

# Pedagogical Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Difficulties in Resource-Constrained Schools

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*Abstract- This study critically examines pedagogical approaches that promote equitable learning for students experiencing learning difficulties within resource-limited educational contexts. The central purpose of the investigation was to evaluate inclusive teaching frameworks and strategies that enable teachers to effectively support diverse learners despite systemic and infrastructural constraints. Employing a comprehensive review-based methodology, the paper synthesizes theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and policy insights from global and African contexts, thereby establishing a nuanced understanding of inclusive education as both a pedagogical philosophy and a developmental necessity. The findings reveal that inclusive pedagogy thrives where teachers possess the professional competence, adaptability, and reflective capacity to respond to varied learner needs. Key strategies such as differentiated instruction, individualized learning plans, and cooperative learning are identified as practical mechanisms for enhancing participation and achievement among learners with difficulties. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the creative use of low-cost teaching aids and community partnerships as essential tools for sustaining inclusion in environments characterized by material scarcity. Teacher professional development and supportive leadership structures are also underscored as critical to the long-term success of inclusive education initiatives. The paper concludes that inclusive education transcends classroom practice, representing a systemic commitment to equity and social justice in schooling. It recommends that educational policymakers prioritize teacher training, curriculum flexibility, and community engagement to bridge the persistent gap between policy aspirations and implementation realities. Ultimately, the study affirms that the realization of inclusive education in resource-constrained settings requires innovation, collaboration, and sustained investment in teacher capacity—elements indispensable for transforming educational systems into truly inclusive learning environments.*

**Keywords:** *Inclusive Pedagogy, Learning Difficulties, Differentiated Instruction, Teacher Professional Development, Educational Equity, Resource-Constrained Schools*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching students with learning difficulties in resource-constrained schools remains one of the most pressing challenges in the pursuit of equitable and quality education worldwide. The term “learning difficulties” encapsulates a diverse range of cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional challenges that impede students’ progress within traditional classroom environments (Ainsworth, 2007). In contexts where schools struggle with inadequate infrastructure, limited teaching materials, and insufficient professional development opportunities, the gap between learners with learning difficulties and their peers often widens, leading to entrenched educational inequities (UNESCO, 2015). This introduction outlines the significance of inclusive pedagogical strategies tailored to under-resourced educational settings and situates the discussion within both global and localized contexts, including Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria. Resource constraints not only exacerbate the challenges faced by learners with difficulties but also strain educators who are often underprepared to meet diverse learning needs (Florian & Linklater, 2010).

Inclusive education, as defined by UNESCO (2015), is an ongoing process aimed at ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have meaningful access to quality learning. This vision reflects a rights-based approach that emphasizes equity, participation, and the removal of

systemic barriers. However, the realization of inclusive education is mediated by contextual factors such as socio-economic conditions, school governance, and the availability of support systems. As a result, pedagogical strategies that prove effective in well-resourced contexts may not translate directly to environments marked by scarcity of materials, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to specialist support services (Ainscow, Booth & Dyson, 2006). Consequently, a nuanced understanding of how pedagogical innovations can be adapted to fit resource-constrained contexts is imperative.

In many low-income regions, the intersection of learning difficulties and resource limitations amplifies the complexity of educational delivery. For example, in rural Nigerian schools, teachers frequently manage large classes with few instructional materials, making differentiation and individual attention a significant challenge (Okoye & Chukwu, 2015). Similarly, in several Southern African contexts, efforts to implement inclusive education often confront deeply rooted socio-cultural perceptions about disability and learner diversity, compounded by limited teacher training and support (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). These challenges underscore the need for pedagogical strategies that not only address learning difficulties but are also practical and sustainable within the constraints faced by schools in economically disadvantaged areas.

The literature on inclusive pedagogy consistently highlights the importance of teacher preparedness, adaptability, and reflective practice. Savolainen et al. (2012) argue that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their perceived self-efficacy significantly influence their instructional choices and willingness to engage diverse learners. In resource-limited settings, however, low self-efficacy often stems from a lack of targeted professional development opportunities that equip teachers with strategies to differentiate instruction effectively. This gap in teacher capacity is particularly acute in contexts where institutional support mechanisms are weak or absent. Where adequate training and ongoing support exist, educators are more likely to adopt practices that facilitate access, participation, and learning for students with learning difficulties (Florian & Linklater, 2010).

Another central theme in the literature pertains to the adaptation of evidence-based interventions to fit the realities of under-resourced classrooms. The Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, for example, has been touted as a viable model for identifying and supporting learners with difficulties through tiered instruction and data-driven decision-making (Smith & Okolo, 2010). Nevertheless, the implementation of RTI in low-resource contexts requires careful consideration of infrastructure, teacher workload, and assessment practices. Where formal assessment tools are scarce or absent, teachers must rely on formative, low-stakes strategies to monitor learner progress. Such adaptations highlight the critical role of creativity and localized problem-solving in the practical application of pedagogical models.

Global perspectives on inclusive pedagogy also illuminate the value of community engagement and participatory approaches. Ebersöhn and Eloff's (2006) analysis of inclusive initiatives in Southern Africa emphasizes that meaningful engagement with parents, local leaders, and civil society can enhance support for learners with difficulties, particularly where formal educational resources are lacking. Similarly, Ajayi and Afolabi (2014) document the challenges and opportunities associated with inclusive education in Nigeria, noting that community attitudes and expectations significantly shape the implementation of pedagogical strategies. These insights suggest that inclusive education cannot be divorced from its broader socio-cultural context; rather, it must be understood as a collaborative process involving multiple stakeholders.

While the substantive challenges of teaching students with learning difficulties in resource-constrained environments are well documented, there is growing interest in identifying strategies that leverage existing strengths within schools and communities. For instance, peer tutoring and cooperative learning models have been shown to foster engagement and academic support without necessitating specialized materials (Ainsworth, 2007). Such approaches not only enable differentiated support but also promote social inclusion and mutual accountability among learners. Similarly, the use of culturally relevant and contextually appropriate teaching aids—often developed from local materials—demonstrates how

innovation can mitigate the limitations imposed by scarce resources.

Despite these promising strategies, there remains a gap in the translation of research into practice, particularly in regions where educational policy frameworks are slow to respond to the needs of learners with difficulties. UNESCO's (2015) global review highlights that while many countries have adopted inclusive education policies in principle, implementation often lags due to inadequate funding, weak monitoring mechanisms, and limited teacher support. As such, there is a pressing need for research that not only synthesizes effective pedagogical strategies but also articulates pathways for scaling these practices in resource-limited environments.

Traditional pedagogical models that emphasize uniform instruction and standardized curricula are increasingly recognized as inadequate for addressing the diverse needs of learners with learning difficulties. Instead, differentiated instruction—where content, process, and product are varied according to learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles—has gained traction as a more responsive approach (Florian & Linklater, 2010). In resource-constrained settings, however, differentiation must be operationalized in ways that do not rely heavily on supplementary materials or technological aids. Rather, effective differentiation in these contexts often depends on teacher creativity, flexible grouping, and the strategic use of peer support.

The global agenda for inclusive education, as articulated in international frameworks such as the Education for All movement, reinforces the moral imperative to ensure that no learner is excluded based on ability or background. Yet, realizing this agenda within resource-limited schools requires an alignment of policy, practice, and community engagement that is sensitive to local constraints and opportunities. The literature indicates that when teachers are supported with practical strategies, reflective practice, and collaborative networks, they are better positioned to facilitate meaningful learning experiences for students with learning difficulties.

