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Intersectionality and Teacher Training in Nigeria: Reconceptualizing the ADIMA Framework for Inclusive Classrooms

*Interseccionalidad y formación docente en Nigeria: Reconceptualización del marco ADIMA
para aulas inclusivas*

*Asirúajirawaa sulu'u naatawaa akuwa'ipaa otta ekirajawaa na ekirajüshiikana chayaa Nigeria:
wanajaain tü püüchikak ADIMA süpüla ekirajawaa ewiichikana*

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Abstract

This conceptual paper situates the intersecting realities of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability within Nigeria's educational landscape. Drawing on Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality and ADIMA frameworks, this paper foregrounds how colonial legacies have entrenched systemic barriers that exclude students with disabilities. These frameworks critically examine the preservice teacher training program in Nigeria, arguing that effective special education in Nigeria must account for the compounding effects of cultural stigma, religious misrepresentation, poverty, and gender inequality on students with disabilities. By repositioning ADIMA, this conceptual paper proposes actionable strategies to advance equity, representation, and inclusion in Nigerian special education classrooms.

Keywords: ADIMA framework, intersectionality, Nigeria, special education.

Resumen

Este artículo de carácter conceptual sitúa las realidades interseccionales de la etnicidad, el género, el estatus socioeconómico y la discapacidad en el panorama educativo de Nigeria. Con base en los marcos de la interseccionalidad de Crenshaw (1989) y del ADIMA, este artículo pone en primer plano cómo los legados coloniales han afianzado barreras sistémicas que excluyen a los estudiantes con discapacidad. Estos marcos examinan críticamente el programa de formación inicial docente en Nigeria y sostienen que la educación especial eficaz en este país debe dar cuenta de los efectos acumulativos del estigma cultural, la representación religiosa distorsionada, la pobreza y la desigualdad de género sobre los estudiantes con discapacidad. Mediante la reposición del marco ADIMA, este artículo conceptual propone estrategias viables para avanzar hacia la equidad, la representación y la inclusión en las aulas de educación especial nigerianas.

Palabras clave: marco ADIMA, interseccionalidad, Nigeria, educación especial.

Jùkùjia palitpùtchiru'u

Sulu'u tū ashajajkat pùtchi yaa, waashajain sūnain tū asirúajirawaa sulu'u naatawaa akuwa'ipaa sa'aka jukuwa'ipa wayuu, naatawaa jiwase, korolo mmaipaa otta kapùlaa e'raajaa sulu'u tū ekirajawaakat chayaa Nigeria. Sùka tū pùtchikat Crenshaw (1989) otta tū pùtchikat ADIMA, tū ashajajkat pùtchi yaa e'raajūshi jukuwa'ipa na mmaipaa chayaa alijunairu'u eekai eipajūin pùtchi katsuinsūkat sùpùla sùpùlajain na ekirajaanakana eekai kapùlaan. Tū pùtchikat e'raajashi sūnain tū jukuwa'ipa ekirajawaa na ekirajūshiikana chayaa Nigeria, otta saashajain sūnain tū ekirajawaa ma'in sulu'u naatawaa eekai anain sùpùla keraajaa pùtchi sa'aka kapùlaa saa'in wayuu, jukuwa'ipa laùlaayuukana mmaipaa, mujulaa mmaipaa otta naatawaa jiwase namūin na ekirajaanakana eekai kapùlaan. Sùka tū pùtchi ADIMA eitaasū joolu'u, tū ashajajkat pùtchi yaa e'raajashi wane jukuwa'ipa sùpùla katsuinjirawaa pùtchi, pa'anapajirawaa pùtchi otta ekirajawaa ewiichikana sulu'u naatawaa ekirajawaa chayaa Nigeria joolu'u.

Pùtchi katsuinsūkat: Pùtchi katsuinsūkat: pùtchi ADIMA, asirúajirawaa sulu'u naatawaa akuwa'ipaa, Nigeria, ekirajawaa ma'in sulu'u naatawaa.

Introduction

Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Crenshaw (1989), refers to how overlapping dimensions of individual identity, including race, gender, class, and disability, shape distinct experiences of oppression and privilege. Originally grounded in Black feminist thought, intersectionality has since become an indispensable analytical tool for identifying the compounded marginalization experienced by individuals who occupy multiple subordinated social positions (Wolbring & Nasir, 2024). When intersecting identities go unacknowledged, systemic forms of oppression are reinforced, leaving vulnerable populations without adequate support and perpetuating harm across society.

