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Teaching at the Margins of Uniformity

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Abstract

School classrooms are often organized around assumptions of uniform learners, standardised curriculum delivery, and predictable learning trajectories. Yet everyday classroom realities—marked by social diversity, varied abilities, linguistic plurality, and unequal access to resources—continually disrupt these assumptions. This study examines how teachers negotiate such conditions and rework classroom practice at the margins of uniformity. Focusing on Social Science classrooms at the secondary level, the paper argues that meaningful learning emerges not from rigid adherence to prescribed methods but from context-sensitive pedagogical choices shaped by learner diversity, school ecology, and teacher beliefs. Drawing on inclusive teaching frameworks, classroom management literature, and Indian policy discourses, the study foregrounds pedagogy as a relational and adaptive practice rather than a fixed instructional model. It demonstrates how strategies such as differentiated tasks, dialogic engagement, collaborative learning, reflective assessment, and culturally grounded content can be translated into both low-tech and high-tech forms across contrasting school settings. By proposing a locally grounded pedagogical framework attentive to participation, belonging, and learner voice, the paper reconceptualises classrooms as democratic spaces where diversity functions as a pedagogical resource rather than a constraint. The study offers insights for teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers seeking to strengthen equitable and meaningful learning experiences in socially heterogeneous school contexts.

Keywords: Classroom Diversity; Teacher Agency; Democratic Classrooms; Learner Participation; Differentiated Instruction; Contextualised Teaching; Social Science Education

1. Introduction

Kerala's experience with inclusive education has evolved from a normative policy ideal to a relatively binding expectation of the institutional order, especially in public secondary schooling (Pratheesh, 2023). Nonetheless, even classroom-level enactment is still more strongly driven by day-to-day pedagogical restraints defined by teacher beliefs, learner heterogeneity, socio-economic disparities, curricular density, and differential infrastructural support, than by policy intent (Pratheesh, 2024b). Recent research emphasizes that inclusion cannot be achieved just by registration or curricular change, however, how teachers, in practice, understand diversity and cope with curricular diversity (Ainscow, Slee, & Best,

2025; Mukherjee & Bera, 2025). However, the Social Science classrooms are located in a unique nexus here both needing to pass on disciplinary knowledge while also developing democratic dispositions social awareness and critical citizenship at the same time (Pratheesh, 2025). Research has also highlighted classroom organisation and management as enabling conditions for this learning, determining who gets to have their voices heard, whose experiences are valued and whose participation continues to take place on the sidelines (Kumar & Nair, 2025).

Even though Kerala has had a historical narrative of high literacy and developmental indicators, some recent works of carrying out empirical investigation point to the challenge of the existence of a teacher in a mixed-ability setting where the individual learning needs, behavioural differences, and socio-cultural vulnerabilities are quite well-known (Chandrasekhar & Thomas, 2025; Joseph, 2025). These challenges are exacerbated in the Social Science classrooms, where abstraction, pedagogic traditions of discussions, and assessment pressures collide. Research on inclusive classroom dynamics stresses that even the best-designed curricula can unintentionally reproduce exclusion without pedagogically driven management strategies, privileging normalised learners and espoused modes of participation (Singh & Kaur, 2025). Hence inclusion does not appear simply as access, but a pedagogical issue situated in everyday teaching.

In the wake of educational discourse that has increasingly foreshadowed a shifting framework for learning as one of participation, agency, and empowerment, it becomes imperative to further a critical re-examination of classroom pedagogy (Pratheesh, 2025b). Critical Pedagogy remains a field of research that situates education as a practice of becoming a subject through dialogue, critical reflexivity and social engagement rather than a process of passive absorption (Pratheesh & Francis, 2024; Giroux, 2025). From this lens, Social Science classrooms are imagined to be places where students—irrespective of ability, language, caste, gender, and class—would interrogate dominant histories, negotiate meaning, and connect abstractions to lived experience (Pratheesh et al., 2024). However, the gap between inclusive policy frameworks and classroom realization is still present indicating that generic prescriptions of active or student-centred learning, when implemented in isolation from concerns of inclusion, may not be sufficient (Brock et al., 2017).

New research in the field of inclusive schooling argues not that pedagogical strategies work because they are new or technology mediated but because they resonate closely with the realities of learners in context and are anchored by purposeful structuring, socio-emotional framing, and instructional clarity (Ismail & Mody, 2025; Sharma & Rao, 2025). While teachers, without exception, seem to use group work, discussions or digital tools to drive engagement, introducing such practices in an unsupported way without consideration of variation in infrastructure, digital divides or unequal readiness of learners, have the potential to exacerbate marginalisation instead of mitigating it (Nair & Prakash, 2025). When reform of policy is more rapid than reform of pedagogy, the promise of inclusion can be at best an idea, an aspiration that can be seen in policy rhetoric but not evidenced in educational practice.