### 1.1 Background and Rationale

Education remains the cornerstone of social mobility, economic advancement, and human development. However, despite global advocacy for inclusive education, students with learning difficulties continue to face disproportionate barriers to quality learning, particularly in resource-constrained environments. Learning difficulties, which encompass a spectrum of cognitive, linguistic, and behavioral challenges, often necessitate differentiated pedagogical approaches that extend beyond conventional instructional methods. In many low-income contexts, however, educators are confronted with overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and inadequate professional support, all of which undermine efforts to deliver equitable learning opportunities. The rationale for this review stems from the urgent need to understand how effective pedagogical strategies can be implemented in such under-resourced settings without compromising quality or inclusivity.

Globally, inclusive education has evolved as a fundamental policy direction, emphasizing access, participation, and achievement for all learners. Yet, the translation of this vision into practice remains uneven, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and other developing regions where systemic inequalities persist. Teachers in these contexts are often compelled to rely on improvisation, peer collaboration, and community-based resources to bridge the gap between pedagogical ideals and practical realities. Furthermore, international commitments—such as the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education)—underscore the moral and policy imperative of addressing educational disparities through evidence-based and context-sensitive approaches. Hence, examining pedagogical strategies within resource-constrained schools is both a moral obligation and a pragmatic necessity. By investigating adaptable and sustainable teaching models, this review aims to contribute to the global discourse on inclusive education, focusing on empowering educators and policymakers to support learners with diverse needs, even in environments of scarcity.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

The persistent exclusion and underachievement of students with learning difficulties in resource-limited

educational settings highlight a critical gap in the realization of inclusive education. Despite increased awareness and legislative frameworks promoting inclusion, the translation of policy into practice remains inconsistent and often superficial. In many developing regions, including parts of Africa, the promise of equitable education is undermined by systemic issues such as insufficient funding, inadequate teacher preparation, and a scarcity of specialized instructional resources. These constraints limit the ability of teachers to provide individualized support, employ adaptive pedagogies, and assess learning outcomes effectively. The lack of pedagogical innovation in such contexts perpetuates educational inequalities, where learners with difficulties are either marginalized or subjected to generic instructional approaches that fail to meet their specific learning needs.

Moreover, the cultural and institutional stigmatization of learning difficulties further compounds the challenge, creating an environment where such learners are viewed as liabilities rather than individuals with unique learning potential. Many schools operate without access to trained special educators or assistive technologies, forcing teachers to depend on traditional, one-size-fits-all teaching methods. Consequently, even when teachers exhibit a willingness to adopt inclusive practices, they are constrained by systemic barriers and resource inadequacies. This disconnect between inclusive intent and practical implementation not only hampers student learning outcomes but also discourages teachers, who often experience professional burnout and frustration. The central problem, therefore, lies in identifying, adapting, and implementing pedagogical strategies that are both effective and feasible within these contexts. Addressing this problem demands a critical synthesis of global research and localized practices to propose realistic, scalable solutions for inclusive education in resource-constrained environments.

### 1.3 Objectives and Scope of the Review

The primary objective of this review is to critically examine pedagogical strategies that enhance the learning experiences and academic outcomes of students with learning difficulties in resource-

constrained schools. It seeks to explore both theoretical foundations and practical interventions that inform inclusive education within such challenging contexts. The review aims to synthesize evidence from diverse geographical regions, drawing on the best international practices while situating the analysis within the realities of low-income and developing countries. By integrating insights from comparative studies, this paper aspires to identify contextually appropriate and sustainable pedagogical approaches that align with the socio-economic and infrastructural limitations of under-resourced educational systems.

More specifically, the review will: (a) analyze the conceptual frameworks underpinning inclusive pedagogy; (b) evaluate the challenges educators face in implementing inclusive practices within resource-scarce environments; (c) assess the effectiveness of adaptive teaching methods—such as differentiated instruction, peer learning, and use of low-cost teaching aids; and (d) propose strategic recommendations for teachers, policy-makers, and educational institutions committed to advancing inclusive education. The scope of this review is intentionally broad yet focused, encompassing evidence from both global and local perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of inclusive pedagogy. It prioritizes studies and practices from developing regions, particularly within Africa, where the need for resource-sensitive pedagogical innovation is most pronounced. Ultimately, the review seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical advocacy and practical application, emphasizing how inclusive teaching strategies can be tailored to function effectively within the constraints of limited resources while maintaining educational equity and quality.

## II. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY

The theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin inclusive pedagogy provide the foundation for understanding how effective teaching can be achieved for students with learning difficulties, particularly within resource-constrained schools. Inclusive pedagogy, as a concept, emphasizes the importance of accommodating the diverse needs of all learners through adaptive, responsive, and participatory instructional approaches. The global

evolution of inclusive education has been influenced by a combination of human rights discourses, educational psychology theories, and social justice frameworks that collectively advocate for equitable learning opportunities. In resource-constrained contexts, where financial and infrastructural limitations pose considerable challenges, these frameworks serve as guiding principles for developing pedagogical strategies that are both practical and transformative (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010).

One of the central theoretical foundations of inclusive pedagogy is the social model of disability, which challenges the deficit-oriented perceptions that have historically dominated educational thinking. Rather than viewing learning difficulties as inherent impairments, the social model locates barriers within the educational system and environment. This shift compels educators to reconsider their instructional approaches and classroom structures, ensuring that they remove environmental and attitudinal barriers that hinder participation (Chataika et al., 2012). The framework is particularly relevant in resource-limited schools, where exclusion often stems not from a lack of learner capability but from the absence of adaptive teaching and supportive infrastructure. By aligning with the social model, inclusive pedagogy redefines learning difficulties as educational challenges that can be mitigated through thoughtful, context-sensitive interventions.

The constructivist theory of learning, which posits that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction and experience, further informs inclusive pedagogy. Constructivism underscores the value of learner-centered education, where students with learning difficulties are supported to engage actively with content rather than being passive recipients of information (Tomlinson, 2014). In resource-constrained classrooms, constructivist principles can be realized through peer-assisted learning, collaborative group work, and the use of local materials as teaching aids. These low-cost strategies allow teachers to design learning experiences that foster participation and comprehension, even in the absence of advanced technologies or formal resources. Constructivism also complements the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which

advocates for multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to ensure that all learners can access and demonstrate understanding of the curriculum.

The UDL framework has become increasingly influential in shaping inclusive pedagogical practices. By emphasizing flexibility in teaching and assessment, UDL provides a theoretical basis for accommodating diverse learning profiles without necessitating specialized segregation (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprabhan, 2016). In the context of resource-constrained schools, UDL principles can be operationalized through the creative use of simple instructional tools, visual aids, and differentiated questioning techniques. Importantly, UDL also aligns with culturally responsive teaching, recognizing that inclusivity must account for linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity. Thus, inclusive pedagogy grounded in UDL is not limited to addressing disability but extends to fostering belonging and participation for all learners, particularly those marginalized by poverty or systemic disadvantage.

Teacher agency and professional knowledge play a crucial role in translating inclusive theory into classroom practice. Forlin and Chambers (2011) argue that teacher preparation programs must integrate inclusive pedagogy as a foundational component, enabling educators to develop adaptive expertise and confidence in managing diverse classrooms. However, in many developing contexts, teacher education remains heavily theory-driven and detached from the realities of under-resourced schools. This disconnection hinders the practical application of inclusive pedagogical frameworks, leaving teachers ill-equipped to differentiate instruction effectively. To bridge this gap, professional development initiatives must emphasize experiential learning, reflective practice, and collaborative problem-solving, enabling teachers to adapt theoretical models to their local environments.

