

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION AT UNINBE: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

LA GESTIÓN DE RECURSOS HUMANOS COMO HERRAMIENTA PARA LA INCLUSIÓN EDUCATIVA EN LA UNINBE: DESAFÍOS Y PERSPECTIVAS

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ABSTRACT

The University of Namibe (UNINBE), established in 2020, is a public higher education institution with a Human Resources and Social Action Department, responsible not only for managing recruitment processes and performance evaluations but also for promoting social support and cultural and educational activities. This structure has played an important role in promoting educational inclusion through initiatives such as awarding scholarships, providing university residences, and implementing support programs for students facing socioeconomic vulnerability. This study aimed to analyze how human resources management contributes to the implementation of inclusive educational policies at UNINBE. The methodology used was qualitative, with a descriptive and exploratory approach, based on the analysis of institutional documents and semi-structured interviews with managers and members of the academic community. The main results show that although there has been significant progress in institutional commitment to inclusion, important challenges persist, including the scarcity of specialized training for professionals, insufficiently adapted infrastructure, and the difficulty of effectively implementing inclusive policies. It is concluded that, despite the limitations, UNINBE has the potential to become a national benchmark in inclusive higher education. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen strategic actions to ensure continuous training, expand physical and technological accessibility, and align with inclusive educational guidelines, both nationally and internationally.

Keywords:

inclusive Education, Social Support, Capacity Building, Accessibility, Educational Policies.

RESUMEN

La Universidad de Namibe (UNINBE), establecida en 2020, es una institución pública de educación superior que cuenta con un Departamento de Recursos Humanos y Acción Social, responsable no solo de gestionar los procesos de reclutamiento y evaluación del desempeño, sino también de promover el apoyo social y las actividades culturales y educativas. Esta estructura ha desempeñado un papel importante en la promoción de la inclusión educativa mediante iniciativas como la asignación de becas, la provisión de residencias universitarias y la implementación de programas de apoyo para estudiantes en situación de vulnerabilidad socioeconómica. El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar cómo la gestión de recursos humanos contribuye a la implementación de políticas educativas inclusivas en la UNINBE. La metodología utilizada fue de carácter cualitativo, con un enfoque descriptivo y exploratorio, basada en el análisis de documentos institucionales y entrevistas semiestructuradas con directivos y miembros de la comunidad académica. Los principales resultados muestran que, aunque ha habido avances significativos en el compromiso institucional con la inclusión, persisten desafíos importantes, entre ellos la escasez de formación especializada para el personal, una infraestructura insuficientemente adaptada y la dificultad para implementar de manera efectiva las políticas inclusivas. Se concluye que, a pesar de las

limitaciones, la UNINBE tiene el potencial de convertirse en un referente nacional en educación superior inclusiva. Para lograrlo, es fundamental fortalecer acciones estratégicas que garanticen la formación continua, ampliar la accesibilidad física y tecnológica, y alinearse con las directrices de educación inclusiva tanto a nivel nacional como internacional.

Palabras clave:

Educación Inclusiva, Apoyo Social, Desarrollo De Capacidades, Accesibilidad, Políticas Educativas.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary field of higher education, the notion of inclusion has evolved from a compensatory approach focused on populations with disabilities toward a broader paradigm grounded in principles of social justice, structural equity, and human rights. This conceptual shift, largely driven by international frameworks promoted by UNESCO (1994, 2009), has redefined inclusion as a systemic process that entails the transformation of institutional cultures, policies, and practices. However, this discursive evolution has not been accompanied, in many contexts, by equivalent transformations at the operational level, resulting in a persistent gap between normative discourse and institutional reality (Kefallinou et al., 2020).

From a critical perspective, several scholars have questioned the instrumental appropriation of the concept of inclusion within universities, arguing that, in many cases, it is incorporated as a rhetorical element within institutional strategic frameworks without altering the power structures and organizational logics that produce exclusion (Domingo-Martos et al., 2024). In this sense, inclusion risks becoming what some approaches describe as a “symbolic policy,” in which progressive principles are promoted without generating substantive changes in the material conditions of access, retention, and academic success. This issue is particularly relevant in higher education systems characterized by structural limitations, where institutional capacities to implement inclusive policies are uneven and frequently insufficient.