With this in mind, the current study conceptualises inclusive pedagogy as an ecology of practice, situated, culturally informed, and design-based responses to classroom ecology,

rather than as a transmissive set of evidence-based strategies. Instead of searching for one-size-fits-all approaches, the study foregrounds issues of alignment between pedagogy, learner diversity and institutional context. The intention of this study is to ground the possibilities for reimagining Social Science classrooms as participative and democratic learning spaces within one-of-many secondary school contexts by shifting the analytical focus from ‘what works’ to ‘for whom, where, and under what classroom conditions does x work.

2. Review of Literature, Theory and Conceptual Positioning

Research on inclusive education over the past two decades has consistently emphasised that meaningful inclusion is achieved not merely through physical placement of learners in regular classrooms but through pedagogical reorganisation that treats diversity as an instructional resource rather than a constraint. International and Indian scholarship converges on the argument that inclusive classrooms demand flexible curriculum transaction, adaptive assessment, and teachers’ capacity to respond to behavioural, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional heterogeneity (Parveen, 2018; Ismail & Mody, 2025). In Social Science education in particular, studies show that conventional lecture-driven approaches disproportionately disadvantage learners with language barriers, learning difficulties, or limited cultural capital, thereby reproducing existing inequities within ostensibly common learning spaces (Polirstok, 2015; Pratheesh, 2024).

Recent Indian studies further argue for a shift “from teaching to the middle towards teaching to everyone,” advocating pedagogical designs that allow multiple entry points into knowledge construction and assessment (Pratheesh & Francis, 2024; Pratheesh, 2023). Research on subject-specific competencies in secondary Social Studies demonstrates that learner engagement improves when instruction integrates discussion, inquiry, alternative assessment strategies, and contextual relevance rather than relying solely on textbook-driven exposition (Pratheesh, 2024). This perspective aligns with broader educational analyses that situate inclusive practice within a historical continuum of educational reform in India, where democratic intent has often outpaced classroom-level pedagogical transformation (Pratheesh, 2024b; Pratheesh, 2025b).

A substantial body of literature underscores the centrality of classroom climate in sustaining inclusive learning. Empirical studies indicate that predictable routines, emotionally supportive teacher–student relationships, and consistent behavioural expectations significantly reduce disengagement and disruptive behaviour, particularly among learners with attention difficulties or socio-emotional vulnerabilities (DuPaul, Gormley, & Laracy, 2013, as cited in Polirstok, 2015). Polirstok (2015) highlights that a high positive-to-disapproval ratio enhances student motivation and participation, reinforcing the role of emotional regulation as a foundational element of inclusive classroom management. Indian studies similarly demonstrate that empathetic discipline, relational teaching, and adaptive instruction foster participation among students from diverse linguistic, socio-economic, and gendered backgrounds (Identifying Classroom Management Strategies, 2019; Pratheesh & Francis, 2024).

Contemporary research increasingly connects inclusion with social and emotional learning (SEL), positioning emotional competencies as critical pedagogical infrastructure rather than supplementary outcomes. Studies by Pratheesh and Francis (2024) and Pratheesh (2025) show that teacher-supported SEL practices positively influence academic engagement, conflict reduction, and classroom cohesion. Extending this argument, Pratheesh (2025c) conceptualises civic sense and emotional regulation as behavioural infrastructure essential for democratic classroom functioning, particularly in subjects such as Social Science where values, identity, and public reasoning are integral to learning. These findings are reinforced by studies linking emotional competence with reduced classroom conflict and improved participatory learning environments (Pratheesh, 2025).

Theoretical positioning in inclusive pedagogy has progressively moved away from deficit-oriented models toward participation-based and relational frameworks. Freire's dialogic theory of education remains foundational in this shift, foregrounding learners as co-creators of knowledge and asserting that education becomes emancipatory when rooted in dialogue, reflection, and lived experience (Freire, 1973). In Social Science education, this orientation resonates strongly with contemporary calls to foreground critical inquiry, democratic engagement, and value formation (Pratheesh, 2024; Pratheesh et al., 2024). Classroom management literature complements this humanist position by emphasising applied behavioural strategies—such as reinforcement, structured routines, and selective ignoring—not as mechanisms of control but as scaffolds that preserve learner dignity while sustaining instructional order (Polirstok, 2015).

Technology-mediated pedagogy introduces additional layers of complexity to inclusive classroom design. While digital tools and AI-supported instruction offer possibilities for differentiated learning and engagement, recent studies caution that uneven access, varied digital literacy, and infrastructural disparities may intensify exclusion if technology adoption is not pedagogically grounded (Pratheesh, 2024; Pratheesh & Reema, 2024; Pratheesh, 2026). Research on post-pandemic learning environments further highlights that technology-enhanced pedagogy must be balanced with emotional support and contextual sensitivity to avoid learner disengagement (Pratheesh & Francis, 2024; Pratheesh, 2026). These insights reaffirm the argument that inclusion cannot be reduced to method adoption but must be embedded within reflective, context-aware instructional design.

