

Inclusive Pedagogical Practices for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT:

Inclusive higher education has become both a human-rights obligation and a development priority, yet enrolling students with disabilities does not guarantee that they are taught inclusively. This scoping review mapped the breadth of literature on inclusive pedagogical practices for students with disabilities in tertiary education, aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10. Guided by Arksey and O'Malley's five-stage framework and reported in line with PRISMA-ScR, a systematic search of Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science retrieved studies published between 2015 and 2025. After duplicate removal, title-and-abstract screening, and full-text eligibility assessment by two independent reviewers, 27 studies were included in the final synthesis. Thematic synthesis generated five interconnected themes: Universal Design for Learning as a proactive instructional framework; faculty attitudes, beliefs, and professional competence; accommodations, disclosure, and bureaucratic gatekeeping; student voice, lived experience, and belonging; and institutional policy, culture, and systemic conditions. Across themes, the most persistent finding was the gap between formal provision and lived reality, where accommodations, policies, and frameworks were endorsed in principle but enacted only superficially. The evidence base was further marked by methodological limitations and a strong concentration in high-income, English-speaking contexts, leaving the realities of the Global South underexamined. The review concludes that meaningful inclusion depends as much on relational, cultural, and systemic conditions as on technical structures, and calls for methodologically stronger, contextually grounded, and participatory research to advance equitable tertiary education for students with disabilities worldwide.

Keywords: universal design for learning; reasonable accommodations; faculty preparedness; sense of belonging; educational equity.

1. Introduction

The global movement toward inclusive education has reframed disability not as an individual deficit to be remediated but as a question of how learning environments are designed, governed, and experienced. Within higher education, this shift has gained particular urgency as universities and colleges enroll increasingly diverse student populations and confront long-standing expectations that participation be equitable rather than merely permitted (Salmi & d’Addio, 2020). International commitments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education, and SDG 10, which seeks to reduce inequality within and among nations, have positioned inclusive tertiary education as both a human-rights obligation and a development priority (Byrne, 2019). For students with disabilities, access to higher education is closely tied to economic participation, social mobility, and full citizenship, making the quality of their classroom experience a matter of consequence well beyond the institution itself (Lopez-Gavira et al., 2025). Yet enrolling students with disabilities is not the same as teaching them inclusively, and it is in the everyday pedagogical encounter, how courses are designed, how instruction is delivered, and how learning is assessed, that the promise of inclusion is ultimately kept or broken (Wahyuni et al., 2025).

Despite expanding policy commitments, a persistent gap remains between the formal provision of access and the inclusive practice students actually experience in tertiary classrooms. Accommodations are frequently granted on paper yet inconsistently implemented; faculty often endorse inclusion in principle while reporting limited confidence or preparation to enact it; and progressive institutional policies regularly outpace the resources and accountability needed to make them real (Riswari et al., 2022). Compounding this, much of the existing evidence originates in high-income, English-speaking systems with well-established disability services and rights legislation, offering limited guidance for institutions in the Philippines and the wider Global South that must

pursue inclusion under conditions of constrained resources, inaccessible infrastructure, and competing priorities (Moriña, 2017). This study therefore set out to map the breadth of available literature on inclusive pedagogical practices for students with disabilities in higher education, to identify the strategies, conditions, and barriers that shape their implementation, and to surface the gaps, methodological, contextual, and experiential, that should guide future inquiry. In doing so, it aims to consolidate what is known, clarify what remains uncertain, and frame an agenda relevant to equitable tertiary education in line with SDG 4 and SDG 10.

A growing body of studies has examined dimensions of this challenge, though it remains fragmented across frameworks, actors, and settings. Universal Design for Learning has been widely advanced as a proactive approach that anticipates learner variability and reduces reliance on individualized accommodation, yet studies note a recurring distance between its espoused principles and its actual classroom enactment (Ismailov & Chiu, 2022). A substantial literature documents the decisive influence of faculty attitudes and competence, repeatedly finding that broad support for inclusion coexists with anxiety about teaching disabled students, particularly those with invisible or non-apparent conditions. Other research interrogates the bureaucratic machinery of disclosure and accommodation, highlighting how stigma, documentation burdens, and medicalized eligibility systems deter students from seeking the support to which they are entitled (Emmers et al., 2020). A further strand centers the voices of disabled students themselves, reframing inclusion as relational and affective, an experience of belonging, rather than a purely procedural matter, while institutional studies emphasize that leadership, funding, and accountability distinguish meaningful implementation from symbolic commitment (Osuna-Juárez & González-Castellano, 2023). Taken together, these literatures suggest that inclusive pedagogy operates as an interconnected system rather than a single intervention; however, they have rarely been synthesized into a coherent map of the field, and their concentration in well-resourced Western contexts leaves the realities of developing systems comparatively underexamined.

