



## Realizing an Inclusive Campus: A Systematic Review of Support, Readiness, and Challenges in Providing Services for Students with Disabilities

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE INFO
<p>This study aims to explore the types of services available for students with disabilities in higher education, analyze the factors influencing institutional readiness, and identify the major challenges faced by universities in providing these services. The research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on PRISMA guidelines, analyzing 20 empirical articles published between 2020–2025 from five leading academic databases. The findings reveal that universities have provided various services, including academic support, assistive technology, physical accommodations, and socio-emotional assistance. However, the implementation of these services remains highly dependent on institutional policies, human resource capacity, infrastructure, and inclusive campus culture. Major challenges include insufficient staff training, limited access to assistive tools, administrative bureaucracy, and persistent social stigma against disability. The implications of this study highlight the potential of its findings as a strategic basis for formulating or strengthening inclusion policies at the higher education level. Moreover, it underscores the urgency of continuous professional development for academic and administrative staff in adopting inclusive teaching strategies responsive to the diverse needs of students. Additionally, the high level of stigma and resistance within campuses suggests the need for institutional cultural transformation through sustained educational and advocacy programs.</p>	<p><b>Article History:</b> <i>Submitted/Received</i> 01 Juni 2025 <i>First Revised</i> 15 Juni 2025 <i>Accepted</i> 27 Juni 2025 <i>First Available online</i> 29 Juni 2025 <i>Publication Date</i> 29 Juni 2025</p> <p><b>Keyword:</b> Inclusive Education, Higher Education Readiness, Services for Students with Disabilities.</p>
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Students with disabilities are increasingly enrolled in higher education institutions (Melian & Meneses, 2022). However, they still face various barriers to accessing inclusive education, especially because the transition process between levels of education requires a longer adaptation period (Morina, 2017; Hebron, 2017). In addition, limitations in the implementation of inclusive policies, lack of adequate facilities, and limited supporting services and programs also become obstacles to realizing inclusive and quality higher education (Khandokar Tazina Islam, 2024).

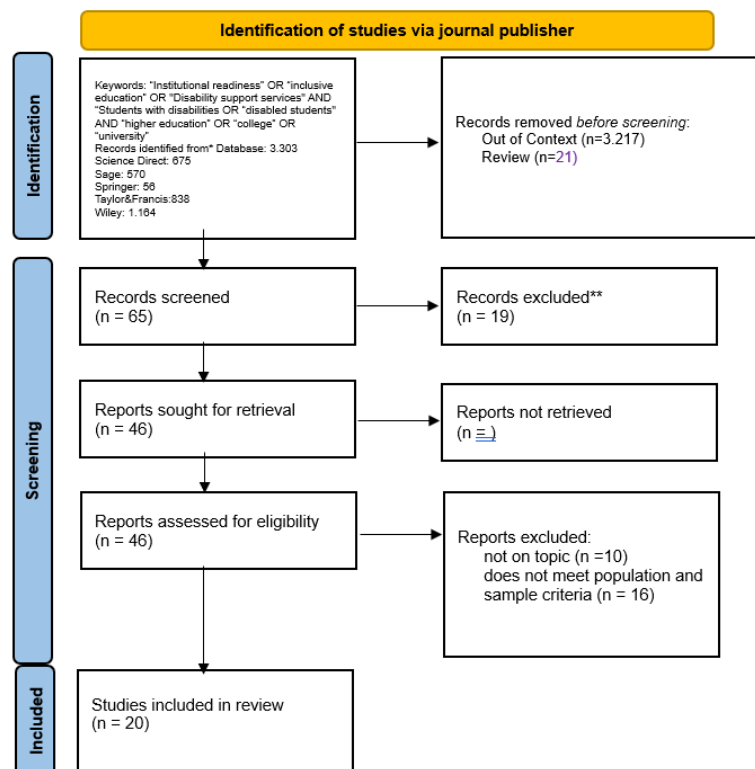
Previous research has highlighted the important role of higher education institutions—both two-year and four-year—in providing accommodations and modifications needed by students with disabilities, such as extra time on exams, note-taking, and sign language interpreter services (Cheatham, Smith, Elliott, Friedline, & Terri, 2013). However, despite some efforts to provide adequate physical access, many still fail to create a truly inclusive and supportive learning environment (Izzo, 2012). Key barriers identified include low faculty literacy regarding inclusive learning strategies, limited understanding of the rights of students with disabilities, and the absence of institutional policies that explicitly support principles of inclusion (Altes, Tisja Korthals: Willemse, Goei, Ehren, & Melani, 2024). These factors are exacerbated by a lack of training, resources, and ongoing institutional support. In this context, the success of students with disabilities cannot be measured solely by academic achievements such as graduation or grades, but rather is a multidimensional concept that includes learning experiences, social support, personal growth, and recognition within the academic community (Pais, Morina Diez, & Morgando, 2024). Furthermore, research conducted in Ukraine shows that university staff's perceptions of the level of inclusivity are not always influenced by their personal or professional experiences, but rather are determined by systemic factors such as institutional policies and organizational dynamics—especially in crisis contexts such as armed conflict (Tsybuliak, Mytsyk, & Suchikova, 2024). These findings emphasize the importance of a comprehensive structural and policy approach in building an inclusive and sustainable campus environment.

