IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Teaching For Inclusion In Higher Education: Technological Tools, Teacher Attentiveness, And The Lived Classroom Experiences Of Students With Disabilities

Rohi Jan

Assistant Professor

Department of Education University of Kashmir

Dr. Shazia Majeed

Contractual assistant professor

Department of Education University of Kashmir

Aqib Rehman

University of Stirling Scotland United Kingdom

Abstract:

Despite the growing emphasis on inclusive education within national and international policy frameworks, the everyday classroom realities of students with disabilities (SwDs) in higher education continue to reflect persistent forms of exclusion. A dedication to equity, flexibility, and accessibility is expressed in laws like India's National Education Policy (2020) and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016). However, there is still a lack of consistency in how these principles are used in the classroom, especially when it comes to the use of technology and the role that educators play in fostering inclusive learning environments. This study goes beyond policy rhetoric to highlight lived realities by critically examining how technological tools and instructor attentiveness jointly impact SwDs' classroom learning experiences. Based on in-depth qualitative interviews with SwDs and institutional observations, the study documents how students interact with lectures on a daily basis, as well as how the—by monitoring pupils, modifying their teaching methods, and proactively guaranteeing accessibility—were perceived as far more inclusive.

Keywords: Students with Disabilities, Inclusive Education, Higher Education, Classroom Practices, Assistive Technology, Educational Technology, Teacher Attentiveness, Inclusive Pedagogy, Lived Experiences, Accessibility, and Disability Studies

Introduction:

In recent decades, inclusive education has emerged as a central principle shaping higher education systems across the globe. Inclusion aims to guarantee that all students, regardless of physical, sensory, cognitive, or psychosocial impairments, can access, participate in, and meaningfully benefit from education (Meadows-Haworth, C. (2023). It has its roots in human rights discourses and social justice frameworks. International agreements like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) have strengthened the responsibility of governments and organizations to establish inclusive and equitable learning environments. Students with disabilities (SwDs) are challenging previously restrictive academic frameworks that were built around normative notions of ability, pace, and performance as they increasingly enroll in higher education institutions as part of this worldwide trend (National Education Policy 2020).

In the Indian context, innovative policy frameworks like the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 demonstrate this dedication to inclusion (Ryan, A. G. (1994). Higher education should be adaptable, learner-centered, and sensitive to a wide range of needs, according to these rules. They place a strong emphasis on the use of assistive and instructional technologies, accessibility, and the need of educators and institutions to make reasonable accommodations. Even while these guidelines represent a major change at the regulatory level, there is still a substantial gap between the goals of the law and actual teaching methods. Inclusion continues to be more aspirational than experiential for many SwDs, especially in school settings where learning is practiced every day (Kwiotek, R. G., & McDonnell, P. (2003).

Classrooms represent the most immediate and influential sites where inclusion is either realized or denied. It is here that students encounter teaching methods, assessment practices, peer interactions, and technological tools that shape their academic trajectories and sense of belonging (Turnbull, H. R. (2009). Yet, higher education classrooms often continue to operate through ableist norms that privilege speed, visual dominance, uninterrupted attention, and auditory comprehension. Lectures delivered rapidly, heavy reliance on visual slides, inaccessible digital materials, and limited opportunities for interaction can systematically marginalize SwDs. Such practices not only restrict access to content but also communicate implicit messages about who is considered a “legitimate” learner within academic spaces (Long, C. D. (1997).

Technology has been widely promoted as a transformative force capable of addressing many of these barriers. Modern higher education has changed due to the growth of learning management systems (LMS), digital lecture materials, recorded lectures, captioned videos, and assistive technologies like screen readers and speech-to-text software. In theory, these tools have enormous potential to improve student autonomy, flexibility, and accessibility. Technology can provide SwDs with opportunities for repeated engagement with content, different ways to participate, and accommodations tailored to their specific requirements. Technology is frequently portrayed as a major force behind inclusive education, especially in the post-pandemic period when digital and blended learning have become commonplace (Shessel, I., & Reiff, H. B. (1999).

However, the mere presence of technology does not automatically translate into inclusion. An increasing amount of research indicates that digital tools may replicate or even exacerbate existing disparities if they are created or implemented without consideration for accessibility and diversity. SwDs can be excluded just as successfully by inaccessible PDFs, uncaptioned films, visually packed presentations, and inflexible online evaluation methods as by physical barriers. Furthermore, a techno-centric emphasis on infrastructure runs the risk of masking the relational and human aspects of education. Without educators' ethical commitment and pedagogical awareness, technology continues to be an underappreciated or abused tool rather than a tool that promotes inclusivity (Webster, R. (2015).

Within this context, the role of teachers becomes particularly significant. Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also key mediators of institutional values and classroom culture. SwDs' learning experiences are significantly shaped by their understanding of disabilities, attentiveness to the needs of students, and readiness to modify teaching methods. Even in environments with limited resources, teacher attentiveness—exemplified by actions like assessing students' comprehension, providing materials in accessible formats, carefully timing lectures, and sympathetically answering requests for accommodations—can make classrooms more inclusive. On the other hand, apathy, ignorance, or strict adherence to conventional teaching techniques might undermine the potential advantages of currently accessible technologies and exacerbate students' sentiments of exclusion (Jetter, K. P., & Jetter, K. P. (1998).

Despite the growing recognition of inclusive pedagogy, the lived classroom experiences of SwDs in higher education remain underexplored, particularly in the Indian context. Much of the existing literature focuses on policy analysis, institutional provisions, or technological innovations, often neglecting how SwDs actually navigate classrooms on a day-to-day basis. There is limited empirical work that examines how technological tools and teacher practices intersect in shaping inclusion from the perspective of students themselves. Centering SwDs' voices is crucial not only for understanding the effectiveness of current practices but also for challenging dominant narratives that equate inclusion with compliance or infrastructure alone (Dargie, R. (2002).

