An exploration of the conceptualization, guiding principles, and theoretical perspectives of inclusive curriculum

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Abstract: This paper extensively examines the concept of inclusive curriculum in education by conducting a comprehensive review of relevant literature. Its primary objective is to promote equal opportunities and meaningful learning experiences for all students. The study sheds light on the multifaceted dimensions of inclusive curriculum, investigates key theoretical perspectives in inclusive education, and analyzes the various components of curriculum within an inclusive framework. The inclusive curriculum encompasses content, instructional methods, assessment strategies, and learning environments, which collectively contribute to a comprehensive and holistic approach. The paper emphasizes the significance of fundamental principles such as equity, access, social justice, collaboration, individualized support, positive school climate, and inclusive policies and systems in the design and implementation of an inclusive curriculum. The examination of theoretical perspectives, including the social model of disability, constructivism, critical pedagogy, and universal design for learning, underscores their relevance to inclusive curriculum. These perspectives underscore the importance of recognizing and embracing diverse identities and cultures, thereby fostering inclusive learning environments that promote diversity, equity, and meaningful participation. In conclusion, the paper highlights the pivotal role of adopting an inclusive curriculum in cultivating inclusive learning environments that prioritize diversity, equity, and meaningful participation. The synthesis of literature and theoretical perspectives provides valuable insights into the design and implementation of effective inclusive curricula in educational settings.

Keywords: Access, Conceptualization, Equity, Inclusive curriculum, Key principles, Social justice, Theoretical perspectives.

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a philosophy and approach that aims to provide equitable access and opportunities in education for all learners, regardless of their backgrounds, abilities, or needs. It strives to create a supportive learning environment where every student is valued, respected, and able to participate fully. Inclusive education seeks to eliminate obstacles to learning and participation by providing the necessary supports, accommodations, and adaptations within mainstream classrooms (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020; OECD, 2023).

Inclusive education goes beyond simply integrating or mainstreaming students with disabilities into regular classrooms. It embraces diversity in the broadest sense, including factors like ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, gender, and learning styles. Inclusive education recognizes that each learner has unique strengths and experiences to contribute (Kart & Kart, 2021; Shahi, 2022; Sharma, 2019).

Inclusive classrooms can have positive social impacts on all students. Interacting with diverse peers can decrease fear, hostility, prejudice, and discrimination, while increasing tolerance, empathy, and understanding overall. In this way, inclusion helps foster a more inclusive society (Kart & Kart, 2021).

Inclusive education aims to provide quality learning experiences for all children, regardless of background or ability. It encourages social integration and mutual understanding among students (UNICEF, 2017). By providing appropriate supports, inclusive education also enables children with disabilities to actively participate and contribute economically and socially in their communities (OECD, 2023; Regmi, 2017).

While the benefits of inclusion are widely acknowledged, challenges remain in implementation, both theoretically and practically (Mendoza & Heymann, 2022; Schuelka & Engsig, 2022). There is still debate around defining inclusive education consistently on a global level (Mendoza & Heymann, 2022). Capturing its complexity as both a principle and practical application continues to be an ongoing challenge in the field of education (Regmi, 2017).

Important historical milestones have helped shape today's understanding of inclusive education. These include the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision in the U.S., the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the 1978 Warnock Report in the U.K., the 1994 Salamanca Statement, and the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the U.S. (Great Britain, 1978; U.S. Department of Education, 1997, 2004; UNESCO, 1994; United States Courts, 1954; Zettel & Ballard, 1979).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international treaty adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations (2006), recognized the right to inclusive education for persons with disabilities and urged countries to provide reasonable accommodations and support for inclusive educational practices (United Nations, 2006). Finally, Goal 4 of the United Nations (2015), emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education for all, highlighting the importance of removing barriers and ensuring inclusive learning environments (United Nations, 2015). These milestones and movements have played a crucial role in shaping and advancing inclusive education globally, promoting equal educational opportunities, and challenging discriminatory practices.