In line with previous findings, this study conducted a systematic review to identify the forms of services and support provided by universities for students with disabilities, while analyzing the factors that influence the readiness of institutions to realize inclusive higher education, and uncovering various challenges that arise in the implementation process, both from structural aspects, policies, and practices in the field. To achieve this goal, this study uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by following the PRISMA guidelines, through an analysis of 20 empirical articles published in the period 2020–2025 and obtained from five reputable scientific databases. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive approach to evaluating the dynamics of inclusive services in universities, which not only examines it from the perspective of students with disabilities, but also integrally involves the role of lecturers, educators, and support staff as part of the institutional ecosystem. The title “Realizing an Inclusive Campus: A Systematic Review of Support, Readiness, and Challenges in Providing Services for Students with Disabilities” was chosen to represent the main focus of the

research, namely to critically summarize the forms of support that have been implemented and examine systemic readiness in realizing inclusive higher education.

## 2. METHODS

This study used the PRISMA methodology as described by (Page, et al.,2021). PRISMA, an acronym for “Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses,” consists of four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. The PRISMA methodology is essential because it provides a structured and transparent framework for conducting systematic reviews. It allows for the unbiased collection, evaluation, analysis, and documentation of studies related to the research area using an iterative process (Page, et al., 2021). Thus, the PRISMA elements serve as a valuable guide, providing a structured framework for authors, reviewers, and editors to ensure completeness and transparency in systematic reviews (Moros-Daza & Jubiz-Diaz, 2024). The flowchart in Figure 1 illustrates the step-by-step process adopted in this study, following the PRISMA guidelines.



Gambar 1. PRISMA flow diagram (Page et al., 2021)

### Identification Stage

The article search for this study was conducted in May 2025 to collect comprehensive and relevant literature related to the readiness of higher education institutions to provide services to students with disabilities. The articles searched covered a publication period between 2020 and 2025. The database selection was carried out carefully by considering broad coverage, high reputation, and access to articles that have gone through a rigorous peer-review process. The databases used included ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, Sage Publications, Wiley, and Springer, which are known as primary sources in the fields of education, psychology, and

social studies and provide a wealth of scientific literature related to this research topic. In addition, the articles selected at this identification stage are in English and can be accessed without a subscription (Open Access).

In the search stage, 3,303 articles were identified with the largest number found in Wiley (1,164), Taylor & Francis (838), ScienceDirect (675), Sage Publications (570), and Springer (56). The search was conducted by focusing on the title and abstract of the article using the "TITLE-ABS-KEY" operator, as explained by Apostolos Dasilas (2023), and using the combination of keywords: (("institutional readiness" OR "inclusive education" OR "disability support services") AND ("students with disabilities" OR "disabled students") AND ("higher education" OR "college" OR "university")).

