

PART 1

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I UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ENGAGEMENT

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- » To develop an understanding of the principles behind inclusion, particularly in educational contexts
- » To begin to develop an understanding of the factors—international, national, humanitarian and social—that contribute to the formation and implementation of legislation, policy
- » To be able to reflect these understandings in initial discussions and analysis of cases and situations where the inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds or with specific needs is considered
- » and practice towards educational inclusion and engagement

KEY TERMS

- » engagement
- » equity
- » inclusion
- » integration
- » mainstreaming
- » school belonging
- » Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

INTRODUCTION

According to ABS data (ABS 2019b), almost 30 per cent of the Australian population was born overseas, with the highest percentage of immigrants born in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, followed by India, China and the Philippines and Vietnam. New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria have the highest proportions of overseas-born citizens. Australia is one of the most culturally diverse nations on earth and about 23 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home (ABS 2016b). Religious affiliations are 34 per cent Christian, 31 per cent another religion and 30 per cent with no religious affiliation. This extensive cultural and linguistic diversity within the Australian population is reflected in our schools and their communities. Other characteristics of diversity reflected in our schools are the greater access and participation of students of Indigenous heritage, students from different faith systems, and students with impairments, disabilities or disadvantages (including poverty) that influence their development of communicative competence, social competence, cognitive ability, or literacy and numeracy.

Australia has committed to a range of legislative instruments at state, national and international levels that promote **inclusion** of all citizens, while prohibiting forms of discrimination. All states and territories have enacted such legislation, which is reflected in overarching Commonwealth legislation. While the social and academic inclusion of the diversity of individuals and groups in our schools is often taken for granted, this is a relatively recent process and one that is still in progress. We start here to analyse how inclusion takes place in schools and how to best promote its objectives and determine the nature of the **engagement** that students achieve.

inclusion

A set of processes and practices concerned with removing barriers to presence, participation and progress for all students.

engagement

Can be generally seen as student participation in educationally effective practices, both inside and outside the classroom, which leads to a range of potentially measurable outcomes.

STORIES OF INCLUSION

Inclusion and the law

In Australian states there have been several State Supreme Court cases that considered the issue of school inclusion. At least two recent cases have concerned the rights of a deaf child to attend their local school and participate equitably in the school's curriculum and out-of-class activities. The focus in these cases was not on the child's degree of hearing loss or specifically on their education achievements, but on the language used in classroom instruction and the communication modes available in the school to best support the child's inclusion, development and learning. Specifically, the plaintiffs claimed that Auslan, the sign language used by the Australian Deaf Community and part of Australia's National Language Policy, was the child's 'natural' language and should have been available to the child in the regular classroom to support their early communication access as a bridge towards subsequent achievements. The schools involved claimed that this was an unreasonable accommodation whereby the teachers and support staff would have had to acquire or provide a second language and develop a bilingual environment in their classrooms.

On the surface this can seem to be an issue of specific accommodation for a deaf learner, but there are sub-issues that the courts and case analysts found difficult to reconcile:

- 1 Does the court need to determine whether the child does, in fact, have proficiency in Auslan?¹
- 2 Does this language provide access to all areas of the curriculum and especially towards the achievement of literacy in English (an agreed national schools objective) and learning outcomes comparable with hearing students at the same year level?
- 3 What is the capacity of a state education authority to be able to provide a proficient model of Auslan in the classroom?
- 4 Would this accommodation mean that other non-English languages recognised under the National Language Policy should also be available for instruction in Australian classrooms? For example, very few schools in Australia use Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages in schooling, even though there are now a number of valuable resources and curricula available in these languages. There is significant evidence that use of 'mother tongue' in the early years of schooling provides a useful 'bridge' to literacy in English.

The states' Supreme Courts have typically ruled in a limited way under state anti-discrimination legislation and in the context of the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, but sufficiently enough to suggest that Auslan as a visual language should be available to deaf students in regular schools in most Australian states and territories. Although courts cannot mandate the outcomes of such a provision, as a consequence of anti-discrimination legislation Australian states now provide many regular classes with Auslan interpreters, communication aides, note-takers and teachers who have some degree of proficiency with this language. ■

PAUSE AND REFLECT

- 1 To what extent is this story and the possible use of Auslan for classroom instruction an example of effective inclusion?
- 2 Which principles of inclusion are involved and which aspects of current legislation and international agreements are reflected?

INCLUSION: WHAT'S IN A WORD?

