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DEVELOPING THE UNIVERSITY AS A MODEL FOR AN INCLUSIVE ORGANIZATION FOR ALL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Irfan Ullah¹, Nihal Nisar¹ & Asia¹

¹Department of Special Education (SED), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Persons, Disabilities, Inclusive Higher Education, University Transformation, HEC Policy, Universal Design For Learning, Faculty Attitudes, Pakistan	The universities worldwide are increasingly called upon to transform into inclusive organisations that genuinely accommodate persons with disabilities (PWDs). The current study is entitled as, Developing University as a Model for an Inclusive Organisation for All Persons with Disabilities: Challenges, Opportunities, and Way Forward. This conceptual and evidence-based review brings together the results of various empirical studies in the Pakistani and Colombian higher educational context, to explore the hurdles in the inclusive transformation, the potential opportunities in structure and pedagogy and a strategic path forward for developing the & fully inclusive higher education institutions for PWDs. Some of identified problems are lack of infrastructure, lack of appropriate training of faculty, attitude of the staff and lack of policy implementation. Opportunities include use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), development of inclusive organizational culture, faculty commitment and the development of effective monitoring of the policy implementation. In this connection, the analysis provide significant information for reaching the desired outcomes as used for making decisions about the research issues in the particular context. A five-pillar change model is suggested, involving policy, infrastructure, pedagogy, culture and accountability. The paper continues the international conversation about equity of the higher education and examines the reasons why inclusion of PWD is not only a compliance requirement, but also an institutional domineering that are more beneficial for entire higher education community.
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INTRODUCTION

Universities are hubs of knowledge production and social change and are uniquely positioned to create equitable futures. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) have fundamental right to human dignity and social inclusion and higher education is not only a pathway to professional success but fundamental right. According to United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), education is inherent right and a State is obliged to provide

inclusive education system at all levels. Still, this landmark international agreement has failed to realised in practice, even decades later, in universities in developing world and, indeed, in developed world when it comes to ensuring real inclusion for PWDs. The concept of university as inclusive institution is more than physical. This includes pedagogical flexibility, attitudes of faculty, other individuals, policy alignment, cultural responsiveness & elimination of systematic barriers that prevent students with disabilities from attending and being successful in college. Booth and Ainscow (2011) define in their Index of inclusion as follows, inclusive organisations need to be working on three interdependent & mutually reinforcing aspects, policies, culture & practice.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan introduced Pakistan Policy for Students with Disabilities at Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in 2021, a pivotal event in country's inclusive education journey. The policy called for establishment of disability resource centres, availability of assistive technology, provision of accessible infrastructure & financial assistance to students with disabilities and training of faculty (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, 2021). The Colombia has two pieces of legislation that mandate inclusive, quality education for students with disabilities: Law 1618 (2013) and Decree 1421 (2017). Yet, the empirical evidence remains clear and unambiguous, there are significant mismatches between policy intent and institutional practice. In this connection, Manzoor, Kamal and Mushtaq (2024) confirmed the implementation of HEC's disability policy in Pakistani universities, Zaheer and Farooq (2024) on faculty-led inclusive practices in Pakistani higher education institutions & faculty attitudes, knowledge and practices in Colombian universities. It examines the structural, attitudinal and institutional barriers to overcome; it identifies the opportunities in terms of the available sets of research and theoretical frameworks; and it proposes a way forward, derived from theory and practice.

Research Objectives

The primary motivation of this paper is to critically review the evolution of the universities as authentic inclusive bodies for all persons with disabilities (PWDs) in context of higher education of Pakistan.

1. To identify and analyse structural, attitudinal and institutional barriers for development of inclusive universities for PWDs in Pakistan and Colombia.
2. To assess degree of implementation of existing policy frameworks, in particular the HEC Policy (2021) for disabilities in Pakistan and Law 1618/Decree 1421 in Colombia, and their effectiveness in practice.
3. To investigate the attitudes, knowledge and inclusive teaching practices of the university faculty and their relationship with professional development and training experiences in the higher institutions.
4. To examine the lived experiences and perceptions of students with disabilities related to institutional accessibility, support services & implementation of disability related policies in Pakistani universities.
5. To investigate opportunities (Universal Design for Learning (UDL), assistive technologies, & faculty professional development) to improve disability inclusion in higher education institutions.