Based on the initial search, 3,303 relevant studies were found based on a review of the article titles and abstracts. The next step was to conduct a screening process to ensure that only articles that truly fit the research focus were forwarded. A total of 3,238 articles were removed in this phase, including 21 review articles, and 3,217 articles that were deemed irrelevant to the topic of faculty readiness in providing services to students with disabilities. This screening process aims to filter out literature that is no longer relevant or up-to-date so that only the most recent and relevant articles are forwarded for further analysis. Thus, the remaining 65 articles were recognized as empirical studies to be reviewed in the next stage.

### **Screening Stage**

The screening stage is a crucial step in the review process, which aims to eliminate duplicate and irrelevant articles from consideration (Apostolos Dasilas, 2023). After the identification stage, the articles generated from the search strategy were reviewed again based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria listed in **Table 1** to determine which ones fit the scope of this study.

A total of 19 articles were excluded at this stage because they did not meet the established inclusion criteria. Some of the reasons for the exclusion of these articles were seen as the type of research method that was not empirical, did not match the research topic (either related to the form or type of service, the readiness of higher education institutions, and the challenges faced in providing services), the research did not focus on higher education institutions and the research respondents were not related to students with disabilities or staff and teaching staff at higher education institutions. After this screening process, 45 articles were obtained which were considered very relevant and in accordance with the research objectives, thus becoming a strong basis for further analysis.

**Table 1** Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria

<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>
Research related to services, institutional readiness, or challenges in supporting students with disabilities in higher education
The research focuses on inclusive education in higher education
The research addresses at least one of three research questions, namely the form of service, readiness factors, or institutional challenges in supporting students with disabilities in higher education
The publication includes the latest review of the readiness of higher education institutions to provide services to students with disabilities.
The research paper is the result of empirical research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods)
The research paper was published between 2020 - 2025.
The research paper is written in English.
The research paper has been published after going through a peer review process.
The research paper can be downloaded and read in full without subscription or access restrictions.
The research follows a structure that is in accordance with the research method.
<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>
The research is not related to services, institutional readiness, or challenges in supporting students with disabilities in higher education.
The research does not focus on inclusive education in higher education (discussing at the elementary, secondary, or early childhood education levels)
The research discusses at least one of three research questions, namely the form of service, readiness factors, or institutional challenges in supporting students with disabilities in higher education.
The publication does not cover the readiness of higher education institutions to provide services to students with disabilities.
The research paper is not the result of empirical research (eg in the form of a narrative review, editorial, etc.)
The research paper was not published between 2020 - 2025.
The research paper is not written in English.

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The research paper has been published without going through a peer review process.

The research paper cannot be downloaded and read in full without a subscription or access restrictions.

The research does not follow a structure that is in accordance with the research method.

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### Eligibility Stage

At this stage, an evaluation of the quality of the articles that have passed the previous selection process is carried out to determine their suitability for further analysis. This quality assessment is an important component of a systematic review because it aims to ensure that the methods used in the study have adequate validity and that the findings are reliable. (Moros-Daza & Jubiz-Diaz, 2024).

To assess the quality of the criteria, researchers used seven questions adapted (Zhao, Pinto Llorente, & Sánchez Gómez, 2021), which have been adjusted to the focus of the research topic and are summarized in Table 2. The assessment covers a number of crucial aspects, including clarity in explaining the types of services, readiness, or barriers of institutions in supporting students with disabilities; clarity of research objectives; appropriateness of the design and methods used; data collection instruments; sample characteristics; relevance of results to research questions; conclusions presented; and transparency in stating study limitations. All of these aspects are explained in detail in Table 2 to provide an overview of the standards used in assessing the quality of articles.

A total of 46 articles that had gone through the initial selection stage were then evaluated based on a series of predetermined quality questions. This evaluation process resulted in the elimination of 10 articles, which were deemed not to provide in-depth or relevant discussion of the research questions. In addition, 16 other articles were eliminated because they did not meet the criteria for the method and type of sample population (disabled students, lecturers, or university staff) in this study. The selection process finally left 20 articles that were deemed worthy of further analysis. These selected articles are expected to provide deeper insights to answer the research questions and enrich understanding in the context of services for disabled students in higher education.

