

Reactive Inclusion: School Infrastructure Barriers and Accessibility for Learners with Cerebral Palsy in a Nigerian Private School: A Mixed-Methods Case Study

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Abstract: Although Nigeria's Prohibition of the Discrimination against persons with Disabilities Act (2018) requires accessible school infrastructure, a substantial gap often lies between legal pronouncements and physical implementation especially in the private school sector. This research explored how physical infrastructure acts to enable or impede the educational inclusion of learners with Cerebral Palsy (CP) in a purposively sampled private international school in Ibadan, Nigeria. Utilizing a pragmatic mixed methods case study research design, data was collected using a closed Likert-scale questionnaire to parents (n=12) of learners with CP and semi-structured interviews with school personnel (n=10) including administrators, teachers and other support staff. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse quantitative data whereas reflexivity themes guided analysis of qualitative data. The research revealed a mean parental rating of accessibility to be 3.27 on a scale of 5.00, concealing a polarized infrastructure that juxtaposes fairly compliant new building sections with exclusionary older structures. The infrastructure domain rated least favourably included access facilities and handrails (Mean=3.00) and the accessibility of sanitation facilities (Mean=3.08). Major themes generated from the qualitative data analysis include the prevalence of architectural barriers in terms of vertical access, the organizational propensity for reliance on human assistance ('the helper' syndrome), disjunctures between stated policies and actual practices and the Emotional Labour that staff incur. We theorise these trends to represent 'Reactive Inclusion' - a condition where excellent interpersonal support serves to mask and, in effect, 'stand-in' for the failure of physical infrastructure. Our results suggest policy implications for school leaders, policy makers and architectural professionals aimed at fostering genuine inclusion of learners with physical disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Cerebral Palsy, School Infrastructure, Accessibility, Nigeria, Universal Design for Learning, Social Model of Disability.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4; United Nations, 2015) affirms the right to inclusive, equitable, and quality education, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD; United Nations, 2006) explicitly recognises this right for persons with disabilities. Nevertheless, physical environments remain a stubborn impediment to inclusive education throughout sub-Saharan Africa. For learners with Cerebral Palsy (CP) - the leading motor disability in children (Novak et al., 2020) - the built environment is more than a classroom backdrop: it shapes access, or blocks it entirely.

Nigeria's Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (2018) gave public buildings,

including schools, a five-year window to achieve accessibility compliance; this expired in January 2024. But evidence suggests a stark gap exists between the legislation's promise and on-the-ground reality (Bamisaye et al., 2024; Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020), especially in the private sector, where Schools often operate with significant autonomy, lack strong regulatory oversight, and are located in converted houses not intended for use as school buildings (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019).

Most of the research conducted on inclusive education in Nigeria centres on teachers' attitudes towards disability, teachers' professional development, curriculum adaptation and policy in public schools (Ajuwon, 2012; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). In spite of this existing body of work, the physical experiences of children with CP in the private school

sector have remained critically under-researched. To address this void, we undertake a convergent parallel mixed-methods case study in Lead City International School, an inclusive private institution in Ibadan, Nigeria.

The study uses the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 2013) as its conceptual foundation to consider inaccessible infrastructure as institutional discrimination, and it uses Universal Design for Learning (UDL; CAST, 2024) as an operational framework for assessment of physical provision. This article will report findings on;

- The level of physical accessibility in key areas of the school;
- The lived experiences of learners with CP (as narrated by parents, teachers and school leaders) navigating their daily routes;
- The factors and facilitators influencing the children's full participation in activities; and
- The functioning of what we term 'Reactive Inclusion' a context in which the best intentions of people compensate for, yet conceal, structural barriers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Cerebral Palsy and the Educational Environment*

Cerebral palsy CP refers to a group of permanent, non-progressive neurological developmental disorders of movement and posture, due to damage or malformation in the brain at an early stage (Rosenbaum et al., 2007). With the global incidence of 2–3 per 1000 live birth, an estimated 17 million people live with CP worldwide, CP is the most prevalent physical disability in childhood (Novak et al., 2020). Despite of clinical characteristics ranging widely including spasticity, dyskinesia, muscle weakness, loss of balance and fine motor skills, CP symptoms profoundly influence how learner interacts with their school physical environment.