When intersectionality affects the educational experiences of students with disabilities within the Nigerian context, it creates educational inequalities across ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic lines—invariably, utilizing the ADIMA framework as a tool to address these inequities and propose inclusive strategies (Adima, 1992; Oyefeso, 2013). This conceptual paper further reconceptualizes the ADIMA framework, grounding it in cultural relevance and incorporating disability justice principles, universal design for learning (UDL), and assistive technology. Dr. Emmanuel Adima, a Nigerian Scholar foundational to the field of Special Education

in Nigeria, advocated for teacher training programs that recognized and heralded the inclusion of Nigerian students in all spaces. By creating the ADIMA framework, he intended to provide effective tools for teacher training. Given that the initial framework did not account for certain intersections and the increased use of technology, it was necessary to reconceptualize ADIMA, offering preservice teachers a broader lens and tools for more impactful practices within the Nigerian educational system. With this in perspective, it is important to elaborate on the Nigerian educational system as a context for this paper.

The Nigerian educational system presents a compelling case study for intersectional analysis, with over 200 million people distinguished by profound ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity. This impacts the Nigerian education system, reflecting deep structural inequalities that continue to marginalize students with disabilities. The intersecting forces of gender, socioeconomic status, cultural stigma, and religious belief compound these inequalities. Despite the existence of international (Salamanca Framework, 1994) and national policies (Discrimination Act, 2018) endorsing inclusive education, students with disabilities in Nigeria remain among the most educationally excluded populations in the world (UNICEF, 2024). To address these concerns, this conceptual paper reconceptualizes the ADIMA framework, offering preservice teachers a stepping stone towards inclusive education.

Nigeria's Intersectional Realities: A Historical and Contextual Overview

Colonial History and Ethnic Diversity

Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960, following approximately 98 years of colonization that fundamentally restructured Nigerian society, culture, and education (Oyěwùmí, 2005). During this period, Nigerian people were systematically dispossessed of their indigenous knowledge systems and compelled to internalize the perceived superiority of Western epistemologies. The education system established under colonial administration was built upon this foundation of cultural erasure, constructing learning environments that demanded the forfeiture of indigenous identities as a condition for access (Oyěwùmí, 2005).

Nigeria is home to more than 400 languages and 300 ethnic groups, most of which were constituent parts of larger pre-colonial kingdoms and empires before the country's amalgamation in 1914 (Ogunyemi & Bada, 2020; Chukwu & Okoji, 2024). The forced amalgamation of the Southern Protectorate, Northern Protectorate, and Lagos Colony created a complex interplay of identities, as communities navigated the tension between preserving indigenous cultures and engaging with imposed Western educational systems (Abejide, 2022; Rao, 2025). These systems systematically prioritized colonial languages and values, marginalizing local traditions and creating conditions under which cultural wholeness was incompatible with formal educational attainment.

A persistent consequence of colonially influenced education is the production of curricula that remain disconnected from students' cultural, linguistic, and historical realities (Fafunwa, 2018). This disconnect diminishes students' capacity to engage authentically with their heritage, contributes to the loss of cultural identity, and reduces motivation for formal learning. Moreover, the continued privileging of Western epistemological frameworks over indigenous knowledge systems limits the potential for culturally relevant innovation and community-centered problem-solving among Nigerian learners, contributing to socio-economic disparities and limited access to education.

Socioeconomic Hierarchies and Educational Access

Socioeconomic inequality constitutes another critical dimension of Nigeria's intersectional educational landscape. Nigerians experience markedly divergent economic realities that determine access to resources, services, and opportunities (Justine et al., 2012). The structural disparity between economically advantaged and disadvantaged households perpetuates intergenerational cycles of poverty, as wealthier families can leverage superior resources to maintain their socioeconomic status. In comparison, poorer families face systemic barriers to upward mobility (Justine et al., 2012).