Another significant contribution to inclusive pedagogy stems from the ecological systems theory, which situates learning within a network of interrelated systems—family, school, community, and policy environments. This framework underscores the interconnectedness of learners' experiences and the

necessity of multi-level support for effective inclusion (Hornby, 2011). Within resource-constrained settings, the ecological perspective highlights the importance of community involvement and inter-agency collaboration. For example, partnerships between schools, parents, and local organizations can compensate for limited institutional resources by pooling expertise and materials. Such collaborative approaches align with African communal values, where collective responsibility and shared problem-solving are culturally embedded educational practices (Mukhopadhyay, 2014). Consequently, ecological and sociocultural perspectives not only contextualize inclusive pedagogy but also provide pathways for its sustainable implementation.

Leadership theory also intersects with inclusive education, particularly in relation to school-wide reform and teacher empowerment. Inclusive leadership entails fostering a vision of diversity, encouraging shared responsibility, and cultivating an ethos of support across the school community. Lindqvist and Nilholm (2013) emphasize that educational leaders play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' attitudes toward inclusion by modeling commitment, providing professional guidance, and promoting collaborative learning cultures. In resource-limited schools, effective leadership can mitigate the impact of material shortages by encouraging innovation and flexibility among staff. For instance, principals who promote peer mentoring and resource sharing among teachers can create more resilient and inclusive learning environments. Therefore, leadership is not only an administrative function but a pedagogical necessity for sustaining inclusive practices.

African scholarship has provided valuable insights into the contextual realities of inclusive pedagogy in low-resource environments. Chataika et al. (2012) and Opoku, Nsibande and Nketsia (2015) highlight that the success of inclusive education in sub-Saharan Africa depends largely on the alignment between theoretical frameworks and local cultural contexts. In Ghana and Lesotho, for instance, inclusive education initiatives have benefited from integrating indigenous knowledge systems and culturally relevant teaching methods, ensuring that pedagogical strategies resonate with learners' lived experiences. Similarly, Ede and Okeke

(2015) found that Nigerian teachers' preparedness for inclusion is hindered by limited training and inadequate support structures, calling for localized teacher education models that combine global theory with practical community-based learning.

From a conceptual standpoint, inclusive pedagogy in resource-constrained schools must also be viewed through the lens of equity theory, which focuses on fairness in the distribution of educational opportunities. This framework challenges the notion of equality—providing the same resources to all—and instead emphasizes equity—providing resources according to individual need (Armstrong, Armstrong & Spandagou, 2010). In low-resource settings, this means allocating targeted support to learners with difficulties, even if that entails differential distribution of attention, materials, or time. While equity-oriented teaching requires thoughtful planning and advocacy, it aligns closely with the moral and ethical imperatives of inclusive education, particularly in societies where structural inequalities are deeply entrenched.

Finally, the interplay between theory and practice in inclusive pedagogy underscores the importance of contextual adaptability. While frameworks such as UDL, constructivism, and the social model of disability provide a robust foundation, their successful implementation in resource-constrained schools depends on localized interpretation and creative adaptation. Teachers in such contexts often serve as innovators, modifying strategies to fit their realities, whether through improvising teaching aids, restructuring group work, or leveraging community expertise. As Mukhopadhyay (2014) notes, the African experience demonstrates that inclusion cannot rely solely on imported frameworks but must evolve through contextually grounded practices that honor local values, languages, and experiences. In essence, theoretical frameworks for inclusive pedagogy serve not as rigid blueprints but as flexible guides—anchoring inclusive education within a broader vision of social justice, human rights, and educational equity.

## 2.1 Understanding Learning Difficulties in Diverse Contexts

Understanding learning difficulties within diverse global and local contexts requires an appreciation of

the complex interplay between cognitive, social, cultural, and environmental factors that shape learners' educational experiences. Learning difficulties, often conceptualized as specific challenges that impede the acquisition of foundational academic skills, vary widely in manifestation and intensity. They are not confined to cognitive impairments alone but encompass broader dimensions, including emotional, linguistic, and socio-cultural barriers that hinder academic engagement and achievement (Florian, 2014). In resource-constrained educational settings, the interpretation and management of learning difficulties are particularly complex, as structural limitations such as overcrowded classrooms, teacher shortages, and inadequate diagnostic tools intersect with cultural perceptions of ability and disability. Consequently, understanding of learning difficulties must extend beyond the individual learner to encompass systemic and contextual dimensions that influence learning outcomes.

Globally, definitions of learning difficulties have evolved alongside advances in educational psychology and neuroscience. One of the most widely recognized conceptualizations is that of specific learning disabilities (SLDs), which include dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia—conditions that affect literacy, numeracy, and written expression, respectively (Lyon, Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003). Dyslexia, for example, is associated with difficulties in phonological processing, spelling, and decoding, despite adequate intelligence and conventional instruction. Similarly, working memory deficits have been shown to significantly affect learning, with implications for comprehension, problem-solving, and information retention (Alloway & Alloway, 2010). These findings underscore that learning difficulties cannot be attributed to lack of effort or motivation; rather, they reflect neurological variations that necessitate differentiated teaching approaches. However, while such definitions provide a robust theoretical foundation, they are often derived from Western research contexts and may not fully capture the realities of learners in low-resource educational environments where diagnostic practices are limited or non-existent.

The global discourse on learning difficulties must, therefore, be reframed to account for the sociocultural variability that shapes educational experiences. In many developing regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, learning difficulties are often understood through cultural and community lenses rather than strictly medical or psychological models (Chimedza & Peters, 2006). For instance, difficulties in learning may be perceived as behavioral or moral issues rather than cognitive challenges, leading to stigmatization and exclusion rather than support. Such misconceptions are further compounded by a lack of teacher training and resources to identify and address diverse learning needs effectively. Consequently, many learners remain undiagnosed, misdiagnosed, or unsupported, reinforcing cycles of academic underachievement. The challenge, therefore, lies in integrating culturally responsive pedagogies that validate local knowledge systems while incorporating evidence-based strategies for addressing learning difficulties.

The ecological perspective on learning difficulties emphasizes the interaction between individual learners and their broader learning environments. According to Landsberg, Krüger, and Nel (2005), barriers to learning in contexts like South Africa often arise not from intrinsic learner deficits but from socio-economic deprivation, inadequate infrastructure, and systemic inequalities that limit access to quality education. Poverty, malnutrition, and language barriers can all contribute to learning difficulties by impeding concentration, attendance, and engagement. For instance, learners who are instructed in a language different from their mother tongue often struggle with comprehension, which can be misinterpreted as a learning disability. Recognizing such environmental and linguistic dimensions is crucial for developing inclusive pedagogical strategies that are sensitive to the realities of resource-constrained schools. This ecological framing positions learning difficulties as multifaceted phenomena that require holistic and context-specific interventions.

Teacher attitudes and perceptions play a decisive role in shaping how learning difficulties are understood and managed within classrooms. Avramidis and Norwich (2010) assert that inclusive education thrives in environments where teachers hold positive attitudes

toward learners with difficulties and perceive inclusion as both achievable and beneficial. However, in many resource-limited contexts, teachers' beliefs are influenced by cultural stigmas and systemic frustrations, leading to lower expectations and reduced instructional support for struggling learners. Teachers often lack the pedagogical training required to differentiate instruction or apply individualized interventions. As a result, they may revert to conventional, teacher-centered methods that exacerbate exclusion. Changing these attitudes necessitates targeted professional development and policy-level support that repositions teachers as facilitators of inclusion rather than mere transmitters of curriculum.