The built environment is no passive background but rather the active mediator through which learner with CP gains access to learning.

Rather than other children with learning and sensory disability whose learning is hampered mostly by Pedagogy; child with CP is the one with Architectural barrier as major issue of learning process. A stairway, a narrow walkway, or toilets without grab rail limit entire segments of the school's curriculum, such as not to let child with disability participate fully in any area of learning (Maulana, 2023). Such architecture not only cause discomfort but also create exclusion: determining which subjects are teachable and study-able, in which common spaces the child can participate or the level to which the body can sustain basic human need such as elimination with basic sense of dignity. A ground breaking study by Barrett et al. (2019) done for World Bank highlighted that the physical building of the school is able to influence up to 16% of student achievement in terms of progress.

This highlights the role of the classroom environment as an instructional actor-which, inspired by the Italian Reggio Emilia pedagogy movement is often referred to by school architecture theorists as the 'third teacher' (Nicholson, 2005). In the context of learners with CP, this framework has grave implications: for in a physical environment that is actively inhospitable to them, learners are actively instructed in their marginal position within the institution.

➤ *The Social Model of Disability and Inclusive Infrastructure*

An alternative paradigm, the Social Model of Disability, originally created through disability studies academic work and later re-interpreted and popularised by Oliver (2013), shifts understanding of disability away from individual deficit and towards societal structures: a wheelchair user, this model suggests, is not disabled because they cannot walk, but by the existence of stairs, wide doors, and unavailable accessible restrooms. In this view, disabled individuals are not suffering tragedies or misfortunes but experiencing failures of social construction. When such systems, such as the structure of the built school environment are analyzed through a Social Model lens, a building which has no lifts becomes not an unlucky inconvenience but an act of structural discrimination (Inclusion London, 2025).

An accessible lab, library, or recreational facility, for instance, where there is no ramp or accessible entrance implicitly communicates the learner who relies on wheels as existing on the peripheries of a school's social and academic life. This implicitly enacted form of discrimination can be particularly pervasive because it requires no direct ill-will. Developed from a Social Model framework is the UD for L model (Universal Design for Learning), created by CAST (2024). The principles of UD for L seeks to make any environment as usable by the widest possible range of users as is feasible. The UD for L framework also translates to the physical construction of schools and its 'micro-architecture'; this could involve the installation of levers for doors, height-adjustable furniture and classrooms, non-slip surfaces, and wide accessible walkways and routing within the building (Roski et al., 2021). Environments built according to the UD for L principle support learners' autonomy and agency, thereby promoting student autonomy and reducing reliance on supports and the involvement of educators (2021).

➤ *Inclusive Education in the Nigerian Context*

There is indeed substance in the Nigerian framework of inclusive education. The National Policy on Inclusive Education from the Federal Ministry of Education (2016) espouses mainstreaming of inclusive education; and the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2018) sets an obligation to undertake reasonable adjustments in all public buildings (including schools). Section 6 of the Act stipulated a transitional period of five years (which have expired) within which facilities such as ramps, elevators and accessible toilets were to be installed in schools.

Notwithstanding, the body of evidence consistently report a significant implementation gap.

Studies have shown that teachers' knowledge of the 2018 Disability Act, however extensive, does not guarantee institutional implementation due to a host of factors, including inadequate financing, weak enforcement mechanisms and absence of detailed technical guidelines (Bamisaye et al. 2024). A principal barrier to accommodation of children with physical disabilities in Nigerian schools has been inadequate infrastructure, which many schools are yet to provide (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2020). As at late 2023, only twenty of Nigeria's 36 states had commenced implementation of the Act (Adewumi & Mosito, 2019).