The debate becomes more complex when examined through the lens of social justice. Within this framework, inclusion cannot be reduced to expanding access; rather, it requires a profound reconfiguration of the conditions that structure the educational experience, including pedagogical practices, curriculum design, assessment systems, and organizational dynamics (Moreno-Tallón & Muntaner Guasp, 2025). In line with this perspective, Calderón and Echeita (2022) argue that inclusive education should be understood as a human right that directly challenges educational institutions to guarantee equitable conditions for all students. However, this normative demand contrasts

with empirical evidence showing the persistence of institutional, cultural, and attitudinal barriers that limit the effectiveness of inclusive policies (Granada Azcárraga et al., 2020; Woodcock et al., 2023; Hussain & Abdullah, 2023).

In Latin America and other Global South contexts, the problem intensifies due to the convergence of multiple forms of inequality. Recent studies have documented that, although significant progress has been made in the formulation of inclusive policies, their implementation faces constraints related to resource availability, teacher training, and institutional coherence (Arcos Proaño et al., 2023; Giménez Rodríguez, 2024; Sosa & Villafuerte, 2022). In these contexts, inclusive education becomes a contested field between normative aspirations and actual institutional capacities, highlighting the need to analyze not only the policies themselves but also the organizational mechanisms that enable—or hinder—their implementation.

It is precisely at this point that human resource management emerges as a critical, yet under-theorized, component in the literature on inclusive education in higher education. Traditionally approached from functionalist perspectives focused on organizational efficiency, human resource management has been insufficiently examined in terms of its role in institutional transformation toward inclusion. However, from a strategic standpoint, human resource management involves the configuration of organizational capacities that directly affect the quality of educational processes (Chiavenato, 2014; Mintzberg, 2006). This includes the training, motivation, evaluation, and retention of academic and administrative staff—elements that are fundamental for the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Despite its relevance, the available empirical evidence presents important limitations. On the one hand, there is a proliferation of studies focused on individual-level variables—such as teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, or beliefs—which, while valuable, tend to fragment the analysis and obscure the structural dimensions of the problem (Granada Azcárraga et al., 2020; Woodcock et al., 2023). On the other hand, studies addressing inclusion from an organizational perspective often focus on policies or normative frameworks without delving into the internal management processes that mediate their implementation. Consequently, an analytical fragmentation persists, hindering a systemic understanding of inclusive education.

This limitation becomes even more evident in African contexts, where scientific production on inclusive education in higher education remains significantly lower compared to other regions. In the case of Angola, although the approval of Presidential Decree No. 187/17 represents a substantial normative advancement, studies such as Sousa and Lima (2020) reveal a considerable gap between policy design



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and effective implementation. Factors such as insufficient accessible infrastructure, limited specialized staff training, and a lack of adapted pedagogical resources constitute persistent obstacles that call into question the feasibility of inclusive models under current conditions.

In this scenario, the University of Namibe (UNINBE) emerges as a strategic setting for analyzing these dynamics, as a recently established institution that simultaneously faces the challenge of consolidating its organizational structure and aligning with the principles of inclusive education. This dual condition makes it a particularly relevant case for examining how human resource management decisions influence institutional capacity to effectively implement inclusive policies.

Based on this analysis, a critical research gap is identified: the absence of studies that integrate, from a systemic and contextualized perspective, the relationship between human resource management and the implementation of inclusive education in higher education institutions within emerging African contexts. This gap is significant, as it limits the understanding of the organizational mechanisms that mediate between normative discourse and institutional practice, thereby restricting the ability to formulate evidence-based policies.

In response to this issue, the present study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach aimed at examining how human resource management practices at the University of Namibe influence the implementation of inclusive education policies. Specifically, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How are human resource management strategies configured in relation to inclusive education? (2) What structural, cultural, and organizational barriers limit their implementation? and (3) What opportunities emerge to strengthen inclusion from an institutional perspective?

In this way, the article seeks not only to provide empirical evidence on a relatively unexplored context but also to contribute to the theoretical debate by positioning human resource management as a central—rather than peripheral—axis in understanding inclusive education in higher education. Ultimately, it is argued that inclusion cannot be understood solely as an educational policy, but rather as a complex organizational process that requires profound transformations in how institutions manage their human capital and structure their practices.

2. Materials and Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory approach, aiming to investigate how Human Resource Management at the University of Namibe (UNINBE) contributes to the effective implementation of inclusive educational policies in the context of Angolan higher education.

The research is based on institutional document analysis, observation of administrative and pedagogical practices, and semi-structured interviews with key figures from the university community.

A qualitative approach was chosen due to its focus on the interpretation of meanings, perceptions, and institutional practices. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1994), this approach allows for a deeper understanding of social phenomena in the environments in which they occur, which is essential for capturing the subjective dimensions involved in educational inclusion and people management.