The word 'inclusion', when used in an educational context, continues to be somewhat paradoxical for many observers. Inclusion in its most general sense refers to the right to access and active participation and achieving **equity** through engagement in all aspects of daily life. The concept is founded in human rights principles and is evident in many of the international agreements that Australia has legally committed to.

equity

The achievement of outcomes that are equal.

¹ It can also be noted that currently more than 85 per cent of severely and profoundly deaf students in Australia have a cochlear implant which, without guaranteeing effectively normal hearing or eliminating the need for access to supportive signed communication, may significantly enhance their potential for spoken language acquisition in adequate listening conditions. Further, more than 96 per cent of parents of deaf children use a spoken language at home.

Our rights may be seen as falling into three broad areas. First, we have *moral rights*, which are justified on the basis of the ethical or moral values that we hold, or that our cultural communities accept. Second, we have *legal rights*, which are enforceable in domestic law and in domestic or international courts. Third, we have *human rights*, which are recognised in international law and conventions on the basis of a consensus within the international community that they are inherent among humanity.

There are, of course, overlaps among these categories as nations seek to encapsulate some of their ethical or moral beliefs in legal requirements, or as nations sign international agreements and by doing so are required to enact enabling legislation to implement the principles of the signed agreement within their country. Nation states that sign these international treaties have the obligation to respect them, protect those concerned and, importantly, fulfil their obligations under the treaties and conventions. For example, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 1989) has been signed and ratified by all but three nations (Somalia, South Sudan and the USA). This binding convention stipulates a child's right to participate in everyday events and opportunities, limits any attempts to restrict this right and is designed to protect children from forms of discrimination. Another UN Convention agreed to by Australia is the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, which defines a refugee as a person who has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

There are several other international conventions and agreements that contain guidelines which provide us with structural contexts, and even imperatives, depending on how influenced we are by the proclamations of these conventions and agreements. The perspectives of the Convention on the Rights of the Child apply in Australia, but so do those of the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO 1994), the World Education Forum (UNESCO 2000) and, most recently, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN General Assembly 2007), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006 and ratified in 2008. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), which implements and monitors the national Australian Curriculum from Foundation to Year 12, respects and reflects these agreements and their implications for responding to diversity and provides guidelines and resources for teachers.

Some of these conventions concern students with a disability. However, before considering this specific group we need to consider the broader principles of equity, for equity is central to inclusion through education.

In terms of understanding equity in education, one should consider four basic questions:

- 1 Do all individuals or groups have the same chance of progressing to a particular level in the education system and beyond?
- 2 Do all individuals enjoy equivalent learning conditions?
- 3 Do all students develop the skills and knowledge that are designated as the goals of the education system?
- 4 Once they have left the education system, do individuals or groups have the same chances of using their acquired skills and knowledge to realise their potential in society?

These questions reveal the basis of equity—not only of equal opportunity or equal access, but also equity in terms of outcomes. This issue of outcomes is a most important one.

An internet search of the literature about diversity and inclusion in the context of schooling reveals that a large proportion of material relates to inclusion of students with 'special education needs' or with a learning 'disability' or 'difficulty'. These terms are themselves in some degree of conflict with the meaning of inclusion as they can construct strong images of categorisation or deviance if not appropriately understood and interpreted.

In this context, the meaning of inclusion is frequently confounded by earlier concepts from processes such as **mainstreaming** and **integration**. While authors may continue to disagree on the exact definition of these older terms and the distinctions among them, the following reflects a degree of consensus:

- 1 Mainstreaming was a term that originated under legal challenges for the rights of minority groups in the USA. It was originally regulated by the 1975 Public Law 94-142 and was then re-authorised by the US Congress in 1997 and 2004. Mainstreaming essentially focused on the 'place' of the child with a disability or difference. At the time, students with African-American heritage were being further socially and culturally disadvantaged by frequently being placed in special education schools for students with intellectual impairments. The 1975 legislation was framed around the legal determination that their human rights required that they be placed in regular schools. These students were then 'mainstreamed' into US local schools. The term 'mainstreaming' was then adopted and proved to have influence beyond the USA. It was also adopted with various interpretations by other countries, many of which did not have a Bill of Rights that underpinned the original motivation behind the US mainstreaming movement.
- 2 While integration implies that persons with a disability should be integrated into elements of mainstream society, in the educational context it is likely that students will have to evidence a measured degree of ability or capacity that is appropriate to their 'fitting in' to a regular school placement, rather than a school or school system being required to accommodate to their needs. Definitions of 'integration' frequently involve professional judgments about the levels of students' academic, social or personal achievements compared to agreed standards for their 'placement' in a local (regular) school (see, for example, Mirenda 1998). Processes of identification, assessment, ascertainment or appraisal of the potential for integration of children with a disability or difference are commonly found in associated education policy and practice. So, while integration is a process that provides a means of access for students with a disability or specific learning needs to find placement in regular schools, it is typically conditional upon those students meeting some set of agreed academic performance standards. It can be noted also that this process does not include consideration of the nature of participation, engagement and outcomes of the placement, or indeed other aspects of the students' needs socially or emotionally.
- 3 Inclusion, by contrast, assumes that a just state of affairs is one in which people with a disability or another form of human difference should be included in society from the outset, and in education in particular. The associated policy responses to this position are broad and comprehensive and focus on the conditions necessary (or changes or adaptations of existing conditions) to include all individuals or groups and support the participation of children with a disability or human difference or disadvantage in schools and in their communities (Foreman 2008).

As described, major national and international agreements, national legislation and curricula and policy further define and add imperatives for all state and independent

mainstreaming

A term that originated under legal challenges for the rights of minority groups in the USA. Subsequent government legislation and direction mandated that many students formerly placed in special schools should be placed in local, regular schools. As such, mainstreaming focuses on the 'place' of the child with a disability or difference.

integration

The inclusion of people with a disability in educational institutions at a level commensurate with their degree of ability.

education systems to move towards this process of inclusion. Finally, effective inclusion has a number of components and the culmination of these is found in the outcomes experienced by students themselves. This issue of outcomes can be judged by the nature and benefit of the academic and social engagement that these students are able to achieve in education.

A UNITED NATIONS PERSPECTIVE

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is the most signed convention in UN history. It even exceeded the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the rapidity of its ratification. It was developed because a UN review showed existing UN human rights instruments have not protected people with disabilities from human rights abuses. It was believed that a separate convention was needed to make disability issues more visible within human rights, to ensure the circumstances of disabled people were addressed and to clarify countries' obligations and requirements. The Convention has been signed and legally ratified by almost all countries and came into effect in 2008. The instruments of the Convention are quite clear in relation to children with a disability, and to education in particular:

- 1 States that are signatories to the Convention shall ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.
- 2 Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability.
- 3 Children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability.
- 4 Persons with disabilities [will] receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education.
- 5 Effective individualised support measures are provided in environments that maximise academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a binding convention and requires signatories, including Australia, to adopt legislation, policy and practice to support the inclusion of persons with a disability in all aspects of life. In so far as education is concerned, it mandates that regular or local schools should be the *expected* experience for all children. The Convention adopts a model of disability that is not only about academic participation, but is socially constructed, with a focus on removing barriers at all levels.

STORIES FROM THE CLASSROOM

Inclusion

The pre-service teacher notices the class has many more boys than girls. There are twenty-eight children in the class: nineteen boys and nine girls. The room is very small for so many children to move around in without touching or bumping into other students.

The teacher asks all students to get a chair and bring it so they can sit in a circle in the centre of the classroom. One girl, Mary, stops another girl, Sarah, from putting her chair in the space next to her. Mary kicks the chair away so Sarah can't sit there. Then a boy, Simon, sitting in the next chair, gets involved as well and starts pushing the chair back with his

foot. The smaller girl, Sarah, becomes upset, takes her chair and moves across the circle to another space. The boy also takes his chair and moves to another space in the circle. The children appear to be carefully considering who they are comfortable sitting next to for this learning activity.

The circle of students on the chairs settles down, although a few of the boys are talking in glowing terms about the excursion they had yesterday. All students are given a card with pictures, colours and a number on it. The students are then instructed to change places so that they are sitting in numeric order according to the numbers on the cards they hold. The students all do this quietly and settle into the circle with all students randomly distributed around the circle. The teacher now asks them each to talk about the best aspects of the excursion they had the day before to a science discovery centre. ■

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Read the 'Stories from the classroom' feature and consider the following questions relating to inclusion.

- Was Mary acting inclusively in this scenario?
- Why do you think the teacher made the students sit in a circle?
- Why did she make the students sit in random places in the circle?

Think about what inclusion means for all the students in such a learning situation.