It is this gap that the present scoping review seeks to address.

2. Methodology

This study employed a scoping review methodology to systematically examine and synthesize existing studies on inclusive pedagogical practices for students with disabilities in higher education institutions. Guided by Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) seminal framework, the review enabled a comprehensive, structured mapping of the literature relevant to inclusive teaching and learning in tertiary settings. Scoping review methodology is particularly suited to fields such as inclusive higher education, where research remains conceptually diverse, methodologically varied, and rapidly expanding across differing national and institutional contexts. Unlike traditional systematic reviews that apply narrowly defined parameters, the scoping review approach is iterative, flexible, and exploratory, allowing continuous refinement of focus as new insights arise from the literature. Adhering to Arksey and O'Malley's five-stage structure ensured methodological rigor, transparency, and coherence in analyzing how inclusive pedagogy is conceptualized and enacted for students with disabilities, and the review was reported in line with the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR).

2.1 Formulating the Research Questions

The review began with the formulation of core research questions that served as the foundation for systematically mapping the literature on inclusive pedagogical practices in higher education. These questions were crafted to keep the review focused, coherent, and aligned with the equity ambitions of SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The first set of questions sought to identify and describe the characteristics of inclusive pedagogical strategies implemented for students with disabilities across diverse higher education settings, including universities, colleges, and teacher education institutions. This facilitated a holistic understanding of how inclusive teaching is conceptualized and operationalized in tertiary contexts.

A second set of questions examined how these inclusive practices intersect with institutional structures, faculty competencies, accommodation systems, and the lived experiences of disabled students. This emphasis was warranted given the persistent gap reported between formal provision and classroom reality. Finally, the research questions explored the conditions, enablers, and barriers that shape the implementation of inclusive pedagogy, including teacher preparedness, institutional support, policy frameworks, and systemic constraints, with particular attention to under-resourced and Global South contexts. Together, these guiding questions ensured a comprehensive and purposeful exploration of the literature, enabling the review to address existing gaps and illuminate the role of inclusive pedagogy in advancing equitable tertiary education.

2.2 Identifying and Retrieving Relevant Literature

A systematic search was conducted across four major academic databases, Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science, to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature on inclusive pedagogical practices in higher education. These databases were selected because they index a wide range of peer-reviewed studies across disciplines, educational levels, and global contexts, making them suitable for capturing the breadth of research required in a scoping review. The search targeted studies published from 2015 to 2025 to focus on recent developments in inclusive policy, disability rights frameworks, and pedagogical innovation shaping contemporary tertiary education.

To enhance accuracy and relevance, a keyword-driven search strategy was employed using structured Boolean operators. The search combined terms related to inclusive pedagogy, disability, and higher education. Specifically, the following Boolean string was applied:

("inclusive pedagogy" OR "inclusive instruction" OR "universal design for learning" OR "inclusive education") AND ("students with disabilities" OR "learners with disabilities" OR "special educational needs" OR "special needs") AND ("higher education" OR "tertiary education")

OR "college") AND ("teaching strategies" OR "pedagogical practices" OR "instructional approaches" OR "accommodations" OR "support")

These keywords were deliberately selected to capture the pedagogical, disability, and tertiary dimensions of the study simultaneously, ensuring the retrieval of literature that examines inclusive instruction alongside the institutional and experiential conditions in which it occurs. The use of Boolean combinations strengthened the precision of the search while maintaining sufficient breadth to support the exploratory nature of the scoping review. By using broad yet targeted search terms, the strategy successfully captured studies spanning universities, colleges, and teacher education institutions across varied national contexts, strengthening the credibility, transparency, and inclusiveness of the review.

2.3 Selection of Studies

As shown in Figure 1, all retrieved records underwent a rigorous, multi-stage screening process to ensure relevance, methodological quality, and analytical coherence. The initial database search yielded 612 records, of which 168 duplicate entries were identified and removed. The remaining 444 records were screened based on titles and abstracts, resulting in the exclusion of 351 records that did not meet the scope of inclusive pedagogy or higher education for students with disabilities. Subsequently, 93 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, of which 66 were excluded due to insufficient relevance, weak methodological grounding, or limited conceptual contribution. This process resulted in 27 studies being included in the final synthesis.

PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram

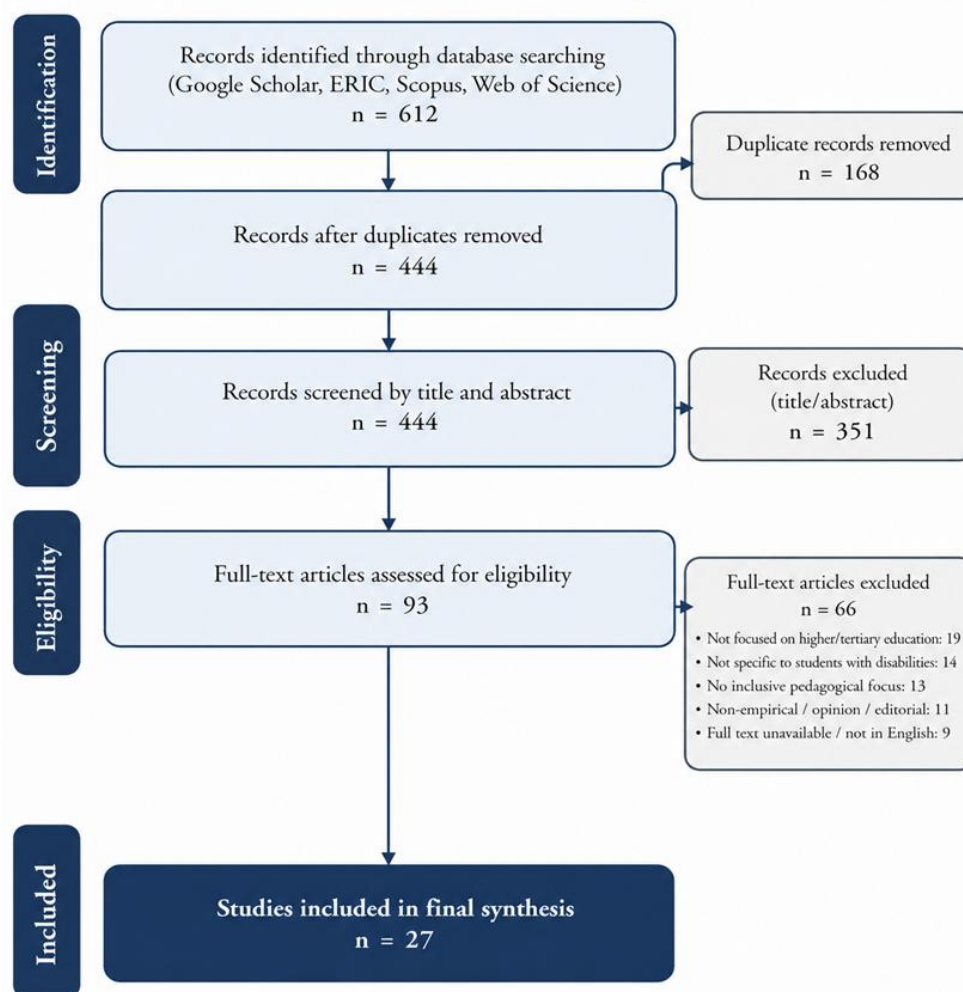


Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR flow chart of the search, selection, and abstracting of articles for the scoping review. Source: Page et al. (2021).

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the selection process, two independent peer reviewers participated in the screening and eligibility assessment. Discrepancies in inclusion decisions were resolved through discussion and consensus, ensuring consistency, transparency, and accuracy throughout the selection procedure. Studies were included if they explicitly examined inclusive pedagogical practices, instructional accommodations, or equity-oriented teaching approaches for students with disabilities within higher education. Only peer-reviewed empirical studies, mixed-method research, and substantive conceptual or theoretical papers published in English were considered. The educational scope was limited to tertiary and post-secondary settings, provided the studies offered meaningful theoretical or empirical contributions.

