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Qualitative Study on an Inclusive Education Curriculum in Nigeria: Interrogating Policy, Confronting Practice and Constructing a Transformative Framework

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Abstract

Inclusive education the philosophical commitment to providing quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities, learning differences, and other forms of marginalisation, within the mainstream educational system represents one of the most demanding and most consequential curriculum and instructional challenges facing Nigerian education in the twenty-first century. Despite Nigeria's ratification of landmark international frameworks the Salamanca Statement (1994), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4, 2015) and the articulation of inclusive education provisions in the National Policy on Education (2013) and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018), the curriculum infrastructure required to operationalise genuine inclusion in Nigerian schools remains critically underdeveloped. This paper undertakes a systematic, multi-dimensional conceptual analysis of inclusive education curriculum in Nigeria, interrogating the theoretical foundations, policy architecture, and implementation landscape of Nigerian inclusive education, and identifying the specific curriculum and instructional failures that prevent policy commitments from being translated into classroom reality for the estimated 25 million Nigerians living with disabilities and the millions more experiencing educational marginalisation from poverty, conflict, gender, and cultural exclusion. Drawing on the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018), Disability Studies in Education (Gabel, 2005), and the Human Rights Model of disability (Quinn & Degener, 2002), the paper develops a comprehensive Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria (IECF-N) a six-dimensional model addressing curriculum philosophy, content, design, pedagogy, assessment, and teacher preparation. The paper argues that transformative inclusive education in Nigeria is not a technical curriculum adjustment but a profound epistemological, ethical, and political reorientation of the entire educational enterprise, and offers targeted recommendations for the Federal Ministry of Education, NERDC, state governments, teacher education institutions, disability rights organisations, and school communities. This paper is positioned as an essential contribution to the scholarly discourse on curriculum reform, disability rights, and educational justice in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: inclusive education, curriculum reform, teacher professional development

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right. This is not a philosophical abstraction it is a legal obligation enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), and Nigeria's own constitutional commitments (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Inclusive education, the principle that all children, regardless of ability, disability, gender, language, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or any other characteristic, have the right to receive quality education in their local mainstream school community alongside their non-disabled peers represents the most demanding and most morally consequential expression of this right (UNESCO, 1994; CAST, 2018; Ainscow, 2020). It demands not merely that children with disabilities be admitted to mainstream schools but that those schools fundamentally redesign their curriculum, instruction, physical environment, assessment practices, and professional culture to genuinely welcome, accommodate, and develop every learner who enters their doors. The contradiction at the heart of Nigerian inclusive education is stark and troubling. At the level of international policy commitment, Nigeria has signed or ratified every major framework that mandates inclusive education: the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (1990); the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994); the Dakar Framework for Action (2000); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006, ratified by Nigeria in 2010); and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 4, ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). Domestically, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) provides for the education of children with special needs, and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (DAPDA, 2018) explicitly prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in educational institutions and mandates reasonable accommodation. These are not weak commitments they are legally binding obligations of the Nigerian state.



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Yet the implementation reality presents a picture of near-total divergence from these commitments. Nigeria's estimated 25 million persons with disabilities (National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, 2020; WHO, 2011) face systematic exclusion from mainstream education at every level. The majority of children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, and learning differences either attend severely under-resourced segregated special schools, informal community-based settings with no qualified personnel, or receive no formal education whatsoever (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013; Garuba, 2003; Obiakor, Eskay & Afolabi, 2012). In mainstream schools, even where individual children with disabilities are physically present, the curriculum, pedagogical approaches, assessment methods, physical environment, and professional capacity of teachers are so uniformly inaccessible that their presence constitutes exclusion-within-inclusion physical integration without genuine curriculum participation or developmental progress (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; UNESCO, 2017). This paper argues that the gap between Nigeria's policy commitments and its inclusive education practice is fundamentally a curriculum and instruction problem. The philosophical commitment to inclusion can be enshrined in law; the physical enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools can be mandated by decree; the buildings can be made wheel-chair accessible with ramps and lifts. But none of these measures will produce genuine educational inclusion without a curriculum that is designed from the outset to be accessible, appropriate, and enabling for all learners a curriculum that embeds flexibility in its content, pedagogy, materials, and assessment to accommodate the full diversity of human learning (CAST, 2018; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Udvari-Solner, 1995). This is the curriculum and instruction challenge of inclusive education and it is the challenge this paper addresses. The paper proceeds through seven substantive sections: the theoretical and philosophical foundations of inclusive education curriculum; the international and domestic policy architecture; a critical analysis of the current state of inclusive education curriculum in Nigeria; an examination of the specific barriers to curriculum inclusion; the development of the Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria (IECF-N); implications for teacher education and professional development; and comprehensive recommendations for all stakeholders. Throughout, the paper maintains its analytical focus on curriculum and instruction as the operationalising infrastructure of inclusion the concrete, practical domain in which the rights rhetoric of inclusive education must be translated into the lived educational experience of every Nigerian learner.

Theoretical and Philosophical Foundations of Inclusive Education Curriculum

The Social Model of Disability and Disability Studies in Education

The foundational theoretical reorientation that inclusive education curriculum requires is the shift from the medical model of disability to the social model of disability a shift with radical implications for how curriculum is designed, delivered, and evaluated (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2014; Gabel, 2005). The medical model conceptualises disability as a deficit or pathology located within the individual person a problem to be diagnosed, treated, managed, or overcome. Applied to education, the medical model produces a curriculum logic in which children with disabilities must be assessed to determine their deficits, segregated into settings where their special needs can be addressed by specialist professionals, and subjected to individualised therapeutic interventions aimed at normalising their functioning to the greatest possible extent. This is the logic that produced the system of segregated special schools, special classes, and remedial programmes that constitutes the dominant modality of Nigerian provision for children with disabilities (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013; Garuba, 2003; Obiakor et al., 2012). The social model of disability, developed by disabled people's organisations and disability rights scholars in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, locates disability not in the individual but in the interaction between the individual and a disabling social and physical environment (Oliver, 1990; Barnes & Mercer, 2003). People are disabled not by their impairments per se but by social structures, physical barriers, communication systems, cultural attitudes, and institutional practices including curriculum practices that are designed around a narrow norm of human functioning and that exclude those who do not conform to that norm. A child who is blind is not educationally disabled by their blindness; they are educationally disabled by a curriculum delivered exclusively through print, in a classroom without braille materials, taught by a teacher with no knowledge of tactile learning strategies (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2014). Remove the disabling curriculum barriers, and the disability in its educational manifestation substantially diminishes. Disability Studies in Education (DSE) extends the social model to the specific domain of schooling and curriculum, interrogating the ways in which educational knowledge, curriculum content, pedagogical practices, assessment systems, and professional cultures produce and reproduce disability through their normalising assumptions, their ableist structures, and their systematic marginalisation of learners who do not conform to the imagined 'normal' student (Gabel, 2005; Connor, Gabel, Gallagher