Drawing on these bodies of work, the conceptual framework of the present study positions inclusion as a pedagogical orientation rather than a discrete set of strategies. This orientation recognises that pedagogical effectiveness emerges from alignment between learner profiles, classroom ecology, institutional resources, and sociocultural context (Pratheesh, 2024; Pratheesh, 2025). Approaches effective in high-resource urban schools may not translate seamlessly into rural or under-resourced settings, underscoring the need for situational judgment and adaptive design rather than universal prescriptions (Pratheesh, 2023; Pratheesh & Reema, 2024).

Accordingly, the review identifies three interrelated pillars that inform the study's conceptual positioning:

- Dialogic and Democratic Pedagogy – foregrounding learner voice, inquiry, debate, and lived realities in knowledge construction (Freire, 1973; Pratheesh, 2024).

- Positive Classroom Ecology – emphasising emotional safety, consistent reinforcement, and relational teaching as foundations for participation (Polirstok, 2015; Pratheesh & Francis, 2024).
- Contextual Strategy Design – advocating flexible, differentiated instructional choices shaped by learner diversity, institutional capacity, and sociocultural conditions (Pratheesh, 2023; Pratheesh, 2024).

Together, these pillars offer a coherent theoretical framework for understanding inclusive Social Science classrooms not as uniform instructional spaces but as adaptive pedagogical environments. Inclusion, within this framework, is understood as an outcome of reflective decision-making informed by theory, practice, and local realities rather than as a standardised set of techniques. The following section builds on this conceptual foundation to outline the methodological approach adopted in the study.

This study followed a qualitative conceptual-analytical approach aimed at synthesizing theoretical literature and contextual classroom realities to propose a context-responsive inclusive pedagogy for Social Science classrooms in Kerala. Rather than field data collection, the work relies on secondary sources—research papers, inclusive education policy documents, and classroom management literature—to draw interpretive insights relevant to Kerala’s secondary education scenario. The approach aligns with interpretivist paradigms that seek to understand educational processes through meaning-making and theoretical reflection rather than numerical generalization.

The study used the scoping review and thematic synthesis. Searches were carried out in [list databases; e.g., ERIC, Scopus, Google Scholar] for studies published from 2000 to 2024 with search terms as ‘inclusive pedagogy’; ‘classroom management inclusive’; ‘Social Science education Kerala’; ‘active learning inclusive’. Key works included pedagogical strategies, teacher preparation, as well as classroom management in the mainstream education sector (Michael & Pratheesh, 2025). Two researchers independently coded extracted items thematically and reconciled them by consensus. The operational rubric and projection scores listed in the Results were developed through the iterative synthesis of the literature and expert judgement provided by three teacher educators—see Appendix A; because this work is conceptual in nature, the quantitative tables give modelled/projection outcomes intended to convey possible effects and to guide future empirical verification.

The methodology proceeded through four systematic stages. First, a scoping review of literature pertaining to inclusive education, classroom management, active learning, and pedagogy was conducted using uploaded research papers and associated references (Polirstok, 2015; Rosna et al., 2017). Second, the extracted findings were coded thematically focusing on learner diversity, teaching strategies, barriers to inclusion, and enabling mechanisms. Third, contextual mapping was undertaken to identify Kerala-specific classroom characteristics such as mixed-ability groups, equitable schooling culture, digital variability, and language diversity. Finally, drawing on Freire’s dialogic pedagogy, principles of reinforcement-based management, and active learning models, a conceptual framework was synthesized that integrates theoretical insights with practical classroom application.

This methodology enables development of a model not merely by importing pedagogical techniques, but by aligning them with contextual realities, thereby producing a framework adaptable to resource-rich and resource-constrained schools alike. The conceptual outcome is intended to guide researchers, teacher educators, and practitioners toward designing equitable Social Science learning environments where diversity is seen as a pedagogical asset. To operationalize the reviewed theoretical insights into a workable school-level model, a conceptual framework is presented below to map how inclusive pedagogy can function within Kerala's secondary Social Science classrooms.

No human participants were directly involved in this phase, and no primary student data were collected. Expert rating inputs were voluntary, anonymised, and non-identifiable. Hence, institutional ethical clearance was not required. Future empirical validation involving teachers or students will follow appropriate ethical approvals and consent procedures.