- Have you ever felt excluded from a social group? How did it make you feel to be excluded?
 - What did you do to try to be included, if anything? On reflection, is there something else you could have done to try to be included?
 - What else could the teacher have done before, during or after the activity?
 - What might the teacher do next time?
-

SOME THEORY AND A FRAMEWORK

Inclusion is both a term and a process that is relative in its interpretations and applications in respect to the various historical, cultural and pedagogical traditions; social structures, medical services and resource availability; and political, legal and policy frameworks and economic priorities that a country embodies or that an education system or school operates within at any point in time (Hyde 2009; Hyde et al. 2006).

Inclusion is typically seen as both a process of *access*, with related considerations of the conditions for access towards the *participation* of all students, and as a process of *change* in terms of the legislation, policy and educational practices that are developed, and formation of positive attitudes among participants (Skritic 1995). Inclusion, then, is a concept that is essentially based in the philosophical and pedagogical traditions that we embrace and the international and national imperatives to which we have committed and which as a society we attempt to implement.

In the educational systems that a country provides, inclusion may be perceived as a cycle between *differentiation* and *uniformity* (Vislie 2003; Wagner 1994). The most *differentiated* education systems provide a high degree of specialisation of services and associated funding adapted to the needs of individuals and groups. Responsibility for curriculum planning and pedagogy is often devolved to local schools or regions, and often there is a high degree of individualisation in planning and choice among school programs and support services. The focus is highly learner-centred and on the needs of all and excellence of outcomes. Reforms of highly differentiated service systems usually involve an increase in the degree of centralisation—through legislation, policy, national curriculum, funding, evaluation and regulation—to establish greater central control, or to ensure that resources that are made available are distributed as equitably as possible and that centrally desired outcomes are achieved, often within diminishing budgets. This aspect of budgets is an important one that can significantly influence how far governments go in attempting to meet the needs of individuals with a difference or disability. It is, in essence, a political issue that can limit the outcomes of effective policy directed towards optimal inclusion of students in education.

The most *uniform* education systems are recognised by a high level of central control of legislation, policy, funding, teacher standards and other guidelines for practice, central curriculum policy (for example, national curriculum content and standards), national testing of students, teacher and school performance and the maintenance of long-established pedagogic traditions. There is often a high emphasis on ‘completing the curriculum’. Reforms to these uniform systems usually involve greater decentralisation of some elements to allow for a degree of local region or school variations in curriculum implementation, use of funding and pedagogy (Vislie 2003). Assumptions that all schools and communities start at the same point may be questioned and greater flexibility may be allocated to school systems, schools and teachers in implementing national policy and curriculum objectives and measuring school outcomes.

In reality, however, a dynamic, cyclical process operates between the two extremes of central control and school-based decision making, with national and local systems of education moving between the two extremes of uniformity and differentiation depending on changing political, social, cultural or economic factors and influences. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a case in point, with its emphasis on uniformity in legislation and policy, but differentiation at national and local levels to the needs of individuals within the societies and communities of the signatories to the Convention.

Strong movement away from differentiation and towards the uniform end of the cycle may be currently observed in Australia, with high levels of importance being given to the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; AITSL) and the use of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) student and applications of school data in political and system debate about schools and their performance and funding.

Therefore, there is no one, fully effective definition or model of inclusion because in each national or school system ‘inclusion’ may be viewed somewhat differently for good reasons. Differentiation allows the needs of each student to be considered or taken into account; for example, students with a specific learning need. Uniformity allows for the rights, participation and equity of all students. Both can therefore be at some level inclusive or exclusive: in their policy and practice, and in following legislative and policy controls and pedagogical traditions. There may be no utopian ‘school for all’ possible, as in each form

of system there may always be some aspects of exclusion, for some groups or individuals, wherever there is inclusion. The individuals or groups included or excluded can change as the rules, structures, attitudes and budgets change within the cycle between uniformity and differentiation. We see this in Australia in current considerations of people with a mental health condition, the rights of children of asylum seekers and the impact of child poverty as major issues in society, as well as in education. Levels of inclusion and exclusion depend on our priorities and values at any point in time, and the balance we reach between uniformity and differentiation may change.