Conversely, studies were excluded if they consisted primarily of opinion pieces, editorials, or non-empirical commentaries; if they focused on basic or secondary education rather than the tertiary level; if they addressed disability without a clear pedagogical focus; or if the full text was unavailable or not published in English. Non-academic and unrefereed sources were excluded to maintain scholarly rigor. The decision to limit the review to studies published between 2015 and 2025 was intentional and theoretically grounded, capturing the most recent developments in inclusive higher education shaped by strengthened disability rights frameworks, the global mainstreaming of Universal Design for Learning, and heightened policy attention to equity and inclusion. Together, these procedures ensured that the final corpus represented high-quality, current, and contextually relevant evidence aligned with the objectives of this scoping review.

2.4 Data Charting and Organization

A systematic data extraction and charting process was applied to all included studies to ensure consistency, organization, and analytical depth. For each article, detailed information was recorded, including bibliographic data (author, year, country), research purpose, methodological approach, sample

characteristics, and institutional setting. The review also captured the specific inclusive pedagogical strategies discussed, the theoretical or conceptual frameworks guiding each study, the types of disabilities and accommodations addressed, and any institutional or policy conditions reported. In addition, the major findings, implications, and recommendations of each study were documented.

These data were then organized into analytical matrices, allowing the reviewer to compare studies systematically across multiple dimensions, such as instructional approaches, disability focus, institutional context, and reported enablers or barriers. This structured comparison made it possible to identify recurring concepts, points of divergence, and thematic intersections across diverse contexts and methodologies. Ultimately, the charting process served as the foundation for synthesizing the literature, enabling the extraction of meaningful patterns, relationships, and trends that informed the development of the emergent themes.

2.5 Data Synthesis and Interpretation

A thematic synthesis approach was employed to analyze and integrate the extracted data, consistent with the exploratory aims of a scoping review. This method enabled a systematic examination of patterns, concepts, and relationships across the included studies, moving beyond surface-level description toward an interpretive synthesis of the literature. Through careful comparison of how inclusive pedagogy, faculty preparedness, accommodation systems, student experience, and institutional culture were discussed, the analysis captured both shared understandings and contextual variations across diverse higher education settings.

The thematic synthesis followed an iterative process of coding, comparison, and refinement. Initial codes were generated from key concepts and findings reported in the studies, which were then organized into broader analytical categories. Through repeated review and consolidation, five overarching thematic dimensions emerged, reflecting recurring

pedagogical priorities, challenges, and orientations present in the literature. These themes provided a structured lens for understanding how inclusive pedagogy is conceptualized and enacted for students with disabilities in tertiary education, offering a coherent foundation for advancing future research, informing policy development, and guiding inclusive instructional practice in alignment with SDG 4 and SDG 10.

3. Results

Theme 1: Universal Design for Learning as a Framework for Inclusive Instruction

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has emerged as one of the most frequently cited frameworks in the literature on inclusive teaching in higher education, largely because it shifts the burden of adaptation away from the individual student and toward the design of the course itself (Espada-Chavarria et al., 2023). Rather than retrofitting accommodations after a student discloses a disability, UDL asks instructors to anticipate variability from the outset by offering multiple means of engagement, representation, and action or expression (Rogers-Shaw et al., 2018). Studies in this cluster tend to report that UDL-aligned courses reduce the need for individual accommodation requests and benefit a wider population than students with formally documented disabilities (Edwards et al., 2022). This proactive orientation also resonates with broader calls to make technology integration genuinely equitable rather than merely available, since accessible design and inclusive instruction increasingly converge in digitally mediated learning environments. However, the evidence base is uneven: much of it consists of small-scale case studies, instructor self-reports, and single-institution pilots rather than controlled comparisons. This makes it difficult to establish causal claims about learning outcomes, even where the descriptive findings are encouraging (Almeqdad et al., 2023).

A recurring tension in this theme concerns the gap between UDL as an espoused philosophy and UDL as enacted classroom practice. Several authors note that faculty often endorse UDL principles in surveys while implementing only

superficial elements, such as posting lecture slides, without redesigning assessment or engagement structures (Duncan et al., 2025). The literature also points to resource and workload constraints, since genuine UDL implementation requires substantial upfront course redesign that many overworked or contingent faculty cannot undertake. Such constraints are amplified within emerging Education 5.0 and AI-mediated learning environments, where the promise of personalization frequently outpaces the equity and capacity conditions needed to realize it. There is comparatively little research from low- and middle-income contexts, including the Philippines and Southeast Asia more broadly, which raises questions about the transferability of UDL models developed in Western, well-funded institutions; this echoes wider concerns about how culturally responsive and future-ready pedagogies translate across divergent educational settings (Taga, 2026). Mapping these gaps is precisely where a scoping review adds value, as it can document not only what is known but where the silences lie (Murtadlo et al., 2025).