Private schools represent a special category of challenges; many are located in residential buildings with tight entry-ways, multi-storey facilities without lifts, and step entrances (Barrett et al. 2019). Many of these privately run schools which profess to offer 'quality' education may be more lenient to the requirements of the Disability Act compared to public schools. As observed by UNICEF (2020), many children with disabilities refrain from drinking water while in Nigerian schools for fear of not being able to access the toilet – a clear indication of direct impact on health.

Often times, there is a common trend observed in the literature, which Ajuwon (2012) describes as the 'helper syndrome'. It is the coping mechanism whereby the failure to adapt the infrastructure to the learners' needs is compensated through reliance on peers and assistance provided by school staff. Despite reflecting communality of care, this practice fosters a culture of charity towards disabled children and does not empower children to be independent learners; it also absolves institutions from their responsibility to create and provide an accessible environment.

Many inclusive education scholars have cautioned against confusing social warmth and care for the disabled with the creation of structures that enable participation of all students in all aspects of schooling (Florian, 2014; Slee, 2018).

III. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design and Philosophical Orientation*

This is a convergent parallel mixed-methods case study design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) which is underpinned by a pragmatic philosophical position (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Pragmatism places the research question above methodological dogma allowing for the convergence of quantitative and qualitative methods in instances where one can provide what the other cannot. The quantitative element in this study captures the width of the perceptions of accessibility at the campus site from parents' perspectives, whilst the qualitative elements capture the richness of individual lived experiences, expert observations and critiques of the organisation.

A single-site case study design was chosen as the overall design as the nature of the questions is fundamentally based on asking 'how' and 'why', how the existing infrastructure limits the educational experiences of students with CP and why barriers persist in light of the legislation.

The use of a case study design is useful in generating 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of a bounded educational case, which in turn yields transferability to other similar organisations.

➤ *Research Site and Participant Selection*

Purposive sampling (Etikan et al. 2016) was used to select one private school, the Lead City International School located in Ibadan, Oyo State Nigeria, due to the school having in its roll, students with physical impairments and it belonging to the private sector which to a lesser degree had not been adequately addressed in research in inclusive education. The school site included modern buildings and some repurposed older homes offering diverse infrastructural differences to analyse. 12 parents/ guardians whose child/ren has(ve) Cerebral Palsy were targeted to complete the questionnaire; eligibility to take part in the study requires the child having a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy and having attended Lead City for a period of at least one academic year. Ten staff members in leadership roles, a headteacher, a SENCO, teachers, nursing staff and security men/women were targetted to have a semi structured interview.

➤ *Data Collection Instruments*

There were twenty-five items divided into three subscales in the parent questionnaire. Those included the physical environment accessibility (10 items), the learning environment and professional staff support (10 items), and the overall perception of the accessibility and inclusiveness (5 items). All items used a 5-point Likert scale with ranges from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The instrument was developed from various established accessibility models, such as, Inclusive School Environment and Accessibility Checklist of UNESCO (2017), Accessibility and Inclusion Index from European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2015), and World Report on Disability of World Health Organization (2011).

For teachers and administrators, a semi-structured interview protocol including six thematic sections of which covered; background and professional history; personal observation and description on the physical infrastructure and facilities for accessibility; everyday movement and accessibility experience by the children with CP in the school setting; particular barrier(s) or facility that promoted inclusion or the opposite; perception and awareness on existing policies related to access to inclusive environment; and recommendations and suggestions to improve accessibility was used. The language for interviewing both groups was English. Interviews were tape recorded after having received prior consent from the participants and transcribed verbatim.

➤ *Data Analysis*

Descriptive Statistics and Individual Ratings
Descriptive statistics, in the form of means and standard deviations, were calculated for individual items on the parent questionnaire and the various clusters of these items, using Microsoft Excel. The highest and lowest scoring areas for perceived provision of accessibility and the nature of

perceived provision overall was therefore established. Reflexive Thematic Analysis Qualitative data obtained from interview transcripts was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Reflexive thematic analysis views themes not as a discrete set of something to be discovered within data, but as something to be constructed actively by the researcher through engaging with the data.