This study addresses critical gap by examining teaching for inclusion in higher education through the intertwined lenses of technology use, teacher attentiveness, and the lived classroom experiences of SwDs. The study highlights students' accounts of involvement, struggle, adaptability, and resilience in academic settings through in-depth qualitative interviews and institutional observations. It investigates how SwDs interact with instructional technology, the circumstances in which they facilitate or hinder learning, and the manner in which teachers' behaviors and attitudes influence these interactions. The study attempts to shed light on the practical reality of inclusion as it is implemented—or ignored—in classrooms by going beyond institutional assertions and policy language.

Importantly, the research adopts a disability studies perspective that understands disability not merely as an individual deficit but as a product of social, pedagogical, and technological arrangements. According to this perspective, inaccessible teaching methods and unresponsive educational systems are the causes of exclusion rather than students' disabilities. Thus, the study opposes deficit-oriented methods and promotes a change to inclusive, student-centered pedagogies that acknowledge diversity as a standard component of higher education (Stoler, R. D. (1992).

This research contributes to current discussions on inclusive education, educational technology, and higher education pedagogy by placing SwDs' lived experiences at the center of analysis. It emphasizes that effective inclusion necessitates careful, thoughtful, and morally sound teaching methods in addition to readily available resources and legislative requirements. In doing so, the report advocates for rethinking higher education classrooms as places of compassion, adaptability, and shared accountability, where technology acts as a facilitator and educators play a crucial role in promoting inclusion rather than merely carrying out regulations (Cameron, D. L., & Cook, B. G. (2013).

Teaching for inclusion in higher education:

Teaching for inclusion in higher education represents a critical shift from traditional, one-size-fits-all pedagogies toward approaches that recognize and value learner diversity. The foundation of inclusive education is the idea that every student has an equal right to meaningful engagement and academic success, regardless of their gender, disability, socioeconomic status, language, or cultural identity. Inclusion in higher education involves more than just granting students physical access to classrooms; it also entails establishing learning environments that are adaptable, accommodating, and supportive of a variety of learning styles (Mitchell, M. M. (1976).

Inclusive teaching is fundamentally relational, shaped by everyday interactions between teachers, students, and peers. Students' experiences of inclusion or marginalization are largely influenced by classroom dynamics, engagement patterns, and instructor responsiveness. An inclusive academic culture is fostered by actions like fostering collaborative and peer-supported learning, recognizing multiple views, and establishing safe and respectful settings for discussion. Formal accommodations are not often as important to students with disabilities (SwDs) as feeling heard, respected, and acknowledged by their teachers. Teachers promote students' dignity and sense of belonging when they exhibit empathy, adaptability, and openness. Therefore, teaching for inclusion involves paying attention to the interpersonal and emotional aspects of learning in higher education classrooms in addition to policy and infrastructure (Kamran, M., & Bano, N. (2024).

inclusive teaching is a commitment to equity rather than uniformity, recognizing that students enter universities with diverse abilities, learning styles, and lived experiences. These distinctions are valued in inclusive pedagogy, which purposefully creates instructional strategies that lower obstacles to involvement and learning. In order to enable students to connect with academic knowledge in ways that best suit their unique abilities, frameworks like Universal Design for Learning (UDL) support providing alternative modes of interaction, representation, and expression. For instance, distributing lecture materials in a variety of formats—such as written text, audio recordings, and visual resources—improves accessibility for students with sensory impairments while also accommodating different learning styles among all students. In this approach, inclusive teaching enhances the learning environment for the entire academic community while also accommodating differences (Goo, M., Maurer, A. L., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (2019).

In higher education institutions, there is frequently a discrepancy between aim and reality despite progressive frameworks and policies supporting inclusive education. Inadequate institutional accountability, inflexible curricula, overcrowded classrooms, and insufficient teacher training can all work against inclusive initiatives. A systematic commitment is needed to address these issues, including procedures for integrating student input into teaching techniques, enhanced disability support services, and ongoing professional development for instructors. However, in higher education, teaching for inclusion is both a pedagogical requirement and an ethical duty. It forces academic institutions and instructors to critically consider the structural privileges, ingrained power dynamics, and participation patterns that define academic environments. Beyond regulation compliance and physical access, inclusive teaching incorporates flexible pedagogies, responsive curricula, and a change in mindset that recognizes diversity as a source of group learning. Inclusive approaches promote equitable interaction and challenge deficit-based assumptions by recognizing diverse methods of knowing, learning, and expressing understanding. Higher education gets closer to realizing its transformative potential when it adopts inclusion as a fundamental academic tenet. This is achieved by establishing settings in which every student is not just accommodated or present but is actually acknowledged, empowered, and supported to actively engage in their educational journeys (Alahmari, K. A., Rengaramanujam, K., Reddy, R. S., Samuel, P. S., Ahmad, I., Kakaraparthi, V. N., & Tedla, J. S. (2021).

Inclusive pedagogy for students with disabilities in class lectures:

Inclusive pedagogy for students with disabilities in classroom lectures is grounded in the principle that diversity in learners is not a problem to be fixed but a reality to be embraced. It seeks to design teaching–learning processes that anticipate varied abilities, learning styles, and support needs, ensuring that all students can participate meaningfully in academic life. Rather than relying on post-hoc accommodations, inclusive pedagogy emphasizes proactive planning, flexibility, and responsiveness within everyday classroom practices (SCOTT, I., MCLACHLAN, F., & BROOKFIELD, K. (2018).

the core of inclusive pedagogy is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which encourages multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. In order to ensure that students with visual, hearing, learning, or cognitive challenges have equitable access to material, this translates into presenting knowledge in a variety of formats during a class lecture, including written summaries, spoken explanations, visual aids, and digital resources. Accessibility for students with visual impairments or learning issues can be greatly improved, for example, by giving lecture slides ahead of time, utilizing readable fonts and high contrast

graphics, and verbally explaining images or diagrams (Broderick, A., Mehta-Parekh, H., & Reid, D. K. (2005).

