2. **Linguistic Diversity** — variety of languages, dialects, accents & sign languages spoken in a community; tied closely to cultural identity & ways of thinking.
3. **Cultural Diversity** — beliefs, values, customs, arts, social norms of different groups; includes subcultures, religion, generational & organisational cultures too.
4. **Socio-economic Diversity** — differences in income, wealth, education, occupation, social class → affects access to opportunities & lived experience.
5. **Disability Diversity** — presence of physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, mental-health & chronic-illness conditions;

needs different accessibility & support.

 Note: these types overlap & intersect — recognising + valuing them builds inclusive, equitable societies.

2.2 Girl Child with Disability & Twice Exceptionality

◆ Girl child with disability

A female (under 18) with a long-term physical / mental / intellectual / sensory impairment that, meeting social barriers, limits full participation. Gender inequality + disability = **"double discrimination"** → more barriers to education, healthcare, protection & inclusion than boys with disability or girls without.

◆ Twice Exceptionality (2e)

Being **gifted / high-ability** in one area **AND** having a disability/learning-challenge at the same time — eg. brilliant in maths but also dyslexic, ADHD, autistic, or physically disabled.
→ giftedness may hide the disability, or disability may hide the giftedness → hard to diagnose → frustration, anxiety, low self-esteem. Needs identification of BOTH strengths & struggles.

◆ Disability as a Social & Political Construct

Disability is not just a medical problem inside the person — it is **created/worsened by society**: attitudes, environment, politics.

★ **Medical model** → disability = individual deficit to "fix"

★ **Social model / human-rights model** → impairment is biological, but *disability* comes from how society is organised

◆ Disabling barriers (examples)

- **Attitudinal** — stereotypes & prejudice (eg. assuming wheelchair-user can't work)
- **Environmental** — no ramps, inaccessible transport/buildings

- **Systemic/Institutional** — discriminatory laws, non-inclusive policies
- **Communication** — no sign-interpreters, Braille, easy-read material

→ Focus shifts from "curing" the person to changing society & removing barriers.

2.3 Global Perspective on Disability

◆ UN Mandate — CRPD (2006)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities → legally-binding treaty setting out human rights of PWDs & asking States to protect them fully.

Key features:

- **Human Rights Approach** — PWDs are rights-holders, not objects of charity
- **Social Model** adopted — disability = impairment × barriers
- **Non-discrimination & Equality** in all areas of life
- **Accessibility** — physical, transport, information, communication
- **Participation & Inclusion** — full participation incl. decision-making
- **Specific rights** — education, health, employment, independent living, political participation, freedom from cruel treatment

◆ ICF 2001 (WHO)

International Classification of Functioning, Disability & Health — universal framework, standard language for health states.

Everyone can experience some decrease in health/functioning → not just a classification of "disease."

Combines medical + social model = **"biopsychosocial" model**, describing the interaction of:

- Health Conditions (disease, disorder, injury)
- Body Functions & Structures
- Activities (walking, communicating, self-care)
- Participation (work, education, social life)
- Environmental Factors (physical/social/attitudinal)
- Personal Factors (age, gender, coping style, background)

◆ IDH / ICIDH 1980 (WHO)

Older model — linear & more negative in tone:

Impairment — loss/abnormality of body structure or function (organ level) eg. loss of limb

Disability — resulting restriction in performing an activity (individual level) eg. difficulty walking

Handicap — resulting social disadvantage in fulfilling a normal role eg. can't work / study due to barriers

⚠ Criticised: too linear (impairment→disability→handicap) & too medical. ICF replaced it with a positive, interactive, holistic approach.

2.4 Diversity & Learning

Diversity in classrooms = variety of students/teachers/staff — race, gender + also learning styles, socio-economic status, family, religion, cognitive ability.

◆ How diversity helps learning

- Enriched perspectives → deeper & more critical thinking
- Better problem-solving & creativity from varied ideas
- Improved cognitive skills — reasoning, memory
- Prepares for a globalised world — cross-cultural skills
- Reduces prejudice & stereotypes through real interaction
- Higher engagement & motivation when identity is reflected in class

◆ Attributions (why it works)

- Cognitive dissonance → re-examining own beliefs
- Exposure to varied teaching/learning styles
- Modeling & mentorship from diverse peers/teachers
- Growth of social & emotional intelligence
- Broader shared knowledge base in discussions

◆ Embracing Diversity in Schools

- Culturally responsive teaching
- Inclusive curriculum (diverse histories, cultures, abilities)
- Professional development for staff (bias, disability awareness)
- Differentiated instruction for varied needs
- Promoting respectful dialogue / safe spaces
- Celebrating diversity — cultural events, heritage days
- Accessible learning environments & assistive tech
- Diverse hiring of staff/faculty
- Community & family engagement

◆ Equity vs Inclusion

Inclusion — everyone is fully present, integrated & belongs.

"being invited to the party"

Equity — giving each learner the specific support they personally need to succeed (not identical treatment). *"getting the right shoes to dance, for YOUR feet"*

🤝 Equity + Inclusion are symbiotic — a truly inclusive school is equitable too, addressing each student's barriers.

2.5 Diversity & the SDGs

SDGs = **17 goals** set by UN in **2015**, target year **2030** — a "blueprint" for a better, sustainable world: ending poverty + improving health/education + reducing inequality + protecting environment, together.

◆ **SDG 5 — Gender Equality**

Achieve gender equality & empower all women/girls — a human right AND a base for a peaceful, prosperous world.

Targets: end discrimination + violence against women/girls; end child marriage & FGM; value unpaid care work; equal leadership & decision-making; reproductive health rights; equal rights to economic resources/property.

→ Progress here lifts ALL other SDGs — healthier families, stronger economies.

◆ **SDG 3 — Good Health & Well-being**

Ensure healthy lives & well-being for all ages.

Targets: cut maternal & child mortality; end AIDS/TB/malaria epidemics; reduce non-communicable disease deaths; treat substance abuse; cut road-accident deaths; universal health coverage; reduce pollution-related illness.

◆ SDG 4 — Quality Education

Inclusive, equitable quality education + lifelong learning for all.

Targets: free equitable primary/secondary education; early-childhood care; equal access to technical/vocational/tertiary education; relevant skills for jobs; end gender gaps in education incl. disabled & indigenous learners; universal literacy/numeracy; child-, disability- & gender-sensitive schools.

◆ SDG 10 — Reduced Inequalities

Reduce inequality within & among countries — income AND inequality by age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion.

Targets: raise income growth of bottom 40%; social/economic/political inclusion for all; equal opportunity, remove discriminatory laws; fair fiscal/wage/social policies; better global financial regulation; voice for developing countries; safe & orderly migration.

🌐 Together SDG 5, 3, 4 & 10 show how tackling **diversity-related** disadvantage (gender, health, education, inequality) is central to sustainable development — "leave no one behind."

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