

## Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways

Md. Naseem<sup>1\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Teacher competency represents the foundational determinant of inclusive education effectiveness, yet most Indian teachers feel unprepared to manage diverse learning needs without adequate theoretical understanding or practical support. This chapter examines comprehensive competency standards for inclusive teaching, assessment tools measuring teacher readiness, professional development pathways, and institutional strategies for sustaining competency development. Drawing on Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) standards, National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) guidelines, and international frameworks, this chapter identifies core competencies spanning knowledge (understanding disabilities, universal learning design), skills (differentiated instruction, assessment, collaboration), and dispositions (inclusion mindset, empathy). Assessment tools, including the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale, Inclusive Education Classroom Observation Scale (IECOS), and authentic portfolio approaches, enable systematic evaluation of teacher competency development. Professional development pathways include pre-service B.Ed. Special Education (RCI-recognized), Postgraduate Professional Diplomas in Special Education (PGPDSE), and continuing professional development aligned with NEP 2020's mandate for 50 hours annually. Research documents that teacher preparedness remains fragmented, treatment of inclusion as additional responsibility rather than core teaching philosophy creates implementation gaps. Institutional strategies including mentoring systems, professional learning communities, competency-based professional development, and technology-enabled platforms systematically build and maintain teacher competencies. Yet systemic barriers persist: inadequate pre-service training (most programs lack sufficient disability inclusion content), insufficient in-service professional development, insufficient monitoring mechanisms, and attitudinal barriers limiting implementation. The chapter argues that sustainable inclusive education requires integrating inclusion throughout all teacher education (not as specialization), implementing systematic competency assessment, providing continuous targeted professional development, and creating institutional cultures valuing and supporting inclusive practice.

**Keywords:** *Teacher Competency Frameworks, Inclusive Education, Standards, Assessment Tools, Professional Development*

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Vindhya Gurukul College, Chunar, Mirzapur (Affiliated to: Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi, U.P.)

\* Corresponding Email: chand.mdnaseem@gmail.com

**Received: November 02, 2025; Revision Received: November 15, 2025; Accepted: December 20, 2025**

# Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways

## 1. Introduction

Inclusive education's success fundamentally depends on teachers' preparedness, competence, and ongoing professional development. Yet research consistently documents significant gaps: 60-70% of Indian teachers report feeling underprepared to teach diverse learners despite legal mandates for inclusion. The disconnect between policy mandate and teacher readiness reflects fragmented teacher preparation systems, inadequate professional development, and insufficient competency assessment mechanisms.

The National Education Policy 2020 envisions competency-based, inclusive education where all learners thrive. Achieving this vision requires deliberately structured teacher competency frameworks: clear standards specifying what teachers must know, be able to do, and value; valid assessment tools measuring competency levels; strategic professional development pathways building competencies across career stages; and institutional strategies sustaining competency growth. This chapter examines these interconnected components, drawing on international research, Indian policy frameworks, and emerging best practices.

## 2. Defining Inclusive Education Teacher Competencies

### 2.1 Core Competency Domains

Comprehensive inclusive teaching competency encompasses knowledge, skills, and dispositions across multiple domains:

Knowledge Domain:

- Understanding diverse disabilities and learning differences
- Knowledge of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles
- Familiarity with curriculum adaptation and differentiation
- Understanding of assessment approaches for diverse learners
- Knowledge of legislation (RPWD Act, RTE, NEP 2020)

Skill Domain:

- Designing inclusive, accessible learning environments
- Implementing differentiated instruction and adaptations
- Using evidence-based assessment tools and techniques
- Collaborating with special educators, parents, and colleagues
- Managing behavior constructively in inclusive settings

Disposition Domain:

- Growth mindset viewing diversity as strength
- Empathy and respect for all learners
- Commitment to equity and inclusion
- Willingness to collaborate and seek support
- Reflective practice orientation

## Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways

### 3. Comprehensive Teacher Competency Framework

**Table 1: Inclusive Education Teacher Competency Framework (RCI-NCTE Aligned)**

Competency Domain	Core Competencies	Assessment Evidence	Development Strategy
Inclusive Pedagogy	Differentiated instruction, UDL implementation, inclusive curriculum design	Student learning outcomes, classroom observation; lesson documentation	Targeted training workshops; instructional coaching; peer observation
Disability Understanding	Knowledge of diverse disabilities; strength-based perspectives; etiology and implications	Competency assessments; case study analysis; written examinations	Disability awareness modules; exposure to diverse learners; mentoring
Assessment & Evaluation	Selecting appropriate tools; administering assessments; interpreting results; accommodating learners	Assessment plan development; tool selection justification; student progress documentation	Assessment training; practice with diverse tools; collaborative analysis
Collaboration	Parent communication; team coordination; shared problem-solving; inclusive decision-making	Documented collaborations; meeting participation; parent feedback surveys; IEP documentation	Collaboration workshops; PLCs; mentoring partnerships
Behavior Support	Positive behavior strategies; trauma-informed approaches; classroom management; emotional support	Classroom observation; student behavior data; teacher reflection	Behavior training; coaching; stress management support
Inclusive Mindset	Growth mindset; equity commitment; culturally responsive practices; self-reflection	Attitude assessment scales; classroom practice observation; teacher reflection journals	Mindset workshops; community engagement; professional reflection