Historically, Nigerians, both during and after the colonial period, have placed high cultural value on education as a pathway out of poverty (Asaju & Adagba, 2014). Families frequently made significant financial sacrifices to secure educational opportunities for their children, recognizing Western education as the primary route to improved life circumstances. Nevertheless, socioeconomic inequalities have profoundly shaped health outcomes and educational access: wealthier individuals have better access to healthcare, nutrition, and living conditions, while disadvantaged groups face higher mortality and ill health, which further constrain educational participation and long-term opportunities (Nwankwo et al., 2025). For students with disabilities from low-income households, these compounding disadvantages are particularly acute, as access to specialized educational resources, assistive technology, and trained teachers remains severely limited.

Gender and Colonial Disruption of Equity

In precolonial Nigeria, gender relations were not uniformly organized around the hierarchical structures that characterize Western patriarchal traditions. Oyèwùmí (2005), in her seminal work *The Invention of Women*, contends that precolonial Yoruba society did not structure social responsibility or opportunity along gendered lines as colonial governance did. This relative gender equity is evidenced by the historical prominence of powerful women across Nigerian communities, including Queen Amina of Zaria (Omotade & Oluwafemi, 2023), Princess Moremi of Ile-Ife (Omoyele & Morsiani, 2025), Queen Idia of the Benin Kingdom (Emokpae, 2025), and the organized resistance of the Aba Women's Movement in eastern Nigeria.

The introduction of colonial education systems disrupted this precolonial gender equity by restricting formal learning primarily to men, thereby generating gendered disparities in educational access, leadership, and decision-making (Oyěwùmí, 2005). Although protests emerged against this exclusion, when women were eventually admitted to formal education, curricula concentrated on domestic skills designed to prepare them for service within the household rather than civic or intellectual life (Ukpokolo, 2023). These colonial-era gender hierarchies have deepened in the postcolonial period, resulting in persistent inequalities in educational standards, expectations, and conditions for girls and women (Abubakar et al., 2025; Madu & Obi, 2021). The abduction of the Chibok girls in 2014 provides a stark contemporary illustration of the extreme vulnerabilities that girls face in accessing education in Nigeria (Dayil & Vickers, 2020).

Disability in Nigerian History and Culture

Nigeria's ethnic and cultural diversity has given rise to heterogeneous historical understandings of disability. While empirical research on precolonial disability history across all Nigerian ethnic groups remains limited (Oluwadele et al., 2023), extant scholarship reveals both stigmatizing and affirming perspectives. Some communities held views that associated disability with spiritual punishment or misfortune (Imade, 2017), while others, including aspects of Yoruba cosmology, understood physical difference as an expression of divine creativity. According to Adegbindin (2018), Yoruba deities were believed to create human beings in varied forms to express their conception of normalcy, framing physical difference as inherent to the human condition rather than as a deficit. Such cultural frameworks fostered greater social integration of persons with disabilities.

Colonial incursion introduced religious frameworks and educational philosophies that added new layers of stigma to preexisting understandings of disability. Colonial education systems prioritized the development of non-disabled workers capable of English literacy and manual labor, effectively excluding persons with disabilities from formal educational participation (Senu-Oke, 2011). Colonial religious doctrine, in turn, positioned disability either as an occasion for charitable almsgiving or as evidence of divine punishment for sin (Imade, 2017). These constructions have proven remarkably durable: the pursuit of miraculous healing as a substitute for educational inclusion remains a significant cultural phenomenon in contemporary Nigeria, perpetuating exclusion and limiting equity for persons with disabilities (Nwabuisi, 2021).

Disability Justice and the Nigerian Policy Landscape

Disability Justice as a Framework

Disability justice, as conceptualized by Patty Berne, Mia Mingus, and Stacey Milbern of Sins Invalid (2015), constitutes a movement that centers the lives and leadership of people whose disabilities intersect with multiple forms of oppression, including poverty, houselessness, and educational exclusion. In contrast to earlier

disability rights paradigms that often foregrounded legal access within existing social structures, disability justice demands the dismantling of ableism alongside racism, sexism, and other interlocking systems of domination. The framework's first principle is explicitly intersectional, recognizing that disability cannot be understood in isolation from other forms of identity-based oppression.

Applied to the Nigerian context, disability justice demands an educational response that does not merely accommodate disability as an isolated condition but actively addresses the compounding effects of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and colonial history on the educational experiences of students with disabilities. As Slifka (2024) observes, disability intersects with gender, ethnicity, and social class to produce distinct and layered forms of discrimination and stigma, a dynamic powerfully documented in Nigerian contexts by Anokwuru (2023).