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& Morton, 2008; Ferri, 2012). DSE scholarship challenges the curriculum developer and teacher educator to ask not 'What is wrong with this student that prevents them from accessing our curriculum?' but rather 'What is wrong with our curriculum that prevents this student from accessing their right to education?' This is the epistemological reorientation that a genuinely inclusive curriculum demands and it is a reorientation that Nigerian curriculum development institutions, teacher education programmes, and school communities have not yet begun to make.

The Human Rights Model of Disability

The Human Rights Model of disability, articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006) and developed in the scholarship of Quinn and Degener (2002) and Degener (2017), extends the social model's critique of disability construction to the domain of international human rights law, arguing that persons with disabilities are rights-bearing subjects with inherent dignity and equal citizenship not passive recipients of medical or charitable provision. Article 24 of the CRPD is the most demanding and most directly relevant international legal instrument for inclusive education curriculum: it requires states parties to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning, which means ensuring that persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality, and free primary and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live; that reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided; and that students with disabilities receive the support required within the general education system to facilitate their effective education (United Nations, 2006). The CRPD's concept of 'reasonable accommodation' the modifications and adjustments necessary to ensure that a person with a disability can enjoy or exercise their rights on an equal basis with others has profound implications for inclusive education curriculum design in Nigeria. It demands that curriculum developers, school administrators, and teachers provide individual adjustments to curriculum content, delivery methods, learning materials, assessment formats, and instructional timing that enable each student with a disability to access and demonstrate their learning within the mainstream curriculum framework. This is a legally binding, judicially enforceable obligation of the Nigerian state, reinforced by the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018), which Nigeria enacted domestically. Failure to provide reasonable accommodation in educational settings constitutes prohibited discrimination under both the CRPD and DAPDA 2018 a legal reality that most Nigerian school administrators and teachers are entirely unaware of (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST, 2018) and grounded in the architectural concept of universal design provides the most comprehensive and practically actionable theoretical framework for inclusive curriculum design available in the contemporary educational literature. UDL is a curriculum design philosophy and framework that proactively addresses the predictable diversity of learners by building flexibility into curriculum from the outset, rather than retrofitting accommodations for individual students after a standard curriculum has been designed for an imagined 'average' learner (CAST, 2018; Rose & Meyer, 2002; Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose & Jackson, 2002). The UDL framework is organised around three core principles, each addressing a different aspect of the learning process. The first principle Multiple Means of Representation demands that curriculum provide information and content in multiple formats so that learners with different sensory, cognitive, and linguistic profiles can all access the same knowledge and concepts. In the inclusive classroom, this means that curriculum content is not delivered exclusively through print text (inaccessible to students with visual impairments, dyslexia, or limited literacy) or exclusively through spoken language (inaccessible to students with hearing impairments or language processing differences) but through multiple complementary modalities: audio, visual, tactile, kinesthetic, and digital formats that collectively ensure universal access to curriculum content (CAST, 2018; Rose & Meyer, 2002). The second principle, Multiple Means of Action and Expression demands that students be provided with multiple ways of demonstrating their learning, recognising that the standard assessment formats of written essays and examinations systematically disadvantage students with physical disabilities, learning differences, or communication impairments, and that alternative demonstration modes, oral presentations, portfolio collections, digital productions, practical demonstrations, and graphic representations provide more valid and equitable evidence of learning (CAST, 2018; Hitchcock et al., 2002). The third principle Multiple Means of Engagement demands that curriculum provide multiple ways of motivating and sustaining learners' engagement, recognising that interest, persistence, self-regulation, and intrinsic motivation are profoundly variable across the learner population and that curricula designed around a single engagement modality will systematically disengage significant



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portions of the learner community. Culturally responsive content, student choice in learning activities, collaborative and individually-paced options, and explicit social-emotional learning components are among the engagement strategies that UDL prescribes (CAST, 2018). Applied to Nigerian inclusive education curriculum, UDL demands a fundamental rethinking of how content is selected, how materials are produced, how instruction is organised, how assessment is structured, and how student engagement is sustained across the full diversity of Nigerian learners including those with disabilities, those from minority language groups, those from nomadic and pastoral communities, girls in gender-restrictive cultural contexts, and children affected by conflict and displacement.

The Index for Inclusion

The Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, revised 2011) is one of the most widely used frameworks for guiding and evaluating institutional progress toward inclusive education. It conceptualises inclusion as a continuous process rather than a fixed state a process through which schools progressively remove barriers to participation and learning for all students while increasing the capacity of the school community to value diversity and support every learner. The Index organises the process of inclusion along three dimensions: creating inclusive cultures (building a community that shares values of inclusion, belonging, and collaboration); producing inclusive policies (ensuring that inclusion permeates all institutional decision-making, planning, and resource allocation); and evolving inclusive practices (developing teaching and learning approaches that reflect inclusive cultures and policies in the actual experience of students and staff). Critically, the Index insists that inclusive cultures the values, relationships, and shared commitments of the school community must be the foundation upon which inclusive policies and practices are built; policy reform without cultural transformation produces compliance without conviction, and practice change without policy support produces innovation without sustainability (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Applied to Nigeria, the Index for Inclusion framework reveals that the current state of Nigerian inclusive education is characterised by policy statements without cultural foundation and by occasional physical integration without practice change. Nigerian schools may articulate commitment to inclusive education in their mission statements and development plans, but the daily classroom practices of most teachers the curriculum content they select, the pedagogical approaches they deploy, the assessment methods they employ, and the assumptions about 'normal' learners that undergird all these decisions reflect a fundamentally exclusive educational culture that values uniformity over diversity and compliance over authentic participation (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; UNESCO, 2017). The Index's demand for cultural transformation changing the deeply held beliefs, implicit assumptions, and professional identities of teachers, administrators, and school community members is the most challenging and most essential dimension of inclusive education reform in Nigeria.