Within this broad theoretical framework, it is possible to describe or locate various countries and education authorities in respect to their current policies, positions and practices. By their histories, traditions, economic priorities, legal provisions, and social and cultural policies, we may see where they currently place themselves, and where their values and professional and social tensions may lie in the provision of education services and the directions of reform of those services. Mitchell (2005) suggested that there are three conclusions that can be reached about inclusive education:

- 1 that inclusive education is seen by most as creating a single system designed to serve the needs of all students
- 2 that inclusive education is still often based on both socio-political models and psycho-medical models
- 3 that while many countries appear highly committed to inclusive education, their practices often fall short of their rhetoric and policies.

So even when inclusion is strongly supported by international, national or state policy—or even legislation, as it appears to be in Australia—there is concern that the observable practices or outcomes in schools can remain substantially unchanged or experience significant delays or difficulties in their implementation. As Sowell (1995) accurately observed some time ago, policy issues can become ideological debates that present conflicting visions or the ‘visions of the anointed’ (p. 241). Such ‘anointed’ visions, especially those that espouse a centrally regulated view of inclusion or a vision based only on moral and rights principles, can prevail over other issues in determining policy. Each school and every classroom plays its part if the real outcomes of inclusive education policy are to be realised.

There are now very few pre-service or in-service teacher education courses or programs available in Australia to prepare teachers for dealing with the diversity of student needs that they will find in their classrooms. Typically, only a single course in each teacher education program is offered in this respect. This places the responsibility for responding to student diversity clearly in the domain of the regular school and classroom for all learners. This is reflected in the AITSL Standards for all graduate teachers (see www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards).

We also warn against thinking that inclusion is only a ‘group’ thing (for example, about ‘students with autism’ or students’ well-being challenges) or an ‘academic’ thing (for example, about measured achievement within the curriculum). Inclusion is more an individual experience than a group experience and is as much related to an individual’s social participation, access to quality education and an enduring sense of well-being and **school belonging** as it is to levels of academic achievement, specific competencies or school placement considerations. While considerations about the rights and needs of groups—for example, of children with an attention, linguistic, gender or behavioural difference—are important, the most relevant considerations often lie with the situation of the individual, as it is at that level where real outcomes and a ‘sense’ of inclusion can be fostered and experienced.

school belonging

Relates to students feeling a part of the school community as well as being a valued contributing member, identification with the school and perceptions that the school and classroom activities are relevant and fair.

The components of an inclusive education are *access, participation, engagement* and *equitable outcomes*. Access ensures that students with a disability or learning difference can take part in the general education system. However, of itself this can be a recipe for failure unless those systems and schools adapt and change to enable the students to participate towards achieving equitable outcomes academically and socially.

Is this the end of the story then? How do we know that they have achieved equitable outcomes? This latter question is crucial. What forms of engagement and belonging with social and academic events and activities did students experience and how effectively did the offered adaptations and supports work? What else could be done? To achieve equity of outcomes we need to carefully plan and evaluate the types of learning engagements that these students have. It does not happen by the students just ‘being there’ or by teachers simply going through the procedural steps outlined in current policy.

In this context, the term ‘engagement’ is stressed (Cooper et al. 2011). Engagement is compatible with the broadest descriptions of inclusive education, but is concerned with the degree to which a student is ‘attached’ or ‘belongs’ emotionally, socially, cognitively and academically to the school. The focus is more evaluative about how the school and the teachers are able to accommodate to the student’s needs, the relationships developed and how effective the initiatives taken and supports provided are ultimately judged to be. Schools may support building a sense of belonging by encouraging strong relationships between staff, students and parents and providing opportunities for students to participate in school activities (Prince & Hadwin 2013). Other studies state that ethnic minority students’ school engagement is influenced by their feelings, daily experiences and interpersonal interactions, which may enhance their participation, recognition and commonalities among their peers (Dusi & Steinbach 2015; Gummadam et al. 2016). In other words, it is all about the perceptions and experiences of the students, not about our judgments regarding the nature or effectiveness of our policies and support systems themselves. A specific research literature has developed about students’ sense of school belonging: ‘the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by others in the school community’ (Gagné et al. 2014, p. 375; Santos 2014, p. 27). This research emphasises the importance of students’ perceptions of their own experiences in our schools and how these can enable us as educators to better frame our educational policies and practices.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A set of curriculum principles that offer all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL is underpinned by research about the ways in which students learn and is designed to improve the learning experiences and outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities, students from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and international students.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

The diversity of students in today’s classrooms is unprecedented. For some time, the traditional ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to curriculum has denied the vast individual differences in learning strengths, challenges and interests. However, a novel approach to instructional design called **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is becoming a popular means for many teachers to address the challenge of catering for individual learner differences in their classrooms.