Table 2. Quality Criteria

Quality Criteria
1. Are the types/forms of services provided by the university clearly stated according to the type of disability?
2. Does the article provide a clear explanation of the types or forms of readiness of the university in providing services to students with disabilities?
3. Does the article provide a clear explanation of the challenges faced by universities in providing services to students with disabilities?
4. Are the objectives of the study clearly explained and focused on services for students with disabilities in universities (types, readiness, or barriers)?

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5. Are the research design and instruments used in accordance with the objectives of the study and clearly explained?
  6. Does the article explain the sample and population of the study, especially students with disabilities, lecturers, and/or university staff?
  7. Does the article answer the research questions about services for students with disabilities in universities (types, readiness, or barriers)?
  8. Are the conclusions clearly explained and based on the results of the study, and is there a discussion of the limitations of the study?
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### **Inclusion Stage**

The final stage of the study involved a thorough analysis of the final 20 articles to identify and answer the research questions. Following PRISMA guidelines, the articles were carefully selected to ensure the quality and relevance of the studies analyzed. The study aimed to provide valuable insights into services for students with disabilities in higher education, specifically in terms of the types, readiness, and challenges faced by higher education institutions. The systematic approach used in this study increased the reliability and validity of the results and facilitated a comprehensive and unbiased review of the available literature in this area. All data from the 20 articles were carefully analyzed to provide an in-depth and holistic view of the state of services for students with disabilities in higher education, as well as the readiness and challenges faced by higher education institutions. The results of this study are expected to inform the development of more effective policies and strategies for higher education institutions that accept and serve students with disabilities.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents an overview of each study analyzed, followed by answers to the research questions based on the analysis of the selected articles. The structure of this section is structured to follow the questions asked in the study so that each subsection provides relevant results from the systematic literature review (SLR).

#### **Forms of services and support provided by universities for students with disabilities**

The synthesis of the articles analyzed shows that universities in various countries have provided various forms of services to support the academic and social success of students with disabilities. These services can be categorized into several main types: academic and learning support, assistive technology, physical and structural accommodations, and social and emotional services.

First, academic support is the most commonly found service. Articles from (Anderson, et al.,2022) and (Rolak, Heerkens, et al.,2023) state that students receive facilities such as additional exam time, separate exam rooms, special study courses, and assignment adjustments. This support is especially important for students with dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, or other neurological disorders. In addition, universities also organize inclusive classes, as described in the TPSID (Transition and Postsecondary Education Program for



Students with Intellectual Disabilities) study in the United States, which allows students with intellectual disabilities to participate in regular lectures with assistance (Griga, et al., 2024).

Second, assistive technology is an important element in supporting accessibility. The use of screen reader software, text-to-speech, and virtual reality (VR) specifically designed for blind students (Yensathit, Ariya, Intawong, & Puritat, 2025) shows that digital innovation plays a significant role in expanding access to inclusive higher education. Universities such as Qatar and UNAM (Mexico) have also developed assistive technology centers that provide hands-on training to students and faculty.

Third, aspects of physical and structural accommodation include the provision of disability-friendly building access, special campus transportation, and adequate elevators. In the context of deaf students, as shown by (Al Hashimi, et al., 2021), services such as sign language interpreters and special class programs are also available. However, limited interpreters and irregular schedules are still common problems in some institutions.

Finally, support is not only technical or physical but also social and emotional. Articles from the University of Mexico (Polo Martínez & Díaz Barriga Arceo, 2025) and a study of autistic students in the Netherlands (Pesonen, et al., 2020) show the importance of peer mentors, campus counselors, and academic mentors who understand the individual needs of students with disabilities. These roles support students' sense of belonging and enhance their participation in campus life. Overall, the results of the studies show that the types of services and supports provided by universities vary greatly depending on the type of disability, geographic context, and institutional policies. However, these services are not always evenly available across faculties or study programs. Many initiatives are still individual or project-based, making their sustainability and consistency a challenge that will be addressed in future research questions.

### **Factors affecting the readiness of higher education institutions to support students with disabilities**

The readiness of higher education institutions to provide services for students with disabilities is influenced by a number of interrelated main factors. These factors can be grouped into five broad categories: (1) institutional policies and regulations, (2) human resource capacity, (3) infrastructure and technology, (4) institutional culture and attitudes, and (5) external support and networks.