Theme 2: Faculty Attitudes, Beliefs, and Professional Competence

The disposition of teaching staff repeatedly surfaces as a decisive factor shaping whether inclusive practices take root, and this theme captures the substantial body of work examining what instructors think, feel, and know about teaching students with disabilities (Lindner et al., 2023). Many studies document a paradox: faculty frequently express broad support for inclusion in principle while simultaneously voicing anxiety about their own competence to teach disabled students effectively (Morgado & Sánchez-Díaz, 2023). This anxiety appears most pronounced around invisible disabilities, such as learning disabilities, mental health conditions, and autism spectrum conditions, where instructors are uncertain how to respond. The literature suggests that attitudes are not fixed but are shaped by prior contact with disabled people, disciplinary culture, and the presence or absence of institutional support. Negative or fearful attitudes, in turn, correlate with reluctance to provide accommodations and with deficit-oriented

assumptions about student capability (Alhumaid et al., 2023).

Professional development is the most commonly proposed remedy across these studies, yet the findings about its effectiveness are mixed and worth scrutinizing carefully. One-off workshops appear to produce limited and short-lived change, whereas sustained, embedded, and discipline-specific training shows more promise, though rigorous evaluation remains scarce (Sumonte-Rojas, 2025). A subset of the research examines the role of lived experience and contact theory, finding that faculty who interact meaningfully with disabled students or colleagues tend to develop more confident and flexible teaching practices (Moriña & Orozco, 2022). There is also an emerging conversation about disabled academics themselves and how their presence reshapes institutional culture, although this remains underexplored. For a scoping review, this theme is fertile ground because it reveals both the consistency of the attitude findings and the methodological weakness of much of the intervention research.

Theme 3: Accommodations, Disclosure, and the Bureaucratic Gatekeeping of Support

This theme groups the literature concerned with the formal machinery through which students access support, namely the processes of diagnosis, disclosure, registration with disability services, and the granting of accommodations. A striking and consistent finding is that students frequently choose not to disclose their disabilities, citing fear of stigma, concern about being treated differently, prior negative experiences, and skepticism that disclosure will actually improve their situation (Grimes et al., 2019; Bunbury, 2020). The result is that formal accommodation systems capture only a fraction of the students who might benefit from them, undermining the equity goals such systems are meant to serve (Osuna-Juárez & González-Castellano, 2023). Researchers describe these systems as gatekeeping mechanisms that place the documentary and emotional burden on students, who must repeatedly prove their disability to multiple parties (Rivera & Tilcsik, 2023; Filippou et al., 2025). The medicalized, diagnosis-dependent

model of access draws particular criticism for excluding students who lack the resources to obtain formal documentation (Bunbury, 2020; Sujannah et al., 2025).

The studies in this cluster also interrogate what happens after accommodations are granted, revealing that approval on paper does not guarantee implementation in the classroom (Aguirre et al., 2021). Faculty may resist, forget, or quietly undermine accommodations, especially when they perceive them as compromising academic standards or as unfair to other students (Goodwin et al., 2024; Osuna-Juárez & González-Castellano, 2023). Extended examination time is the most commonly studied accommodation, while less attention is paid to accommodations in laboratories, fieldwork, clinical placements, and other non-traditional learning settings (A & Orozco, 2021). This gap is becoming more pressing as emerging AI-powered and Education 5.0 learning environments reshape how support is delivered, since these technologies promise more flexible and personalized accommodation yet risk reproducing existing inequities if access conditions are left unaddressed (Taga, 2026). This is a notable gap given how central such settings are to many tertiary programs, including teacher education and the health professions (Ajani & Ntombela, 2025). A scoping review can usefully map which accommodations and which disciplinary settings dominate the literature and which have been neglected, pointing future inquiry toward the underexamined edges.