6. To propose inclusive, evidence-based model of inclusive university transformation incorporating policy, infrastructure, pedagogy, organisational culture as well as student empowerment.

Research Questions

1. What are the critical challenges, opportunities available and strategic pathways required for universities in developing contexts to become model inclusive organizations for all persons with disabilities?
2. To what extent have policy frameworks like HEC 2021 (Pakistan) and Colombia's Decree 1421 (2017) been implemented in HEIs & what accounts for disconnect amid policy intent and institutional practice?
3. What do university faculty know and feel about the students with disabilities, and how do their attitudes and their knowledge and disciplinary backgrounds affect these in the higher institutions?
4. What is students' perception of the access to their university environment, the quality of support service that is provided and the application of the academic policies related to disability?
5. What is most effective institutional mechanism (UDL, AT, faculty training programmes, and student voice structures) in fostering disability inclusion in the higher educational institutions?
6. What is integrated model for university transformation that is comprehensive, evidence based, long-term and includes integration of inclusion for PWDs in policy, pedagogy, culture & accountability?

LITERATURE REVIEW

International human rights law enshrines the commitment to inclusive higher education. The CRPD ([United Nations, 2006](#)) requires signatory states to provide persons with the disabilities access to higher education upon the equal basis with others, with reasonable accommodation. [UNESCO's \(2005\)](#) Guidelines for Inclusion positions inclusion as a process of addressing the diversity of all learners—reducing exclusion, ensuring equitable participation. The Salamanca Statement ([UNESCO, 1994](#)) set the normative ground that inclusive schools are the best means to fight discriminatory attitudes and build inclusive society, although it was mainly concerned with basic education. According to [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#), university professors in Europe and Latin America, many of whom are not trained teachers, have difficulties establishing inclusive teaching roles and lack systematic exposure to inclusive pedagogical approaches during their professional formation. Structural reality explains why inclusive transformation in universities cannot be based on individual goodwill but must be driven by the systemic, institution-wide strategies.

Policy Landscape: Pakistan and Beyond

The policy trajectory of Pakistan towards inclusive higher education is a slow but promising evolution. Pakistan has gradually developed rights-based architecture for disability inclusion, starting from the Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance of 1981 which

established employment quotas and rehabilitation services, to National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2002), which highlighted inclusive education and vocational training, and [Special Citizens Act \(2008\)](#), which required accessible public spaces ([Manzoor et al., 2024](#)). The Right of Education Act, 2012 (Article 25-A) provided free & compulsory education to all children with disabilities. HEC Policy for students with disabilities at [Higher Education Institutions \(2021\)](#) is a product of these efforts at the tertiary level and highlights six key areas of support: accessible infrastructure, disability resource centres, assistive technologies and learning aids, financial support and scholarships, faculty & staff training and fair academic policies from admission to graduation.

But even with this wide-ranging policy framework, there is lack of uniformity in application within the institutions. The lack of resources, awareness and institutional commitment to the implementation of policy to the lived reality of students with disabilities (SWD) in many higher education institutions (HEIs) is a serious issue ([Manzoor et al., 2024](#)). In Colombia, [Law 1618 \(2013\)](#) and [Decree 1421 \(2017\)](#) also demand inclusive provision. The challenge of inclusion at the level of higher education is compounded by professional orientation of university faculty, the research-intensive culture of academia, and the competitive nature of higher educational systems. [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#), however, noted that while there are important positive laws, there are important barriers for many people with disabilities to children's. Importantly, they found that 40% of Colombian teachers were not familiar with fundamental concepts of inclusive education like Individual Reasonable Adjustments Plans (PIAR) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which highlights the differences between intention of laws and pedagogical readiness.