The Nigerian Policy Context

Nigeria's legal and policy frameworks reflect a formal commitment to inclusive education for students with disabilities, yet significant implementation gaps persist. Nigeria is among the 92 countries that ratified the 1994 Salamanca Statement on Inclusive Education, affirming the right of all students, including those with disabilities, to education within inclusive settings. The 1997 National Policy on Education and the 2015 National Policy on Special Education further elaborated this commitment, with the latter establishing a principle of zero rejection to ensure that all students with disabilities have the right to free and appropriate education (Obi & Ashi, 2016). The 2018 Discrimination Prohibition Act extended these protections, prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities and mandating equal rights and opportunities.

Despite this legislative architecture, the lived reality for students with disabilities in Nigeria remains deeply inequitable. According to UNICEF (2024), Nigeria has approximately 18 million out-of-school children, with 25% of this group consisting of children with disabilities. Nigeria holds the distinction of having the largest population of out-of-school children in the world. This reality persists despite the legal mandate for free and compulsory education from primary through secondary levels. Nigeria's 2026 national budget allocated only 6.1% of total expenditure to education, a figure broadly consistent with a long-standing pattern of underfunding. Contributing factors include poverty, social stigma, inadequate school infrastructure, child labor, internal insecurity, and deeply entrenched cultural and religious norms (Oyekan et al., 2023).

Compounding these structural barriers, the World Bank (2020) and the International Disability Alliance estimate that approximately 14% of Nigerians, some 25 million people, are rendered additionally vulnerable by poverty and food insecurity. According to Nigeria's 2018 Demographic and Health Survey, 7% of household members aged five and older live with at least one disability across the domains of seeing, hearing, communication, cognition, mobility, and self-care. Haruna (2017, p. 102) captured the pervasive nature of this stigma, observing that in Nigeria, once a

person with a disability is stigmatized, they experience a profound transformation of identity accompanied by discrimination across economic, social, and educational dimensions. Cultural and religious beliefs that attribute disability to supernatural causes, witchcraft, or sin continue to drive discrimination, in some extreme cases justifying practices of ritual exploitation or forced begging (Etieyibo & Omiegbe, 2016; Omiegbe, 2023).

These realities reveal that policy pronouncements, however well-intentioned, are insufficient without corresponding investments in teacher preparation, community engagement, and culturally responsive pedagogical frameworks. It is precisely this gap that the ADIMA framework was designed to address, and which the present paper seeks to reconceptualize in light of contemporary intersectionality and disability justice scholarship.

The ADIMA Framework: Origins and Intersectional Foundations

Dr. Emmanuel Adima and the Origins of the Framework

Dr. Emmanuel Adima was a Professor of Special Education at the University of Ibadan and a pioneering advocate for disability rights and educational equity in Nigeria (Adima, 1992). His scholarly and activist work focused on securing equitable access to education and social resources for individuals with intellectual disabilities (previously referred to as mental retardation, which was stigmatizing) (AAIDD Ad Hoc Committee on Terminology and Classification, 2010). Dr. Adima designed the ADIMA framework as a practical, pedagogical tool for teacher preparation programs, aiming to equip special educators with culturally grounded strategies for inclusive instruction.

Dr. Adima's advocacy extended beyond the classroom. He urged Nigerian society to create inclusive and accessible environments for persons with disabilities across healthcare, education, employment, and community life. Crucially, his work engaged intersectional concerns before the term itself had gained currency in African educational scholarship: he drew attention to gendered disparities in the treatment of girls and boys with disabilities, highlighted the roles of cultural and religious beliefs in perpetuating exclusion, and called for community-level transformation alongside institutional reform.

As a student of Dr Emmanuel Adima at the University of Ibadan from 1987 to 1991, I learned from him in the field of mental retardation (now referred to as intellectual disabilities). He persistently advocated for equitable access for individuals with intellectual disabilities in our community and encouraged us to visit segregated schools in Ibadan, where, at that time, most students with disabilities were placed or kept at home. During these visits, he led discussions on disparities in treatment between girls and boys with disabilities, emphasizing that gender should not determine access or opportunity. He highlighted how cultural, religious, and societal beliefs contributed to these challenges.