Six stages of thematic analysis were undertaken as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006); i) Familiarisation with the data ii) Generation of initial codes iii) Search for themes iv) Review of themes v) Definition and naming of themes vi) Production of report. Themes were induced from participants own accounts, and were considered in relationship to the conceptual framework. Triangulation The qualitative and quantitative findings were then combined and discussed at the interpretative stage to offer additional perspectives and support for patterns identified across methods or to offer an explanation for findings in one method based on evidence from the other.

➤ Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical approval from the University of Lincoln Research Ethics Committee (Reference: EDM9781). All parents gave informed written consent before taking part, and they were also given a 21-day period during which they could withdraw their data from the study post-submission. Confidentiality was assured in several ways: In this study, the participating parents are presented only in demographic terms, while participants working with these children have been anonymized and given code names reflecting their roles (T1-T4 were teachers; A1-A10 were administrators).

All the data was held in accordance with GDPR regulations and University of Lincoln policy. Sensitive data concerning disability required special attention, and we ensured that there was no possibility of any of the children could be identified from their stories.

IV. RESULTS

➤ Participant Characteristics

Twelve parents completed the survey; the majority was female ($n = 8$, 67%) between the ages of 30-49 years old ($n = 10$, 83%) who had had a child with CP attend school for 1-6 years ($n=9$, 75%). The school had students from the age of 5-19 with most of the participants ($n=7$, 58%) having children aged 10-14 years old. Ten school staff completed the survey comprising: the headteacher, SENCO, two class teachers, two nurses, a facilities officer, a boarding school manager and two security officers; the participants had between two to 15 years at the school.

➤ Quantitative Findings: Accessibility Ratings by Domain

- Descriptive statistics of the 25 questionnaire items by domain Overall Mean of Provision-related items: 3.27(SD=.45) The perceived level of provision among the students was moderate and it is still below the agreed level(M4.00). Table 1.

Descriptive statistic of all 25 items by domain Table 1 shows the descriptives for the overall 25 questionnaire items across the four domain.

The overall mean accessibility was 3.27(SD=0.45).

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Parent-Rated Accessibility by Domain (N = 12)

Domain	Items (n)	M	SD	Min	Max
Main entrance accessibility	1	3.25	1.29	1	5
Pathways: smooth and obstacle-free	1	3.08	1.31	1	5
Classroom accessibility	1	3.33	1.07	1	5
Ramps and handrails	1	3.00	1.28	1	5
Sanitation facilities	1	3.08	1.31	1	5
Playground and outdoor spaces	1	3.25	1.14	1	5
Corridors and stairways	1	3.17	1.19	1	5
School furniture suitability	1	3.33	0.98	1	5
Transport and mobility assistance	1	3.42	1.16	1	5
Overall physical structure	1	3.25	1.06	1	5
Teacher empathy and understanding	1	3.67	0.89	2	5
Assistive learning tools	1	3.42	1.00	2	5
Adequacy of support in class	1	3.58	0.90	2	5
Adaptation of teaching methods	1	3.50	0.90	2	5
Parental involvement in decisions	1	3.17	1.03	1	5
Supportive school attitude	1	3.58	0.90	2	5
Maintenance of accessibility features	1	3.50	0.90	2	5
Promotion of equality and inclusion	1	3.50	0.90	2	5
Full participation in activities	1	3.58	0.90	2	5
Positive peer interactions	1	3.92	0.67	3	5
Overall satisfaction with accessibility	1	3.25	1.06	1	5
Adequate facilities for disabilities	1	3.08	1.16	1	5

Accessibility challenges affecting performance	1	3.42	0.90	2	5
Leadership proactivity on accessibility	1	3.33	0.98	1	5
Would recommend school to others	1	3.50	0.90	2	5

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree. Means ≥ 4.00 Indicate Agreement; ≥ 3.50 Indicate Moderate Agreement.