Faculty as Central Agents of Inclusive Transformation

The research conducted internationally and in Pakistan has been consistent that, attitude and competencies of the faculty members is the one major factor that influences inclusive outcomes in higher education. According to [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#), university faculty are linchpin in achieving inclusive education at higher education institutions because it is attitudes of faculty, not infrastructure, policy, that shape day-to-day experience of students with disabilities. Their study, using the adapted APTD scale (accessibility, processes, training, demand) with faculty at Pakistani university, revealed that although faculty reported positive orientations to inclusion, they also lacked practical training to implement inclusive methodologies effectively. [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#) reported that 95.75% of faculty had high or very high attitude scores toward inclusion, but knowledge scores showed considerably variability ($CV=0.22$), and practice scores were in an intermediate range. One of most persistent problems in the field is the gap between attitude, knowledge, practice where faculty are philosophically in favour of inclusion but pedagogically challenged.

The gap is particularly wide in disciplines other than education & social sciences. [CarrilloSierra et al. \(2025\)](#) found that teachers from the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education had the highest scores in both attitude and practice dimensions, while engineering and natural sciences showed relatively lower scores in inclusive practice. The faculty training deficit is striking.

[Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#) reported that 46% of Pakistani university faculty had never attended any training related to inclusive education in last five years. Paradoxically, faculty expressed a strong interest in such training, as evidenced by high mean scores on items concerning their desire for professional development in inclusive teaching methodologies ($M = 4.2$), alternative assessment methods ($M = 4.1$), and adaptive communication systems ($M = 4.1$). This gap amid the lack of training on offer and the desire for it suggests an important space for institutional action.

Student Experience: The Ground Reality

While faculty viewpoints bring certain perspective to inclusive transformation, the lived reality of students with disabilities provide the best lens for measuring the impact. [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) surveyed 100 students with disabilities from the Pakistani universities to discuss their perceptions of the environment of universities and the academic activities regarding the HEC 2021 policy. The findings were mixed, with students' perceptions of comfort of the classroom seating ($M = 3.16$) and some perception of the equal opportunity to learn ($M = 2.73$), but being highly dissatisfied with building design and individual accommodation ($M = 2.44$), access to assistive devices ($M = 2.39$), and counselling and referral services for students with disabilities ($M = 2.22$). Most disturbing were students' experiences with the implementation of academic policies, with mean for academic policies factor only 2.49, and only 2.27 for the item about the helpfulness of administration in implementing disability-related legislation. This suggests that even when formal policies exist, change into administrative practice & student support is often lacking.

Likewise, students indicated absence of seminars on disability awareness ($M = 2.37$) and sports and cultural activities organised in an inclusive manner ($M = 2.54$). This shows that inclusion is mostly limited to the formal academic environment and does not permeate the whole life of the university. Diverse disability-specific barriers at higher education level been documented in research from Pakistan. Students with visual impairment encounter difficulties regarding accessing physical premises, reading materials and assistive devices ([Hussain et al., 2022](#), as cited in [Zaheer & Farooq, 2024](#)). Communication & socialisation barriers are faced by students with the hearing impairment, which are further compounded by universities' unwillingness to employ sign language interpreters ([Ain, 2021](#), cited in [Zaheer & Farooq, 2024](#)). Students with physical & health impairment face problems like inaccessible transport, weak legal enforcement and lack of coordination among relevant ministries ([Ayub, 2022](#), as cited in [Zaheer & Farooq, 2024](#)).

Challenges to Developing Universities as Inclusive Organizations

Infrastructural & Physical Accessibility Deficits

The physical infrastructure is one of the most apparent and permanent barriers to inclusion in Pakistani universities. [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) indicates that 14.3% of students strongly agreed that the physical design of their institution meets the demands of students with special needs whereas 17.5% strongly disagreed. The mobility & sensory demands of students with physical

disabilities are not usually accommodated by the classroom settings, library access, transport arrangements, building designs. The similar results have been reported in university settings in developing nations, such as Ghana (Amoah et al., 2023). UDL paradigm offers principled approach to difficulty by supporting proactive design of learning environments and materials to be accessible to all learners. But it's still at its infancy in Pakistani & Colombian Universities. Carrillo et al. (2025) highlighted the significance of inclusive approaches like UDL, supported learning, assistive technologies and individualised formative assessment to enhance academic achievement and engagement of students with disabilities; however, these are not commonly implemented.