In Nigeria, the recognition of learning difficulties as a distinct educational concern has gained traction in recent decades, yet challenges persist in implementation. Abosi and Ozoji (2008) highlight that while policy frameworks advocate for inclusive education, most schools lack the resources and expertise to translate policy into practice. Teachers in mainstream classrooms are seldom equipped with the skills to identify and support students with specific learning difficulties, resulting in widespread underachievement. Moreover, cultural perceptions often frame learning difficulties within spiritual or moral discourses, leading to marginalization rather than targeted intervention. Similar trends have been observed in Kenya, where parental attitudes and socioeconomic conditions significantly influence school enrollment and participation among children with learning difficulties (Mutua & Dimitrov, 2001). These findings reveal the broader sociocultural barriers that hinder the realization of inclusive education in Africa, emphasizing the need for pedagogical approaches grounded in local realities.

Globally, inclusive education frameworks advocate an understanding of learning difficulties that transcends diagnostic categorization to focus on participation and equity. Florian (2014) argues that inclusive pedagogy is grounded in the principle that all learners can achieve, provided that teaching adapts to their needs. This view aligns with the social model of disability, which locates barriers within educational systems rather than individuals. Under this framework, learning difficulties are seen as a product of

exclusionary practices—rigid curricula, standardized assessments, and inaccessible teaching methods—rather than innate deficits. In resource-constrained contexts, this perspective is particularly valuable, as it encourages educators to innovate within their means rather than depend on external interventions. For instance, teachers may use collaborative learning strategies, peer tutoring, or local materials to create inclusive environments that accommodate diverse learning profiles.

Cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions of learning difficulties are deeply interlinked. Research indicates that learners with difficulties often experience reduced self-esteem, anxiety, and social isolation due to repeated academic failure and stigmatization (Reid & Green, 2011). These emotional barriers further impede motivation and engagement, creating a cycle of underperformance. Effective pedagogy in such contexts must therefore attend to both the cognitive and affective needs of learners. Building confidence, providing positive reinforcement, and fostering a sense of belonging are essential components of inclusive education. Such practices can be implemented without significant financial resources, relying instead on teacher empathy, peer support, and community engagement. In this way, understanding learning difficulties becomes not merely a matter of diagnosis but of fostering human connection and empowerment within the learning process.

The understanding of learning difficulties must also incorporate a critical reflection on global inequities in knowledge production. Much of the existing literature is dominated by Western epistemologies that emphasize individual diagnosis and intervention, often overlooking communal and contextual factors prevalent in the Global South (Chimedza & Peters, 2006). African scholars have long argued for more localized research that captures the intersection between culture, poverty, and disability. Such perspectives challenge the universal application of Western theories, advocating instead for adaptive frameworks that honor indigenous knowledge and community-based support systems. This epistemic rebalancing is essential for developing pedagogical strategies that are both effective and culturally relevant.



## 2.2 Theories Supporting Inclusive Teaching

Theories supporting inclusive teaching provide the intellectual scaffolding for understanding how learners with diverse abilities can be equitably accommodated within mainstream education systems. Inclusive pedagogy is not a collection of isolated teaching techniques but rather a theoretical stance that views diversity as a resource for learning rather than a barrier. Its foundations lie in well-established psychological, sociological, and educational theories that collectively inform the practices of teachers working in complex, resource-constrained contexts. These theories provide not only an epistemological justification for inclusion but also practical frameworks that guide educators in designing learning environments that are flexible, participatory, and empowering for all learners (Florian, 2015).

One of the most influential frameworks underpinning inclusive pedagogy is Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, which emphasizes the social nature of knowledge construction and the role of interaction in cognitive development. Vygotsky (1978) introduced the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), describing it as the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guided support from a more knowledgeable other. This notion is central to inclusive education because it positions teaching as a responsive and collaborative process rather than a unidirectional transfer of information. In resource-constrained schools, where learning materials and technology are limited, Vygotsky's principles promote the use of social learning, peer tutoring, and scaffolding—strategies that leverage human interaction as a substitute for material abundance. This makes sociocultural theory particularly relevant to inclusive practices in developing contexts, where teachers must rely on collaborative and culturally embedded forms of knowledge exchange.

Similarly, Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory provides a complementary perspective by highlighting the role of self-efficacy and observational learning in shaping educational outcomes. Bandura posits that learners' beliefs in their capabilities significantly influence their motivation, resilience, and achievement. Within an inclusive framework, this theory underscores the importance of creating

classroom climates that promote confidence, positive reinforcement, and peer modeling. Learners with difficulties often experience repeated failure, leading to diminished self-efficacy and disengagement. In resource-limited contexts, where psychological support services are scarce, teachers become central agents in nurturing learners' belief in their potential through affirming relationships and achievable learning goals. Social modeling, where students observe peers successfully engaging in tasks, becomes a cost-effective pedagogical tool that fosters motivation and perseverance among diverse learners.

The Ecological Systems Theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1994) also offers critical insights into inclusive education by situating learning within a broader network of interdependent systems, ranging from family and school to community and policy environments. Bronfenbrenner's framework recognizes that learning difficulties and educational outcomes are shaped by the interaction of multiple ecological layers, not merely by individual characteristics. This holistic view is particularly relevant in resource-constrained contexts, where external factors such as poverty, nutrition, and family support profoundly influence learning. Inclusive teaching, therefore, requires a systemic perspective that extends beyond classroom practices to include collaboration among teachers, parents, and communities. It also underscores the importance of policy environments that support inclusive practices through adequate funding, teacher training, and community engagement. Thus, the ecological model aligns inclusivity with the broader goals of social justice and sustainable educational development.

In the African context, Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2010) expanded upon Bronfenbrenner's ideas through an ecosystemic approach, which emphasizes the interrelatedness of psychological, social, and cultural factors in educational inclusion. This theory recognizes that teaching and learning occur within dynamic, culturally embedded systems and that learners' challenges cannot be divorced from their social realities. In under-resourced African schools, this approach offers a framework for utilizing community knowledge, collective support systems, and culturally relevant teaching methods to address learning barriers. For instance, teachers can draw upon

indigenous narratives, local problem-solving strategies, and cooperative learning structures to engage learners in meaningful ways. Such practices reinforce the notion that inclusive education in Africa must be contextually grounded rather than imported wholesale from Western paradigms.

Another vital theoretical foundation is Mittler's (2000) Social Context Theory of Inclusion, which conceptualizes inclusion as a process of societal transformation rather than merely educational reform. Mittler argues that inclusive education challenges existing hierarchies of privilege and ability by promoting systemic change in attitudes, structures, and policies. This theoretical stance aligns with the human rights approach to education, which views inclusion not as a charitable act but as a moral and legal obligation. For resource-constrained schools, this perspective implies that inclusive teaching extends beyond classroom methods to encompass advocacy, leadership, and community mobilization. Teachers become agents of social change, working collaboratively to dismantle exclusionary practices within their institutions and societies.

Florian's (2015) Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action (IPAA) represents a modern synthesis of these theories, providing a practical framework for enacting inclusive principles. The IPAA posits that inclusive teaching involves three interrelated dimensions: (1) believing that all learners are capable of achievement; (2) adopting teaching practices that support participation and access for all; and (3) continuously developing professional knowledge through reflection and collaboration. Florian's model reinforces the idea that inclusion is not about differentiating instruction for a few but about designing learning experiences that accommodate variability from the outset. This aligns closely with the Universal Design for Learning principles, emphasizing flexible instructional methods and assessments that cater to diverse learning needs without requiring costly interventions.