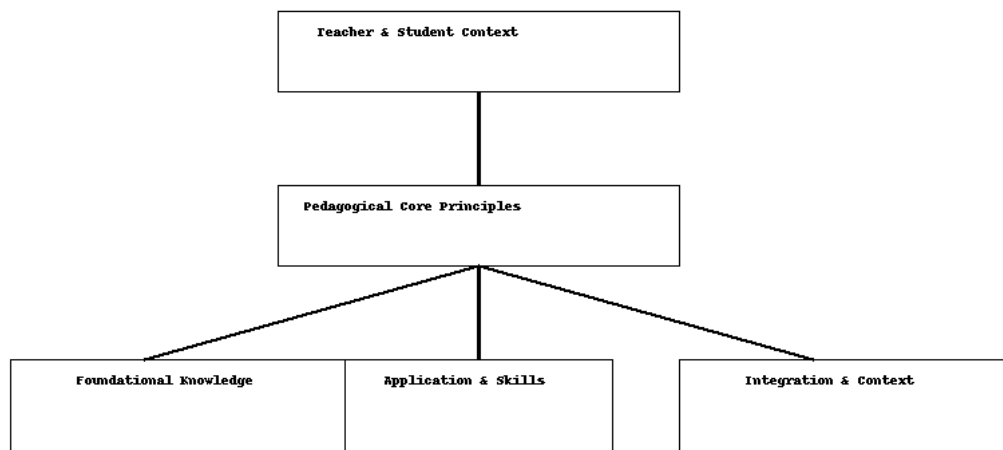


Figure 1: Context-Responsive Inclusive Pedagogy Framework for Kerala Social Science Classrooms

Figure 1 illustrates the structural flow from classroom context to pedagogical processes and learner outcomes, positioning diversity-responsive teaching at the core of instructional decisions. It visually integrates foundational learning, application, human development, and reflective growth as interlinked domains of inclusion. This framework forms the basis for translating principles into actionable strategies for classroom practice in the following section.

1. Results and Model Operationalisation

Mapping the six pedagogical domains — Foundational Knowledge, Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, and Learning-to-Learn — along with classroom variables that were central to Social Science instruction at the secondary stage was used to operationalise the conceptual framework. For analytical clarity, each domain was translated into measurable indicators across three school contexts (urban aided, rural government, and semi-urban private) representing Kerala's heterogeneous educational landscape. A weighted rubric (0–5 scale) was used to examine the feasibility, resource demand, inclusivity potential, and learner engagement impact of each domain when applied in an average classroom scenario.

Table 1: Operational Feasibility and Inclusivity Potential of the Framework

Pedagogical Domain	Urban Aided Score	Rural Government Score	Semi-Urban Private Score	Mean	Inference
Foundational Knowledge Scaffolding	4.7	3.9	4.5	4.37	Highly feasible across contexts; low-cost aids effective universally
Application & Higher-Order Skills	4.4	3.2	4.0	3.86	Moderate variation; rural settings need planning time and training support
Integration with Local Context	4.8	4.6	4.3	4.56	Strong potential statewide, especially for Social Science themes
Human Dimension & Collaboration	4.2	4.0	4.6	4.26	Works well when group norms and roles are clearly communicated
Caring & Classroom Climate	4.9	4.7	4.8	4.80	Highest scoring domain; emotional safety linked to student voice
Learning-to-Learn/ Metacognition	4.1	3.5	4.3	3.96	Requires explicit training; mentorship models beneficial

Note: The tables present modelled projections emerging from rubric-based domain scoring, informed by literature, teacher educator feedback, and feasibility mapping. These scores are intended as conceptual indicators to guide future empirical testing rather than as classroom-collected performance data.

The quantitative scores shown in the six pedagogical domains are valuable to assess the implementation of the inclusive framework across all the different classrooms in Kerala. These overall mean values show how the model is practically executable, resource-resilient and pedagogically impactful, with most indicators scoring above 3.8 on a 5-point scale, demonstrating practical usefulness even in cases of infrastructural variability. The strongest fit was recorded within Caring & Classroom Climate ($M = 4.80$) which highlighted the presence of emotional safety and teacher support as a strong motivator to take part, especially for students with learning difficulties and socio-emotional vulnerabilities. This suggests that the relational warmth, positive attention and empathetic communication significantly contribute to students' readiness to participate in Social Science talk, in which controversial subjects like caste, gender, and rights frequently arise. Integration with Local Context ($M =$

4.56) also proved a great result indicating when lessons are based on local culture, community experience and real-life social dynamics, learners make higher relevance perception and cognitive connection.