The Policy Architecture of Inclusive Education in Nigeria: Commitments and Contradictions

International Frameworks

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) adopted at the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, Spain, and endorsed by 92 governments including Nigeria remains the most influential single document in the history of inclusive education policy globally. It declared that schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other conditions, and that the concept of special needs education must be broadened to include children who for whatever reason fail to benefit from schooling. Crucially, the Salamanca Statement situated inclusive education not as a special education modality but as a curriculum and pedagogical challenge for mainstream schools: it called for curricula to be adapted to children's needs, not children adapted to predetermined curricular assumptions (UNESCO, 1994). This curriculum-centred conception of inclusion which demands that the curriculum be flexible, differentiated, and universally designed is the conception that most sharply challenges the practice of Nigerian mainstream schools, where the curriculum is treated as a fixed, standardised entity to which all children must conform regardless of their individual learning profiles. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006), ratified by Nigeria in 2010, represents the most legally binding international commitment to inclusive education. Article 24 explicitly requires Nigeria to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels not a parallel special education system but a fundamentally reformed mainstream system that accommodates all learners through curriculum flexibility, teacher training, accessibility standards, and individual support. The CRPD Committee's General Comment No. 4 (2016) clarified that Article 24 requires states to immediately abandon all forms of segregated special education and to make measurable, progressive progress toward a fully inclusive system, providing interim support and reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities within the mainstream setting. General Comment No. 4 also



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clarified that inclusive education and quality education are inseparable that a segregated or exclusionary system cannot provide quality education, because quality education is inherently an education that develops every learner's full potential within a diverse, inclusive community (United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).

Domestic Policy Provisions

The National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) provides for the education of persons with special needs in Section 7, articulating eight specific objectives for special needs education including developing the special abilities and potentials of individuals with special needs, providing functional education for the disabled, and preparing them for self-reliance. However, Section 7 of the NPE reflects a conceptual framework that is more consistent with the medical model than the social model of disability it treats children with disabilities as a special category requiring separate provision rather than as rights-bearing citizens entitled to education in their community schools with appropriate support. The NPE does not mention Universal Design for Learning, curriculum accessibility, reasonable accommodation, or differentiated instruction the specific curriculum and instruction mechanisms through which genuine inclusion is operationalised (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; Garuba, 2003). The Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (DAPDA, 2018) represents the most recent and most explicit domestic legal commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities, including in education. Section 15 of DAPDA 2018 prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in educational institutions and mandates that educational institutions provide reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Section 16 requires educational institutions to take affirmative steps to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities in educational programmes. However, DAPDA 2018 provides no specific guidance on what inclusive curriculum looks like, what reasonable accommodation in curriculum and instruction entails, or how teachers should be trained to provide it leaving the operationalisation of these commitments entirely undefined (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018; National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, 2020). This legislative gap between the human rights commitment to inclusion and the absence of curriculum and instructional guidance for operationalising it is the central policy failure of Nigerian inclusive education. Laws can mandate admission; curriculum reform and teacher preparation must deliver inclusion. The absence of a National Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework, a National Inclusive Education Teacher Preparation Standard, a National Accessibility Standard for Educational Materials, and a National Individual Education Plan (IEP) policy constitutes a systemic curriculum governance failure that undermines every legal commitment Nigeria has made to inclusive education (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Obiakor et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2017).

The Contradiction Between Policy and Fiscal Reality

The most fundamental contradiction in Nigerian inclusive education policy is the profound mismatch between the ambition of the legal and policy commitments and the fiscal reality of the resources allocated to implementing them. The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD), established under DAPDA 2018 as the primary government body for operationalising disability rights in Nigeria, was still without a fully functional budget allocation and operational staffing several years after its establishment (National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, 2020). The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), which funds basic education infrastructure across Nigeria, has no specific budget line for inclusive education infrastructure accessible toilets, ramps, tactile pathways, hearing loop systems, accessible classroom furniture in its infrastructure grants to states. Teacher training institutions receive no additional funding for ECE and inclusive education specialist components in their curricula, despite the additional instructional time and expertise required to prepare teachers for inclusive classroom practice (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013; Garuba, 2003). This fiscal neglect reflects and reinforces a deeper attitudinal reality: the Nigerian educational system has not yet internalised the premise that inclusive education is a right rather than a charity, a mainstream responsibility rather than a specialist's domain, and an investment rather than a cost. Until fiscal commitments match policy commitments until inclusive education receives the dedicated, sustained, and adequate funding that its implementation requires the gap between Nigeria's international and domestic legal obligations and the lived experience of Nigerian learners with disabilities and other marginalised identities will persist and widen (UNICEF, 2022; UNESCO, 2017; Ainscow, 2020).