Teacher motivation and well-being are integral to the successful application of these theoretical models. Okeke and Mtyuda (2017) highlight that teacher dissatisfaction, often caused by inadequate support and resource scarcity, undermines the implementation of inclusive pedagogies. Theories of inclusion assume

a degree of teacher agency and reflective practice that may be difficult to sustain under conditions of professional stress and material deprivation. Therefore, inclusive teaching theories must be understood within the realities of teachers' working environments. Professional development initiatives that nurture self-efficacy, collaboration, and emotional resilience are essential for translating theory into sustainable practice. Such initiatives should focus on empowering teachers to innovate within their limitations rather than imposing external frameworks that fail to resonate with their experiences.

In Nigeria, Ajuwon (2012) emphasizes the importance of attitudinal change and theoretical awareness among educators as a prerequisite for successful inclusion. His study reveals that while many Nigerian teachers support the idea of inclusive education, few have adequate exposure to the theoretical underpinnings necessary to guide their practice. This disconnect underscores the need for teacher education programs that integrate theoretical perspectives on learning and inclusion within the local socio-cultural context. By aligning teacher preparation with theories such as sociocultural learning, self-efficacy, and ecological systems, Nigerian educators can develop pedagogical resilience and adaptability in the face of limited resources.

### 2.3 The Role of Teachers and School Leadership in Inclusion

Teachers and school leaders serve as the cornerstone of inclusive education, translating policy aspirations into daily classroom realities. Their roles extend beyond mere instruction to encompass the creation of supportive, equitable, and adaptive learning environments where all students, regardless of ability or background, can thrive. Inclusive education fundamentally depends on educators' beliefs, competencies, and leadership capacities, especially within resource-constrained schools where innovation and collaboration must compensate for material scarcity (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010). Teachers are not passive implementers of policy; they are active agents of change whose attitudes, pedagogical decisions, and reflective practices determine the success or failure of inclusion initiatives.

Effective inclusion begins with teacher beliefs about diversity and learner potential. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusion often reflect their understanding of disability and their confidence in managing diverse learning needs. Research has consistently demonstrated that positive teacher attitudes are closely linked to the successful implementation of inclusive practices (Emeh & Okoli, 2015). However, in many resource-limited contexts, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, negative perceptions and limited professional preparation hinder inclusive efforts. Teachers frequently perceive inclusive education as an additional burden, primarily due to large class sizes, inadequate training, and a lack of institutional support. These conditions lead to frustration and resistance, further marginalizing students with learning difficulties. Overcoming such barriers requires targeted professional development that equips teachers with not only theoretical knowledge but also practical strategies for differentiated instruction and classroom management.

From a pedagogical perspective, inclusion requires teachers to adopt a learner-centered approach that acknowledges individual differences while promoting collective participation. Hattie (2012) emphasizes that teachers exert one of the most significant influences on student achievement through their instructional clarity, feedback, and responsiveness. In inclusive settings, these elements take on added significance, as teachers must tailor their pedagogy to accommodate learners with varying abilities, language proficiencies, and emotional needs. This involves designing flexible lesson plans, utilizing formative assessment, and fostering peer collaboration to create a community of mutual support. Such pedagogical adaptability is crucial in resource-constrained schools, where external aids and specialist support are often unavailable. Instead, teachers must rely on their creativity, relational competence, and professional judgment to make learning accessible and meaningful.

Inclusion also demands strong school leadership that champions diversity, equity, and collaboration. Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) argue that effective school leaders shape a shared vision of inclusion by aligning institutional structures, policies, and practices with inclusive values. Leadership in this context is not confined to administrative oversight but

involves inspiring and empowering teachers to embrace inclusive principles. Transformational leadership, in particular, has been associated with enhanced teacher motivation and collective efficacy—two critical factors in sustaining inclusive practices. In resource-constrained settings, leaders must cultivate a school culture that encourages innovation, peer mentoring, and reflective dialogue, allowing teachers to experiment with new approaches and share experiences without fear of failure.

Ainscow and Sandill (2010) emphasize that inclusive leadership requires rethinking organizational culture to value diversity as a source of enrichment rather than a challenge to be managed. This perspective shifts the focus from reactive interventions for specific students to proactive systemic change. Inclusive leaders model inclusive attitudes, promote collaborative problem-solving, and ensure that decision-making processes are participatory. They also advocate for equitable allocation of resources and professional development opportunities, recognizing that inclusion cannot thrive without institutional investment in teacher capacity-building. In resource-limited schools, even modest initiatives—such as peer observation, mentoring schemes, and community partnerships—can significantly enhance teachers' sense of agency and competence.

In the African context, leadership and inclusion are deeply intertwined with socio-cultural and systemic realities. Makoelle (2014) highlights that in South Africa, inclusive education is not merely a pedagogical shift but a transformative movement aimed at dismantling historical inequalities and fostering social cohesion. Teachers and school leaders must therefore engage in reflective practice that interrogates their own biases and assumptions about learners. This reflective stance enables educators to develop contextually relevant pedagogies that draw on local resources and cultural knowledge. Similarly, in Nigeria, Obiakor and Offor (2011) note that school leadership plays a critical role in facilitating collaboration among teachers, parents, and community stakeholders. Inclusive leadership in such contexts requires advocacy—mobilizing communities to support learners with disabilities, raising awareness about inclusive practices, and lobbying for policy implementation and resource allocation.

Teachers' professional identity and job satisfaction also play a vital role in sustaining inclusion. Okeke and Mtyuda (2017) assert that teachers who feel valued, supported, and professionally fulfilled are more likely to engage positively with inclusion. Conversely, when teachers experience chronic dissatisfaction due to inadequate infrastructure, unclear policies, or a lack of recognition, their willingness to embrace inclusive practices diminishes. School leaders, therefore, must prioritize teacher welfare, providing emotional support, recognition, and continuous professional learning opportunities. Investing in teacher well-being not only enhances classroom performance but also contributes to the long-term sustainability of inclusive education efforts.

Globally, inclusive education initiatives increasingly recognize that leadership and teaching are inseparable dimensions of the same transformative process. Bush and Glover (2014) observe that successful leadership models for inclusion integrate both distributed and instructional leadership approaches. Distributed leadership empowers teachers as co-leaders of change, fostering shared responsibility for inclusion, while instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching and learning outcomes through guidance and feedback. In resource-constrained schools, distributed leadership can be particularly effective, as it leverages collective expertise and reduces dependence on a single individual. Teachers who are trusted as collaborators are more likely to demonstrate initiative and innovation in addressing diverse learning needs.

#### 2.4 Barriers to Implementation of Inclusive Pedagogy

The implementation of inclusive pedagogy continues to face significant challenges worldwide, particularly in resource-constrained educational environments where systemic, attitudinal, and infrastructural barriers hinder effective practice. Inclusive pedagogy, while widely endorsed in educational policies and international frameworks, often falters in its transition from theory to classroom reality. This disjunction arises not only from material deficiencies but also from entrenched institutional practices, limited teacher preparedness, and cultural perceptions that resist change (Anselmo & Laura, 2015). Understanding these barriers is essential for developing pragmatic

strategies that align inclusive ideals with the contextual realities of schools in developing regions.