Sharing my learning journey under Dr Adima, while reflecting on his advocacy for disability justice in Nigeria, brings to the fore his activism for why people with disabilities need to be accrued respect and accessibility to education. To contextualize his activism, the authors bring to the fore the practices of education for people with disabilities in Nigeria.

As illustrated in the anecdote from one of Dr. Adima's former students, a co-author in this paper, he maintained that gender should never restrict access or opportunity for students with disabilities. His work, in hindsight, embodied early intersectional disability justice advocacy. This conceptual paper reconceptualizes the original ADIMA framework to equip today's educators with the tools needed to implement inclusive, culturally responsive practices.

The Original ADIMA Framework

The ADIMA framework derives its name from an acronym based on Dr. Adima's surname, with each letter designating a core pedagogical strategy for special educators: **A**—Adapted Curricula; **D**—Demonstration-Based Learning; **I**—Instructional Materials; **MA**—Mental Age. These components directly address the distinct learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities in the Nigerian educational context. Oyefeso (2013) subsequently examined the effects of the ADIMA method on the academic performance of students with mild intellectual disabilities in Ibadan, providing empirical support for the framework's instructional efficacy. With its effectiveness established, the ADIMA framework now calls for a reconceptualization that integrates intersectional and technology-driven approaches to teacher preparation for inclusive education.

Reconceptualizing ADIMA: An Intersectional and Technology-Inclusive Framework

In light of the intersectional realities documented above and contemporary developments in disability justice and assistive technology scholarship, this paper proposes a reconceptualization of the ADIMA framework. The reconceptualized model retains and critically deepens the original four components while adding a fifth: Assistive Technology, to reflect the indispensable role of technological tools in contemporary inclusive education. Each component is reframed through an intersectional lens that foregrounds ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability as mutually constitutive dimensions of student identity and educational experience. Figure 1 gives a visual framework of reconceptualizing the ADIMA framework.

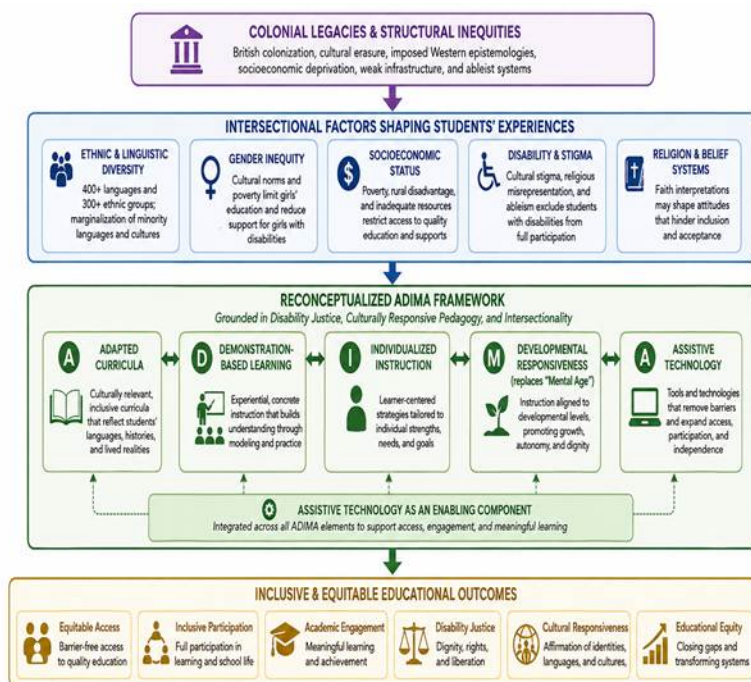


Figure 1. Reconceptualized ADIMA Framework for Intersectional and Technology-Centered Inclusive Education in Nigeria

Note: This conceptual framework illustrates how colonial legacies, structural inequities, and intersecting identities influence the educational experiences of students with disabilities in Nigeria. The reconceptualized ADIMA framework integrates culturally responsive pedagogy, disability justice principles, and assistive technology to promote equitable and inclusive educational outcomes in technology-centered classrooms.