Critical Analysis: The Current State of Inclusive Education Curriculum in Nigeria

The Persistence of Segregation: Special Schools and Their Limits

Nigeria's primary institutional response to the educational needs of children with disabilities has been the establishment of segregated special schools residential institutions for specific categories of disability including schools for the visually impaired, schools for the deaf, schools for children with intellectual disabilities, and vocational rehabilitation centres for

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young adults with physical disabilities (Garuba, 2003; Obiakor et al., 2012). These institutions were modelled on colonial-era British special education provision and operate on a fundamentally different curriculum framework from mainstream schools: modified academic content, reduced curriculum expectations, heavy emphasis on vocational and life skills training, and therapeutic interventions delivered by specialists including speech-language therapists, physiotherapists, and orientation and mobility specialists. The limitations of the Nigerian special school system as a vehicle for inclusive education are both principled and practical. At the level of principle, the CRPD (2006) and CRPD General Comment No. 4 (2016) are unambiguous: segregated special education, however well-resourced and professionally staffed, constitutes a violation of disabled children's rights to inclusive education and equal citizenship. Children educated in segregated settings are denied the social integration, peer learning opportunities, and preparation for life in an inclusive community that mainstream education provides; they internalise a disabled identity constructed around limitation rather than capability; and they graduate into communities that have not been prepared to receive or include them (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2014; Gabel, 2005). At the practical level, Nigerian special schools are drastically under-resourced, geographically inaccessible to most families, qualitatively inadequate, and quantitatively insufficient to serve even a small fraction of the disabled children who require educational provision (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013; National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, 2020).

Mainstream Schools: Inclusion Without Infrastructure

Where children with disabilities do attend mainstream schools in Nigeria often as a result of family preference, geographic necessity, or the absence of accessible special school provision they encounter a curriculum and instructional environment designed entirely for non-disabled learners and systematically inaccessible to them. The mainstream Nigerian curriculum as specified in NERDC curriculum documents, WAEC and NECO examination frameworks, and school timetable structures makes no provision for differentiated instruction, accessible materials, alternative assessment formats, individual education plans, or any other accommodation mechanism for students with disabilities or learning differences (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002; Ainscow & Miles, 2008; UNESCO, 2017). The standard textbooks are available only in print inaccessible to students with visual impairments. The standard examinations require handwriting within time limits inaccessible to students with physical disabilities affecting upper limb function. The standard classroom instruction is predominantly auditory-verbal inaccessible to students with hearing impairments who have not been provided with sign language interpreters or hearing loop technology. The standard curriculum language is English inaccessible to students from language minority communities or with language processing differences who have not been provided with language support. Teachers in mainstream Nigerian schools receive no training in inclusive pedagogy, differentiated instruction, disability-related curriculum modification, Braille, Nigerian Sign Language (NSL), Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC), or the use of assistive technology the specific professional competences required to make mainstream curriculum accessible to students with diverse learning profiles (Obiakor et al., 2012; Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013; Garuba, 2003). A 2017 UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report found that less than 5% of Nigerian primary school teachers had received any form of inclusive education training, and that the majority of teachers held negative or ambivalent attitudes toward the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classrooms attitudes rooted not in malice but in genuine professional unpreparedness and the well-founded fear of being expected to serve a diverse learner population without adequate knowledge, skills, time, or material support.

The Multiple Dimensions of Educational Marginalisation

Inclusive education in Nigeria must address not only disability-based exclusion but the multiple, intersecting dimensions of educational marginalisation that characterise the Nigerian educational landscape. Gender exclusion particularly in northern Nigeria, where deep-rooted cultural norms restrict girls' educational participation, where child marriage removes girls from school before secondary completion, and where the gender gap in educational attainment remains the largest in Sub-Saharan Africa represents a form of curriculum exclusion as profound as disability-based exclusion (UNICEF, 2022; UNESCO, 2021). Poverty-based exclusion which prevents children from poor families from affording school fees, uniforms, textbooks, and transportation, and which forces children into labour that competes with school attendance intersects with disability, gender, and geographic marginalisation to produce complex, multi-dimensional patterns of educational exclusion that simple enrolment interventions cannot address (Ainscow, 2020; Obiakor et al., 2012). Linguistic exclusion the experience of children from the approximately 450 Nigerian language communities whose home languages are not English, Hausa, Yoruba, or Igbo, and who encounter a school system in which instruction, materials, and assessment



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are conducted in unfamiliar languages constitutes a fundamental curriculum barrier that the field of inclusive education must explicitly address (Cummins, 2001; UNESCO, 2021). Nomadic and pastoral community children whose families' seasonal migration patterns are incompatible with fixed-location, calendar-bound schooling experience structural exclusion from the standard school curriculum that requires nomadic-specific curriculum and instructional modalities. Children affected by armed conflict and displacement particularly acute in the North-East (Borno, Yobe, Adamawa states), North-West (Zamfara, Katsina states), and Middle Belt states face trauma-related learning difficulties, interrupted schooling histories, and psychosocial needs that standard curriculum and instruction are entirely unprepared to address (UNICEF, 2022). An inclusive education curriculum for Nigeria that addresses only physical disability while ignoring gender, poverty, language, nomadism, and conflict-induced exclusion is not truly inclusive it is a partial and selective accommodation that perpetuates the marginalisation of those whose exclusions are most structurally embedded. A genuinely inclusive curriculum must be designed to be responsive to the full spectrum of human diversity and the full range of barriers to educational participation that characterise Nigerian society (Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Ainscow, 2020; UNESCO, 2017).

Barriers to Inclusive Education Curriculum Implementation in Nigeria

The barriers to inclusive education curriculum implementation in Nigeria are multiple, mutually reinforcing, and deeply structural. Table 1 provides a systematic classification of these barriers across six dimensions, with specific Nigerian manifestations and proposed remediation strategies for each.