#### ***Institutional Policies and Regulations***

Some institutions show higher readiness because they are supported by clear and comprehensive internal policies. In Mexico, for example, the University of Mexico has The Creation of the Disability Assistance Unit (UNAPDI) and has designed inclusion guidelines and policies based on the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). This policy allows the institution to move systematically, rather than just based on individual faculty initiatives (Polo Martínez & Díaz Barriga Arceo, 2025). A similar thing is also found in Qatar, where inclusion policies are supported by the establishment of the Inclusion and Special Needs Support Center (ISNSC) which provides centralized services (Ahmed & Al-Kuwari, 2025). In contrast, in some contexts such as Kosovo and Colombia, the lack of strong internal inclusion policies is a major barrier.



Institutional readiness in this region varies widely across faculties and often depends on the interpretation of policies by specific individuals or units (Zabeli et al., 2021; Martínez & Gómez, 2025).

#### ***Human Resource Capacity and Competence***

The second most important factor is the capacity and training of lecturers and staff. A study by (Lo et al., 2024) showed that inclusion training, teaching flexibility, and availability of information are important parts of lecturers' confidence in providing support. Unfortunately, this training is not yet evenly available and is often considered an additional burden (Ahmed & Al-Kuwari, 2025; Zabeli, Kaçaniku, & Koliqi, 2021). In addition to training, lecturers' perceptions of inclusion and their responsibilities also affect institutional readiness. Several articles show that positive attitudes from lecturers contribute greatly to a supportive campus climate (Lo et al., 2024; Rolak et al., 2023).

#### ***Infrastructure and Technology***

Infrastructure factors include physical accessibility such as elevators, classrooms, and disability-friendly toilets, as well as the availability of assistive technologies such as screen reader software and inclusive online platforms. A study by (Yensathit et al., 2025) highlighted the importance of developing technology based on the needs of visually impaired users, such as virtual reality-based library orientation. However, this readiness is uneven. Some campuses still face limitations in assistive devices, accessible spaces, and digital systems that are not disability-friendly (Al Hashimi et al., 2021; Zabeli et al., 2021).

#### ***Institutional Culture and Attitudes***

Campus culture is also an important determinant. Institutional readiness is often hampered by stigma and resistance to the concept of inclusion, from staff, lecturers, and other students. A study from the Netherlands on autistic students noted that universities often still implement a diagnosis-based system, which actually limits access and support because not all needs can be formally categorized (Pesonen, et al., 2020). Furthermore, an article by (Anderson et al, 2022) showed that in the online context, cultural barriers emerged in the form of staff unwillingness to adapt and a lack of empathy for the challenges of students with disabilities in disclosing needs (Anderson, Grave, & Terras, 2022).

#### ***External Support and Networking***

Support from external parties such as funding agencies, rehabilitation (VR) agencies, and user communities also determine readiness. In the United States, for example, the Transition and Postsecondary Education Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities has been successful in promoting institutional readiness through federal funding and collaboration between institutions (Griga, et al., 2024). However, reliance on short-term projects is problematic. When external support ceases, many services stagnate because they are not embedded in campus systems (Griga, et al., 2024). Overall, institutional readiness is not just about the presence or absence of services but reflects systemic commitment, inclusive culture, and sustainable capacity. Many institutions have shown progressive steps, but are not yet fully prepared to serve all types of disabilities consistently.

### **Challenges faced by universities in providing inclusive services for students with disabilities**

Analysis of the journals reviewed revealed that universities in various countries still face significant challenges in providing comprehensive inclusive services for students with disabilities. These challenges can be grouped into five main aspects, namely: (1) lack of awareness and understanding among staff, (2) limited resources and infrastructure, (3) administrative and bureaucratic constraints, (4) cultural barriers and stigma, and (5) inconsistent policies and implementation.

#### ***Lack of Awareness and Understanding among Academic Staff***

One of the most consistent challenges that emerged in almost all articles was the lack of understanding and training of lecturers regarding inclusive education. For example, in Qatar, although there is a disability support center, many lecturers are not aware of the services available or feel they do not have the time to attend training (Ahmed & Al-Kuwari, 2025). In Mexico, students reported denial of accommodations by lecturers and a high reliance on personal initiatives rather than institutional systems (Polo Martínez & Díaz Barriga Arceo, 2025). Similarly, in a study of autistic students in the Netherlands, it was found that lecturers often did not understand the sensory needs of autistic students, even causing additional stress through inflexible teaching practices (Pesonen, et al., 2020).