Inclusive education entails a comprehensive transformation of the entire education system (UNICEF, 2017). This transformation encompasses various aspects, including legislation and policy development, financial systems, administrative procedures, educational design and delivery methods, as well as monitoring and evaluation practices. Furthermore, it necessitates reorganizing schools to create an inclusive environment that caters to the diverse needs of all learners. Inclusive education goes beyond individual classrooms and seeks to bring about systemic changes that enable equal access and opportunities for all students. The components of inclusive education are presented in Figure 1.

Nepal is renowned for its rich cultural heritage and is considered one of the world's most culturally diverse countries. The 2011 National Population Census identified 125 caste/ethnic groups in Nepal, with 123 different languages spoken as mother tongues. According to the report of the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) (2021) literacy rate in Nepal is 83.6 percent, and the percentage of people with disabilities is 2.2 percent. Given the educational status, and geographical and ethnographic diversity of Nepal, the effective implementation of inclusive education is crucial. Historically, diverse groups such as children with disabilities, girls, marginalized communities, and those from rural areas have faced barriers to education in Nepal (Neupane, 2020).

Figure 1.
Inclusive curriculum components.

2. Objectives of the Study
1. To understand the key concepts and guiding principles of inclusive education.
2. To identify the key theoretical perspectives of inclusive education.

3. Methodology
This study employs a combination of desk review and the researcher's extensive personal experiences in the field of inclusive education. By leveraging insights accumulated over a decade of involvement in this domain and conducting a thorough examination of pertinent literature, this study aims to augment the current understanding of inclusive education. Its primary objective is to bridge existing gaps in knowledge by offering a comprehensive exploration of the conceptualization, key principles, and theoretical perspectives that underpin inclusive education.

4. Results and Discussion
4.1. Conceptualization of Inclusive Education
Regardless of their backgrounds or skills, all students should have equal access to and opportunity in education (OECD, 2023; Regmi, 2017). This is the goal of the inclusive education strategy. It cultivates a setting where obstacles to learning and engagement are removed and where each student feels appreciated and encouraged. Including students with disabilities or special needs in normal classes is simply one aspect of inclusive education. It acknowledges and values diversity, which includes elements like socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and learning preferences (OECD, 2023; UNICEF, 2017). Every student has different abilities and needs, and this policy encourages their acceptance and participation in regular classes while providing the necessary assistance and adjustments.

The conceptualization of inclusive education started gaining prominence in the mid-20th century, with several key figures contributing to its development. One notable contributor is UNESCO, which published the "Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education" in 1994, emphasizing the importance of inclusive education for children with disabilities (UNESCO, 1994). This document served as a significant milestone in the global understanding and promotion of inclusive education. Scholars such as Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson have also made significant contributions to the conceptualization of inclusive education. Their research and writings highlight the importance of addressing barriers to learning and participation in mainstream schools (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2004). Florian and Linklater are renowned researchers who have advanced the understanding of inclusive education, focusing on policy, pedagogy, and practices that support the inclusion of all learners, particularly those with disabilities (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Booth and Ainscow have collaborated extensively on inclusive education research and practice, emphasizing the importance of inclusive school cultures, collaborative practices, and contextualized approaches (Booth & Ainscow, 2011).

The concept of inclusive education has been shaped by numerous influential figures and organizations over time, though it is difficult to attribute its development to a single pioneer (Ainscow, 2005). Some key contributors to the field include Maria Montessori, who emphasized creating inclusive learning environments accommodating diverse needs (Montessori, 1912). Lev Vygotsky also highlighted the importance of providing appropriate support through his theories on the zone of proximal development and scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). Professor Mel Ainscow from the UK has prominently advocated for inclusive practices through research, publications, and collaborations globally (Ainscow, 2005). Additionally, the Warnock Report "Special Educational Needs", published in the UK in 1978, was groundbreaking in advocating for inclusive education and profoundly impacted educational policies worldwide (Warnock Report, 1978). While several pioneers contributed valuable insights, inclusive education emerged through the combined efforts of many over time, aimed at promoting equitable and quality education for all learners regardless of differences.