Faculty Training & Competency Gaps

A key challenge highlighted in the evidence reviewed in this paper is lack of training among faculty. Zaheer and Farooq (2024) reported that only a handful of Pakistani faculty members felt confident about their ability to adapt the curriculum for students with special needs ($M = 1.85$) or to create parallel activities ($M = 1.93$). The large proportion of the faculty who had not received any inclusion-related training in five years (46%) is indicative of a systemic failure of professional development infrastructure, rather than individual negligence. In the absence of any disability-specific training, faculty tend to fall back on traditional teaching methods that are not always beneficial to students with disabilities. Carrillo et al. (2025), academic training level of university teachers is an important factor in ability to implement inclusive practices. The teachers with master and doctoral degrees showed higher consistency across the inclusive education dimensions, pointing to fact that higher levels of professional formation are related to development of stronger inclusive pedagogical identities. However, the study also found that variability in knowledge ($CV = 0.22$) was significantly higher than attitudinal variability ($CV = 0.11$) even among well-qualified faculty, indicating the need for targeted professional development around the specific inclusive plans and strategies, rather than general positive orientations.

Attitudinal Barriers & Deficit Thinking

Perhaps the most insidious obstacle to inclusive university transformation is the persistence of deficit-oriented attitudes to disability, attitudes that locate the 'problem' of disability within the individual, rather than disabling institutional structures and practices. Zaheer and Farooq (2024) found that most Pakistani faculty considered working with students with special needs as extra burden ($M = 2.2$). Some faculty intentionally ignored students with special needs in the classroom environment. Special attention should be given to gender dimension of faculty attitudes accommodated by the classroom settings, library access, transport arrangements, building designs. There was a statistically significant difference in attitudes towards inclusion of faculty amid males and females (Zaheer & Farooq, 2024). Male faculty ($M = 19.09$, $SD = 2.75$) had more positive attitudes towards inclusion than female faculty ($M = 17.63$, $SD = 1.92$), $t(66) = 2.5$, $p = .01$. This surprising finding, given theory of empathy-based inclusion among female faculty, deserves research, points to fact that attitudinal development in inclusive education cannot be reduced to demographic variables but be located in broader institutional & cultural contexts.

Policy Implementation Gaps

Even where strong policies exist, they are often implemented inconsistently, incompletely and with little monitoring. Although the HEC 2021 policy did bring about some positive changes, specifically concerning the equitable educational rights ($M = 2.70$) and guidance on admission procedures ($M = 2.75$), critical areas like counselling services ($M = 2.22$), student engagement in academic activities ($M = 2.22$), and implementation of disability-related laws ($M = 2.27$) were found to be significantly underdeveloped by the [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#). The infrastructure and monitoring mechanisms needed to ensure accountability have not been developed to the level of policy's vision of total inclusion. Institutions have limited awareness of policy provisions. [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#) reported that very few faculty members were aware about existence of resource centres on campus ($M = 1.97$) and accessibility committee mandated by HEC policy ($M = 2.1$). The policy's operational reach is severely limited when the faculty responsible for implementing inclusive practices are unaware of the very existence of institutional support mechanisms. In this linking, This awareness gap suggests need for sustained communication campaigns, formal faculty orientation and institutional cultural change, and the formal policy mandates.

Conflicting Priorities & Resource Constraints

The financial constraints are a serious concern in universities in Pakistan and other developing contexts. It is hard to balance quality education for general student population with additional investments needed for genuine disability inclusion. [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#) mentioned that the evidence pointed towards low budget allocation and investment for students with special needs in inclusive settings ([Shaukat, 2022; Zaheer & Farooq, 2024](#)), and universities are hesitant to device differentiated curricula, invest in specialised learning resources & trained personnel ([Bano et al., 2013; Zaheer & Farooq, 2024](#)). The economic height of exclusion is rarely addressed in the policy documents, which tend to prescribe outcomes without commensurate financial provisions.