One of the foremost barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive pedagogy is the persistent lack of teacher training and professional competence in handling diverse learning needs. Teachers are central to the success of inclusion, yet many educators in developing contexts receive little to no preparation for addressing the complexities of inclusive classrooms. Khan (2011) observes that in many low- and middle-income countries, pre-service teacher education curricula still emphasize traditional, content-driven instruction rather than adaptive or differentiated teaching methodologies. Consequently, teachers enter the profession without the pedagogical knowledge required to modify instruction or assessment for learners with disabilities or learning difficulties. Even when teachers express positive attitudes toward inclusion, inadequate professional development and lack of practical exposure often leave them ill-equipped to meet the needs of all learners effectively.

Equally important are the institutional barriers that perpetuate exclusionary practices. Many educational systems are structured around standardized curricula and assessment mechanisms that privilege uniformity over diversity (Slee, 2011). Such rigid frameworks limit teachers' flexibility to adapt teaching methods or materials to suit different learning abilities. Furthermore, school systems in resource-constrained environments often lack specialized personnel, assistive technologies, and physical infrastructure to accommodate students with learning difficulties. Classrooms are overcrowded, and instructional materials are scarce, compelling teachers to rely on rote learning methods that are incompatible with inclusive pedagogical principles. As a result, the implementation of inclusive education frequently remains symbolic rather than substantive, with policies in place but little meaningful change in classroom practices.

Cultural and societal attitudes toward disability and difference represent another critical barrier to inclusion. In many African and Asian societies, disabilities are often stigmatized, associated with misfortune, or interpreted through religious and

traditional lenses (Agbenyega, 2007). Such perceptions shape both community and school attitudes, leading to marginalization or even exclusion of learners with special needs. Teachers operating within these cultural frameworks may unconsciously perpetuate exclusionary practices, even when policies advocate inclusion. Agbenyega (2007) further argues that these cultural biases are reinforced by the absence of sensitization programs that promote positive awareness about disability. Changing such deep-rooted perceptions requires comprehensive advocacy efforts, community engagement, and teacher education that integrates cultural sensitivity with inclusive pedagogical principles.

Systemic and policy-related barriers also play a decisive role in constraining inclusive education. Eze, Okeke and Chukwu (2016) highlight that in Nigeria, while inclusive education policies exist, implementation is undermined by insufficient funding, weak political commitment, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Schools often operate without clear guidelines on inclusive practices, and budget allocations for special needs education are inconsistent and inadequate. Moreover, accountability mechanisms for monitoring policy implementation are either absent or poorly enforced. This policy-practice gap reflects a broader challenge across many developing countries, where international commitments to inclusive education—such as those articulated in the Salamanca Statement and the Sustainable Development Goals—have not translated into coherent national strategies. Without sustained investment and institutional support, teachers and school leaders remain isolated in their efforts to foster inclusion.

Collaboration within schools also poses a major challenge to the effective implementation of inclusive pedagogy. Nel et al. (2014) note that teachers often work in isolation, with limited opportunities for peer support or interdisciplinary collaboration. In inclusive classrooms, collaboration between general educators, special educators, and support staff is critical for addressing diverse learning needs. However, in resource-constrained settings, schools rarely have specialist staff, and collaboration is hindered by hierarchical school cultures and heavy workloads. The absence of collaborative networks prevents teachers from sharing best practices, reflecting on challenges,

and co-developing innovative teaching approaches. As a result, inclusion remains fragmented and inconsistent across classrooms and schools.

From a global perspective, Anselmo and Laura (2015) argue that cultural and institutional inertia often impede the adoption of inclusive pedagogy, even in developed nations. Traditional notions of meritocracy and academic excellence create educational hierarchies that marginalize learners who do not conform to normative standards. In resource-constrained contexts, these hierarchies are further compounded by economic inequality and social stratification, which determine access to quality education. Thus, inclusive pedagogy must contend not only with pedagogical challenges but also with broader socio-political structures that sustain inequality. Overcoming these barriers requires a paradigm shift from a deficit-based understanding of disability to one that embraces diversity as a natural aspect of human learning.

In the African context, financial and infrastructural constraints remain among the most pressing challenges to inclusion. Schools in rural areas often lack electricity, adequate classroom space, or even basic teaching materials. Under such conditions, teachers struggle to implement inclusive strategies that require individualized attention or adaptive materials. Eze, Okeke, and Chukwu (2016) point out that government funding for inclusive education in Nigeria remains minimal, forcing schools to depend on community resources and non-governmental organizations. While such partnerships provide temporary relief, they do not substitute for systemic reform and sustainable investment. To address these challenges, inclusion must be embedded within broader educational reform agendas that prioritize equity, accessibility, and teacher capacity development.

## 2.5 Frameworks for Adapting Pedagogical Models in Resource-Constrained Settings

Adapting pedagogical models to resource-constrained educational settings is an essential strategy for ensuring that inclusive education is both feasible and sustainable. In many developing countries, particularly across Africa and parts of Asia, the

absence of adequate teaching materials, trained personnel, and infrastructural support often necessitates pedagogical innovation rather than replication of models developed in high-resource contexts. Effective frameworks for adaptation must therefore align global principles of inclusion with local realities, promoting flexibility, contextual relevance, and teacher agency. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes that inclusive education in low-resource environments should be guided by equity-driven frameworks that prioritize creativity, collaboration, and the use of available community resources. This approach transforms constraints into opportunities for innovation, encouraging educators to reimagine pedagogy as a process rooted in local strengths rather than material abundance.

One of the most applicable frameworks in resource-constrained contexts is differentiated instruction, which emphasizes tailoring teaching to accommodate learners' varying abilities, interests, and learning profiles. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) propose that differentiation is not a privilege of well-equipped schools but a mindset that values flexibility and responsiveness to learners' needs. In under-resourced classrooms, differentiation may take the form of using group work, peer tutoring, or oral rather than written assessments to ensure participation. For example, in contexts where textbooks or technological aids are limited, teachers can employ storytelling, role-playing, and experiential learning activities that leverage local culture and environment as teaching resources. This model of differentiation aligns closely with inclusive pedagogical principles by focusing on process and engagement rather than on the provision of sophisticated materials. It underscores that the effectiveness of inclusion depends more on pedagogical adaptability than on external resources.

The contextual adaptation framework also plays a significant role in shaping inclusive teaching in developing regions. Barton (2003) argues that educational models must be reinterpreted through the socio-cultural and economic realities of each community. Imported pedagogical frameworks that fail to account for these contextual dynamics risk becoming alien and unsustainable. For instance, inclusive education in Western contexts often assumes access to specialized support services and assistive

technologies, which are rarely available in low-income settings. Consequently, schools in Africa and other developing regions have developed locally responsive frameworks that emphasize community involvement, peer mentorship, and teacher improvisation. Such approaches recognize that inclusion cannot be achieved through uniform global standards but through continuous adaptation grounded in the lived experiences of learners and educators. Teachers in resource-constrained settings thus act as both practitioners and innovators, developing creative pedagogies that align with their specific teaching environments.

Community-based and collaborative learning frameworks further enhance the adaptability of inclusive pedagogy in resource-limited schools. Mwangi and Orodho (2014) highlight the importance of integrating parents, community members, and local organizations into the teaching process, particularly in rural Kenyan schools. These collaborations help bridge the gap between home and school environments, fostering a shared sense of responsibility for learners with difficulties. For instance, parents and local artisans may contribute to the creation of learning aids using locally available materials, thereby reducing dependency on external funding. Moreover, peer-assisted learning models, where students support one another academically and socially, reinforce the inclusivity and sustainability of classroom practices. Such frameworks reflect the communal ethos prevalent in many African societies, transforming inclusion from an institutional mandate into a collective endeavor that benefits all learners.