The concept of universal design emerged out of the field of architecture, but in the early 2000s began to be applied to education. The general meaning of universal design, from an architectural perspective, is ‘the design of products and environments to be useable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaption or specialized design’ (Connell et al. 1997, p. 2). Applying this concept to education, Pisha and Coyne (2001)

described universal design as ‘the development of educational curricula and materials that include potent supports for access and learning from the start, rendering them effective for a far wider range of students than traditional materials’ (p. 197). The term that has emerged to describe the application of these principles to educational situations is ‘Universal Design for Learning’.

According to Cumming et al. (2016), UDL places the student at the centre of instructional design. It relies on understanding and accepting the concept of learner variability. Students’ academic and behavioural knowledge and skills are extremely diverse. A curriculum that is deliberately designed to reduce barriers to learning and to reach and accommodate all students before they experience academic or motivational failure is a curriculum universally designed for learning. UDL as an instructional framework supports teachers to adhere to three planning and instructional principles: Engagement, Representation, and Action and Expression (CAST 2018). Using the three broad learning networks as a framework and attending to three simple things—the alternative ways in which information can be presented, the alternative ways in which expression can be taught and scaffolded, and the alternative ways in which students can be engaged in learning—it is possible to design learning environments that are pedagogically effective for both regular students and students with special learning needs. This framework is commercially successful, and innovative enough that it is being widely copied.

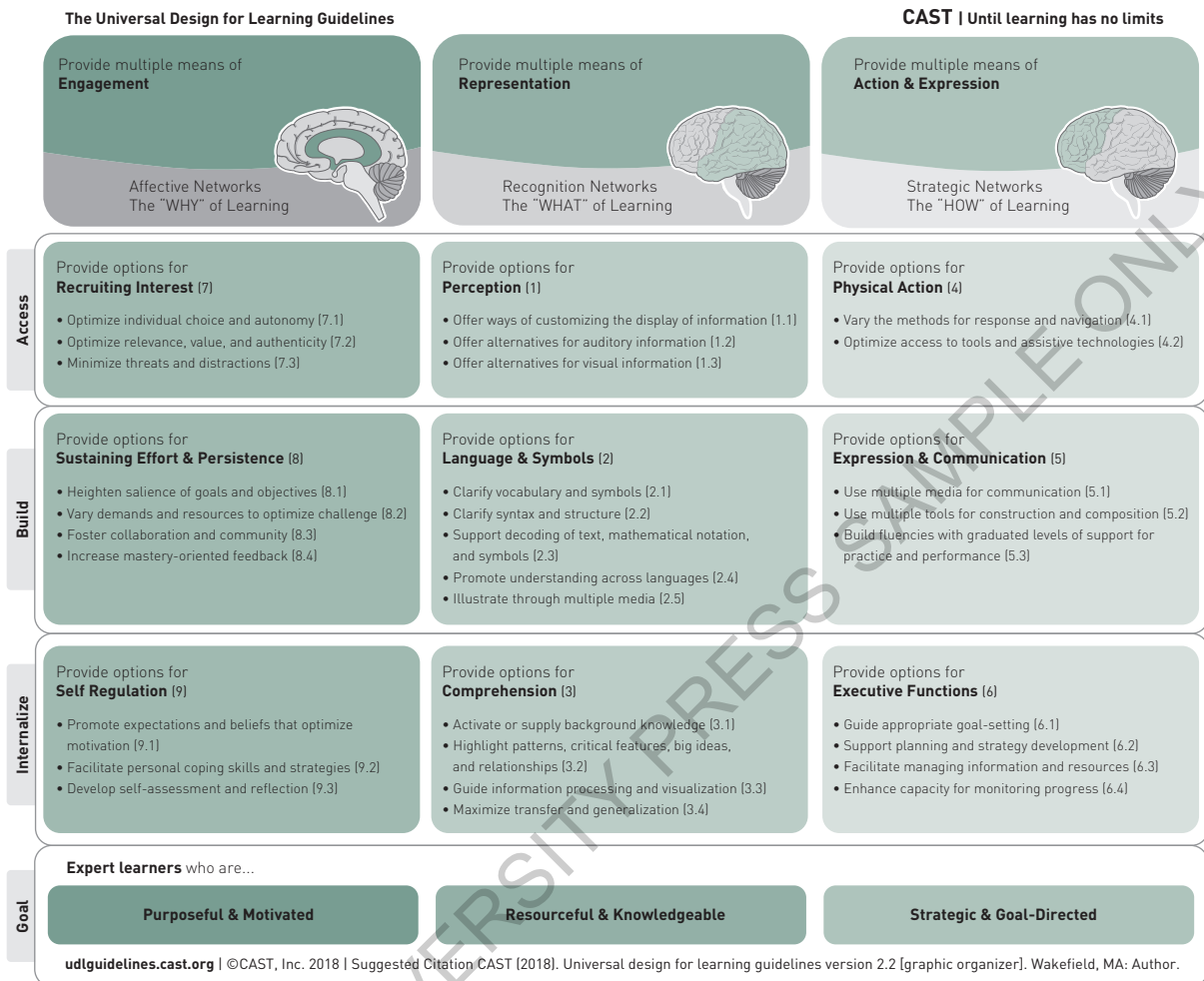
Figure 1.1 provides a comprehensive summary of each planning and instructional principle and its related options. These principles guide curriculum design on content, activities and pedagogy, addressing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. Each principle yields a distinct perspective on the design of learning environments relative to student learning and performance.

