



## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Indian Teacher Training: An Institutional Perspective from SIES ICE

Ms. Nitya Vijay Kumar

Faculty, SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education  
Email: [nityak@sies.edu.in](mailto:nityak@sies.edu.in)

### Abstract:

*This article explores the importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in teacher training institutes. In India, classrooms often bring together children from different language, cultural, and economic backgrounds, such as Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, and Urdu speakers learning side by side. Teacher training institutes like the SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education (Mumbai) include programs in early childhood care, special education, and counseling to prepare teachers for these varied needs. National policies such as the Right to Education Act (2009) also highlight the need for fairness and equal access to schooling, especially for children from disadvantaged communities. By examining the foundations of DEI, its practical role in teacher preparation, and strategies for building inclusive practices into curricula and institutional culture, this article points to challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for creating classrooms where every child can learn and thrive.*

**Keywords:** Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Teacher Training, Institutional Perspective.

### Introduction:

Indian educational philosophy has always emphasized on diversity, equality, and inclusion. The Bhagavad Gita (5.18) states:

विद्याविनयसम्पन्नेब्राह्मणेगविहस्तिनि। *vidyāvinayasampannebrāhmaṇegavihastini*

शुनिचैवश्वपाकेचपण्डिताःसमदर्शिनः॥ *śunīcaivaśvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥsamadarśinaḥ*

Meaning: The wise see with equal vision a learned and humble brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and even an outcaste.” This teaching of samadarshana (equal vision) reflects the essence of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

This philosophy underscores the belief that knowledge and learning are meant for all, without distinction. It emphasizes the educator’s responsibility to recognize the inherent worth of every learner, irrespective of caste, language, or ability.

DEI is not merely a set of values but a framework that ensures all learners—regardless of caste, religion, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, or cultural background—have equitable access to quality education.

Embedding DEI into teacher training is essential for preparing educators to navigate complex classroom dynamics, promote social justice, and foster empathy and mutual respect among students. When teacher trainees are exposed to diverse perspectives early, they are better equipped to create classrooms that celebrate differences, challenge stereotypes, and encourage active participation from every learner.

India's Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009 mandates equitable access to schooling for children from disadvantaged communities, including those from economically weaker sections and marginalized castes. Complementing this, the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) emphasizes inclusive education through flexible curricula, multilingual instruction, and the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. Together, RTE and NEP provide a strong policy foundation for embedding DEI principles into teacher training, ensuring that every child, regardless of background or ability, has access to quality learning opportunities.

The principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion through the teachings of ancient educators:

- Swami Vivekananda stressed that education must be “the manifestation of perfection already in man.” His vision promotes inclusion by recognizing the inherent potential in every child, regardless of background.
- Rabindranath Tagore advocated for holistic and inclusive education through his *Shantiniketan* model, where learning was rooted in nature, culture, and respect for diversity.
- Mahatma Gandhi emphasized *Nai Talim* (basic education), which integrated craft, community service, and moral values, ensuring equity by making education accessible to rural and marginalized communities.
- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar highlighted education as the key to social justice, insisting that schools must dismantle caste-based discrimination and promote fairness.

These foundations show that DEI is not a new concept imported from outside but deeply embedded in India's own educational and philosophical traditions. Teacher training institutes like SIES ICE continue this legacy by embedding respect for diversity, fairness, and inclusion into their pedagogy.

Institutional Framework for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at SIES ICE

Diversity – Recognizing and Valuing Differences

### **Practices**

- Multilingual and multicultural learning
- Exposure to varied learner backgrounds

### **Examples**

- Lesson plans prepared by trainees include examples in Marathi, Hindi, and English.
- Internship schools represent different socio-economic and cultural communities.
- Classroom discussions encourage sharing regional traditions and experiences.
- Curriculum includes case studies of children from diverse family structures.
- Workshops on cultural sensitivity and intercultural communication help trainees understand and respect varied learner perspectives.

## Equity – Providing Fair Support and Opportunities

### Practices

- Differentiated instruction and assessment
- Need-based academic and emotional support

### Examples

- Extra mentoring sessions for student-teachers who need academic support.
- Modified assignments for trainees with learning or physical challenges.
- Use of varied assessment tools such as portfolios, reflective journals, and presentations.
- Access to digital resources and assistive materials for all trainees.
- To promote low-cost, recycled teaching materials and adaptable lesson designs to ensure meaningful participation for learners from all socio-economic backgrounds.
- Regular feedback and monitoring ensure equitable opportunities for trainees to progress at their own pace.