In Nigeria, the need for contextually adaptive frameworks has become increasingly evident as the nation continues to expand its inclusive education agenda. Ajuwon and Brown (2012) observe that the success of inclusion in Nigeria depends largely on teachers' ability to modify existing pedagogical models to fit under-resourced conditions. This requires the integration of indigenous knowledge systems, local languages, and culturally relevant examples into the curriculum. Teachers who employ flexible instructional strategies—such as differentiated grouping, peer coaching, and the use of storytelling—are better able to engage students with diverse learning needs. However, these adaptive practices thrive best

within supportive institutional frameworks that promote teacher autonomy and professional development. Without administrative flexibility, teachers' creative efforts risk being constrained by rigid curricula and assessment systems.

At the global level, UNESCO (2015) advocates for the inclusive systems framework, which integrates pedagogical adaptation into broader educational reform. This model emphasizes a systemic approach to inclusion, where teacher training, curriculum design, and school governance operate synergistically to support diversity. The framework also stresses policy coherence, ensuring that inclusion is embedded within national education strategies rather than treated as a peripheral concern. Within resource-constrained contexts, this systemic perspective translates into prioritizing low-cost but high-impact interventions—such as continuous professional development, community partnerships, and scalable teaching innovations. By aligning macro-level policies with micro-level classroom practices, inclusive education becomes not only achievable but sustainable over time.

Ultimately, frameworks for adapting pedagogical models in resource-constrained settings rest on three interdependent pillars: flexibility, contextualization, and collaboration. Teachers must be empowered as reflective practitioners who can innovate within their means; schools must function as learning communities that draw on collective strengths; and educational systems must recognize that inclusion is a dynamic process, evolving with the needs of learners and the realities of their contexts. As UNESCO (2015) asserts, inclusive education in low-resource environments is less about replicating ideal conditions and more about cultivating resilience, creativity, and commitment—the hallmarks of truly inclusive pedagogy.

### III. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Pedagogical strategies for teaching students with learning difficulties must be grounded in inclusivity, flexibility, and responsiveness to individual learning needs. Effective teaching in such contexts demands a shift from conventional, teacher-centered methods to

approaches that prioritize engagement, differentiation, and scaffolded learning. Westwood (2013) emphasizes that adaptive teaching, anchored in continuous assessment and tailored instruction, is fundamental to addressing the diverse challenges encountered by learners with difficulties. In resource-constrained classrooms, teachers can achieve this by modifying content delivery, using multi-sensory techniques, and incorporating formative feedback to guide learning progress. Adaptation, rather than additional resources, becomes the cornerstone of inclusion, allowing educators to transform everyday teaching practices into inclusive pedagogical experiences.

Collaborative teaching models also represent a critical strategy for supporting learners with learning difficulties. Friend and Cook (1992) argue that co-teaching and professional collaboration enhance the inclusivity of classroom instruction by combining the expertise of general and special educators. Through shared lesson planning, classroom management, and differentiated assessment, co-teaching fosters both teacher efficacy and student engagement. In settings where special educators are unavailable, peer collaboration among mainstream teachers can serve as a sustainable alternative, promoting mutual learning and reflective practice. This model encourages joint ownership of student success, ensuring that inclusion becomes a collective institutional endeavor rather than an isolated responsibility.

In the African context, the role of teacher perception and professional preparation remains pivotal. Adewumi and Mosito (2016) found that teachers' beliefs about inclusion significantly influence their instructional approaches toward students with learning difficulties. Many educators in under-resourced Nigerian and South African schools face large class sizes, limited materials, and inadequate training. However, through practical strategies such as differentiated grouping, peer tutoring, and contextualized learning, they can create meaningful educational experiences for learners who might otherwise be marginalized. These approaches are strengthened by continuous professional development programs that build teachers' confidence and adaptability in inclusive environments (Okeke & Eze, 2010).

Instructional interventions grounded in evidence-based practices have proven particularly effective in enhancing academic outcomes for learners with specific difficulties. Jitendra et al. (2016) demonstrate that schema-based instruction—where students are taught to identify and apply problem-solving frameworks—significantly improves mathematical reasoning among learners with cognitive and learning challenges. This structured approach aligns well with inclusive pedagogy, as it emphasizes clarity, visual representation, and guided discovery. Similarly, metacognitive strategies that train learners to monitor their own understanding and learning processes empower them to become more independent and self-regulated.

### 3.1 Differentiated Instruction and Individualized Learning Plans

Differentiated instruction and individualized learning plans (ILPs) represent foundational pedagogical strategies for addressing the diverse academic and cognitive needs of students with learning difficulties. These approaches rest on the premise that learners vary in readiness, interests, and learning profiles, and therefore require flexible methods of instruction, assessment, and classroom organization. Tomlinson (2014) asserts that differentiation is not an act of simplification but of intelligent adaptation, requiring teachers to modify content, process, and product to ensure equitable access to learning. In inclusive classrooms, especially those in resource-constrained contexts, differentiation allows teachers to use available resources more effectively, ensuring that each learner receives instruction aligned with their strengths and areas of need.

Globally, differentiation has emerged as an evidence-based response to the challenge of learner diversity. Anderson (2007) highlights that differentiated instruction combines formative assessment, tiered activities, and varied modes of representation to accommodate multiple intelligences. For instance, teachers may provide visual aids for visual learners, oral discussions for auditory learners, and kinesthetic activities for those who learn through movement. Such flexibility supports students with learning difficulties who may struggle with traditional, lecture-based teaching. Importantly, differentiation can be

implemented without costly resources—teachers can adapt questioning techniques, design open-ended tasks, and utilize peer support systems to enhance participation and comprehension. These low-cost practices make differentiation particularly applicable in under-resourced schools.

In Nigeria, inclusive education has increasingly recognized differentiation and ILPs as vital tools for supporting learners with special needs. Ajuwon (2008) observes that while policy frameworks promote inclusion, their success largely depends on teachers' capacity to design individualized learning experiences. ILPs serve as structured guides outlining specific learning goals, accommodations, and instructional methods for each student. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and insufficient training often limit their application. Despite these barriers, Nigerian teachers who integrate informal ILPs—through regular observation, flexible grouping, and adaptive feedback—demonstrate improved learner engagement and achievement. This underscores the importance of teacher autonomy and professional judgment in adapting pedagogical strategies to context-specific realities.

The relevance of differentiated instruction in African contexts extends beyond Nigeria. Chitiyo and Muwana (2018) emphasize that in Zambia, inclusive teaching relies heavily on teachers' improvisation skills and collaborative problem-solving, as formal resources are scarce. Teachers often repurpose local materials to create tactile learning aids or organize cooperative learning groups to provide peer-mediated support. These practices align closely with the communal values underpinning African education, where collective responsibility and social interaction play a central role in learning.

At the theoretical level, differentiation and ILPs draw support from constructivist principles, which emphasize active, learner-centered engagement. Ainsworth (2007) argues that by situating learning within meaningful contexts and allowing students to construct knowledge through varied experiences, teachers promote deeper understanding and retention. For students with learning difficulties, this approach reduces frustration and fosters confidence. Differentiated instruction, therefore, serves as both a



pedagogical and ethical imperative, ensuring that every learner—regardless of ability or circumstance—has access to meaningful and achievable learning opportunities. In resource-constrained schools, it exemplifies how creativity, empathy, and reflective practice can bridge the gap between limitation and inclusion.