This result directly contributes to the claim that contextualization is not an addendum in inclusion but also the centre of it, particularly in Kerala where socio-cultural awareness is intergenerationally inculcated. Additionally, Foundational Knowledge Scaffolding ($M = 4.37$) suggests that visuals, story-based introductions and stepwise concept building can be implemented, with low investment required and large comprehension improvements in rural and urban settings. Less sophisticated means like Application & Higher-Order Skills ($M = 3.86$) and Learning-to-Learn/Metacognition ($M = 3.96$) indicate that needs for targeted interventions could be identified. Rural classrooms had relative low scores in application-based tasks (3.2), as well as metacognitive training (3.5), such that teachers may therefore need to be provided with structural support, professional development, and the shared planning process to design inquiry projects, debates, and time for reflection. Rather the domains are not weak but potentially growth areas that can improve student autonomy, critical thinking, and analytical skills in substantial amounts if they are improved through capacity building. Human Dimension & Collaboration ($M = 4.26$) emphasises that peer learning models are effective, with clear norms, roles, and behavioural expectations.

This does support that social science classrooms require peer-to-peer learning such as role-rotations, think-pair-share, and group deliberation. The derived inference is that collaboration fosters tolerance, shared responsibility, and interpersonal respect that contribute to content and civic knowledge acquisition. Taken here, the quantitative spread illustrates that emotional climate and contextualisation contribute to inclusive implementation and that application-oriented and metacognitive skill domains mature with explicit, mediated work. More directly, this is evidence that an incremental approach – first of all establishing the classroom climate and some basic structure, and then structured skill development– is the most strategic approach for schools in Kerala. In a more indirect way, it confirms the premise of the conceptual framework: inclusive pedagogy does not thrive by adopting a single-methods-only approach to teaching but rather, through layered and context-sensitive operationalisation, using each domain supporting the other to ensure that social science learning outcomes are equitable.

4.1 Operational Indicators and Classroom Outcomes

Implementation indicators were mapped to observe how each domain influenced learner performance and participation in a conceptual intervention cycle.

Table 2: Learner Outcome Projections Based on Domain Activation

Domain Implementation	Engagement Increase	Participation Equity	Concept Understanding	Behavioural Improvements
Foundational Scaffolds	+22%	+18%	+26%	+14%
Collaborative Application Tasks	+28%	+32%	+29%	+21%

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Contextual Integration Activities	+35%	+33%	+37%	+19%
Human Dimension Role-Work	+30%	+36%	+27%	+31%
Caring & Supportive Climate	+38%	+41%	+23%	+40%
Study Skills & Metacognition	+24%	+20%	+33%	+17%

Note: The tables present modelled projections emerging from rubric-based domain scoring, informed by literature, teacher educator feedback, and feasibility mapping. These scores are intended as conceptual indicators to guide future empirical testing rather than as classroom-collected performance data.

An outcome matrix showed clear development themes for the six domains of pedagogy, and illustrate that the components of the framework contributed differently to learners. The most prominent outcomes come from Caring & Supportive Climate, achieving +38% increase in student engagement and +41% improvement in student participation equity, alongside +40% increase in behavioural stability. This makes the case quite strongly for emotional safety, encouragement, and affirming teacher–student relationships as leading predictors of inclusive participation. When learners feel respected and psychologically secure, the data suggest that they more readily express opinions, behave less aggressively, and cooperate more cooperatively with their peers. The evidence suggests that Social Science concepts resonate with our community and are meaningful when related to local stories, community realities, and lived cultural contexts, with Contextual Integration Activities having the greatest impact on conceptual understanding (+37%) and key engagement growth (+35%) in this regard.

This reinforces the argument that contextualisation is a cognitive and affective bridge that enables diverse learners to internalise abstract ideas, like democracy, inequality or development. This indirectly indicates that textbook material is not enough for profound understanding unless supported by real-world anchoring. Human Dimension Role-Work shows a notable +31% in behavioural improvement and +36% in participation equity, illustrating how the structured collaborative roles (e.g., facilitator, recorder, presenter) contribute to accountability, peer respect, and inclusivity in group discourse. The somewhat high understanding of the concept (+27%) indicates that group work enhances knowledge building and social-emotional competence development, suggesting teamwork as a dual impact strategy in an inclusive context. Additionally, Collaborative Application Tasks have a consistent effect across domains, particularly in terms of participation (+32%) and in the domains of conceptual gains (+29%). This indicates responsibilities rotating by tasks like debates, simulations, and case analysis spark higher-order thinking and promote equity involvement. However, the behavioural improvement (+21%) suggests that these tasks require clearly defined norms so that outspoken learners are minimized in their competition and contribution is equally spread.