Theme 4: Student Voice, Lived Experience, and Sense of Belonging

A growing strand of research deliberately centers the perspectives of disabled students themselves, moving away from studying them as objects of accommodation and toward treating them as authorities on their own educational experience (Moriña et al., 2020; Osuna-Juárez & González-Castellano, 2023). These studies, often qualitative and grounded in interviews or phenomenological designs, surface dimensions of inclusion that surveys of policies and faculty tend to miss, such as the emotional labor of self-advocacy and the daily negotiation of identity (Moriña et al., 2020). A central concept here is belonging, with

students reporting that academic accommodations matter less than whether they feel genuinely welcomed, respected, and seen as legitimate members of the academic community (Aguirre et al., 2021). Microaggressions, ableist assumptions embedded in everyday teaching, and the exhaustion of constantly explaining one's needs recur throughout these accounts (Sujannah et al., 2025). The research suggests that pedagogical inclusion is as much relational and affective as it is technical or procedural (Carballo & Cotán, 2024).

This theme also illuminates the heterogeneity within the disabled student population, cautioning against treating disabled learners as a single undifferentiated group (Moriña et al., 2020). The experiences of a student with a sensory disability, a chronic illness, a psychiatric condition, and a specific learning difference can differ profoundly, and intersecting identities related to gender, class, indigeneity, and first-generation status further complicate the picture. Some of the most valuable studies adopt participatory or co-design methods in which disabled students help shape the research and the resulting recommendations, modeling the inclusion they advocate (Moriña et al., 2020). Even so, certain voices remain underrepresented, particularly students with intellectual disabilities and those in the Global South (Sujannah et al., 2025). Documenting whose experiences have been heard and whose have been marginalized is a contribution a scoping review is especially well suited to make.

Theme 5: Institutional Policy, Culture, and Systemic Enablers and Barriers

The final theme zooms out from the classroom to the organizational and policy environment that either sustains or obstructs inclusive teaching (Filippou et al., 2025). Research here examines mission statements, legislative mandates, quality assurance frameworks, and the structures through which institutions translate the abstract commitment to inclusion into resourced practice. A common conclusion is that the existence of progressive policy is no guarantee of inclusive reality, since there is often a substantial gap between what institutions declare and what students and faculty actually experience (Bunbury, 2020; Filippou

et al., 2025). Scholars describe inclusion that is performative or symbolic, where the language of access serves reputational and compliance purposes while substantive change stalls (Sujannah et al., 2025). Leadership commitment, dedicated funding, and accountability mechanisms repeatedly emerge as the factors that distinguish meaningful implementation from rhetoric (Carballo et al., 2024).

This theme is also where questions of context and equity become most visible, since institutional capacity varies enormously across regions and types of institution (Filippou et al., 2025). Much of the foundational literature originates in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, shaped by their particular legal regimes such as disability discrimination and rights legislation, which limits its direct applicability elsewhere (Bunbury, 2020). In many developing contexts, inclusive higher education must contend with under-resourced disability services, inaccessible physical infrastructure, and competing institutional priorities, and the literature documenting these realities is comparatively thin (Sujannah et al., 2025; Ajani & Ntombela, 2025). As institutions increasingly pursue inclusion through digital transformation, equitable technology integration becomes a further dimension of this systemic challenge, since the benefits of digital tools depend on the institutional capacity and policy conditions that govern their accessible and equitable deployment (Taga, 2026). There is a clear need for research attentive to local legal frameworks, cultural understandings of disability, and resource constraints, which a scoping review can foreground as a priority for future work. By situating classroom practice within this wider system, the theme reminds us that inclusive pedagogy cannot be sustained by individual instructors acting alone (Carballo & Cotán, 2024).

4. Discussion

The findings mapped across these five themes reveal a field that is rich in descriptive insight yet uneven in methodological rigor and global representation. What emerges most clearly is that inclusive pedagogy in higher education cannot be reduced to any single intervention or actor. The

literature on Universal Design for Learning offers an aspirational framework for proactive course design, yet its promise is repeatedly undercut by the very factors the other themes expose: faculty who endorse inclusion in principle but lack the confidence or institutional support to enact it, bureaucratic accommodation systems that place the burden of proof on students, and policy environments where progressive language outpaces resourced practice. Inclusion, in other words, appears across the literature less as a fixed condition an institution either possesses or lacks and more as a continuous negotiation among instructional design, human disposition, administrative machinery, student experience, and organizational will.