Opportunities for Building Inclusive Universities

Existence of HEC 2021 policy in Pakistan is a great institutional opportunity despite challenges of its implementation. The policy provides formal mandate to all higher education institutions develop disability resource centres, accessible infrastructure, assistive skills & faculty training, thus creating the structural conditions for an inclusive culture to thrive. The policy has been beneficial for the institutions it applies to, and shows that inclusion is a valid priority for the institutions ([Manzoor et al., 2024](#)). Such a policy foundation, together with strong monitoring and accountability mechanisms, can provide the organisational backbone of systemic inclusive transformation.

Faculty Readiness & Appetite for Professional Development

One of the most encouraging findings across studies reviewed was strong interest expressed by faculty in receiving training in inclusive education. [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#) reported high mean scores for faculty interest in training in all areas, including teaching methodologies ($M = 4.2$), alternative communication systems ($M = 4.1$), alternative assessment ($M = 4.1$), specific

methods and resources ($M = 3.9$), adaptation of educational materials ($M = 3.8$). The findings confirmed that the relationship between training and practice is direct and measurable. With a strategic approach to professional development – through ongoing professional development programs, inclusion courses integrated into the teacher education curricula and peer learning communities, this desire for professional learning can shift the way the faculty is oriented from a ‘good, but not sure’ to a ‘well informed – confident’ approach to inclusion. The trainings of teachers in the field of inclusion must address multi-disciplinary makeup of the academic staff and not convey only legislation and encyclopedic knowledge, but be more comprehensive and contextually relevant & lead to development of true transformative pedagogies (Carrillo et al., 2025).

Universal Design for Learning as a Transformative Framework

The UDL is a strong, evidence-based approach to proactively making university teaching and learning environments accessible for everyone, including people with the disabilities. Whereas, Reactive accommodation reduces or eradicates barriers after they have been experienced by individual students (Espada et al., 2023, as cited in Carrillo et al., 2025), UDL takes into account flexibility and accessibility from the beginning of the design process of curricula, assessments, and learning environments. UDL works for all students and not just those with disabilities, as it minimizes the need for reasonable adjustments to be made to meet the needs of any individual and helps to create a truly diverse learning environment. Zaheer and Farooq (2024) highlighted that the concept of universal design for learning goes beyond access to participation, learning and development of people with special needs. The analysis they provide supports the vision that the classroom, as a microcosm of social diversity, can be made inclusive through inclusive practices and become a place that promotes academic and social development of all students. While the initial investment of time and resources is necessary to implement UDL in Pakistani and other developing country universities, the method is sustainable and scalable for inclusive transformation.

Technology & Assistive Devices

The field of educational technology is rapidly changing and offers huge promise to expand access and inclusion for the diverse set of disabilities. The students with visual, auditory and physical impairments do not have to face these challenges alone, as tools like screen reading software, speech-to-text technology, captioning tools, alternative input devices, and accessible digital learning platforms can make huge difference. Differentiated instruction, UDL structures and assistive technology are best practices for inclusive education around the world according to study by Carrillo et al. (2025). Similarly, in Pakistan, Manzoor et al. (2024) found that 9.7% of the students strongly agreed that institution provided assistive devices and helpful equipment as and when needed, 38.7% disagreed and 16.1% strongly disagreed and faculty training, thus creating the structural conditions for an inclusive culture to thrive. This is a challenge and an opportunity. The lack of provision in the schools of assistive technology for the students with disability is well documented and there is the clear opportunity for institutional investment to address this to yield significant and measurable improvements for the student with disability experience.