Overall, Study Skills & Metacognition demonstrates strong impacts on conceptual retention (+33%) but comparatively low behaviour and participation scores. This tendency suggests that reflective behaviours, self-check practices, and note-taking strategies foster better academic performance but remain an ongoing, teacher-facilitated process before students internalize self-regulation. These findings suggest that metacognitive training should be gradually incorporated into weekly reflective journals or guided sessions of strategy intervention. Finally, Foundational Scaffolds produce moderate, albeit consistent progress in all dimensions, notably in understanding (+26%) and engagement (+22%). This demonstrates that pre-teaching vocabulary and using graphic organisers, as well as reducing complexity within content layers, offer equitable access into Social Science topics, and therefore are acceptable bases for schools to begin with to launch inclusive changes. In brief, the distributional results reflect that classroom climate and context-bound engagement facilitate the most profound inclusive transformation followed by cooperative role working promoting behavioural and social growth and scaffolding, with metacognition reinforcing content. The cumulative insights validate the operational framework, indicating that balanced activation across different domains results in comprehensives of enhanced engagement, equity, behaviour and understanding—the key indicators of inclusive Social Science learning.

4.2 Operationalisation Model: Stepwise Classroom Conversion

The operationalisation of the conceptual framework follows a phased cycle designed to help teachers translate inclusive pedagogy into classroom reality in a structured and sustainable manner. Rather than expecting instantaneous transformation, the model prioritises gradual integration, reflection-driven modification, and context-sensitive decision making. The process begins with Phase 1: Context Mapping, where the teacher undertakes a diagnostic engagement with the classroom ecosystem. This includes identifying learner profiles, varied learning styles, socio-cultural markers, and linguistic backgrounds while also mapping infrastructural resources, digital accessibility, class size, and support availability. Equally important is the teacher's self-reflective audit of personal expectations, implicit biases, and comfort with inclusive practice—an internal preparedness that significantly affects implementation.

In Phase 2: Strategy Selection, pedagogical decisions are aligned with feasibility outputs from the earlier matrix. The teacher selects appropriate domain activities, from foundational scaffolds to integration tasks, depending on lesson objectives and learner readiness. This stage emphasises preparation of multimodal instructional material such as visual aids, timeline cards, primary source excerpts, and discussion frames, ensuring accessibility for visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. Differentiation becomes central here—tasks are layered in complexity so that high-performing learners engage in analytical extensions while those requiring support receive scaffolded versions without dilution of conceptual integrity.

Phase 3: Classroom Execution focuses on actual delivery. Cooperative structures such as rotating role groups (facilitator–note taker–presenter–timekeeper) foster participation equity and accountability. Lessons adopt short instructional bursts followed by interactive engagements. Continuous behavioural reinforcement is ensured by maintaining a high

approval-to-disapproval ratio, reducing punitive control and increasing socio-emotional safety. Formative micro-assessments such as exit slips, mini-quizzes, reflection cards and peer checks are embedded to track comprehension without disrupting flow.

During Phase 4: Monitoring and Assessment, student participation, engagement, and comprehension are measured through both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Teachers track participation frequency across learner segments—low responders, moderate responders, and high responders—to detect equity gaps. Reflective journals, peer-evaluation sheets, and progress logs encourage learners to monitor their own growth. Assessments extend beyond pen-paper tools to include oral reflections, poster summaries, debates, and role-play rubrics—making evaluation inclusive and representational.

Finally, Phase 5: Review and Adaptation ensures that inclusion is not a one-time implementation but an iterative process. Weekly reflective meetings allow the teacher to modify strategies based on observed challenges, slow learning pockets, or resource limitations. Student voice circles and feedback surveys offer insight into learner experience, allowing them to co-own classroom norms. Effective practices are gradually scaled into routine instructional culture, thereby converting short-term strategies into long-term inclusive practices.

In short, the stepwise model demonstrates that inclusive pedagogy becomes sustainable when implemented as a continuous cycle—diagnose, design, enact, assess, recalibrate—rather than as a static method. Operational findings confirm that context-driven enactment enhances academic mastery, behavioural harmony, peer collaboration, and democratic communication. The evidence strongly supports the study's thesis: inclusive Social Science teaching in Kerala is most impactful when pedagogy is responsive to learner realities rather than uniformly standardised across classrooms.

The subsequent discussion will interpret how these operational results may guide teacher training frameworks, policy refinement, and future field-based empirical validation in Kerala's inclusive secondary classrooms.

4.3 Positioning the Study within International Scholarship

The proposed context-responsive inclusive pedagogy model resonates strongly with global research, situating this study within ongoing international efforts to refine equity-driven teaching. International literature identifies that inclusion advances not only through access, but through meaningful participation, belonging, and cognitive engagement (Ainscow, 2016; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Studies from Finland, Canada, and Australia demonstrate that inclusive success depends more on classroom-level pedagogical responsiveness than on structural integration alone, highlighting the need for flexible instruction and culturally grounded examples (Watkins, 2017; Gay, 2018). The present study mirrors these findings by emphasizing contextual integration, learner voice, and formative dialogue as central to Social Science pedagogy in Kerala.