Additionally, inclusive pedagogy necessitates responsive and attentive teaching methods. In order to foster an atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing their needs without fear of stigma, lecturers must be cognizant of the many ways that students process information. Students with concentration problems, hearing impairments, or anxiety can benefit from simple tactics like speaking at a moderate pace, giving clear and organized explanations, and pausing sometimes for clarification. Encouraging inquiries via written notes, digital platforms, or vocal discussion guarantees that students who might find verbal engagement difficult are not left out (Artiles, A. J., Elizabeth B. Kozleski, Dorn, S., & Christensen, C. (2006).

Assessment and feedback practices within classroom teaching must also reflect inclusivity. Inclusive pedagogy supports flexible assessment methods, allowing students to demonstrate learning in diverse ways—such as written assignments, presentations, or project-based tasks—without compromising academic standards. In lecture-based courses, formative assessments like short quizzes, reflective prompts, or peer discussions help instructors gauge understanding while reducing pressure on students who may struggle with traditional examination formats (De Silva, N. L. (2013).

The social and emotional aspects of inclusive education are equally important. Low expectations, invisibility, or overprotection are common ways that students with impairments experience subtle exclusion. An inclusive professor actively questions presumptions based on deficiencies, acknowledges students' talents, and encourages peer cooperation. Clearly defined responsibilities and mutual respect in group activities can foster a sense of belonging and shared accountability for learning. Essentially, inclusive pedagogy in class lectures is a change in perspective from teaching to an imagined "average" student to teaching for human variety rather than an add-on. Teachers may make lectures inclusive places where students with disabilities are not just present but truly appreciated and empowered as learners by including flexible approaches, accessible materials, supportive technologies, and empathic involvement (Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011).

Policy Frameworks for Inclusive Higher Education:

A convergence of national and international policy frameworks emphasizing equity, accessibility, and participation for students with disabilities (SwDs) is increasingly influencing inclusive education in higher education. Among these are the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, India's Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006). When taken as a whole, these frameworks offer a rights-based basis for inclusive teaching and learning while simultaneously emphasizing the crucial role that technology and teacher attention play in influencing SwDs' actual classroom experiences (AYLING, I. (2025).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006:

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), adopted in 2006, represents a transformative shift in how disability is understood and addressed globally. The UNCRPD promotes a social and human rights-based framework, departing from conventional charity and medical paradigms that frequently represented people with disabilities as passive beneficiaries of care or as people in need of "fixing." According to this viewpoint, people with disabilities deal with institutional, environmental, and attitudinal barriers that prevent them from fully engaging in society (KOTHARI, J. (2010).

Article 24 of the UNCRPD is particularly significant in the context of education, as it explicitly affirms the right of persons with disabilities to inclusive education at all levels, including higher education. It underscores that education must be provided without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, thereby challenging segregated and exclusionary educational practices. Inclusive education, as envisioned by the Convention, requires states to ensure reasonable accommodation tailored to individual needs,

alongside the provision of individualized support measures that maximize academic and social development (Hendriks, A. (2007).

Additionally, Article 24 emphasizes the need of suitable digital and assistive technologies in promoting efficient learning. These technologies are presented as necessary tools that make curriculum, communication, and assessment procedures accessible rather than as optional extras. This focus unites innovation and flexibility in educational institutions with inclusivity (Hendriks, A. (2007).

Importantly, the UNCRPD views inclusion as encompassing more than just having access to educational facilities. Participation, dignity, individuality, and respect for difference are all highly valued. It is acknowledged that students with disabilities are engaged agents whose identities, voices, and experiences must be respected in learning environments. In this way, inclusion is defined as genuine participation in social, intellectual, and cultural spheres as opposed to just being there (Kwiotek, R. G., & McDonnell, P. (2003).

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016:

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 is a significant piece of legislation that operationalizes inclusive education in India. The Act embraces a rights-based framework that acknowledges people with disabilities as equal rights holders and engaged participants in educational settings, departing from a welfare-oriented approach. The RPWD Act aims to make universities and colleges in higher education inclusive establishments that respect students with disabilities' (SwDs) autonomy, dignity, and equal opportunity (Conroy, P. (2011).

A central provision of the RPWD Act is its explicit mandate against discrimination in all educational settings. Higher education institutions are legally bound to ensure that SwDs are not denied admission, participation, or progression on the basis of disability. In order to ensure that SwDs have equal access to curriculum, classrooms, libraries, labs, dormitories, and digital learning platforms as their counterparts without disabilities, the Act requires institutions to make the required accommodations. Therefore, accessibility is regarded as a legal need essential to educational equity rather than a voluntary or altruistic action (Conference Statement: Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. (1994).

The Act further introduces the concept of reasonable accommodation, obligating universities and colleges to respond to individual learning needs without imposing disproportionate or undue burdens. This includes the availability of screen-reading software, assistive technology, accessible study materials, sign language interpretation, note-taking assistance, and alternate forms of evaluation. Exam changes are especially important in addressing the structural disadvantages that SwDs experience. These reforms include extra time, scribes, flexible evaluation techniques, and accessible question formats. The goal of these assessments is to level the playing field and acknowledge the variety of approaches to academic achievement and learning (Sarkar, A. (2018).