#### ***Resource and Infrastructure Constraints***

Many universities are still constrained by limited physical facilities, support staff, and assistive technology. (Al Hashimi et al, 2021) showed that the availability of interpreters for deaf students in Bahrain is still far from sufficient, and classrooms are often not disability-friendly. In Kosovo, although some buildings have elevators and ramps, many classrooms do not meet accessibility standards. In addition, learning aids are often unavailable or broken, such as elevators that do not work or assistive software that is not updated (Zabeli, Kaçaniku, & Koliqi, 2021).

#### ***Administrative and Bureaucratic Constraints***

Challenges also arise from the procedural side, such as complicated accommodation requests, lack of transparency of data between units, and minimal reporting or evaluation systems for the implementation of disability services. In an article by (Rolak et al., 2023), dyslexic students complained about inconsistent accommodation request systems and poor communication between campus units. An article from the United States on postgraduate students with disabilities in online learning also mentions barriers to disclosure due to a lack of clarity on procedures and concerns about stigma (Anderson, Grave, & Terras, 2022).

#### ***Cultural Barriers and Social Stigma***

Stigma against students with disabilities remains a major barrier to inclusivity. In some cases, students must hide their disability identity to avoid being discriminated against or considered weak. In the context of autistic students, this has led to the emergence of masking strategies, namely trying to disguise symptoms of disability in order to be “accepted” in academic environments (Pesonen, et al., 2020). In Kosovo and Colombia, the general perception that students with disabilities are still a burden also influences the allocation of resources and support provided by institutions (Zabeli et al., 2021; Martínez & Gómez, 2025).

### ***Inconsistency of Policy and Implementation***

Although many institutions already have inclusion policies, their implementation is not uniform across all faculties. In the case of UNAM, institutional policies have not been fully adopted at the faculty level, so the services received by students are highly dependent on the attitudes and awareness of lecturers in each study program (Polo Martínez & Díaz Barriga Arceo, 2025). A similar situation occurs in the TPSID (Transition and Postsecondary Education Program for Students with Intellectual Disabilities) in the United States, where the success of the program is highly dependent on support from local management, not just central regulations (Griga, et al., 2024).

Overall, the results of the synthesis show that the challenges of providing inclusive services are not only technical but also structural and cultural. To realize a truly inclusive campus, a comprehensive transformation is needed that includes continuous training, policy reform, infrastructure improvements, and changes in the collective attitudes of the entire academic community.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This systematic review concludes that while inclusive higher education for students with disabilities has shown significant progress, particularly in the provision of academic services, assistive technology, physical accommodations, and socio-emotional support, its implementation remains sporadic, uneven across institutions, and often not fully integrated into institutional policies and culture. Institutional readiness is strongly influenced by key factors such as the existence of supportive internal regulations, human resource capacity, adequate infrastructure, and commitment to inclusive values; while challenges include low staff awareness, limited resources, bureaucratic constraints, and persistent stigma against disability. Findings from the 20 articles analyzed indicate that good practices such as the implementation of Universal Design for Learning and the integration of services through special units have been implemented in several countries, but their sustainability is highly dependent on long-term policy and funding support. This study provides an important contribution in the form of a current thematic mapping of the form of services, the level of institutional readiness, and the obstacles faced in supporting students with disabilities, which have not been systematically studied in a single framework. The results of this study can be a practical basis for universities in designing sustainable strategies through strengthening inclusion policies, continuous training for educators, investment in accessible technology and infrastructure, and development of participatory evaluation mechanisms based on student needs. However, the limitations of this study lie in the scope of articles that are limited to English-language publications and certain periods, variations in methods that cause the synthesis to be narrative in nature, and the lack of an integrative model between service forms, readiness, and challenges. Therefore, further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions contextually through a longitudinal and participatory approach that involves all stakeholders in diverse higher education environments.

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