The item ranked highest was positive interactions with peers (M=3.92, SD=.67), then empathy of teachers (M=3.67, SD=.89), and the amount of class support available to their children (M=3.58, SD=.90). Conversely, the least liked items were access to ramps/handrails (M=3.00, SD=1.28), cleanliness of sanitation areas (M=3.08, SD=1.31), and ease of navigating hallways and other paths (M=3.08, SD=1.31). High SD for the items of the built environment (.98 to 1.31 as opposed to .67 to 1.03) suggest differences in parent experiences with the built environment which vary in different parts of campus.

➤ Qualitative Findings: Thematic Analysis

The RECA the conducted with the 10 staff interviews generated four main themes:

- Fragmented Infrastructure and vertical barriers to access.
- Adaptable and flexible practices and the 'human bridge'.
- Policy/practice divergence. 4. Emotional work, dignity and ethical issues.

• Theme 1: Fragmented Infrastructure and Vertical Access Barriers

Participants consistently described a campus characterised by stark infrastructural contrast modern wings built to compliance standards coexisting with older, converted residential buildings that present substantial barriers to independent mobility. The school principal offered a candid assessment:

The new hostel and Key Stage 3 wing those are 100% compliant. But the administration block and some of the older classroom buildings... they're a struggle. If I had to rate us overall, I would say a 6 out of 10.

Vertical movement was identified as the most pervasive and consequential barrier. The SENCO stated:

Stairs are the greatest enemy. The dining hall is three steps up. The science labs are on the second floor of an older block. For a student in a wheelchair or with a walking frame, those three steps might as well be a wall.

These observations were corroborated by the facilities officer (A4), who noted that the structural constraints of the older buildings load-bearing walls, narrow stairwells, and restricted floor plans make retrofitting costly and technically complex, exceeding what the school's current capital budget accommodates.

• Theme 2: Adaptive Practices and the 'Human Bridge'

Due to the lack of permanent physical access, practitioners devised various alternative approaches that enabled student access. These ranged from a "buddy system", to moving whole class lessons on to the ground floor and to

utilising security and nursing staff for mobility support. The SENCO explained:

We assign buddy systems we arrange desks to leave wide lanes for walkers. And if a workshop is scheduled on the second floor, we'll move the whole session to the ground floor so everyone can participate.

However, participants themselves were alert to the limitations and ethical implications of these adaptations. A security officer (A10) captured the experience with striking directness:

They call us on the phone: 'Security, please help a student to Block B.' That is the adjustment. They use us as human lifts.

The SENCO (T2) articulated the fundamental tension:

Being carried up stairs is not dignified. Accessibility is not just about concrete it's about dignity.

A nursing staff member (A6) further reported the health consequences of human-dependent access to sanitation:

Students with CP usually 'hold it' until they get back to the hostel. Leading to urinary tract infections. It is a serious health issue as a result of infrastructure.

• Theme 3: Policy–Practice Disjunctions

Even when staff knew of the national and international principles on inclusive education they agreed lack of policy enforcement, a lack of technical input and the amount of resources were prohibitive barriers to inclusion. The Head Teacher explained:

We follow British compliance standards because we are an international school. The Nigerian National Policy is there, but there is weakness in local enforcement.

A classroom teacher (T2) echoed this concern:

The government talks about it, but we do not see much enforcement or guidance on infrastructure standards.

The facilities officer (A9) identified a specific absence of technical guidance on Universal Design:

Government policy is not comprehensive enough on the specifics of universal design.

The principal acknowledged the financial dimension of compliance:

Retrofitting old buildings is more expensive than building new ones. We need incentives grants, tax reliefs to make this happen across Nigerian schools.

• **Theme 4: Emotional Labour, Dignity, and Ethical Tensions**

A common theme was that all types of staff experienced significant emotional burdens from the interaction of structural deficits and child welfare concerns. Nursing staff A6 shared a particularly sharp example:

We had a student who wet themselves in class because they couldn't reach the accessible toilets fast enough. It was a humiliating experience for the child.