However, the Act underscores the role of faculty members and academic administrators in creating enabling learning environments. Inclusion encompasses not just physical infrastructure but also classroom interactions, institutional cultures, and educational techniques. Teachers are expected to use adaptable teaching methods, be attentive to the needs of their students, and view disabilities as a feature of human diversity rather than a barrier. In turn, administrators are in charge of coordinating with disability support cells, guaranteeing institutional compliance, and implementing grievance redressal procedures (AYLING, I. (2025).

Despite these progressive and comprehensive provisions, The lived experiences of SwDs in higher education frequently show a persisting gap between policy intent and day-to-day practice. Lack of systematic monitoring, insufficient resources, and poor implementation plague many institutions. Since many teachers receive little to no training in inclusive pedagogy or disability sensitivity, faculty preparation continues to be a major concern. Because of this, people may view acceptable adjustments as onerous favors

rather than legal rights, which could result in resistance, delays, or uneven support (Haines, S., & Ruebain, D. (Eds.). (2011).

Furthermore, the RPWD Act's revolutionary potential is usually undermined by attitudinal impediments. SwDs may feel excluded and marginalized due to insensitive comments, low academic expectations, and a lack of knowledge regarding invisible or psychosocial disorders. Therefore, even if the RPWD Act offers a strong legislative foundation for inclusive higher education, institutional commitment, capacity-building programs, and a change in perspective are ultimately necessary for its success. Sustained efforts are needed to convert statutory demands into inclusive classroom practices that really support the rights and voices of students with disabilities in order to close the gap between the law and lived reality (Lucas, L. (1983).

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a dramatic change in India's educational vision. The policy transcends a welfare-oriented approach by clearly identifying students with disabilities (SwDs) as a socioeconomically disadvantaged group and places disability within a framework that is rights-based and justice-oriented. In order to address learner diversity and align national policy with international inclusive education commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, NEP 2020 promotes the methodical integration of assistive technologies, digital platforms, and adaptable pedagogies. The focus on multilingual and multimodal instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and ongoing professional development for educators demonstrates an awareness that inclusive education necessitatesThe policy transcends a welfare-oriented approach by clearly identifying students with disabilities (DOLMAGE, J. T. (2017).

In the context of higher education, NEP 2020 underscores the creation of inclusive campuses that address not only physical and digital access but also meaningful participation, retention, and academic success of SwDs. This broader perspective recognizes that obstacles encountered by SwDs are frequently ingrained in institutional cultures, inflexible curricula, evaluation procedures, and insensitive teaching strategies. The policy aims to eliminate systemic exclusion and empower SwDs to traverse higher education with dignity and agency by supporting learner-centered pedagogies, flexible curricular structures, and numerous entry and departure alternatives (Barnes, C. (2007).

Within this evolving policy landscape, technological tools and teacher attentiveness emerge as critical mediators between policy intent and lived classroom realities. Assistive technologies—such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, captioning tools, accessible learning management systems, and digitally inclusive course materials—have the potential to significantly enhance autonomy, engagement, and academic participation for SwDs. When effectively implemented, these tools can reduce dependence on others, support self-paced learning, and create alternative pathways for accessing knowledge. Particularly in digitally mediated higher education spaces, accessible technology becomes central to bridging learning gaps and fostering inclusive participation (Morocco, C. C. (2001).

However, technology alone cannot guarantee inclusion. Its effectiveness is deeply contingent upon Teachers' attitudes, awareness, and behaviors have a significant impact on it. Teaching that is responsive, sympathetic, and attentive is essential to converting technology possibilities into experienced inclusion. Teachers who are prepared to modify their teaching methods, make prompt accommodations, and have frank conversations with SwDs help create learning settings where diversity is valued as an asset rather than a problem. On the other hand, even the most sophisticated technologies might become useless due to insensitivity, strict adherence to conventional pedagogies, or slow reactions to accommodation needs (Howell, R. (1996).

Teacher attentiveness also involves recognizing the heterogeneity of disability experiences and avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches. It takes constant introspection, adaptability, and a dedication to hearing what students have to say to be an inclusive educator. Therefore, it is crucial to provide instructors with both technical competencies and inclusive pedagogical sensibilities through ongoing professional development, as NEP 2020 emphasizes. In the end, whether NEP 2020's inclusive vision is realized as true empowerment for SwDs or stays limited to policy rhetoric depends on how accessible technology and attentive instruction

interact. In this way, classrooms become crucial locations where inclusive policies are either implemented or compromised in regular classroom instruction (Lee, H., & Templeton, R. (2008).

Lived Experiences of Students with Disabilities in Accessing Educational Institutions and Classroom Teaching:

The lived experiences of students with disabilities (SwDs) in accessing educational institutions and participating in classroom teaching reveal a complex interaction of structural, pedagogical, and attitudinal barriers. Challenges begin even before students enter the classroom, as inaccessible public transport, uneven roads, absence of ramps, and poorly designed campus infrastructure significantly restrict mobility, particularly for students with locomotor and visual impairments. Many SwDs depend on family members or peers for commuting, undermining their independence and regular attendance. These difficulties are further compounded for students from rural and economically marginalized backgrounds, frequently leading to delayed enrollment, irregular participation, or discontinuation of studies (van Wyk, G., & Hodgkinson-Williams, C. A. (2022).

Within educational institutions, uneven physical accessibility continues to shape the everyday experiences of students with disabilities (SwDs). Many campuses are still poorly designed, with elevator-free classrooms on top floors, narrow doorways, and inaccessible restrooms that significantly restrict mobility. For students with visual or locomotor disabilities, independent navigation is further limited by the lack of tactile paths, ramps, and clear signage in Braille or audio forms. These infrastructure obstacles convey neglect and exclusion symbolically in addition to causing physical inconvenience. In academic settings, SwDs frequently experience marginalization and invisibility when accessibility measures are viewed as optional extras rather than fundamental requirements. The impression that their presence is grudgingly accepted rather than equally valued (Brandy T. Gatlin, & Cynthia L. Wilson. (2016).