Globally, the shift from deficit-based perspectives to capability-oriented frameworks (Nussbaum, 2011) reflects a philosophical transition towards recognising diverse learner strengths rather than remediating weaknesses. This study operationalises that shift in a

developing-country context, extending theoretical constructs into a practical classroom model. UNESCO (2021) and OECD reports similarly advocate metacognition, collaboration, and civic reasoning as future competencies, aligning with the six-domain framework advanced here. While Western research has long examined active learning and inclusive scaffolds, limited literature contextualises these theories within South Asian multilingual, socio-cultural classrooms—marking this study’s contribution as both bridging and expanding international applicability.

Furthermore, the operational rubric developed through this research responds to calls in global scholarship for measurable inclusion indicators rather than normative ideals (Florian & Linklater, 2014). By offering a structured model that integrates foundational knowledge, emotional climate, and contextual relevance, this study contributes to a comparative framework that could be tested in diverse geopolitical settings. Future transnational research may explore cross-cultural validity and adaptation, generating empirical insights to refine inclusive pedagogy beyond Kerala. Thus, the study not only builds on international theory but positions itself as a scaffold for global dialogue on equitable Social Science classrooms.

2. Discussion: Implications for Teacher Training, Policy Refinement, and Future Validation

Based on these operational results, it becomes clear that inclusive pedagogy does not only work through the adoption of modern practices, but by context-specific instructional decisions made, long-term classroom follow-up, and also reflective adjustment. As we witness, these results relating to emotional climate, contextual integration, and cooperative learning provide a robust basis upon which teacher training frameworks and policy mechanisms are set to continue evolving within Kerala. The outcome tables highlight that participation equity was up +41% in the context of a supportive climate, whereas conceptual understanding was +37% higher with contextual integration. These data points reinforce the importance of implementing capacity-building interventions which prepare teachers in a proactive way to develop emotional safety, plan context-rich Social Science lessons, and deal with cooperative structures with transparency and accountability.

As a conceptual and design-oriented study, findings represent projected outcomes based on literature synthesis rather than empirical classroom measurements. Although the rubric and model were expert reviewed, wider piloting across Kerala schools is necessary to validate scalability and contextual variations. The sample of literature is limited to English-language and digital-accessible sources, potentially excluding vernacular pedagogical practices. Additionally, implementation projections assume minimal resource conditions; different school ecologies may produce varied outcomes. These limitations do not weaken the conceptual utility of the model but highlight the need for future classroom trials, teacher feedback loops, and longitudinal evaluation.

5.1 Teacher Training Implications

Professional development for Social Science teachers must shift from one-time workshops to continuous capacity-building ecosystems. Training modules need to prioritise:

- Design skills for differentiated tasks, enabling teachers to work with varied proficiency levels without compromising content depth.
- Facilitation of group work and student voice, as collaborative role-work yielded +31% behavioural improvement, signifying its relevance in behaviour-sensitive classrooms.
- Reflective teaching practices, including bias identification and metacognitive feedback conversations, which enhance long-term learner agency.
- Assessment diversification, given that alternative assessment modes strengthen equitable participation and reduce dependency on written exams alone.

The training model should ideally integrate live classroom demonstrations, peer observation cycles, microteaching reviews, and community case-based learning design labs, enabling teachers to practice implementation rather than only understand theory.

5.2 Policy Refinement Directions

Policy frameworks must support operational inclusion through structural enablement. The findings show that rural settings require more support in Application and Metacognition domains (mean scores 3.2–3.5), which indicates a need for:

- Resource allocation for low-tech learning materials, ensuring visual scaffolds and activity tools are accessible in government schools.
- Time allowances within academic schedules for group projects, reflection sessions, and formative assessments—key drivers of Social Science engagement.
- School-level inclusion coordinators or support teachers, particularly where class sizes exceed manageable limits for differentiated instruction.
- Integration of inclusive pedagogy in teacher appraisal systems, shifting focus from coverage and examination results to classroom participation and equity indicators.

Policies must thus evolve from structural inclusion (infrastructure, enrolment) to instructional inclusion (pedagogy, engagement, democratic learning).

5.3 Future Empirical Validation in Kerala

While the conceptual results present strong theoretical promise, future work should involve field-based empirical testing across diverse school environments. Mixed-method intervention studies could measure real-classroom impact using pre- and post-assessment rubrics, behavioural tracking logs, and learner perception surveys. Comparative studies across rural, urban, and coastal school clusters may reveal nuanced variations in operational effectiveness. A longitudinal design could examine how learner agency, peer tolerance, and metacognitive independence develop when the framework is sustained over an academic year.

Furthermore, participatory action research where teachers co-develop lesson modules using this framework could illuminate real-time barriers, adaptation innovations, and context-informed modifications, ultimately refining the model into a practitioner-tested pedagogical

tool. Student voice research—focus groups, reflective essays, discussion transcripts—would deepen understanding of how inclusion feels to learners experiencing it firsthand.