The universe sample he was made up of the community academic at UNINBE, from which the selection was made, one sample intentional, of a non-probabilistic nature, composed by the following participants:

- Managers and technicians from the human resources and social action department;
- Teachers from different departments;
- Three students with special needs or in situations of social vulnerability;
- Two individuals responsible for coordinating student support and inclusive programs.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, recorded and subsequently transcribed, to deepen understanding of experiences, perceptions, and practices related to inclusion and human resource management. Furthermore, a documentary analysis of institutional instruments, including the UNINBE Organic Statute, internal regulations, scholarship policies, institutional development plans, and documents related to social actions and student support, was conducted. Direct observation was also employed through systematic visits to the university's administrative and pedagogical environments (secretariats, classrooms, student residences, and cultural spaces), with detailed recording in a field diary.

The collected data were subjected to content analysis according to Bardin's methodology (2011), which enabled the categorization and systematic interpretation of speeches, documents, and observational records. The emerging categories were organized around the three central axes of the study: practices, challenges, and perspectives of management and inclusion.

The study rigorously adhered to the ethical precepts of scientific research, ensuring participant anonymity, free and informed consent, and the confidentiality of



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information. The research was approved by the university's administration and fully complied with current regulations governing research involving human subjects.

3. Results

The analysis of the collected data reveals a multifaceted panorama of human resource management and the implementation of inclusive educational policies at the University of Namibe (UNINBE). The results were organized into three main categories: current inclusive practices, challenges faced, and perspectives for the future of inclusion in the university context.

Current Inclusive Practices

The interviewees acknowledged that the Human Resources and Social Action Department has implemented measures to promote inclusion in the academic and administrative spheres. Among the highlighted practices are:

- Granting scholarships to low-income students, aiming to ensure access to and retention in higher education;
- Providing university housing for students from different regions and socioeconomic backgrounds;
- Conducting cultural and recreational activities that promote integration and value diversity in the university environment.

Furthermore, other initiatives were identified as fundamental to strengthening social support and complementary training within the academic community, such as:

- Distribution of basic food baskets and hygiene kits to students in vulnerable situations;
- Free psychological and psycho-pedagogical support services, with individual and group sessions;
- Creation of a student emergency fund, intended to support students facing temporary financial difficulties (such as transportation, food, or healthcare);
- Social counseling and career guidance to assist students in adapting and remaining in their studies;
- Granting partial or total exemptions from tuition fees, based on socioeconomic criteria.

In the field of educational and cultural activities, the following stand out:

- Cultural weeks and local identity fairs, promoting the appreciation of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Namibe region;
- workshops and open courses, such as dance, theater, music, crafts and languages;
- Lectures, seminars and thematic debates on inclusion, citizenship, human rights and equity in higher education;

- University extension programs, integrating the external community and encouraging cultural exchange;
- Reading groups, film clubs, and art exhibitions, with broad participation from faculty and students.

These practices demonstrate an institutional commitment to the principles of educational inclusion, although they lack systematization and strengthening through structural policies.

Challenges Identified

Despite the progress, the data reveals several obstacles that hinder the full implementation of inclusive policies at UNINBE. The main challenges identified were:

- Insufficient training of professionals, especially teachers and technicians, to work with the specificities of inclusive education;
- Inadequate infrastructure, with a lack of accessibility in physical spaces for people with physical and sensory disabilities;
- Lack of adapted teaching materials and assistive technologies, compromising the learning process of students with specific needs;
- Cultural and institutional resistance hinders the adoption of innovative practices and the overcoming of exclusionary paradigms still present in higher education.

These challenges highlight the need for urgent and effective measures to transform the normative principles of inclusion into concrete, consistent, and permanent practices.

Perspectives for the Future

Despite the limitations, participants expressed optimism about the future of inclusion at UNINBE, highlighting the institution's potential, given its youth and dynamism, to become a national and regional benchmark in this field. Among the main perspectives mentioned are:

- Continuous investments in training and development of human resources, with a specific focus on inclusive education and addressing diversity;
- Improvement of physical and technological infrastructure, with structural adaptations and acquisition of accessible equipment;
- Strengthening partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, and international institutions, with a view to obtaining technical and financial support;
- Developing an institutional strategic plan that integrates inclusion as a cross-cutting theme in the university's academic and administrative policies.

These actions, if implemented in a coordinated manner and with institutional support, can promote the consolidation of a more accessible, participatory, and equitable



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university environment, contributing significantly to social transformation and the fulfillment of national and international commitments to inclusive education.

Table 1 presents a detailed summary of the inclusive practices in place at UNINBE, demonstrating the institution's commitment to human resource management and social initiatives.