Classroom teaching practices further shape the educational experiences of SwDs. Diverse learning needs are frequently not accommodated by traditional lecture-based approaches, a strong dependence on blackboards, rapid verbal instruction, and strict evaluation procedures. When assistive technologies, accessible learning materials, or alternate teaching methods are lacking, students with hearing, vision, or learning difficulties sometimes find it difficult to stay up. Despite their good intentions, a lot of SwDs claim that instructors are not well trained in inclusive pedagogy and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

Attitudinal barriers within classrooms also significantly affect students' experiences. Some SwDs encounter low expectations from teachers, differential treatment, or subtle forms of discrimination that undermine their confidence and academic self-worth. Peer interactions can be both supportive and exclusionary; while some classmates offer assistance and solidarity, others display discomfort, pity, or avoidance, contributing to feelings of isolation. Despite these challenges, SwDs also demonstrate resilience and agency. Many develop personal coping strategies, rely on peer support networks, and advocate for their rights within institutions. Positive experiences are often associated with empathetic teachers, flexible teaching methods, availability of disability support services, and inclusive institutional cultures that value diversity (Lavín, C. E., Jordan, A. W., & Francis, G. L. (2021).

Research Methodology:

The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design to explore teaching for inclusion in higher education through the lived classroom experiences of students with disabilities (SwDs). a qualitative approach was deemed most suited, Since the study aims to capture subjective meanings, commonplace interactions, and complex experiences that are frequently missed in policy-driven or quantitative evaluations. The research, which is based on a disability studies and social model of disability framework, views exclusion as the result of institutional, pedagogical, and technical arrangements rather than personal disabilities (Brandy T. Gatlin, & Cynthia L. Wilson. (2016).

Research Design and Approach:

The study follows a phenomenological orientation, focusing on how SwDs experience classroom teaching, technological tools, and teacher attentiveness in higher education settings. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions, emotions, and interpretations of inclusion and exclusion within academic spaces. The emphasis is on students' voices as legitimate sources of knowledge, aligning with rights-based and participatory perspectives in disability research (van Wyk, G., & Hodgkinson-Williams, C. A. (2022) (Lavín, C. E., Jordan, A. W., & Francis, G. L. (2021).

Study Setting and Participants:

The research was conducted in selected public higher education institutions in India. Students participating in undergraduate and graduate programs with a variety of disabilities, such as visual, hearing, locomotor, and learning problems, participated. Purposive sampling was employed to guarantee participation from a variety of academic levels, disciplines, and disability types. The study was able to retain depth of inquiry while capturing a wide range of classroom experiences thanks to this technique. A manageable sample size was chosen overall to enable in-depth interaction with every participant (McCray, E. D., & McHatton, P. A. (2011).

Data Collection Methods:

the primary data were generated through In-depth, semi-structured interviews with SwDs. Teaching methods in the classroom, technology accessibility, assessment and evaluation experiences, relationships with peers and instructors, and views on inclusion and exclusion were all covered in the interview guide. While maintaining consistency amongst participants, semi-structured interviews provide flexibility to explore developing topics. Depending on the needs and interests of the participants, interviews were conducted in a variety of accessible formats, including written responses, digital platforms, and spoken interviews.

Informal conversations with faculty members and disability support personnel, as well as institutional observations, were conducted to augment interview data. Observations in the classroom concentrated on instructional strategies, technology use, lecture tempo, material accessibility, and interactions between teachers and students. These observations gave context to student narratives and shed light on the implementation of inclusive strategies in actual classrooms (Welsh, R. O., & Little, S. (2018).

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity were strictly followed. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the exclusive use of data for academic research. Given the sensitivity surrounding disability experiences, particular care was taken to create a respectful, non-judgmental, and supportive research environment. Pseudonyms were used to protect participants' identities.

Data Analysis:

After a methodical process of familiarization, coding, theme development, and interpretation, data were examined using thematic analysis. In addition to being guided by theoretical ideas like inclusive pedagogy, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and teacher attention, interview transcripts and observational notes were coded inductively to enable themes to surface from the data. The results were more reliable and credible because of the triangulation of observations and interviews (Hall, T., & Healey, M. (2005).

Limitations:

While the study provides rich insights into lived classroom experiences, it does not aim for statistical generalization. Instead, it offers contextually grounded understandings that can inform inclusive teaching practices and policy implementation in higher education (Smyth, R., & Dhami, R. (2024).

Overall, this methodology enables a holistic examination of how technology, pedagogy, and teacher responsiveness intersect to shape inclusion for SwDs in everyday classroom contexts (Merchant, W., Read, S., D'Evelyn, S., Miles, C., & Williams, V. (2020).

qualitative case studies:

Case Study 1: Navigating Visibility and Voice – A Student with Visual Impairment in a Public University

Aamir (pseudonym), a postgraduate student at a public university with a visual disability, characterized his experience in the classroom as an ongoing struggle between inclusion and accessibility. Although the institution provided a screen reader and admitted him in accordance with disability standards, the regular teaching-learning process frequently did not meet his needs. The majority of courses mostly depended on PowerPoint presentations that contained thick text, graphs, and diagrams that were neither shared beforehand nor explained orally. Because of this, Aamir's ability to comprehend visual content was mostly dependent on his friends, which restricted his independence and involvement.