4.2. Key Principles of Inclusive Education

Principles play a crucial role in any subject or field by providing a foundational framework that guides understanding, decision-making, and practice. The key principles of inclusive education are fundamental guidelines that shape the philosophy and practices of creating inclusive learning environments that accommodate the diverse needs of all learners. The core principles of inclusive education are based on the belief that all students can learn and thrive in an inclusive environment. Bunist, Sorin, and Ciolan (2022) describe five key principles of inclusive education: education for all, individual needs, barrier-free environment, respect for diversity, and effective learning. However, we can mention some key principles as stated below.

4.2.1. Access to Equal Opportunity

Access to equal opportunity refers to the principle of ensuring that all individuals have the same chances and resources to succeed, regardless of their backgrounds, characteristics, or circumstances (OECD, 2023; Reardon & Portilla, 2016). It encompasses various domains, including education, employment, healthcare, and social services. Some of the major accesses to equal opportunity regarding inclusive education are discussed briefly.

Education. Equal access to education is a fundamental component of ensuring equal opportunity. It involves providing all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, gender, disability, or other factors, with equitable access to quality education (UNESCO, 2015). Recent research has emphasized the importance of equal educational opportunities in promoting social mobility, reducing inequalities, and fostering individual development and societal progress (OECD, 2021; Reardon & Portilla, 2016).

Employment. Equal opportunity in the workplace refers to creating a level playing field where individuals have equal access to employment, career advancement, and fair treatment. It involves eliminating discriminatory practices and promoting diversity, inclusion, and merit-based selection processes (OECD, 2021). Recent studies have highlighted the benefits of equal opportunity in employment, including improved productivity, innovation, and employee well-being (Konrad, Erkut, Singh, & Moore, 2020; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014).

Healthcare. Access to equal opportunity in healthcare means everyone, regardless of their background, has fair and unbiased access to healthcare services. This includes factors like a person's economic status, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics. It involves addressing healthcare disparities, promoting health equity, and providing culturally responsive and inclusive care (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). Recent literature has emphasized the importance of equal opportunity in healthcare for achieving better health outcomes, reducing health inequalities, and advancing population health (Mackenbach, McKee, & Marmot, 2019).

Social Services. Equal opportunity in accessing social services encompasses various areas, such as social welfare programs, housing, and support services for vulnerable populations. It involves providing individuals with fair and equitable access to necessary resources and support systems (Burchardt, Obolenskaya, & Vizard, 2019). Recent research has highlighted the positive impact of equal opportunity in social services on poverty reduction, social inclusion, and overall well-being (Cunha, Heckman, & Schennach, 2010).

In conclusion, access to equal opportunity is crucial for promoting fairness, social justice, and individual and societal well-being. Equal opportunity in education, employment, healthcare, and social services is essential for reducing inequalities and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

4.2.2. Equity and Social Justice

Equity and social justice are essential principles within inclusive education that aim to ensure fairness, equal opportunities, and the elimination of discrimination. Inclusive education promotes equity and social justice by ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or abilities, have equal access to quality education (Konrad et al., 2020; OECD, 2021; World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). The principles of equity and social justice enhance the inclusive education in the following areas.

Fairness and Equal Opportunities. Equity in inclusive education recognizes that all learners, regardless of their background, abilities, or characteristics, have the right to receive a quality education (Jacobs, 2010; OECD, 2021). It emphasizes the provision of equal opportunities for learning, participation, and success. Inclusive education aims to remove barriers and address systemic inequalities to ensure that every student has an equitable chance to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

Addressing Discrimination and Exclusion. Inclusive education promotes social justice by actively addressing and combating discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization within educational settings (Ginwright, 2018). It seeks to create safe and inclusive environments where diversity is valued and celebrated (World Health Organization (WHO), 2021). This involves challenging stereotypes, biases, and prejudices and fostering an environment that respects and appreciates the unique identities and experiences of all learners.

Recognizing and Valuing Diversity. Equity and social justice in inclusive education involve recognizing and valuing the diversity of learners (Konrad et al., 2020). It acknowledges that students come from different cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, and ability backgrounds, and their experiences and perspectives enrich the learning environment. Inclusive education embraces diversity as a strength and seeks to create inclusive practices and policies that honor and include the voices and experiences of all individuals.