## Inclusion – Creating Belonging and Participation

### Practices

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Inclusive classroom climate

### Examples

- Trainees design lesson plans adaptable for children with disabilities.
- Group activities ensure participation of every student-teacher.
- Counseling and guidance services support emotional well-being.
- Feedback mechanisms allow student voices in improving teaching practices.
- Peer mentoring and collaborative projects encourage active participation, strengthen social bonds, and promote a sense of belonging among all trainees.

## Practices and Programs Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education

Sr. No.	Practice / Program	Description and DEI Impact
1	Classroom Simulations and Role Play	Trainees participate in role-play activities representing diverse learner profiles, including students with special needs, multilingual backgrounds, and marginalized communities. These activities support inclusive lesson planning and real-time pedagogical adaptation.
2	Inclusive Lesson Planning Workshops	Trainees design lesson plans incorporating multicultural content such as stories, examples, and case studies. Faculty review ensures equitable resource use and inclusive language.

3	Fieldwork in Diverse School Settings	Exposure to government, private, and special education schools enhances trainees' ability to manage diverse classrooms, including multilingual learners and children with disabilities.
4	Peer Reflection and Journaling	Trainees maintain reflective journals during practicum experiences. Structured reflection assignments promote critical examination of bias, equity, and inclusive practices.
5	Counseling Practice	Under supervision, trainees conduct counseling sessions with children to identify emotional and behavioral challenges linked to inequities such as poverty, discrimination, and trauma.
6	Community Engagement Projects	Collaboration with NGOs, urban slum schools, rural learning centers, and organizations such as Local Gyan, a Vashi-based initiative, enhances trainees' awareness of systemic inequities. Through workshops on inclusive and contextually relevant teaching practices, trainees are prepared to advocate for social justice and apply experiential, community-based approaches in education.
7	Technology for Inclusion	Training in assistive technologies, including screen readers and adaptive applications, enables trainees to design lesson plans that support equitable access to learning.
8	ICT Training	ICT-focused training enhances digital literacy and supports the development of interactive and inclusive teaching–learning materials.
9	Individualized Academic Support	Faculty provide personalized guidance based on trainees' individual strengths, challenges, and professional goals.
10	Equitable Learning Practices	Personalized instructional support helps bridge learning gaps and ensures equal learning opportunities for all trainees.
11	Inclusive Mentorship	Faculty mentoring promotes confidence, resilience, and appreciation of diversity while supporting trainees in recognizing and overcoming bias.
12	Holistic Development Initiatives	Emphasis on personal, social, and academic development prepares trainees to become competent, independent, and socially responsible professionals, embedding DEI into daily practice.
13	NLP Programme at SIES ICE	The NLP programme strengthens communication, empathy, and self-development by valuing diverse communication styles (diversity), offering need-based support (equity), and fostering empathetic listening and belonging (inclusion).

*Note.* DEI = Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; NLP = Neuro-Linguistic Programming.

#### Impact at SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education (ICE)

Graduates of the teacher education programs at SIES Institute of Comprehensive Education (ICE) enter schools and community settings with a strong commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). They apply these values in their professional practice by creating learning environments where every child feels respected, supported, and encouraged to participate, regardless of background or ability.

The institution has also witnessed increased participation of women and young learners in its programs, contributing to their financial independence, professional confidence, and leadership development. This empowerment extends beyond classrooms, enabling graduates to assume influential roles in educational and social contexts.

Alumni of SIES ICE have emerged as change agents who introduce innovative teaching practices, integrate technology to support diverse learning needs, and design fair and inclusive lesson plans. Their contributions demonstrate the practical impact of DEI in shaping equitable classrooms and socially responsive education.

Through consistent implementation of DEI principles, SIES ICE has established itself as a recognized center for inclusive teacher education. Its approach serves as a model for institutions seeking to combine academic rigor with social responsibility and meaningful educational practice.

### **Conclusion:**

Making DEI practical in teacher training means moving beyond lectures into real-world simulations, fieldwork, and reflective practice. At SIES ICE, pedagogy is designed to ensure that every trainee learns to teach inclusively, counsel empathetically, and advocate for equity in classrooms.

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