Technology played an ambivalent role in Aamir's academic life. On the one hand, digital tools such as screen-reading software, recorded lectures, and online reading materials enabled him to revisit content at his own pace. On the other hand, many PDFs uploaded to the Learning Management System were scanned images and inaccessible to screen readers, rendering technology ineffective. Aamir noted that accessibility was often treated as a technical issue rather than a pedagogical responsibility.

Teacher attentiveness emerged as the most decisive factor shaping his experience. In classes where instructors took the initiative to describe visual material, share lecture notes beforehand, and check for comprehension, Aamir felt included and academically confident. One faculty member regularly paused during lectures to ask if explanations were clear and encouraged questions through email or WhatsApp, which Aamir found empowering. Conversely, indifferent attitudes—such as dismissing accessibility requests as "special treatment"—reinforced feelings of invisibility. Aamir's case illustrates how inclusive teaching is less about resources alone and more about teachers' willingness to engage ethically and attentively with student diversity.

Case Study 2: Between Anxiety and Accommodation – A Student with Psychosocial Disability

Sara (pseudonym), an undergraduate student diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, experienced disability in ways that were largely invisible yet deeply impactful. While her institution lacked a formal mechanism to recognize psychosocial disabilities, Sara struggled with panic attacks, difficulty concentrating during long lectures, and fear of speaking in crowded classrooms. Traditional lecture-heavy teaching methods, rigid attendance rules, and high-stakes examinations intensified her anxiety, often affecting her academic performance.

Technology served as a critical coping mechanism for Sara. Recorded lectures, online discussion forums, and digital submission of assignments allowed her to engage with course content without the pressure of constant physical presence. However, these tools were not always formally acknowledged as legitimate modes of participation. Some instructors equated physical attendance with commitment and were reluctant to offer flexibility, reflecting limited awareness of invisible disabilities.

Teacher attentiveness played a transformative role in Sara's positive academic experiences. One instructor, after a private conversation, allowed her flexible attendance, provided written instructions for assignments, and offered alternative ways to participate, such as reflective journals instead of oral presentations. This empathetic response significantly reduced Sara's anxiety and improved her academic engagement. In contrast, dismissive remarks from other faculty members—suggesting she "adjust" or "be stronger"—deepened her sense of marginalization.

Conclusion:

This study set out to examine teaching for inclusion in higher education by centering the lived classroom experiences of students with disabilities (SwDs) and exploring how technological tools and teacher attentiveness jointly shape inclusion and exclusion in everyday academic practices. Beyond policy rhetoric, the results unequivocally show that progressive legislation, institutional architecture, or the simple availability of technology do not ensure inclusion. Instead, it is created—or refuted—by everyday pedagogical choices, human relationships, and the moral obligations of teachers in the classroom.

The analysis reveals that technological tools occupy an ambivalent position in the educational lives of SwDs. When designed and implemented with accessibility in mind, Digital tools like screen readers, recorded lectures, accessible learning management systems, and adaptable online platforms greatly improve academic confidence, autonomy, and engagement. Technology facilitates self-paced engagement, offers alternate learning pathways, and lessens reliance on family or peers. However, technology replicates the very exclusions it is supposed to eliminate when accessibility is handled as an afterthought—through inaccessible PDFs, uncaptioned films, visually dense slides, or inflexible digital assessment formats. These results highlight the fact that technology is not intrinsically inclusive; rather, its influence depends on its use and pedagogical intent.

In this study, teacher attentiveness emerged as the most decisive factor shaping students' experiences of inclusion. SwDs felt respected, visible, and academically capable in classrooms run by attentive and compassionate teachers who supplied materials ahead of time, orally explained visual information, modified lecture pace, encouraged accommodation requests, and had open discussions. Even in environments with limited resources, these methods greatly reduced obstacles. On the other hand, policy demands and technology potential were compromised by apathy, ignorance, or strict adherence to traditional teaching practices, which exacerbated SwDs' sentiments of marginalization and invisibility. These results confirm that inclusive education cannot be reduced to compliance or infrastructure alone because it is essentially relational.

The qualitative case studies further illuminate the diversity of disability experiences in higher education. Aamir's experiences highlight how visual accessibility and pedagogical sensitivity determine whether technology empowers or excludes. Sara's narrative reveals the often-overlooked challenges of psychosocial disabilities and the critical role of flexibility and empathy in fostering meaningful participation. Together, these cases challenge deficit-based assumptions and demonstrate that exclusion is produced by inflexible systems rather than by students' impairments. Importantly, this research reinforces a disability studies perspective that situates disability within social, pedagogical, and technological arrangements. It calls for a shift from individualized accommodation models toward proactive, inclusive pedagogies grounded in Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Such an approach benefits not only SwDs but the broader student population by fostering flexible, engaging, and humane learning environment

In conclusion, teaching for inclusion in higher education requires more than policies, technologies, or formal provisions. It demands reflective, attentive, and ethically grounded teaching practices that recognize diversity as a normative aspect of academic life. For inclusive visions articulated in the UNCRPD, RPWD Act (2016), and NEP 2020 to be realized, institutions must invest in sustained faculty development, accountability mechanisms, and the meaningful inclusion of SwDs' voices in pedagogical decision-making. Only then can higher education classrooms evolve into spaces of genuine participation, dignity, and shared learning for all students.