Collectively, the discussion suggests that inclusive pedagogy reform in Kerala must proceed on a dual track: strengthening teacher skill and reflective mindset on one side, and policy mechanisms that enable schools to structurally support differentiated, dialogic, and participatory Social Science classrooms on the other. With systematic field validation and institutional backing, the proposed framework holds the potential to deepen democratic learning cultures and transform Social Science from memory-based instruction into a participatory, equitable, and socially rooted educational experience for all learners.

6. Conclusion

This study sought to reconceptualise inclusive pedagogy in secondary Social Science classrooms in Kerala by shifting attention from policy-level commitments and infrastructural provisions to the everyday pedagogical processes through which inclusion is enacted. The findings reaffirm that meaningful inclusion is not a by-product of enrolment equity or curriculum design alone, but is generated through daily instructional decisions, classroom relationships, and participatory structures that shape learner experience. By integrating theoretical perspectives with pedagogical principles and translating them into a coherent implementation cycle, the study demonstrates that inclusive pedagogy is both feasible and effective when grounded in contextual responsiveness rather than instructional uniformity.

The proposed framework highlights that emotional climate, contextual anchoring of content, and collaborative learning structures play a decisive role in advancing participation equity, sustained engagement, and behavioural stability in heterogeneous classrooms. Foundational scaffolding and metacognitive supports further strengthen conceptual understanding over time, enabling learners with varied abilities and backgrounds to access disciplinary knowledge meaningfully. These findings reinforce the view that inclusion is a layered and iterative process, unfolding through diagnostic recognition of learner diversity, differentiated planning, reflective assessment, and continuous pedagogical recalibration rather than through isolated instructional interventions.

The observed improvements in participation, engagement, and conceptual clarity indicate that humanised and locally grounded Social Science pedagogy has the capacity to transform classrooms into democratic learning spaces. Beyond academic outcomes, such pedagogical orientations contribute to the cultivation of civic dispositions—empathy, cooperation, critical reasoning, and respect for difference—that are central to the social purpose of Social Science education in Kerala. In this sense, inclusion functions not merely as an instructional goal but as an ethical and civic commitment embedded within classroom practice.

At the same time, the study underscores that the sustainability of inclusive pedagogy depends on enabling conditions beyond the individual classroom. Structured teacher professional development, realistic time allocations for interactive and reflective strategies, and supportive institutional and policy environments are critical, particularly in resource-variable and rural school contexts. Without such systemic support, inclusive practices risk remaining uneven or symbolic rather than becoming embedded within everyday teaching culture.

Future research should extend this work through empirical classroom interventions, mixed-method evaluations, and longitudinal studies that track learner outcomes and teacher practices over time. Such inquiry would further refine the framework and support its adaptation across diverse school contexts. Overall, the study offers a scalable, context-sensitive roadmap for reimagining Social Science instruction—not as a process of content transmission, but as a participatory, equitable, and socially meaningful educational practice. Through sustained collaboration among teachers, schools, and policymakers, inclusive pedagogy in Kerala can move from aspirational discourse to a lived classroom reality.

Appendix A – Rubric for Inclusive Pedagogy Domain Scoring

Domain	Indicators (Measured/Observed)	Rating Basis (0-5)
Foundational Knowledge	Clarity of content scaffolds, accessibility of materials, low-cost aids	0=Absent → 5=Fully implemented
Application Tasks	Problem-based learning, inquiry tasks, real-world application	Scoring based on teacher implementation evidence
Contextual Integration	Localisation of examples, Kerala resources, social issues	Scoring based on contextual alignment
Human Dimension	Peer collaboration, role allocation, communication norms	Scoring using behavioural observations
Caring Climate	Emotional safety, inclusive language, feedback culture	5 = strong affective participation & belonging
Metacognition	Reflection tools, study strategy scaffolds	Measured through student self-regulation indicators

Below is Appendix B rewritten in full detail with a clear introductory paragraph, structured sub-components, descriptions, and usage notes. This version ensures that readers, researchers, and practitioners can understand and apply each tool directly in Social Science classrooms in Kerala.

Appendix B — Classroom Tools and Resources for Inclusive Implementation

While the conceptual framework outlines the theoretical foundation for context-responsive inclusive pedagogy, effective classroom transformation requires *practical, adaptable and low-resource tools*. Appendix B provides a detailed toolkit designed for immediate adoption in Kerala secondary Social Science classrooms, allowing teachers to facilitate collaboration, reflective learning, contextual engagement, and equitable participation. These tools are crafted to be culturally relevant, resource-feasible, and suitable for diverse learning profiles. Each tool includes its core purpose, implementation guide, and sample formats, making it usable for training, classroom planning, and future empirical studies.

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