Reducing Disparities and Providing Support. Inclusive education addresses disparities in educational outcomes by providing targeted support and resources to learners who face additional challenges (Konrad et al., 2020). This includes students with disabilities, those from marginalized communities, and those who may require extra support to access the curriculum (Burchardt et al., 2019).

Inclusive education seeks to bridge the achievement gap and ensure that all students have the necessary support to succeed academically and holistically (Wang, Degol, & Ye, 2021).

Advocacy and Social Change. Equity and social justice in inclusive education involve advocating for policy changes, reforms, and inclusive practices at the systemic level (Bunist et al., 2022). It aims to challenge and transform existing structures and systems that perpetuate inequality and exclusion. Inclusive education seeks to create a more equitable society by promoting awareness, understanding, and action towards social justice within educational institutions and the broader community.

Ultimately, inclusive education strives to create a society that celebrates diversity, fosters empathy, and promotes social cohesion. It aims to break down the barriers that hinder the realization of each student's potential, ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and contribute meaningfully to the world around them. By upholding equity and social justice, inclusive education paves the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for all.

4.2.3. Collaboration and Partnerships

Inclusive education emphasizes collaboration among educators, families, and community members to support student learning, well-being, and inclusion. Collaboration and partnerships play a crucial role in promoting inclusive education. They involve fostering strong relationships and effective communication among educators, families, students, and the community to create inclusive learning environments (Friend & Cook, 2020). The collaboration and partnership can enhance inclusive education in the following ways.

Collaboration among Educators. Inclusive education emphasizes collaboration among educators from different disciplines, such as general education teachers, special education teachers, and support staff. Collaborative teams work together to design and implement instructional strategies, accommodations, and interventions that meet the diverse needs of all learners (Friend & Cook, 2020). They engage in shared decision-making, resource sharing, and co-planning to provide a cohesive and inclusive educational experience.

Partnerships with Families. Inclusive education recognizes the importance of strong partnerships between educators and families. Collaboration with families involves actively involving them in decision-making processes, sharing information, and seeking their input regarding their child's educational goals and support needs (Friend & Cook, 2020). Research suggests that meaningful partnerships with families can positively impact students' academic progress, social-emotional development, and self-advocacy skills (Harry & Klingner, 2014).

Student Involvement and Self-Advocacy. Collaboration in inclusive education extends to involving students in the decision-making process and fostering their self-advocacy skills. Engaging students in setting their goals, discussing their learning preferences, and involving them in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings promotes their active participation and ownership of their educational journey (Council for Exceptional Children, 2021; Friend & Cook, 2020). Students' active involvement in their education enhances their motivation, self-confidence, and sense of belonging.

Community Engagement and Partnerships. Inclusive education acknowledges the importance of involving the broader community in supporting inclusive practices. Collaborating with community organizations, local businesses, and service providers helps create inclusive environments that extend beyond the classroom walls (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2018). Community partnerships can contribute to creating inclusive opportunities, providing resources, and fostering social connections for students with diverse needs.

Thus, collaboration and partnerships can promote inclusive education. By working together, educators, families, students, and the community can create inclusive learning environments that support the diverse needs of all learners, enhance educational outcomes, and foster a sense of belonging and well-being.

4.2.4. Individualized Support and Differentiation

Individualized support and differentiation are integral components of inclusive education. They involve tailoring instruction and support to meet the unique needs of each learner, ensuring equitable educational opportunities for all (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Inclusive education recognizes and addresses the unique strengths and needs of each learner through individualized support, differentiated instruction, and personalized learning approaches (Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). Inclusive education can be supported by individualized support and differentiation in the following ways.

Individualized Support. Individualized support refers to providing personalized assistance and accommodations to students with diverse learning needs. It involves identifying and addressing the specific strengths, challenges, and interests of each learner. Individualized support may include modifications to the curriculum, instructional materials, or assessments, as well as the provision of assistive technologies or support from specialized professionals (McLeskey et al., 2017; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2011). Research indicates that individualized support can have a positive impact on student engagement, achievement, and overall well-being (Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano, & Asghar, 2016).