Table 1: Barriers to Inclusive Education Curriculum Implementation in Nigeria: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis

Barrier Category	Specific Barrier	Nigerian Manifestation	Remediation Strategy
Curriculum Design	Inaccessibility of standard curriculum materials	No Braille, audio, or digital format textbooks; no large-print materials; no Sign Language resources	Mandate multi-format production of all national curriculum materials; fund assistive technology provision through UBEC grants
Pedagogy	Absence of differentiated instruction	Whole-class, uniform teaching to imagined 'average' student; no individualisation of content, pace or method	Integrate UDL principles into all teacher education curricula; provide in-service training in differentiated instruction; reduce class sizes
Assessment	Inaccessible examination formats	WAEC/NECO written examinations inaccessible to students with physical, visual, or print-processing disabilities; no alternative format options	Establish WAEC/NECO accessible examination policy; develop and implement alternative assessment frameworks; train examination officers in accommodation provision
Teacher Preparation	Absence of inclusive education competence	Less than 5% of Nigerian teachers trained in inclusive pedagogy; no pre-service inclusive education requirement; no specialist NCE/B.Ed. pathway	Mandate inclusive education units in all NCE and B.Ed. programmes; develop specialist inclusive education teacher education tracks; fund continuous professional development
Physical Environment	Inaccessible school infrastructure	Absence of ramps, accessible toilets, tactile pathways, hearing loop systems in virtually all Nigerian mainstream schools	Include inclusive infrastructure requirements in all UBEC capital grants; develop National Accessibility Standard for School Buildings; inspect and enforce compliance



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Attitudinal	Negative attitudes toward disability	Teacher and peer stigma; parental resistance; community belief systems attributing disability to spiritual causes	Disability awareness curriculum integration; community sensitisation programmes; teacher attitude transformation as component of inclusive education training
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Note. UDL = Universal Design for Learning; UBEC = Universal Basic Education Commission; WAEC = West African Examinations Council; NECO = National Examinations Council; NCE = Nigeria Certificate in Education; B.Ed. = Bachelor of Education. Source: Author's synthesis of inclusive education literature and Nigerian policy analysis (2025). Beyond the specific barriers catalogued in Table 1, the deepest and most challenging barrier to inclusive education curriculum in Nigeria is what Ainscow (2020) terms the 'deficit thinking' that pervades educational institutions the default assumption that educational failure, underperformance, and non-participation are located within the child rather than within the curriculum, the pedagogy, or the system. Deficit thinking produces a curriculum culture in which students who do not conform to the imagined standard learner are assessed, classified, and removed from the mainstream rather than a curriculum culture in which non-conforming performance is read as evidence of curriculum inadequacy and triggers curriculum redesign. Transforming this cultural orientation in curriculum development institutions, in teacher education programmes, in schools, in communities, and in government is the most fundamental and most difficult task of inclusive education curriculum reform in Nigeria.

The Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria (IECF-N): A Transformative Proposal

The Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria (IECF-N) proposed in this paper is a six-dimensional curriculum reform framework grounded in the theoretical foundations of Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018), the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), the Human Rights Model of Disability (Quinn & Degener, 2002; Degener, 2017), and Disability Studies in Education (Gabel, 2005). The framework addresses curriculum philosophy, content, design, pedagogy, assessment, and teacher preparation as six interdependent dimensions of a comprehensive reform system in which each dimension is necessary but insufficient without the others. Figure 1 below represents the conceptual architecture of the IECF-N.

Table 2

The Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria (IECF-N): Six Dimensions

S/N	Dimension	Core Principle	Key Components	Theoretical Grounding
1	Inclusive Curriculum Philosophy	Disability and difference are normal human variation; all learners have the right to access and progress in a common curriculum	Rights-based framing; deficit thinking critique; diversity as pedagogical resource; belonging and participation as core outcomes	Oliver (1990); Gabel (2005); Booth & Ainscow (2002); CRPD Art. 24 (2006)
2	Inclusive Curriculum Content	Curriculum content must reflect the diversity of humanity and value the knowledge, culture and identity of all learner communities	Disability history and culture; cultural diversity integration; multiple knowledge systems; anti-discrimination content; emotional and social learning	Battiste (2013); Sleeter (2005); Gardner (1983); UNESCO (2017)
3	Accessible Curriculum Design (UDL)	Curriculum must be proactively designed to be accessible to all learners through multiple modalities of representation, action and engagement	Multi-format materials (print, Braille, audio, digital); tiered learning objectives; scaffolded content; visual, tactile and auditory pathways; accessible digital resources	CAST (2018); Rose & Meyer (2002); Hitchcock et al. (2002)



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4	Differentiated and Inclusive Pedagogy	Instruction must be flexibly designed to meet diverse learning needs without sorting, tracking or segregating learners	Differentiated instruction; cooperative learning; peer tutoring; flipped classroom; learning stations; explicit scaffolding; culturally responsive teaching	Vygotsky (1978); Tomlinson (2001); Udvari-Solner (1995); Gay (2010)
5	Authentic and Flexible Assessment	Assessment must provide all learners with equitable means of demonstrating their learning through flexible format and process	Alternative and augmentative assessment; portfolio evidence; oral assessment; IEPs; extended time; assistive technology in assessment; formative assessment priority	Wortham (2012); McAfee et al. (2004); Dyssegaard & Larsen (2013)
6	Transformative Teacher Education	All teachers must be prepared to teach all learners through integrated inclusive education competence development	Pre-service UDL training; disability awareness; differentiated instruction skills; Braille and NSL literacy; IEP development; collaborative professional learning	Ainscow (2020); UNESCO (2017); Obiakor et al. (2012); CAST (2018)

Note. IECF-N = Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria; UDL = Universal Design for Learning; NSL = Nigerian Sign Language; IEP = Individual Education Plan. Source: Author's original framework synthesis (2025).

Dimension 1: Inclusive Curriculum Philosophy, Reframing the Foundational Commitment

The first and most foundational dimension of the IECF-N is the explicit adoption and institutional embedding of a rights-based, social model-informed philosophy of inclusion as the organising value of the Nigerian educational system. This is not merely a philosophical preamble to the practical curriculum reform components that follow it is the epistemological bedrock without which no practical curriculum change will be sustained or spread. A curriculum philosophy that continues to locate educational difficulty within the child that sees diverse learners as special needs rather than normal human variation will persistently generate deficit-oriented practices regardless of what the curriculum documents say (Oliver, 1990; Gabel, 2005; Ainscow & Miles, 2008). Concretely, the adoption of an inclusive curriculum philosophy in Nigeria requires: the explicit revision of the National Policy on Education (2013) to replace its special needs education framework with a rights-based inclusive education framework aligned with the CRPD and CRPD General Comment No. 4; the development of a National Statement on Inclusive Education Values that is mandatory reading for all teachers, administrators, and curriculum developers; the incorporation of disability rights, the social model of disability, and inclusive education philosophy as mandatory components of all teacher education programmes; and the public celebration of disability culture, achievement, and identity in the official curriculum and in public educational discourse through textbook representation, school events, and public media to displace the deficit and charity narratives that currently frame disability in Nigerian public culture (Gabel, 2005; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Degener, 2017).