References:

1. Alahmari, K. A., Rengaramanujam, K., Reddy, R. S., Samuel, P. S., Ahmad, I., Kakaraparthi, V. N., & Tedla, J. S. (2021). Effect of Disability-Specific Education on Student Attitudes Toward People With Disabilities. Health Education & Behavior, 48(4), 532–539. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48626929
2. Artiles, A. J., Elizabeth B. Kozleski, Dorn, S., & Christensen, C. (2006). Learning in Inclusive Education Research: Re-Mediating Theory and Methods with a Transformative Agenda. Review of Research in Education, 30, 65–108. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4129770
3. AYLING, I. (2025). Front Matter. In K. F. ROBINSON, M. T. CAREW, & N. E. GROCE (Eds.), Inaccessible Access: Rethinking Disability Inclusion in Academic Knowledge Creation (pp. i–vi). Rutgers University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.18654632.1
4. Ayon, V., & Dillon, A. (2021). Assistive Technology in Education: Conceptions of a Socio-technical Design Challenge. The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion, 5(3), 174–184. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48644451

5. Barnes, C. (2007). Disability, Higher Education and the Inclusive Society. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 28(1), 135–145. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036189
6. Bartlett, P. (2012). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Mental Health Law. The Modern Law Review, 75(5), 752–778. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41682870
7. Biermann, J. (2022). Translating Human Rights in Education: The Influence of Article 24 UN CRPD in Nigeria and Germany. University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.12000946
8. Blackhurst, A. E. (2005). Perspectives on Applications of Technology in the Field of Learning Disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly, 28(2), 175–178. https://doi.org/10.2307/1593622
9. Brandy T. Gatlin, & Cynthia L. Wilson. (2016). Overcoming Obstacles: African American Students with Disabilities Achieving Academic Success. The Journal of Negro Education, 85(2), 129–142. https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.85.2.0129
10. Broderick, A., Mehta-Parekh, H., & Reid, D. K. (2005). Differentiating Instruction for Disabled Students in Inclusive Classrooms. Theory Into Practice, 44(3), 194–202. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3496998
11. Cameron, D. L., & Cook, B. G. (2013). General Education Teachers' Goals and Expectations for their Included Students with Mild and Severe Disabilities. Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 48(1), 18–30. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23879883
12. Conference Statement: Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. (1994). International Review of Education / Internationale Zeitschrift Für Erziehungswissenschaft / Revue Internationale de l'Education, 40(6), 495–507. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3444323
13. Dargie, R. (2002). The Role of Students' Attentiveness and Teachers' Preferences for Students in Explaining Relations Between Social Behavior and Academic Achievement. The Ethiopian Journal of Education, 22(1), 33–55. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48815806
14. De Silva, N. L. (2013). Inclusive Pedagogy in Light of Social Justice. Special Educational Rights and Inclusive Classrooms: on whose terms? A Field Study in Stockholm Suburbs. European Journal of Education, 48(3), 419–435. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26357827
a. Disability rights - justice delayed. Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, 100(397), 29–42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23059651
15. DOLMAGE, J. T. (2017). Academic Ableism: Disability and Higher Education. University of Michigan Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvr33d50
16. Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. British Educational Research Journal, 37(5), 813–828. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23077052
17. Goo, M., Maurer, A. L., & Wehmeyer, M. L. (2019). Systematic Review of Using Portable Smart Devices to Teach Functional Skills to Students with Intellectual Disability. Education and Training in Autism and Developmental Disabilities, 54(1), 57–68. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26663962
18. Haines, S., & Ruebain, D. (Eds.). (2011). Education, disability and social policy (1st ed.). Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt9qgv4x
19. Hall, T., & Healey, M. (2005). Disabled Students' Experiences of Fieldwork. Area, 37(4), 446–449. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20004484
20. Hendriks, A. (2007). UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. European Journal of Health Law, 14(3), 273–298. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48711822
21. Hendriks, A. (2007). UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. European Journal of Health Law, 14(3), 273–298. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48711822
22. Howell, R. (1996). Technological Aids for Inclusive Classrooms. Theory Into Practice, 35(1), 58–65. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476340
23. Jetter, K. P., & Jetter, K. P. (1998). Accommodations - Or Just Good Teaching? Strategies for Teaching College Students with Disabilities [Review of Accommodations-Or Just Good Teaching? Strategies for Teaching College Students with Disabilities, by B. M. Hodge & J. Preston-Sabin]. Research and Teaching in Developmental Education, 15(1), 105–107. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42802504
24. Kamran, M., & Bano, N. (2024). Employing Assistive Technology (AT) for Children with Special Educational Needs: A Case Study from Pakistan. The Pakistan Development Review, 63(2), 203–220. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27315296