Adapted Curricula. Adapted curricula are foundational to inclusive special education because they ensure that educational content is tailored to meet the unique and diverse needs of students with disabilities. However, curriculum adaptation cannot be understood as a purely technical exercise. Within the Nigerian context, effective curriculum adaptation requires educators to engage critically with the colonial legacies embedded in standardized curricula and to design learning experiences that are authentically responsive to students' cultural, linguistic, and historical realities. Drawing on Ladson-Billings' (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, adapted curricula within the reconceptualized ADIMA framework treat students' intersecting identities and cultural knowledge as pedagogical assets rather than deficits. This approach affirms student identity, sustains cultural engagement, and promotes equity across gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic dimensions. Embedding Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles into adapted curricula further strengthens teacher preparation by promoting flexible, accessible, and inclusive instructional design (CAST, 2018).

Demonstration-Based Learning. Demonstration-based learning leverages active, multimodal instructional strategies to engage students through visual, auditory, and sensory channels (Adhikari, 2024). Its pedagogical power is substantially amplified when educators integrate intersectional awareness into their instruction. By incorporating diverse cultural narratives, experiential examples, and community-relevant contexts into practical demonstrations, teachers create learning environments in which students from varied ethnic, gender, and disability backgrounds can see their own experiences reflected in the curriculum. This approach validates students' identities, fosters deeper conceptual understanding, and promotes relational engagement between teachers and learners. In the Nigerian context, demonstration-based learning offers particular value for students whose oral and communal learning traditions have historically been marginalized by text-centered pedagogies.

Individualized Instruction. The original framework referred to this as instructional material; however, this reconceptualization paper emphasizes the need for instructional materials to be individualized. The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a cornerstone of special education practice, reflecting the foundational recognition that students with disabilities have distinct learning profiles that require personalized instructional goals, objectives, and support strategies (Clark, 2000). The reconceptualized ADIMA framework expands the IEP model to encompass intersectional considerations: individualized instruction must account not only for a student's disability-related learning needs but also for how their gender, ethnicity, language background, and socioeconomic circumstances shape their educational experiences and aspirations. This intersectional approach to individualization ensures that instruction addresses the full complexity of each student's identity, strengths, and barriers, enabling more equitable and effective outcomes.

Developmental Responsiveness. The original ADIMA framework's Mental Age component highlights the importance of aligning instructional content and expectations with the developmental stage of students with intellectual disabilities, recognizing that chronological age and developmental functioning may diverge significantly. While this principle reflects a genuine pedagogical insight, the term mental age itself has been critiqued in contemporary scholarship as potentially infantilizing and demeaning, particularly when applied to adults with intellectual disabilities (Rogers & McGuire, 2024). The reconceptualized framework retains the underlying commitment to developmentally responsive instruction while disavowing the term "mental age" in favor of a strengths-based, person-centered developmental approach. This reframing aligns with disability justice principles that affirm the dignity and full personhood of individuals with disabilities, regardless of their developmental profile. Educators are encouraged to exercise heightened attentiveness and support when working with students with intellectual disabilities, while consistently communicating high expectations and respect for student agency.

Assistive Technology. The reconceptualized ADIMA framework incorporates a fifth component, Assistive Technology, to reflect the transformative role of technological tools in contemporary inclusive education. Assistive technology encompasses the devices, software, and systems that enable students with disabilities to access curricula, communicate effectively, and participate fully in classroom and community life (Ayantoye, 2023). For students with physical, sensory, or communication disabilities, assistive technology can be the determining factor in educational participation and academic achievement. Critically, however, access to assistive technology in Nigeria is severely constrained by cost, particularly for students from low-income households. This pattern reflects the intersection of disability and socioeconomic inequality. In response, the reconceptualized ADIMA framework encourages educators to develop resourceful, low-cost alternatives and to advocate for institutional investment in accessible technologies. Teacher preparation programs must equip special educators with both the technical competencies and the pedagogical dispositions required to integrate assistive technology into intersectionally responsive instruction.

Together, these commitments position the reconceptualized ADIMA framework as a tool that not only addresses learner variability but also equips educators to enact inclusive practices that are intersectional, culturally grounded, and technologically supported.

Implications for Teacher Preparation and Educational Policy

The reconceptualized ADIMA framework carries significant implications for teacher preparation programs and educational policy in Nigeria. At the level of teacher education, the framework calls for integrating intersectionality as an explicit theoretical and pedagogical competency into special education curricula (Boveda & Aronson, 2019). Prospective teachers must be prepared not only to implement evidence-based instructional strategies but to do so with a nuanced understanding of how ethnic identity, gender, socioeconomic background, and disability status intersect to shape students' educational experiences and opportunities. This requires substantive engagement with Nigerian history, postcolonial critique, and disability justice within teacher preparation coursework.