Differentiation. Differentiation involves adjusting instruction to accommodate learners' varying abilities, interests, and learning styles. It encompasses adapting content, instructional strategies, and assessment methods to meet the diverse needs of students within a classroom (Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Differentiated instruction aims to provide multiple pathways for learning, allowing students to access and engage with the content at their own level and pace. Recent studies emphasize the effectiveness of differentiation in promoting academic growth, motivation, and positive learning outcomes for all students (Hattie, 2008; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013).

Thus, inclusive education recognizes the importance of individualized support and differentiation to ensure equitable access to education for all learners. It supports by tailoring instruction to address students' unique needs, inclusive practices promote a sense of belonging, engagement, and success for every student.

4.2.5. Positive School Climate and Culture Changed Text

A supportive school climate and culture have a significant effect on creating an inclusive and nurturing learning environment. These elements play a crucial role in creating a climate that supports respect, inclusion, and general student wellbeing, regardless of their varied backgrounds or skill levels. When diversity is embraced, acceptance is encouraged, and a safe and welcoming atmosphere is created for all students, inclusive education flourishes (Collie, Martin, & Papworth, 2020). Positive school environment and culture are significant because of their numerous contributions to inclusive education, which take the following forms:

Positive School Climate. Positive school climate refers to the overall atmosphere and tone of a school, characterized by a sense of safety, inclusivity, and support. It encompasses the relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and the broader school community. A positive school climate nurtures a sense of belonging, promotes positive social interactions, and encourages active student engagement (Lombardi et al., 2019). Recent research has shown that a positive school climate is associated with higher academic achievement, increased student motivation, and improved social-emotional well-being (Konishi, Hymel, Zumbo, & Li, 2019; Wang et al., 2021).

Inclusive School Culture. Inclusive school culture refers to the values, beliefs, and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity within the school community. It recognizes and celebrates the unique contributions and identities of all students, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. An inclusive school culture embraces and supports students with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs, ensuring that they have equitable access to opportunities and resources (Artiles, Kozleski, & Waitoller, 2020; Santos, Alves, & Silva, 2020). Recent studies highlight the positive impact of inclusive school culture on student outcomes, including academic achievement, social-emotional development, and overall well-being (Artiles et al., 2020; Pijl, Meijer, & Hegarty, 2021).

In conclusion, positive school climate and culture are essential components of inclusive education. They foster an environment where diversity is celebrated, inclusion is prioritized, and all students can thrive. By promoting respect, acceptance, and well-being, a positive school climate and culture contribute to improved academic outcomes, social-emotional development, and overall success for all learners.

4.2.6. Inclusive Policies and Systems

Inclusive policies and systems are critical components of inclusive education. They involve the development and implementation of regulations, practices, and structures that ensure equitable access to education and support the diverse needs of all learners. Inclusive education requires the development and implementation of inclusive policies and systems that support the inclusion of all students and provide necessary resources and support services (Pijl, Meijer, & Hegarty, 1997). The inclusive policies and systems support the inclusive education in the following ways.

Inclusive Policies. Inclusive policies are guidelines and regulations that promote equal educational opportunities and remove barriers to participation for all students. These policies may address areas such as curriculum, assessment, teacher training, funding, and the provision of support services (UNESCO, 2017). Inclusive policies aim to eliminate discrimination, promote diversity, and create an inclusive learning environment. Recent research highlights the importance of inclusive policies in facilitating the inclusion of students with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

Inclusive Systems. Inclusive systems encompass the structures, processes, and practices that support the implementation of inclusive education at various levels, including the school, district, and national levels. It involves collaboration among stakeholders, such as educators, administrators, families, and community members, to create a comprehensive and sustainable framework for inclusive education (Booth & Ainscow, 2011; OECD, 2021). Inclusive systems promote collaboration, capacity-building, and shared responsibility for meeting the needs of all learners. Recent studies emphasize the importance of establishing inclusive systems to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education (Nolan, Armstrong, & Munn, 2021).