25. KOTHARI, J. (2010). The UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities: An Engine for Law Reform in India. Economic and Political Weekly, 45(18), 65–72. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25664414
26. Kwiotek, R. G., & McDonnell, P. (2003). Disability in an Equality Framework. Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review, 92(366), 151–160. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30095608
27. Lavín, C. E., Jordan, A. W., & Francis, G. L. (2021). Back to Basics: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Special Education. The High School Journal, 105(1), 5–16. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27127878
28. Lee, H., & Templeton, R. (2008). Ensuring Equal Access to Technology: Providing Assistive Technology for Students with Disabilities. Theory Into Practice, 47(3), 212–219. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40071545
29. Long, C. D. (1997). Opportunities Made Equal: Accommodating Students with Learining Disabilities. Academe, 83(3), 48–51. https://doi.org/10.2307/40251094
30. Lucas, L. (1983). Education for Work with Disabled and Institutionalized Persons. Journal of Education for Librarianship, 23(3), 207–223. https://doi.org/10.2307/40322883
31. Madriaga, M., Hanson, K., Kay, H., & Walker, A. (2011). Marking-out normalcy and disability in higher education. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 32(6), 901–920. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41343695
32. McCray, E. D., & McHatton, P. A. (2011). "Less Afraid to Have Them in My Classroom": Understanding Pre-Service General Educators' Preceptions about Inclusion. Teacher Education Quarterly, 38(4), 135–155. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23479634
33. McManus, M. E., & Kauffman, J. M. (1991). Working Conditions of Teachers of Students with Behavioral Disorders: A National Survey. Behavioral Disorders, 16(4), 247–259. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23886666
34. Meadows-Haworth, C. (2023). The Intersectional Disadvantages for Disabled Women Students in UK Higher Education. The International Journal of Disability and Social Justice, 3(2), 49–70. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48752337
35. Merchant, W., Read, S., D'Evelyn, S., Miles, C., & Williams, V. (2020). The insider view: tackling disabling practices in higher education institutions. Higher Education, 80(2), 273–287. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48736410
36. Mitchell, M. M. (1976). Teacher Attitudes. The High School Journal, 59(7), 302–312. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40365555
37. Morocco, C. C. (2001). Teaching for Understanding with Students with Disabilities: New Directions for Research on Access to the General Education Curriculum. Learning Disability Quarterly, 24(1), 5–13. https://doi.org/10.2307/1511292
38. National Education Policy 2020 – PART 1 (Continued from Vol 25 No. 4 Winter 2021 issue). (2022). World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues, 26(1), 136–158. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48674372
39. Parette, H. P. (1997). Assistive Technology Devices and Services. Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, 32(4), 267–280. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23879197
40. Parette, H. P., Wojcik, B. W., Hourcade, J. J., & Peterson-Karlan, G. (2005). Assistive Technology for Students with Mild Disabilities: What's Cool and What's Not. Education and Training in Developmental Disabilities, 40(3), 320–331. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23879725
41. PFEIFFER, D., & KIGER, G. (1995). INTRODUCTION. Journal of Health and Human Services Administration, 17(4), 381–390. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25780831
42. Raskind, M. (1993). Assistive Technology and Adults with Learning Disabilities: A Blueprint for Exploration and Advancement. Learning Disability Quarterly, 16(3), 185–196. https://doi.org/10.2307/1511326
43. Raskind, M. H., Herman, K. L., & Torgesen, J. K. (1995). Technology for Persons with Learning Disabilities: Report on an International Symposium. Learning Disability Quarterly, 18(2), 175–184. https://doi.org/10.2307/1511203
44. Rothstein, L. F. (1998). Teaching Disability Law. Journal of Legal Education, 48(2), 297–309. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42893555
45. Ryan, A. G. (1994). Life Adjustments of College Freshmen with and without Learning Disabilities. Annals of Dyslexia, 44, 227–249. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23769695

46. Sarkar, A. (2018). RPWD Act, 2016: Fostering a Disability-friendly Workplace in Indian Organizations. Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, 53(4), 591–603. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26536483

47. SCOTT, I., MCLACHLAN, F., & BROOKFIELD, K. (2018). Inclusive Design and Pedagogy: An Outline of Three Innovations. Built Environment (1978-), 44(1), 9–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45173806

48. Shessel, I., & Reiff, H. B. (1999). Experiences of Adults with Learning Disabilities: Positive and Negative Impacts and Outcomes. Learning Disability Quarterly, 22(4), 305–316. https://doi.org/10.2307/1511264

49. Smyth, R., & Dhami, R. (2024). Breaking Down Barriers: Supporting Disabled Students in the Transition from Further to Higher Education. The International Journal of Disability and Social Justice, 4(3), 68–86. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48801133Wiseman, R. L., Emry, R. A., & Morgan, D. (1988). Predicting Academic Success for Disabled Students in Higher Education. Research in Higher Education, 28(3), 255–269. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40195865

50. Stein, M. A. (2007). A Quick Overview of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Its Implications for Americans with Disabilities. Mental and Physical Disability Law Reporter, 31(5), 679–683. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20787061

51. Stein, M. A., & Lord, J. E. (2010). Monitoring the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Innovations, Lost Opportunities, and Future Potential. Human Rights Quarterly, 32(3), 689–728. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40784059

52. Stoler, R. D. (1992). Perceptions of Regular Education Teachers toward Inclusion of All Handicapped Students in Their Classrooms. The Clearing House, 66(1), 60–62. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30188972

53. Turnbull, H. R. (2009). Today's Policy Contexts for Special Education and Students with Specific Learning Disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly, 32(1), 3–9. https://doi.org/10.2307/25474658

54. van Wyk, G., & Hodgkinson-Williams, C. A. (2022). Staff insights on opening up learning to students with disabilities at Motheo TVET College, South Africa: A social justice perspective. In C. A. Hodgkinson-Williams, T. Mayisela, & S. C. Govender (Eds.), Open Learning as a Means of Advancing Social Justice: Cases in Post-School Education and Training in South Africa (pp. 178–198). African Minds. http://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.13359168.13

55. von Benzon, N. R., Makuch, K., & Makuch, Z. (2008). THE RIGHT FOR DISABLED CHILDREN TO ACCESS THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: A LAW AND POLICY CRITIQUE. Willamette Journal of International Law and Dispute Resolution, 16(1), 76–105. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26211667

56. Webster, R. (2015). The classroom experiences of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream primary schools—1976 to 2012. What do data from systematic observation studies reveal about pupils' educational experiences over time? British Educational Research Journal, 41(6), 992–1009. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24808132

57. Welsh, R. O., & Little, S. (2018). The School Discipline Dilemma: A Comprehensive Review of Disparities and Alternative Approaches. Review of Educational Research, 88(5), 752–794. http://www.jstor.org/stable/45277293

58. Wisniewski, L., & Sedlak, R. (1992). Assistive Devices for Students with Disabilities. The Elementary School Journal, 92(3), 297–314. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1001982

59. Woodward, J., & Rieth, H. (1997). A Historical Review of Technology Research in Special Education. Review of Educational Research, 67(4), 503–536. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170519