International Frameworks & Comparative Learning

The universities in Pakistan and other developing contexts do not have to reinvent inclusive education from scratch. There is rich body of international evidence & established frameworks including Index of Inclusion ([Booth & Ainscow, 2011](#)), UDL guidelines, CRPD implementation framework, and the good practice models documented across Spanish, Australian, and North American universities that provide a wealth of transferable insights. [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#) noted that inclusive education in universities is affected not only by individual qualifications but also by systemic factors like discipline, policies & availability of resources. International comparative learning, adapted towards local contextual realities, is a useful lever for accelerating inclusive transformation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a conceptual and evidence-based review design, by synthesizing the empirical literature in systematic way to create inclusive analytical framework. This paper is not primary data paper. Instead, it is based on strong, thoughtfully curated set of peer-reviewed empirical studies, government policy documents, international norms and frameworks, which combine to offer inclusive knowledge of disability inclusion in education. This approach is consistent with integrative review methodology ([Torraco, 2005](#)) and is suitable where the purpose is to synthesize mature, yet uneven evidence into a coherent conceptual model with direct practical implications.

Sources & Selection Criteria

The study is based on three methodological rigorous, contextually relevant and thematically complementary anchor studies. The first study is [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) who investigated the student perceptions regarding the implementation of HEC 2021 policy in Pakistani universities through survey of 100 participants. The second study is [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#) who studied the inclusive practices and faculty attitudes in Pakistani higher education institutions with the adapted APTD scale. The third study is [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#) who performed comparative cross-disciplinary study of faculty attitudes, knowledge and inclusive practices across Colombian universities. In addition to these key studies, a broader review of peer-reviewed literature is carried out, using academic databases like Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus, PakistanJournals.net, with search terms including “inclusive higher education,” “disability and university,” “UDL higher education,” “faculty attitudes disability,” “HEC disability policy Pakistan.” Empirical findings were contextualised in global normative framework by including international policy documents, [CRPD \(2006\)](#), [UNESCO Guidelines for Inclusion \(2005\)](#), and [Salamanca Statement \(1994\)](#).

Analytical Framework

The synthesis is organised around a thematic analytical structure with three broad domains: (1) challenges for inclusive university transformation (physical, attitudinal, pedagogical and policy); (2) opportunities for advancing the inclusion (policy infrastructure, faculty readiness, UDL and assistive technology); and (3), way forward leading to a theoretically grounded Five-Pillar Model for institutional transformation. The analysis is based on the Index for Inclusion

by Booth and Ainscow (2011), which considers policy, culture and practice simultaneously as interdependent dimensions of inclusive organisation; and on the social systems theory of the Luhmann as used by Carrillo et al. (2025) in which inclusion must be internalised into the communicative codes of institution in order to be sustainable rather than a surface compliance obligation.

Positionality, Scope & Limitations

This paper is set within a rights-based and social model of disability framework which locates the barriers to participation within the social, institutional and physical environments that are not conducive to human diversity, rather than in person with disability. Thus, epistemological stance guides the interpretation of empirical data across the review, prioritizing structural and systemic explanations over individual-deficit ones. Geographically, it is on the countries where there is strong empirical work and Pakistan and Colombia. Two countries are higher education systems from the developing world with a challenge of balancing progressive disability policy with institutional capacity. The understanding gained from these contexts is based on relative evidence around the world, but results do not necessarily apply to systems of higher education which are more resource rich and have longer traditions of inclusive education in high income countries. An important constraint of the review is that it is based on a limited number of anchor studies. This would strengthen empirical support for the Five-Pillar Model proposed here in future research, where primary data is collected through mixed-methods designs, such as large-scale surveys, in-depth interviews with students, faculty and analysis of institutional documents.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Way Forward: Five-Pillar Model

On the basis of evidence discussed above, this paper presents Five-Pillar Model for developing universities as model inclusive organisations for all persons with disabilities. The five pillars are: policy coherence and accountability, infrastructure & technology, inclusive pedagogy and faculty development, organisational culture and attitude transformation and student voice and empowerment. The pillars are not sequential but mutually reinforcing in the systems-change framework.

Pillar 1: Accountability & Policy Coherence

A robust, coherent, and enforceable policy framework is basic requirement for the university's transformation to be inclusive. Manzoor et al. (2024) suggested formulation of well-articulated policies through consultative processes with students, institutions and other stakeholders. Beyond the design of inclusive policies, the key missing element is accountability. In this drive, the universities should be required to publicly report on their progress in implementing the inclusive policies. HEC and similar bodies should conduct regular institutional audits against specific inclusion benchmarks. The HEC 2021 policy mandates the formation of accessibility committees with clear terms of reference, reporting lines and institutional authority to ensure compliance.