A second pattern running through the themes is the persistent gap between formal provision and lived reality. Accommodations granted on paper are not reliably implemented in classrooms; policies that declare commitment to access frequently function symbolically; and training meant to shift faculty practice often produces only superficial or short-lived change. The student voice literature is especially valuable here because it reframes inclusion as relational and affective rather than merely procedural, showing that a sense of belonging and freedom from everyday ableism often matter more to students than the technical accommodations they receive. This convergence across themes suggests that future efforts should attend not only to whether supportive structures exist but to the cultural and interpersonal conditions that determine whether those structures actually function as intended. It also cautions researchers against evaluating inclusion solely through audits of policy or counts of registered students.

Finally, the synthesis exposes a striking geographic and contextual imbalance that has direct bearing on the relevance of the evidence for settings such as the Philippines and the wider Global South. The foundational literature is dominated by studies from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, shaped by their specific legal regimes and well-resourced disability services, which limits its transferability to institutions contending with inaccessible infrastructure, thin support systems,

and competing priorities. This imbalance aligns directly with the equity ambitions of SDG 4 and SDG 10, which call for inclusive and equitable quality education and the reduction of inequality within and among countries—goals that cannot be assessed against evidence drawn almost exclusively from high-income contexts. The scoping review's contribution, then, is not only to consolidate what is known but to make these silences visible: the underexamined disciplinary settings, the marginalized student voices, and the under-resourced regions whose realities the current literature scarcely captures. Mapping the gap is itself a finding, and it sets a clear agenda for research that is contextually grounded, methodologically stronger, and genuinely attentive to those the field claims to serve.

5. Conclusion

This scoping review set out to map the breadth of literature on inclusive pedagogical practices for students with disabilities in higher education, and across its five themes—Universal Design for Learning, faculty attitudes and competence, accommodations and disclosure, student voice and belonging, and institutional policy and culture—a coherent argument takes shape. Inclusive pedagogy is not a single technique an institution adopts or a compliance threshold it clears, but a continuous negotiation among course design, the preparedness and disposition of teaching staff, the bureaucratic systems that mediate support, the lived experience of disabled students, and the institutional will that sustains or quietly defeats these efforts. The most persistent thread running through every theme is the distance between formal provision and lived reality: accommodations approved on paper but never enacted in the classroom, policies that proclaim commitment while remaining unresourced, and frameworks embraced in principle yet implemented only at the surface. This is the central insight the review contributes—that the field's documented weaknesses are not failures of intention but failures of follow-through, and that inclusion therefore depends as much on relational, cultural, and systemic conditions as on the technical structures most studies examine.

It follows that meaningful progress must be pursued simultaneously at the levels of practice, institution, policy, and research, since interventions at any single level are repeatedly undone by neglect at the others. In teaching, this means supporting faculty to move beyond the superficial adoption of inclusive language toward substantive, proactive course redesign in which Universal Design for Learning is built in from the outset rather than retrofitted through individual requests—an aim that demands sustained, discipline-specific professional development and realistic workload allowances rather than isolated workshops. At the institutional level, leaders must close the policy–practice gap by coupling their stated commitments with dedicated funding, accountability mechanisms, and accessible physical and digital infrastructure, while reforming disability-support processes to lift the disclosure and documentation burden from students and evaluating inclusion through students' sense of belonging rather than through registration counts and policy audits alone. At the level of system and policy, frameworks must be grounded in local legal contexts, cultural understandings of disability, and the resource realities of the institutions expected to deliver them, rather than imported wholesale from the high-income, English-speaking settings that still dominate the evidence base. Read against the equity ambitions of SDG 4 and SDG 10, this becomes not

merely a pedagogical concern but a measurable commitment to equitable quality education and the reduction of inequality, one that is especially urgent for under-resourced institutions in the Philippines and the wider Global South whose realities the current literature scarcely captures.

Ultimately, the value of this review lies as much in the silences it exposes as in the patterns it consolidates, and these silences set a clear and compelling agenda for what must come next. Future inquiry should move beyond small, single-institution case studies and instructor self-reports toward methodologically stronger comparative and longitudinal designs; it should deliberately situate itself in the Global South, attend to neglected disciplinary settings such as laboratories, fieldwork, and clinical placements, and adopt participatory approaches that center the voices long pushed to the margins, including students with intellectual disabilities. To map the gap, as this review has done, is itself a finding—but to close it is the work that genuine inclusion now requires. The challenge for institutions, educators, and policymakers alike is to ensure that the commitment to inclusive tertiary education ceases to be something declared and becomes, at last, something reliably experienced by every student the field claims to serve.

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