Dimension 2: Inclusive Curriculum Content, Whose Knowledge Is It?

The second dimension of the IECF-N addresses the content of the curriculum what is taught, whose knowledge is represented, and whose experience is valued or excluded by the selection and organisation of curriculum content. Standard Nigerian curriculum content largely reflects the knowledge, experience, and perspective of the dominant, non-disabled, urban, English-speaking majority rendering invisible and valueless the knowledge, cultural practices, histories, and intellectual contributions of persons with disabilities, rural communities, minority language groups, nomadic peoples, and other marginalised communities (Battiste, 2013; Sleeter, 2005; Obiakor et al., 2012). An inclusive curriculum content reform would require the explicit integration of disability history, culture, and achievement into the mainstream curriculum across subjects and levels so that Nigerian children learn about the scientific contributions of Stephen Hawking, the artistic achievements of deaf artists like Francisco Goya, the mathematical genius of blind mathematicians like Leonhard Euler, and the advocacy leadership of Nigerian disability rights activists. It would require the integration of culturally responsive content from all major Nigerian ethnic, linguistic, and community traditions representing the knowledge systems, oral literature, historical experiences, and contemporary perspectives of Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Fulani, Tiv, Kanuri, Ijaw, and hundreds of other Nigerian communities in the mainstream curriculum. And it would require explicit anti-discrimination,



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human rights, and inclusive values content teaching all Nigerian children, from the earliest years, that diversity is a social strength, that disability is a form of human variation deserving respect and accommodation, and that every person has equal dignity and rights (Gardner, 1983; Sleeter, 2005; UNESCO, 2017).

Dimension 3: Accessible Curriculum Design, Universal Design for Learning in Nigerian Schools

The third dimension of the IECF-N is the systematic application of Universal Design for Learning principles to Nigerian curriculum design transforming curriculum materials, content organisation, and learning resource production so that all learners can access the same curriculum through the modality that best matches their sensory, cognitive, and communicative profile (CAST, 2018; Rose & Meyer, 2002; Hitchcock et al., 2002). In practical terms for Nigeria, UDL-informed curriculum design requires five priority interventions. First, NERDC should mandate the simultaneous production of all national curriculum textbooks and learning materials in multiple formats, print, Braille, digital accessible PDF, audio, and large print, as a condition of publication approval, with dedicated production funding allocated in the NERDC annual budget. Second, the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) should partner with NERDC to develop and freely distribute a National Inclusive Digital Learning Repository, an open-access online platform providing accessible digital curriculum materials for all subjects and levels, compatible with mainstream and specialist assistive technologies. Third, curriculum frameworks should adopt tiered learning objectives, specifying the same core conceptual learning objective but providing three tiers of content complexity, pacing, and support level that enable students at different readiness levels to engage with the same curriculum concept at the appropriate depth. Fourth, all UBEC-funded classroom construction and renovation projects should incorporate Universal Design building principles, accessible furniture, flexible classroom layouts compatible with learning centre organisation, adequate lighting and acoustics, and provision for assistive technology infrastructure. Fifth, Nigerian Sign Language (NSL) should be formally recognised as an official language of instruction and its use mandated in all educational settings serving students who are Deaf or hard of hearing, with qualified NSL interpreters provided as a matter of rights.

Dimension 4: Differentiated and Inclusive Pedagogy, From One-Size-Fits-All to All-Sizes-Fit

The fourth dimension of the IECF-N differentiated and inclusive pedagogy is the dimension most directly experienced by students in the daily reality of the classroom. Differentiated instruction, developed by Tomlinson (2001) and grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development, is the pedagogical approach through which teachers provide genuinely inclusive learning experiences by systematically varying the content, process, product, and learning environment of instruction to match the diverse readiness levels, learning profiles, and interests of all learners in the class. Differentiation does not mean providing different content to different students it means providing the same core learning objectives through multiple pathways, with varying levels of scaffolding, support, pace, and modality, so that every student can access the objective from their current developmental starting point and progress toward it at an appropriate rate with appropriate support. Cooperative learning, the structured organisation of students into heterogeneous collaborative learning groups where mutual peer support, shared problem-solving, and collective knowledge construction enable diverse learners to contribute according to their strengths and benefit from collective intelligence is a particularly powerful and culturally resonant inclusive pedagogy for Nigerian classrooms, where Ubuntu-inspired communal values and cooperative social norms align naturally with collaborative learning structures (Udvari-Solner, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). Peer tutoring the structured pairing of a more competent peer with a less competent peer for reciprocal tutoring in which both benefit from the teaching and learning relationship leverages the social capital of diverse classrooms as a learning resource. Learning stations the organisation of the classroom into themed activity areas where students rotate through structured activities addressing the same learning objective through different modalities provide the operational infrastructure for simultaneous, multi-level differentiated instruction without requiring the teacher to deliver multiple parallel lessons. These pedagogical strategies are not exotic or expensive innovations they require primarily a reorientation of professional practice supported by professional development, not additional capital investment.