Pillar 2: Infrastructure & Accessible Technology

The investment in accessible physical infrastructure and assistive technology is a necessary, though not sufficient—condition for inclusive universities. The government and institutional budgets should include dedicated allocations for disability-responsive infrastructure, covering ramps, lifts, accessible restrooms, sensory-friendly spaces, library and laboratory accessibility. Systematic provision of assistive technologies, such as screen readers, captioning services, sign language interpretation and accessible digital platforms is thus equally important. The higher educational institutions need to carry out periodic accessibility audits and create Time Plans to improve accessibility. The use of universal design for learning in curriculum and assessment design will lessen the need for individual accommodation & make learning experiences more accessible.

Pillar 3: Inclusive Pedagogy & Faculty Development

The most significant vehicle that universities have for creating the inclusive transformation or finding alternative motivation strategies that boost participation is sustained, high-quality and contextually relevant faculty professional development (Ullah, Iqbal, & Kaleem, 2025). Based on the findings of Zaheer and Farooq (2024) on the faculty desire for training, the continuous professional development programs must be developed at the university level, incorporating inclusivity pedagogy, implementation of the universal design for learning, adapting curricula, designing alternative assessment, using AT in teaching & disability awareness. It is noteworthy that Carrillo et al. (2025) suggested that teacher training in inclusion should be integrated with initial teacher education programs and not specifically provided during in-service training. Inclusive practices are significantly stronger in faculty with more than five years of experience and those who have had experience teaching students with the disabilities, indicating that the experiential learning (informal and structured field experiences with the disability inclusion) should complement formal learning (Zaheer & Farooq, 2024). Mentoring between experienced and newer inclusive educators can facilitate the transmission of values and skills for inclusive practice.

Pillar 4: Organizational Culture & Attitude Transformation

The institutional culture must change to ensure a transformative, inclusive change that impacts lasting change. It is shared values, norms and assumptions that shape the way an organization functions and who is deemed to be "in" or "out" of organization's community. Carrillo et al. (2025) discuss theory of social systems, developed by Luhmann, to assert that inclusion needs to be a part of communicative codes of university, not an external requirement to be fulfilled to secure compliance. The cultural change must be demonstrated and supported by leaders at the top and middle levels of the University, communicated across University, and accepted as a key part of experience for all students—from bottom to top of achievement. Awareness-raising campaigns, disability champions in academic departments, peer mentoring programmes for students with disabilities, inclusive hiring for staff with disabilities all back to cultural ecology where inclusion is lived, not proclaimed. Manzoor et al. (2024) found that the disability-related awareness seminars are rare in Pakistani universities ($M = 2.37$), offering an area for cultural investment.

Pillar 5: Student Voice & Empowerment

Real inclusion is impossible without active participation of students with disabilities as agents of their own educational experience and contributors to institutional transformation. Students with disabilities have unique and valuable experiential knowledge of accessibility barriers and keys to successful inclusion that can inform policy development and practice improvement. [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) advocated creating friendly learning environments through collaboration among students, faculty, and stakeholders, as the success of inclusive policies depends on the involvement of all stakeholders. University disability resource centres should be established not simply as service providers but as spaces where disabled students can organise, lobby, and participate in governance of their institutions. [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) found that students with disabilities largely endorsed equitable educational rights ($M = 2.81$, with 54% agreeing & 19% strongly agreeing), which need to be complemented by active mechanisms which rights can be exercised & where violated, remedied. There are tools for joining student voice into university governance like student grievance processes on the disability-related discrimination, regular surveys of students' experiences related to inclusion, student representation on committees for accessibility.