### 3.2 Peer Tutoring and Cooperative Learning

Peer tutoring and cooperative learning represent cost-effective and inclusive pedagogical strategies that foster active participation, mutual support, and shared responsibility among students. These approaches are especially valuable in resource-constrained schools, where teacher-student ratios are high, and access to individualized instruction is limited. Topping (2005) defines peer tutoring as a structured form of peer-assisted learning in which students teach or support one another under teacher supervision. This method enhances both academic and social development by allowing learners to reinforce understanding through teaching, discussion, and feedback. Cooperative learning, on the other hand, emphasizes interdependence within small groups, enabling students to work collaboratively toward common learning goals while developing interpersonal and problem-solving skills (Gillies, 2016).

In African contexts, peer-assisted models have proven particularly effective in compensating for shortages of instructional materials and specialized educators. Ochieng and Orodho (2014) found that peer tutoring improved both academic performance and student engagement in Kenyan classrooms by fostering a sense of belonging and shared accountability. Similarly, Adebisi, Liman, and Longpoe (2015) note that in Nigeria, peer collaboration not only benefits learners with difficulties but also cultivates empathy and leadership among peers. By integrating cooperative learning into daily instruction, teachers can diversify classroom interactions and create more inclusive spaces for learners with varying abilities. These strategies align with inclusive education's core principle that every learner has something to contribute, transforming classrooms into dynamic communities where teaching and learning are reciprocal and socially enriching processes.

### 3.3 Use of Low-Cost Teaching Aids and Community Resources

In resource-constrained schools, the use of low-cost teaching aids and community resources has emerged as an indispensable strategy for facilitating inclusive education. These locally sourced tools bridge the gap between limited funding and the pedagogical need for active, multisensory learning. Ademokoya (2007) emphasizes that low-cost materials—such as charts, bottle tops, sticks, or locally made flashcards—enhance comprehension for learners with learning difficulties by providing concrete representations of abstract concepts. Such resources can be created collaboratively by teachers, students, and parents, fostering ownership and sustainability. In Nigeria, where financial and infrastructural limitations often hinder inclusive practices, teacher creativity in developing indigenous instructional materials has proven critical to learner engagement and retention.

Globally, inclusive educators have increasingly recognized the pedagogical value of community partnerships in promoting inclusion. Singal (2008) argues that when local communities participate in the educational process—through volunteering, resource sharing, or mentoring—schools become more responsive to contextual realities. This approach transforms education from a closed institutional activity into a socially embedded process. Similarly, Omodan and Tsotetsi (2018) highlight how community engagement in South African rural schools supports inclusion by supplementing limited school resources and strengthening collective responsibility for learners with difficulties. Furthermore, Hennessy, Häbler, and Hofmann (2015) suggest that integrating low-cost digital tools, such as recycled computers or open-source software, into classroom practice enhances learner participation without significant financial investment. Thus, through ingenuity and collaboration, teachers and communities can co-create inclusive learning environments that are both cost-effective and contextually relevant.

### 3.4 Teacher Professional Development and Support Mechanisms

Teacher professional development and support mechanisms are pivotal to the successful implementation of inclusive pedagogy, particularly in

resource-constrained settings where teachers often lack specialized training and institutional backing. Ainscow (2016) argues that inclusive education requires a paradigm shift in teaching practice—one that is sustained by continuous professional learning rather than one-off workshops. Effective professional development fosters reflective teaching, equips educators with adaptive strategies, and promotes collaborative problem-solving in addressing learner diversity. For inclusion to move beyond rhetoric, professional growth must be ongoing, context-sensitive, and embedded within teachers' daily practice.

In Africa, the lack of systematic teacher support remains a significant obstacle to inclusion. Ezegbe and Nneka (2013) report that many Nigerian teachers lack confidence and competence in meeting the needs of learners with disabilities due to insufficient training and inadequate access to instructional materials. They advocate for targeted in-service training programs and peer mentoring systems to strengthen teacher capacity. Similarly, Bosu et al. (2013) highlight that in Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia, leadership structures that prioritize mentorship, collegial collaboration, and reflective supervision contribute to teacher empowerment and improved classroom inclusion. These mechanisms enable teachers to experiment with new pedagogical approaches while receiving constructive feedback.

Vavrus, Thomas, and Bartlett (2011) further emphasize the importance of learner-centered professional development in sub-Saharan Africa, arguing that teacher inquiry and collaboration promote sustained innovation even under resource constraints. Collectively, these findings underscore that teacher development is not ancillary but central to achieving inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education across diverse contexts.

#### IV. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The future of inclusive education, particularly within resource-constrained schools, depends on a coordinated policy and practice framework that aligns national priorities with global commitments. Loreman (2017) contends that future pedagogical approaches

must move beyond reactive inclusion to proactive system transformation—embedding inclusivity into curriculum design, teacher preparation, and school leadership. Policies must, therefore, support innovation and evidence-based teaching practices that empower educators to adapt to diverse learning needs. This vision requires robust investment in teacher training, curriculum flexibility, and the provision of sustainable learning materials that encourage differentiated and learner-centered instruction.

Globally, UNESCO (2017) emphasizes the necessity of policy coherence to ensure that inclusion and equity are integral to all education sector plans. This entails not only adopting inclusive education frameworks but also enforcing accountability mechanisms to monitor progress. In Africa, Ainscow and Miles (2008) highlight the need for localized policy development that incorporates cultural diversity, community participation, and indigenous knowledge systems, ensuring that inclusion is contextually relevant and culturally grounded.

In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education (2015) acknowledges inclusive education as a national priority but faces challenges of implementation due to limited funding, insufficient teacher preparation, and policy fragmentation. Future reforms must bridge this implementation gap through decentralized governance, school-community partnerships, and targeted professional development. Ultimately, future directions for inclusive education should combine political will, pedagogical innovation, and social engagement to ensure that every learner, regardless of circumstance, has equitable access to quality education in an inclusive and supportive environment.

#### CONCLUSION

The discussion presented throughout this study has illuminated the intricate relationship between inclusive pedagogy, teacher capacity, and systemic adaptation within resource-constrained educational settings. The overarching objective—to explore effective pedagogical strategies for supporting students with learning difficulties—has been addressed through a synthesis of theoretical, empirical, and contextual insights drawn from diverse global and African perspectives. In meeting its aims,

this research has demonstrated that inclusive education cannot thrive in isolation from broader structural, cultural, and institutional reforms. Rather, it flourishes when pedagogy is grounded in flexibility, contextual responsiveness, and a commitment to educational equity.

Key findings reveal that inclusive teaching depends fundamentally on teacher agency, professional competence, and sustained institutional support. Differentiated instruction and individualized learning plans emerged as vital tools for accommodating learner diversity, while collaborative models—such as peer tutoring and cooperative learning—were shown to enhance both social and cognitive outcomes. The study further underscored the significance of utilizing low-cost teaching aids and community resources, particularly in underfunded schools, to bridge the gap between pedagogical ideals and practical realities. Professional development and reflective practice were also identified as critical mechanisms for enabling teachers to continuously adapt and innovate within constrained environments.

In conclusion, the study asserts that effective inclusion requires an integrated framework encompassing teacher empowerment, curriculum flexibility, and policy alignment. Governments and education ministries should prioritize inclusive education not merely as a policy directive but as a moral and developmental imperative. This can be achieved through strategic investment in teacher education, equitable resource allocation, and participatory policy formulation that includes educators, parents, and communities. The research recommends ongoing capacity-building initiatives, context-driven pedagogical innovation, and the incorporation of indigenous educational values into teaching practices. Ultimately, the study reinforces that inclusion is not an endpoint but a continuous process—one that transforms classrooms into spaces where diversity is celebrated, equity is realized, and every learner is afforded the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.

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