Emergency scenarios presented additional ethical tensions. A classroom teacher (T3) recounted:

During a fire drill, two male teachers had to carry him down the stairs. It was scary for him. It identified that our safety protocols depend on physical strength, not accessible infrastructure.

Despite these challenges, participants conveyed strong personal commitment. A boarding staff member (A5) articulated an aspirational vision for the institution:

We are an inclusive school in heart and mind. We are working hard to make the buildings reflect that spirit.

➤ **Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

Table 2 presents the integrated findings across both data strands, demonstrating convergence and complementarity between parent-rated scores and staff-reported observations.

Table 2 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings by Thematic Domain

Accessibility Domain	Parent Survey Mean	Qualitative Insight	Integrated Interpretation
Ramps and Handrails	3.00 (lowest)	"Stairs are the greatest enemy... the dining hall is three steps up." (SENCO)	Vertical movement is the primary barrier; compliance is confined to newer campus zones.
Sanitation Facilities	3.08	"Students go back to the hostel... UTIs are a health issue." (Nursing Staff)	Physical distance to accessible facilities forces class absences and poses direct health risks.
Smooth Pathways	3.08	"The recreational area is a problem the terrain is uneven and the rainy season makes it worse." (Principal)	Outdoor accessibility is seasonal and terrain-dependent, restricting physical education engagement.
Supportive School Attitude	3.58	"We are an inclusive school in heart and mind." (Boarding Staff)	High staff commitment partially offsets structural deficiencies but cannot substitute for design.
Positive Peer Interactions	3.92 (highest)	"Buddy systems... friends hold the bag so they can focus on balance." (SENCO)	Peers serve as 'human bridges,' masking infrastructural failure through social capital.

V. DISCUSSION

➤ **The Phenomenon of Reactive Inclusion**

The main conclusion from this study is that Lead City International School is in a condition we conceptualize as 'Reactive Inclusion'. That is to say that where, as at Lead City, a high level of personal goodwill and responsive individual actions support a child with CP to participate, that participation continues to be dependent upon the presence of a individual supporter and not woven into the structure of the built environment. And the distinction is not of purely academic importance.

Where inclusion requires the action of one particular teacher willing to take their class downstairs or the readiness of a security guard willing to be a 'human lift', it is both inherently unstable, undignified and unsupportable.

That is why this analysis build upon existing academic discussions. Florian (2014) has suggested that inclusive provision is unable to continue indefinitely on the basis of individual teachers' creativity without further system-level infrastructure. Slee (2018) cautions that if inclusion becomes the personal 'added value' of an educator rather than an institutional imperative, the risk of burn out, variability and

outright exclusion rise significantly. The results reported here offers a real-life, richly contextualized account of these dynamics within the private Nigerian schooling context.

➤ **Social Capital as a Concealment Mechanism**

The best-performing item from the parent questionnaire-positive peer interactions (M = 3.92)-is evidence of an important but theoretically under-explored difficulty in assessing inclusive education. High social inclusion can produce a 'false positive' of full inclusion and ease the pressure on the institution to fix structural exclusions. As Thomas (2007) observed, being carried or helped by a peers, whatever the sociability of the motivation for doing so, may erode dignity. This finding from the current qualitative data bears out such a concern: peer assistance schemes, or 'buddy' systems, cover over the presence of unusable stair lifts and deficient toilets rather than resolving the issue.

This finding is one of particular interest to research methodology: in relying solely on parental satisfaction with the inclusive school but failing to check this against staff reports and directly observe students' interactions with their learning environment, we will invariably underestimate the extent of structural exclusion in any inclusive school,

precisely as a result of the comfort and warmth of student interactions that covers over the hostility of their material world.