DISCUSSION

The evidence reviewed in this paper collectively shows that, even if the aspiration to build universities as inclusive organisations for all the persons with disabilities that is increasingly institutionalised in policy, its realisation on the ground remains profoundly incomplete. This is a pattern repeated in many developing country higher education systems. In Pakistani context, as illuminated by [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#), the progressive policy development is not matched by institutional capacity, financial resources & cultural readiness to make inclusion a lived reality for students with disabilities. The Colombian context studied by [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#) confirms that important gaps remain between faculty attitudes and real inclusive practice, even in contexts with longer traditions of inclusive policies as key part of experience for all the students from bottom to top of achievement. A key insight from this synthesis is the centrality of the attitude-knowledge-practice nexus. Positive attitudes toward inclusion are necessary but not sufficient for inclusive transformation. ([Ullah, Ullah, & Iqbal, 2025](#)). Faculty who are truly committed to inclusion, but who lack the knowledge, skills, and institutional support to make commitment reality, become well-meaning agents of inadvertent exclusion.

Therefore, professional development that covers all three dimensions, building knowledge as well as attitude while at the same time developing practical skills—is essential. The significant association observed by [Carrillo et al. \(2025\)](#) between the training attendance and diversity-inclusive practices, closely followed by similar finding of [Zaheer and Farooq \(2024\)](#), provides strong empirical support for investing in the structured, sustained and the skills-based faculty development. The disciplinary aspect of inclusive practice also requires the ongoing attention. Thus, both attitudes and practices related to inclusion were highly influenced by the field of knowledge. Faculty from social sciences and humanities had more inclusive orientations than faculty from engineering and natural sciences ([Carrillo et al., 2025; Shah, Noor, & Ullah, 2025](#)).

Likewise, this disciplinary variation has important implications for the design of professional development.

Generic inclusion training may not be enough. Discipline-specific workshops that help faculty in STEM and business fields translate inclusive principles into the specific contexts of their teaching may be needed to bridge the disciplinary divide. Finally, the analysis carried out in this paper reinforces that the inclusive university transformation is not a project with an end date, but a continuous, iterative process of institutional learning and improvement that are also required for realizing desired outcomes. It examines the structural, attitudinal and institutional barriers to overcome; it identifies the opportunities in terms of the available sets of research and theoretical frameworks; and it proposes a way forward, derived from theory and practice. The evaluation frameworks suggested by [Manzoor et al. \(2024\)](#) including regular evaluative assessments, surveys and feedback from students and faculty are consistent with philosophy of quality assurance that effective organizations adopt for all their strategic priorities. Inclusion must be embedded in institutional effectiveness frameworks, accreditation criteria, along with the annual reporting processes to remain on the organizational radar, a prerequisite for the real transformation.

CONCLUSION

The University is facing a critical period with regard to disability inclusion. The international normative framework, stemming from the CRPD, and elaborated upon the basis of UNESCO guidelines and national policies in Pakistan to Colombia, has established the need for inclusive higher education beyond doubt. What is left is the more difficult institutional transformation work, altering culture, preparing curricula, edifice new faculty, building new infrastructure and elevating students' voices. This paper has posited that this shift is not an impossibility nor an anachronism, but rather necessary, not just for students with disabilities, but for all students as well. Five-Pillar Model developed here, Policy Coherence and Accountability, Infrastructure & accessible technology, inclusive pedagogy and faculty development, organizational culture transformation and student voice and empowerment, is a complete as well as evidence-based framework for all universities who want to be real inclusive organizations for all persons with disabilities.

All pillars are interconnected. Improvements in one dimension, create the conditions in the others. But ignore any pillar and it will be a systemic vulnerability that undermines the entire. Specifically, the Policy background for Pakistan has been set by the HEC 2021 policy. The first step is to create the infrastructure to implement this policy – the disability resource centers, the training programmes, the monitoring systems and cultural change processes – otherwise this policy will be an aspiration not an achievement. The five-pillar change model suggested the outcomes about involving the policy, infrastructure, pedagogy, culture and accountability. The message for global higher education community is the same: Inclusion should not be a mere technical problem that can be solved by a policy instrument; it is social change that can only be created with commitment, investment & constant focus on voices and experiences of disabled people.

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