The main attractions of UDL are:

- It attends to individual needs in a general fashion that does not draw attention to any one individual.
- This approach is proactive rather than reactive—that is, it avoids retro-fitted changes and accommodations to classroom instruction.
- Developing curricula and materials that attend to the needs of students with special needs increases the usability for everyone.
- UDL capitalises on new technologies and electronic resources.
- UDL provides a new way of looking at students with disabilities along a continuum of students with learning-related differences (adapted from Polloway et al., 2018).

The integration of the principles of UDL provides a potentially powerful way to address the individual needs of a range of students in the general education classroom. This point is particularly noteworthy because more students who are at risk, who have special education needs or who have significant learning-related disabilities are now retained in general classrooms, rather than in special education settings.

Teachers seeking to educate their students are faced with the challenge of meeting the instructional needs of all of their students in order to prepare them for a competitive world. Much of the information teachers must teach is complex and abstract. New vocabulary is necessary and the application of new information to everyday life must be understood. Unfortunately, many students have limited interest in learning things that they do not understand or that seem irrelevant to their immediate future. This lack of motivation among students is a formidable barrier. If teachers are unable to introduce new information

FIGURE 1.1 UDL guidelines (CAST 2018)

in an understandable manner, students will become frustrated and will not persist on their own to learn. If teachers are unable to help students acquire new concepts and to have them relate these concepts in a meaningful way, students will not pursue the new content areas presented to them in their classes. It is the professional and ethical duty of educators to implement the instructional techniques most likely to benefit the students they serve in all schools.

So, while 'participation' in education goes beyond 'access', 'engagement' goes beyond 'participation' and asks the leading question: 'Participation in what and with which outcomes?' The process can involve measures of the student's engagement academically, communicatively, cognitively or socially, to promote more active engagement by the student with what is learnt and what is taught in schools.

Inclusive education is, therefore, a process of responding to the uniqueness of individuals and increasing their sense of presence, access, participation and engagement in a learning society and, in the case of this discussion, in schools.

SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the principles behind inclusion, particularly those influencing educational contexts. It also examined the factors—international, national, humanitarian and social—that contribute to the acceptance and implementation of legislation,

policy and practice towards educational inclusion and the monitoring and evaluation of students' engagement. Finally, the chapter has provided a model of inclusion that may be used to critically reflect on school systems and school policies and procedures.

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Where does your school or education system lie in relation to the inclusion of students with diverse backgrounds or needs? Based on your experience, discuss with your classmates an individual, or even a small group, of interest that you are aware of. Reflect on the access, participation, engagement and sense of belonging that they experience in a school and the equity of their outcomes and opportunities in:

- educational terms
- social terms
- personal terms
- overall engagement and a sense of school belonging.

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WEBSITES

AITSL Standards—www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers/standards/list

This resource provides a comprehensive and detailed listing of teacher competencies across a range of curricula and specialised teaching settings.

UDL: Principles and Practice—https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGLTJw0GSxk&ab_channel=NationalCentreonUniversalDesignforLearning

This site describes the principles of Universal Design for Learning.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—www.unicef.org/crc

This site and its many associated manuscripts describe the relevance of this Convention and the obligations that apply to all signatory nation states to act and respond.

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities— www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

This site has similar resources to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child website.