Table 1. Current Inclusive Practices at the University of Namibe

Inclusive practice	Description
Granting of scholarships	Financial support for low-income students, guaranteeing access and retention.
Provision of university residences	Welcoming students from different regions and social backgrounds.
Cultural and recreational activities	Promoting integration and valuing diversity in the university environment.

Note: Prepared by the authors based on the research data.

Table 2 presents the main challenges identified in the implementation of inclusive policies at UNINBE.

Table 2. Challenges Identified in the Implementation of Inclusive Policies

Challenge	Impact
Insufficient training of human resources	It limits teachers' and technicians' capacity to meet specific needs.
Limited infrastructure	Lack of physical accessibility for people with disabilities.
Lack of adapted teaching materials and assistive technologies.	It compromises students' learning with special needs.
Cultural and institutional resistance	They hinder the adoption of innovative practices and paradigm shifts.

Note: Prepared by the authors based on the research data.

Table 3 presents the main perspectives for the future of inclusion at UNINBE.

Table 3. Perspectives for the Future of Inclusion at the University of Namibe

Perspective	Objective
Ongoing training of human resources	Improving training in inclusive education and specialized care.
Infrastructure improvement	Adapting physical spaces and acquiring accessible technological equipment.
Strengthening partnerships	Obtain technical and financial support from government agencies, NGOs, and international institutions.
Institutional strategic plan	Integrate inclusion as a cross-cutting theme in academic and administrative policies.

Note: Prepared by the authors based on research data.

A combined analysis of the three tables reveals a clear picture of the inclusion situation at the University of Namibe. Table 1 demonstrates the institutional commitment to human resource management and social actions that promote inclusion, while Table 2 highlights the concrete challenges that hinder the effective implementation of these policies. Finally, Table 3 points to promising paths for the future. Together, this information indicates that, despite current obstacles, UNINBE has a solid foundation and a plan oriented towards strengthening inclusive education.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study can be more rigorously interpreted when situated within a dual theoretical framework combining Institutional Theory and the Capability Approach, allowing for a deeper understanding of how inclusive education is shaped by both structural constraints and human development conditions.

From the perspective of Institutional Theory, higher education institutions are not merely technical systems but socially constructed organizations influenced by norms, rules, and legitimacy pressures (Mintzberg, 2006). In this sense, the inclusive initiatives observed at UNINBE—such as scholarships, housing, and social support programs—can be interpreted as responses to normative expectations aligned with global inclusion agendas promoted by UNESCO. However, the persistence of gaps in implementation suggests the presence of what institutional scholars describe as decoupling, where formal policies and practices exist symbolically but are not fully embedded in day-to-day organizational routines.

This decoupling is evident in the fragmentation identified in the results: while inclusive practices are present, they lack systemic articulation and institutional consolidation. Such a pattern aligns with prior research indicating that organizations often adopt inclusive discourses to gain legitimacy without undergoing substantive structural transformation (Domingo-Martos et al., 2024). In the case of UNINBE, inclusion appears to operate within a hybrid space—partly



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institutionalized, yet still dependent on isolated initiatives rather than integrated governance mechanisms.

Complementarily, the Capability Approach—originally developed by Amartya Sen and extended to education—provides a critical lens to assess not only access to higher education but the real opportunities individuals have to achieve meaningful academic and social outcomes. From this perspective, the initiatives identified at UNINBE (e.g., financial support, housing, psychological services) can be understood as efforts to expand students' capabilities. However, the lack of accessible infrastructure, adapted materials, and trained personnel significantly constrains these capabilities, limiting students' ability to fully benefit from educational opportunities.

This tension between formal access and substantive capability expansion is consistent with findings by Quinatoa Hurtado and Silva Cadmen (2026), who emphasize that inclusion requires the design of environments that actively enable participation. Similarly, Calvopiña-Roca and Ayala (2024) highlight that inclusion must extend beyond access to encompass conditions that support long-term social and professional integration. In this regard, the UNINBE case illustrates that inclusion cannot be reduced to entry mechanisms but must address the broader ecosystem that shapes student trajectories.

The role of human resource management (HRM) emerges as a critical intersection between these two theoretical perspectives. From an institutional standpoint, HRM functions as a mechanism for embedding norms and practices within organizational routines. From a capability perspective, HRM directly influences the development of competencies required to support diverse learners. The lack of specialized training identified in this study represents a structural constraint that limits both institutionalization and capability expansion.

This finding reinforces arguments by Campos Quispe (2025) and Sandoval Ortiz (2024), who advocate for an inclusive approach to human resource management that integrates diversity and inclusion into core organizational processes. In the absence of such integration, inclusion remains dependent on individual efforts rather than systemic capacity. Moreover, the persistence of cultural resistance identified in the findings suggests that HRM must also address attitudinal and normative dimensions, not merely technical competencies—an issue closely linked to the development of inclusive organizational cultures (Sosa & Villafuerte, 2022; Hurtado et al., 2023).