In conclusion, inclusive policies and systems are crucial for the successful implementation of inclusive education. They provide the framework and support necessary to ensure equitable access to education and meet the diverse needs of all learners. By implementing inclusive policies and establishing inclusive systems, education systems can work towards creating inclusive environments that value diversity, promote participation, and enable the success of every student.

4.3. Theoretical Perspective of Inclusive Education

Theoretical perspectives provide a conceptual framework for understanding and implementing inclusive education in educational settings. It encompasses various theoretical approaches that inform the principles, strategies, and underlying beliefs of inclusive education (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2021). This section discusses the theoretical lenses that inform inclusive education practices. It explores theoretical perspectives such as social justice, emphasizing equitable access and opportunities; disability studies, challenging traditional medical models and focusing on social and cultural aspects; and cultural responsiveness, recognizing and valuing diverse cultural backgrounds and identities (Regmi, 2017). The major theoretical perspectives of inclusive education are discussed briefly.

4.3.1. Social Model of Disability

An important theoretical perspective that supports inclusive education is the social model of disability. According to this theory, disability is mostly caused by social and environmental barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating in society and being included (Owens, 2015). Instead of viewing disability as just an individual medical or biological issue, the social model of disability stresses how societal barriers and attitudes contribute to the exclusion and marginalization of people with

disabilities (Florian, 2018). In order for all students, including those with disabilities, to fully engage in educational opportunities, barriers must be removed and an inclusive atmosphere must be created (UNESCO, 2017). This strategy acknowledges that disability is a social construct driven by societal barriers that are physical, psychological, and structural and that these obstacles can be removed by inclusive educational methods (Owens, 2015).

According to this perspective, inclusive education aims to remove these barriers and create inclusive environments that accommodate diverse learners (UNESCO, 2017). Recent research has highlighted the importance of the social model of disability in guiding inclusive education practices and policies (Armstrong et al., 2021).

4.3.2. Constructivism

Constructivism is a learning philosophy that emphasizes the importance of students actively creating their own knowledge through their interactions with the outside world and with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivism supports the idea that all students, regardless of their ability, gain greatly from active, hands-on learning experiences and collaborative interactions with both classmates and teachers (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). This idea is central to the inclusive education movement. Constructivism emphasizes the value of students actively engaging with their surroundings as an educational philosophy. According to Artiles and Kozleski (2016), inclusive education promotes the development of learning environments that are attentive to the various needs and experiences of all students, including those who have impairments. Constructivism emphasizes the need for individualized instruction by recognizing the distinctive prior knowledge, experiences, and cultural backgrounds that learners bring to the learning process.

Constructivist approaches in inclusive education promote student-centered learning, collaborative activities, and hands-on experiences. They emphasize the importance of engaging students in meaningful and authentic learning tasks that encourage critical thinking, problem-solving, and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts (Loreman & Deppeler, 2019). By focusing on the active participation and contributions of all students, constructivism supports inclusive practices that value and respect the unique abilities and perspectives of each learner (Florian, Linklater, & Black-Hawkins, 2019). Recent studies have explored the application of constructivist principles in inclusive classrooms, highlighting its potential for promoting engagement, critical thinking, and social-emotional development (Charmaz, 2014; Florian et al., 2019).

4.3.3. Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is an educational framework dedicated to ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students by eliminating barriers and creating adaptable instructional materials and strategies (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014; Rose & Gravel, 2014). This approach recognizes the inherent diversity among learners and emphasizes the need for multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to address their varying strengths, interests, and learning styles. It encourages the use of many forms of representation, interaction, and expression in order to account for learners' varied needs, preferences, and talents. According to Basham, Hall, and Carter (2020), universal design for learning offers a paradigm for creating inclusive learning environments that cater to the requirements of all students, including those with impairments. It is a framework that encourages the creation of adaptable learning environments and educational resources that all students, regardless of their background, may access and use (Meyer et al., 2014; Rose & Gravel, 2014). In order to meet the varied learning requirements and preferences of learners, it places a strong emphasis on the provision of multiple modes of representation, engagement, and expression (Meyer et al., 2014). Various representations, various engagements, and multiple manifestations are its three main pillars (Meyer et al., 2014; Rose & Gravel, 2014).