At the policy level, the paper underscores the urgency of closing the gap between formal commitments to inclusive education and the realities of educational exclusion experienced by students with disabilities in Nigeria. Meaningful progress requires sustained increases in educational funding, targeted investment in special education teacher training, community-based disability awareness initiatives, and infrastructure to support the provision of assistive technology in under-resourced schools. Furthermore, policymakers must engage explicitly with the intersectional dimensions of educational exclusion, recognizing that students at the intersection of disability, poverty, and gender marginalization require targeted and sustained support.

Importantly, this paper also calls for greater recognition of scholarship produced by academics in the Global South. Scholars such as Dr. Emmanuel Adima, whose work predated and anticipated many contemporary developments in disability justice and intersectional pedagogy, remain insufficiently acknowledged in global conversations about inclusive education (Ales, 2024). Centering their contributions is not merely an act of scholarly equity; it is an epistemological necessity for developing educational frameworks that are genuinely responsive to African contexts and communities.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has argued that the educational experiences of students with disabilities in Nigeria cannot be adequately understood or addressed without an intersectional framework that attends simultaneously to the legacies of colonialism, ethnic diversity, gender inequality, socioeconomic stratification, and cultural and religious stigma. The ADIMA framework, developed by Dr. Emmanuel Adima at the University of Ibadan, represents an early and underrecognized contribution to intersectional inclusive education in the African context. By reconceptualizing ADIMA to incorporate assistive technology and an explicit disability justice orientation, this paper proposes a pedagogical model that is both historically grounded and forward-looking.

The reconceptualized ADIMA framework offers special educators a coherent, culturally responsive structure for teaching in technology-centered inclusive classrooms. Its implementation, however, requires more than individual pedagogical commitment: it demands collaborative efforts among government, educational institutions, communities, and civil society to create the structural conditions under which equitable, inclusive education becomes a lived reality for all Nigerian students with disabilities. The work of Dr. Adima and the advocacy of those who continue it remind us that disability justice in education is not a technical project but a moral and political imperative; one that calls each generation of educators to renewed courage and commitment.

Limitations

This conceptual paper acknowledges several important limitations. First, while the reconceptualized ADIMA framework integrates intersectional considerations of ethnicity, gender, and disability, the original framework's primary focus on disability meant that other intersecting dimensions were not fully theorized in Dr. Adima's own writings. The present reconceptualization represents an interpretive extension of his work rather than a direct elaboration of documented positions.

Second, access to Dr. Adima's original writings and documentation presents a significant scholarly challenge. As with many Global South scholars whose work was produced outside the dominant circuits of international academic publishing, Dr. Adima's contributions are incompletely archived and inconsistently cited. One goal

of the present paper is to contribute to the ongoing project of redocumenting and reconceptualizing this foundational work, ensuring its availability and recognition within both Nigerian and global scholarship.

Third, the framework includes the component of Mental Age, a concept that, while pedagogically motivated, has been critiqued in contemporary psychological literature as potentially infantilizing and stigmatizing when applied to individuals with intellectual disabilities (Rogers & McGuire, 2024). The reconceptualized framework has addressed this concern by reframing the concept as developmentally responsive, strengths-based, and individualized instruction, while acknowledging that further theoretical refinement is warranted. Future empirical research examining the implementation and outcomes of the reconceptualized ADIMA framework in Nigerian classrooms would substantially advance this line of inquiry.

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Declarations

Author contributions

Ayodele Aborishade: Concept. – Investig. – Red. borr. orig. – Rev. y ed. – Approval of the final manuscript submitted to the journal – Valid. – An. formal.

Joann Anokwuru: Concept. – Investig. – Red. borr. orig. – Rev. y ed. – Approval of the final manuscript submitted to the journal – Valid. – An. formal.

Doreen N Myrie: Concept. – Investig. – Red. borr. orig. – Rev. y ed. – Approval of the final manuscript submitted to the journal – Valid. – An. formal.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement

All data supporting the results of this study are published in the article itself.

Ethical implications

The authors declare that this article has no ethical implications regarding its development, writing, or publication.

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