Another key insight emerging from the theoretical integration is the role of material conditions in mediating institutional change. Institutional Theory often emphasizes legitimacy and norms, but the Capability Approach highlights that without adequate resources, inclusion cannot be

realized in practice. The infrastructural limitations observed at UNINBE thus represent not only operational challenges but structural barriers that prevent the translation of institutional commitments into real opportunities for students.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that inclusion in higher education must be understood as a multi-level phenomenon, involving interactions between macro-level policies, meso-level institutional practices, and micro-level experiences of students and staff. The gap between national policy frameworks—such as the Angolan Decree No. 187/17—and institutional implementation reflects a broader misalignment between these levels, consistent with observations by Sousa and Lima (2020). This reinforces the need for stronger policy-institution alignment mechanisms.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature in several key ways:

- First, it advances the theoretical understanding of inclusive education by bridging Institutional Theory and the Capability Approach, offering a more comprehensive framework for analyzing inclusion as both an organizational and human development process. While previous studies have tended to focus on either structural or individual dimensions, this integrated approach highlights the interdependence between institutional capacity and individual opportunity.
- Second, the study extends existing research by positioning human resource management as a central analytical category in the study of inclusive education in higher education. This challenges the prevailing tendency to treat HRM as a peripheral or administrative function and instead frames it as a strategic driver of institutional transformation.
- Third, the research contributes to the limited body of knowledge on inclusive education in African higher education contexts, addressing a significant geographical and epistemological gap in the literature. By providing empirical evidence from Angola, it enriches the global debate with insights from underrepresented contexts.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest several strategic directions for higher education institutions:

- Institutionalization of Inclusion: Universities should move beyond isolated initiatives and develop comprehensive strategies that integrate inclusion across all organizational dimensions, including governance, curriculum, and resource allocation.
- Strategic Human Resource Development: There is a critical need to invest in continuous and specialized



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training for academic and administrative staff, focusing not only on technical skills but also on inclusive values and practices.

- **Infrastructure and Accessibility:** Institutions must prioritize investments in accessible physical and technological environments, ensuring that inclusion is supported by adequate material conditions.
- **Policy Alignment and Governance:** Stronger alignment between national policies and institutional practices is required, supported by monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that ensure accountability.
- **Cultural Transformation:** Efforts to promote inclusion must address organizational culture, fostering environments that value diversity and actively challenge exclusionary norms.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of Human Resources Management and the implementation of inclusive educational policies at the University of Namibe shows that, despite initial progress, significant challenges remain for inclusion to be fully realized within the institution. The actions of the Human Resources and Social Action Department, including granting scholarships, providing social support, and promoting diversity, demonstrate an important institutional commitment.

However, limitations related to professional training, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of adapted materials, and cultural resistance compromise the consolidation of inclusive policies. Therefore, it is essential that UNINBE invests in continuing education, physical and technological improvements, and fosters strategic partnerships to secure resources and technical expertise.

As a young university still in the process of structuring itself, UNINBE presents a favorable environment for innovation and the construction of an inclusive institutional culture. Strengthening these educational policies not only contributes to compliance with national and international regulations but also promotes the democratization of higher education, the appreciation of diversity, and social justice in Angola.

Therefore, overcoming the identified challenges requires a collective commitment from administrators, faculty, students, and the external community to ensure that inclusive education ceases to be merely an ideal and becomes a concrete reality for all members of the university.

Furthermore, it is essential that this transformation be accompanied by a continuous review of the adopted policies and practices, ensuring their suitability to the real needs of the academic community and to advances in inclusive education. Periodic evaluation will enable the

identification of areas for improvement, the enhancement of positive results, and the promotion of the sustainability of implemented actions. In this sense, the active participation of all stakeholders, especially the students themselves, is crucial to developing innovative and effective solutions.

The University of Namibe has the opportunity to become a national and regional model in promoting quality inclusive education, capable of inspiring other institutions and contributing to the construction of a more just and egalitarian society. This commitment to inclusion reflects not only a legal and ethical requirement but also a strategic vision that recognizes diversity as a source of academic and social richness, strengthening the university's role as an agent of social transformation in Angola and beyond.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding the positions presented in the article or its content. Likewise, there is no conflict with any external institution or with the funding sources.

Authorship Statement

Francisco Joaquim: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing – Original Draft, Project Administration, Resources, Writing.

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