Multiple Representation. It denotes providing content in various formats and modalities to support diverse learning styles, such as text, images, videos, and audio.

Multiple Means of Engagement. It emphasizes providing options for students to become motivated and engaged in their learning, such as allowing for student choice, incorporating interactive activities, and promoting self-assessment.

Multiple Means of Expression. It offers diverse ways for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, such as through written assignments, oral presentations, multimedia projects, or other creative means.

Recent research has examined the effectiveness of UDL in promoting inclusive practices and improving student outcomes across various educational settings (Basham et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2014). Thus, universal design for learning helps to promote inclusive education by incorporating these principles to create inclusive learning environments that minimize barriers, promote accessibility, and foster equitable opportunities for all students to learn and succeed.

4.3.4. Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a theoretical perspective that emphasizes the examination and transformation of social inequalities and power dynamics through education (Florian, 2018). Critical pedagogy is an educational approach that aims to empower students and promote social justice by encouraging critical thinking, reflection, and action. In the context of inclusive education, critical pedagogy seeks to challenge and transform oppressive systems and structures that marginalize certain groups of students, including those with disabilities. It recognizes the importance of addressing power dynamics and promoting equity in educational settings (Florian, 2018). In inclusive education, critical pedagogy promotes the development of critical consciousness, social justice, and advocacy for marginalized students (Giroux & McLaren, 2017). Recent literature has explored the application of critical pedagogy in inclusive classrooms, highlighting its potential for fostering empowerment, self-advocacy, and social change (Ginwright, 2018; Giroux & McLaren, 2017).

The theoretical perspectives of inclusive education provide a foundation for understanding the principles, strategies, and values that underpin inclusive practices in educational settings (Ginwright, 2018). The social model of disability, constructivism, universal design for learning, and critical pedagogy are among the key theoretical perspectives that inform inclusive education. By employing these theoretical frameworks, educators and researchers can work towards creating inclusive learning environments that value diversity, promote participation, and support the success of all learners. Critical pedagogy in inclusive education focuses on the following key principles:

Problem-posing Education. Encouraging students to critically analyze and question social norms, biases, and injustices, promotes a deeper understanding of the world around them.

Dialogue and Collaboration. Creating a democratic and inclusive learning environment where students are encouraged to share their perspectives, engage in meaningful discussions, and collaborate with others.

Empowerment and Agency. Fostering students' sense of agency and empowering them to take action to challenge injustice and advocate for inclusive practices.

Thus, critical pedagogy within the context of inclusive education explores the principles and applications of critical pedagogy, emphasizing its potential to challenge oppressive systems, foster critical consciousness, and promote inclusive practices in education. Also, it highlights the need to create educational environments that empower students, value their diverse perspectives, and address systemic barriers to ensure equitable opportunities for all learners.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of inclusive curriculum has highlighted its significance in providing equal opportunities and meaningful learning experiences for all students by adopting a holistic approach to creating inclusive and empowering educational experiences. Guided by principles of equity, access, and social justice, an inclusive curriculum challenges traditional educational notions and promotes diversity and meaningful participation. The examination of various theoretical perspectives, including

the social model of disability, critical pedagogy, and universal design for learning, has shed light on the diverse insights and strategies for fostering inclusive practices. These perspectives advocate for the removal of barriers, the development of critical consciousness, and the addressing of social inequalities.

In embracing an inclusive curriculum, educators, policymakers, and researchers have the opportunity to transform educational practices and establish inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity, ensure equity, and foster meaningful participation for all students. This exploration serves as a valuable resource, offering insights and guidance to those dedicated to advancing inclusive curriculum and its potential to enhance educational outcomes. By doing so, we can collectively strive towards the creation of a society that values and supports every learner, providing them with equal opportunities to flourish and make meaningful contributions.

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