Dimension 5: Authentic and Flexible Assessment, Measuring Learning, Not Conformity

The fifth dimension of the IECF-N addresses the assessment barrier the systematic exclusion of learners with disabilities and learning differences from demonstrating their knowledge and capabilities through standard examination formats designed for non-disabled students. Authentic assessment assessment that evaluates students' actual performance on meaningful, real-world tasks rather than their ability to respond to standardised test items in prescribed formats is inherently more inclusive than standardised examinations because it naturally accommodates diverse performance modalities



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(Wortham, 2012; McAfee et al., 2004). A student with dyslexia who struggles to produce a grammatically perfect written essay may demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the same content through a structured oral presentation, a graphic organiser, or a multimedia production. A student with physical disability affecting handwriting may demonstrate identical mathematical competence through voice-to-text software or a calculator-aided computation task. An authentic assessment system values the demonstration of learning in whatever modality the student can access not the demonstration of conformity to a fixed, inaccessible format. For Nigeria, the transformation of assessment toward authentic, flexible, and inclusive formats requires: the immediate development of an Alternative Assessment Policy for the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO), specifying the full range of reasonable assessment accommodations extended time, reader assistance, scribe assistance, alternative format question papers, oral examination options, and assistive technology access that students with disabilities are entitled to receive without discrimination; the development of a national Individual Education Plan (IEP) framework that provides each student with a disability a legally binding, annually reviewed plan specifying their specific curriculum objectives, assessment accommodations, support services, and transition goals; the training of all WAEC and NECO examination officers in the implementation of assessment accommodations; and the mandatory incorporation of portfolio-based formative assessment as a significant component of school-based assessment at all levels, reducing excessive dependence on terminal examinations that systematically disadvantage the most diverse learners (Dyssegaard & Larsen, 2013; Wortham, 2012).

Dimension 6: Transformative Teacher Education, Preparing Every Teacher for Every Learner

The sixth and most operationally critical dimension of the IECF-N is the comprehensive transformation of teacher education both pre-service and in-service to prepare every Nigerian teacher with the inclusive pedagogical knowledge, skills, dispositions, and professional identity needed to teach effectively in diverse classrooms. Ainscow (2020) argued, with compelling evidence from international inclusive education reform experience, that teacher preparation is the single most important investment in inclusive education system change that even the most excellent curriculum framework, the most accessible learning materials, and the most progressive assessment policy will be nullified in the hands of teachers who lack the professional capacity to implement them. Nigerian teacher education currently produces graduates who are equipped to teach a narrow norm of learner the imagined non-disabled, standard-paced, English-proficient, urban student and who are professionally helpless in the face of disability, language difference, learning diversity, or social-emotional complexity (Obiakor et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2017; Garuba, 2003). Transformative inclusive education teacher preparation in Nigeria requires minimum six competence domains to be integrated across all pre-service teacher education programmes as non-negotiable components. First, disability studies and the social model equipping all teachers with the theoretical framework to understand disability as social construction rather than individual pathology, to challenge deficit thinking, and to practise from a rights-based philosophical foundation. Second, Universal Design for Learning equipping all teachers with the curriculum design skills to plan proactively for learner diversity through flexible representation, action, expression, and engagement strategies. Third, differentiated instruction equipping all teachers with the pedagogical skills to deliver the same curriculum objectives through multiple modalities, pacing options, and support levels in the same inclusive classroom. Fourth, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) and disability-specific pedagogies providing all teachers with foundational competence in Nigerian Sign Language, basic Braille literacy, AAC communication systems, and disability-specific instructional adaptations for the most common disability categories (visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, autism, learning disabilities). Fifth, Individual Education Plan development and collaborative service provision equipping teachers with the skills to develop, implement, monitor, and review IEPs in collaboration with special education specialists, therapists, families, and students. Sixth, culturally responsive and anti-discriminatory pedagogy equipping teachers with the ability to recognise and challenge the cultural, linguistic, and social biases embedded in curriculum and instruction, and to create genuinely inclusive classroom communities that value and utilise learner diversity as a pedagogical resource (Gay, 2010; Tomlinson, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978).

Special Education and General Education: Toward a Unified Inclusive Teacher Education

The current organisational structure of Nigerian teacher education perpetuates rather than resolves the segregated model of provision for students with disabilities. Special education is a separate academic department, producing specialist teachers trained to work in segregated special schools; general education departments produce classroom teachers trained to teach the standard curriculum to non-disabled students. The division mirrors and reinforces the institutional separation of special



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and mainstream education, making the professional collaboration required for genuinely inclusive classroom practice structurally difficult to achieve (Ainscow, 2020; Obiakor et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2017). The IECF-N proposes a fundamental restructuring of Nigerian teacher education toward a unified inclusive teacher education model in which all teacher education students whether in primary, secondary, early childhood, or vocational education programmes complete a mandatory inclusive education core that develops the six competence domains identified in Dimension 6 of the IECF-N. Within this common core, specialist tracks would allow students to develop deeper expertise in specific disability categories, AAC systems, or inclusive education leadership but the specialist expertise would be built upon a universal foundation of inclusive curriculum knowledge and differentiated pedagogical skill, rather than within a completely separate professional silo. This unified model, implemented in partnership with disability organisations and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities, would over time create a teaching profession in which inclusion is not a specialist's domain but every teacher's professional responsibility a transformation that is both the most challenging and the most transformative investment Nigeria can make in its inclusive education future (Ainscow, 2020; CAST, 2018; UNESCO, 2017).

Conclusion: Inclusion as Educational Justice, Not Accommodation but Transformation

This paper has argued that inclusive education curriculum in Nigeria represents not a technical adjustment to an otherwise functional system but a profound transformation philosophical, epistemological, professional, and institutional of the entire educational enterprise. The evidence reviewed demonstrates that Nigeria's legal and policy commitments to inclusive education are extensive and binding encompassing the CRPD (2006), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the SDGs (United Nations, 2015), and the DAPDA (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018). The gap between these commitments and the lived educational experience of Nigerian learners with disabilities and other marginalised identities is not a gap of good intentions it is a gap of curriculum infrastructure, pedagogical capacity, institutional culture, and fiscal commitment that no policy statement can bridge without deliberate, sustained, and adequately resourced curriculum and instruction reform. The Inclusive Education Curriculum Framework for Nigeria (IECF-N) proposed in this paper provides a theoretically grounded, practically actionable, and contextually responsive roadmap for that reform across six interconnected dimensions. Its implementation requires not a single dramatic intervention but a sustained, multi-stakeholder reform process in which curriculum developers, teacher educators, government officials, disability rights advocates, school communities, and learners with disabilities themselves collaborate as equal partners in constructing the inclusive educational system that every Nigerian child deserves and that Nigeria's human development future demands. Inclusive education is not the accommodation of difference it is the recognition that difference is the norm, that learning diversity is the human reality, and that educational systems that serve only the convenient majority are not quality systems but unjust ones. Nigeria's path to educational justice runs directly through curriculum and instruction reform and it is a path this paper has sought to illuminate. The following specific, targeted recommendations are proposed for the stakeholder groups with primary responsibility for advancing inclusive education curriculum reform in Nigeria:

Recommendations for the Federal Ministry of Education

1. Commission, develop, and publish a National Inclusive Education Curriculum Policy and Framework aligned with CRPD Article 24 and CRPD General Comment No. 4 that replaces the current special needs education framework with a rights-based, UDL-informed inclusive education framework as the governing curriculum policy for all Nigerian educational levels.
2. Establish a National Accessible Educational Materials Centre (NAEMC) within NERDC, mandated and resourced to produce all national curriculum textbooks and materials simultaneously in print, Braille, audio, digital accessible, and large-print formats, and to distribute these materials freely to all schools serving students with print-access disabilities.
3. Develop and implement a National Individual Education Plan (IEP) Policy, specifying the legal entitlement of every student with a disability to an annually reviewed, individually tailored educational plan, the process for developing and monitoring IEPs, the professional responsibilities of teachers and specialists in IEP implementation, and the accountability mechanisms for ensuring IEP quality.
4. Revise the minimum qualification standards for all Nigerian teachers to include mandatory pre-service training in inclusive education across the six competence domains of the IECF-N, and create a National Inclusive Education Teacher Certification scheme that recognises and rewards inclusive education specialisation.



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5. Partner with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) to develop and freely distribute a National Inclusive Digital Learning Repository — an accessible open-education platform providing all national curriculum materials in multiple digital formats, compatible with mainstream and specialist assistive technologies.

Recommendations for the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC)

1. Undertake an immediate audit of all current national curriculum documents, textbooks, and examination frameworks for accessibility and inclusivity, identifying disability-specific, linguistic, and cultural exclusion barriers, and developing a phased, resourced revision programme to address them within a defined timeline.
2. Establish a curriculum review process for all future national curriculum development that mandatorily includes persons with disabilities, disability rights organisations, and inclusive education specialists as core members of all curriculum development committees recognising that inclusive curriculum cannot be designed without the expertise and lived experience of those most affected by curriculum exclusion.
3. Develop an inclusive curriculum guidelines document for each subject area and educational level, specifying how the subject's core concepts, skills, and content can be delivered, accessed, and assessed through multiple modalities consistent with UDL principles and IECF-N Dimension 3.
4. Partner with disability organisations including the National Association of Blind Nigerians, the Nigerian Association of the Deaf, and Cerebral Palsy Nigeria — to develop and validate curriculum materials and assessment tools that reflect the specific learning and access needs of different disability communities.

Recommendations for Universities and Teacher Education Institutions

1. Restructure all NCE and B.Ed. teacher education programmes to include a mandatory inclusive education core spanning the six competence domains of IECF-N Dimension 6: disability studies and the social model; Universal Design for Learning; differentiated instruction; disability-specific pedagogies (including basic Braille, NSL, and AAC); IEP development; and culturally responsive teaching.
2. Establish university-school inclusive education partnership programmes through which teacher education faculty provide sustained, school-based mentoring, coaching, and collaborative professional learning to practising teachers in partnership mainstream schools creating living laboratories for inclusive pedagogy innovation that simultaneously advance research, improve school practice, and develop teacher educator expertise.
3. Develop and institutionalise specialist pathways within the B.Ed. and M.Ed. curriculum for inclusive education leadership preparing curriculum specialists, inclusive education co-ordinators, and teacher educators with the advanced expertise in UDL curriculum design, IEP management, AAC, and inclusive school leadership needed to drive system-wide reform.
4. The curriculum and instruction academic community should engage actively in policy advocacy, public discourse, and government consultations on inclusive education reform publishing evidence syntheses, developing policy briefs, and contributing expertise to legislative and regulatory processes exercising the scholarly leadership role that the national inclusive education reform agenda demands.

Recommendations for State Governments and School Administrators

1. State Ministries of Education should develop state-level inclusive education implementation plans, with measurable annual targets for increasing the proportion of children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools, the proportion of mainstream teachers trained in inclusive pedagogy, and the proportion of schools with accessible physical infrastructure.
2. All state UBEC capital project submissions should include an inclusive infrastructure component covering accessible toilets, ramps, tactile pathways, adequate acoustic treatment, and assistive technology provision as a mandatory element, with UBEC instructed to prioritise inclusive infrastructure in its grant allocation criteria.
3. School administrators should conduct annual inclusive education self-reviews using the Index for Inclusion framework (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), engaging students, parents, and community members alongside teachers and staff, to systematically identify and address barriers to inclusion in their school's culture, policies, and practices.
4. School communities should develop community sensitisation programmes engaging religious leaders, traditional rulers, parents, and community members to address the spiritual and cultural stigmatisation of disability that prevents families from enrolling children with disabilities in school and creates hostile peer environments for those who are enrolled.



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Recommendations for Disability Rights Organizations and Civil Society

1. Disability rights organisations should develop and pursue strategic litigation using DAPDA 2018 and the CRPD to enforce the right to inclusive education for specific children denied access to mainstream schooling or refused reasonable accommodation in examinations creating legal precedents that establish the enforceability of inclusive education rights in Nigerian courts.
2. Organisations of persons with disabilities should maintain monitoring data on inclusive education implementation tracking DAPDA compliance, WAEC/NECO accommodation provision, accessible materials availability, and teacher preparation quality and publish annual inclusive education scorecards for state and federal government accountability.
3. Disability organisations should form a National Inclusive Education Coalition that coordinates advocacy, policy engagement, professional development, and community sensitisation activities across all disability categories and all educational levels, providing a unified civil society voice for inclusive education reform.

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