➤ *Dual-Track Accessibility and Infrastructural Inequality*

The data confirm what we call the ‘dual-track accessibility’: state-of-the-art, purpose-built buildings, already compliant with or getting close to the requirements, can coexist within the same site as outdated, re-purposed domestic houses that systematically limit. The actual everyday accessibility of a particular learner depends not on what the school collectively provides, but on which buildings in their weekly schedule are to be found - an infrastructure of disadvantage operating unseen within the walls of a single organisation. This relates to the argument of Barrett et al. (2019) that the effects of school buildings on learning are mediated by the accumulation of micro-environmental features. In the context of children with CP, this daily accumulation of obstacles and detours – finding oneself with a walking frame in front of a step, waiting for a security guard to facilitate a step, or bypassing the unusable science laboratory – represent an example of what literature refers to as ‘micro-exclusion’ (Ainscow, 2020): unacknowledged, yet debilitating, constraints on access.

➤ *The 'Helper Syndrome' and the Ethics of Assistance*

However, widespread human assistance, replacing accessibility-by-design, poses significant ethical issues. Under the social model of disability (Oliver, 2013), assistance that replaces structural accessibility not individualised support functions as an organisational withdrawal, placing the body of the assistance provider rather than the design of the facility at the locus of accessibility; that is, personalising what is an institutional obligation. Apart from ethical concerns, the practical issues arising from the necessity of human assistance for some people with CP are apparent. When this reliance is considered in the context of potential risks (such as evacuation during a fire, as narrated by the participant who witnessed a fire drill during which a fellow student with CP was lifted up and carried down the stairs; Participant T3), it becomes obvious that the absence of assistive mobility systems requiring the strength and availability of staff represents a failure of safety in itself.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ *Conclusions*

This work is conclusive that the approach of Lead City International School (and thus of many similar schools across private educational settings in Nigeria) successfully implements social inclusion at the expense of severe social exclusion. That the transitional phase for the Disability Act has elapsed in January 2024 does not automatically stimulate systemic structural change, within this setting at least. The “moderate” overall Accessibility score of the school (M=3.27) masks a schizophrenic environment whereby pupils with CP vacillate from nearly being accommodated to being entirely excluded on a daily basis, within the confines of a school.

Reactive Inclusion delineates the critical difference between inclusion as a stated aim, philosophy or value system, as against Inclusion in terms of infrastructure. Training, ethos, or indeed individual determination can produce the former; only significant, systematic investment of public money can create the latter. Unless and until infrastructure is adapted, in line with principles of Universal Design, we will only succeed in adding up micro-exclusions, with the end-product of limitations on subject choices and restriction of pupils with CP’s dignity and capacity to be fully a part of school life.

➤ *Recommendations*

Recommendations For school administrators: Legacy buildings need a phased and prioritized program of strategic retrofit, with a focus on key academic and social areas, such as science laboratories, libraries, refectories, and emergency exit paths. New and renovated facilities need to incorporate UDL-enabled micro-architectural components as standard building features - including levered door handles, adjustable desks and chairs, non-slip floors, and smooth traffic flows - as non-negotiable elements, not add-ons. The human support system requires formalisation via defined protocols, specific training, and an institutional commitment to learner respect, consent, and safety. For policy makers and regulatory bodies: Post-2024 compliance gaps need a response to regular inspections of private facilities and punitive sanctions for violations.

Specific technical guides must be developed that are specific to the Nigerian context, translating the intent of the 2018 Disability Act into practical building standards relevant to school architects, facility managers and contractors. A package of financial incentives such as infrastructure grants, interest-free or concessionary loans, and tax concessions needs to be introduced, helping schools offset the significant cost of retrofit work on legacy structures. For researchers: Longitudinal studies need to track the mental, social, and developmental impact on learners with CP over time of repeated reliance on human assistance. There should be comparative studies conducted across public schools, and at different tiers of private schools, to understand the different systemic obstacles and what good practice can be transferred.

Research is also needed to develop and test infrastructure auditing tools designed to meet the specific conditions of building stock in Nigeria and useful for post-2024 auditing.

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