### 4. Teacher Competency Assessment Tools

#### 4.1 Standardized Assessment Instruments

**Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale:** The 18-item TEIP Scale assesses three dimensions: efficacy in inclusive instruction design (6 items), collaboration efficacy (6 items), and behavior management efficacy (6 items). Research demonstrates TEIP as reliable predictor of inclusive practice quality. Example items: "I am confident designing learning tasks accommodating individual needs of students with disabilities".

**Inclusive Education Classroom Observation Scale (IECOS):** Developed by Gateway School, Mumbai, IECOS enables systematic observation of inclusive practice implementation

## **Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways**

grounded in competency frameworks. Observable indicators assess inclusive pedagogy implementation, collaboration, and learning environment accessibility.

**Portfolio Assessment Approaches:** Teachers develop reflective portfolios documenting inclusive teaching practice through lesson plans showing adaptations, student work samples, video recordings of inclusive teaching, and reflection on learning. Portfolios provide authentic assessment of competency application in actual classrooms.

### **5. Professional Development Pathways**

#### **5.1 Pre-Service Teacher Education**

**B.Ed. Special Education (RCI-Recognized):** Two-year specialized program (or integrated within general B.Ed.) providing: comprehensive disability understanding; assessment and evaluation techniques; IEP development and implementation; evidence-based instructional strategies; classroom management and positive behavior supports; collaboration and communication skills.

**Qualification Requirements:** Requires successful 10+2 completion and bachelor's degree (any discipline). RCI recognition is mandatory for employment as special education teacher.

**B.Ed. General with Special Education Specialization:** General B.Ed. programs with embedded special education courses ensuring all teachers develop inclusive competency.

#### **5.2 In-Service Professional Development**

**Postgraduate Professional Diploma in Special Education (PGPDSE):** One to two-year program for graduates seeking specialization, providing intensive training in specific disabilities and pedagogical approaches.

**Continuous Professional Development (CPD):** NEP 2020 mandates minimum 50 hours annually, including:

- Technology-enabled learning platforms and digital communities
- Mentoring and instructional coaching
- Action research projects examining inclusive practice
- Professional learning communities focused on inclusion

### **6. Certification and Specialization**

#### **6.1 RCI-Based Certification**

**Central Rehabilitation Register (CRR) Number:** Upon completing RCI-recognized programs (B.Ed. Special Education, D.Ed. Special Education, PGPDSE), teachers register with RCI obtaining CRR numbers signifying qualification to work with persons with disabilities.

**Specialized Certificates:** Teachers may pursue specialized certificates in specific areas: autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, sensory impairments.

## Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways

### 6.2 State-Level Teacher Eligibility Test (TET)

Competency Verification: Central TET (CTET) or state-level TET often required for government school employment, assessing teaching competency including inclusive education components.

## 7. Institutional Strategies for Competency Building

**Table 2: Institutional Approaches for Teacher Competency Development**

Strategy	Implementation	Evidence of Effectiveness	Barriers
Mentoring Programs	Pairing novice teachers with experienced mentors; structured mentoring conversations; classroom co-teaching	Improved teacher confidence; better inclusive practice implementation; reduced burnout	Time availability; mentor training needs; cost
Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)	Regular teacher meetings focused on inclusive practice; shared inquiry into student learning; collaborative problem-solving	Increased collaboration; improved instructional practices; sustained learning	School culture barriers; time constraints; monitoring difficulty
Instructional Coaching	Trained coaches providing classroom-based support; observation, feedback, modeling; focused on specific practices	Significant practice improvements documented; sustained implementation	Coach availability; cost; teacher receptiveness
Technology-Enabled Learning	Online courses, digital professional learning communities, webinars, AI-powered personalized learning	Scalability; accessibility; just-in-time support; cost-effectiveness	Digital divide; platform quality variation; support needs
Action Research	Teachers systematically studying own practice; inquiry into inclusive strategies; data-informed improvement	Deep learning; sustainable practice change; empowerment	Time for research; data collection challenges; analysis support

## 8. Systemic Barriers to Competency Development

Teacher Preparation Gaps: Most Indian teacher education programs inadequately address inclusive pedagogy; many treat inclusion as specialized add-on rather than core teaching philosophy. Integration remains fragmented across institutions.

Assessment Challenges: While diverse assessment tools exist (performance-based, ecological, portfolio approaches), many teachers lack training in tool selection and appropriate use. Misuse of assessment tools leads to misidentification.

## **Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways**

**Professional Development Inconsistency:** In-service training remains sporadic and disconnected from classroom practice needs. Lack of ongoing support limits knowledge application.

**Attitudinal Barriers:** Teacher beliefs about student capabilities significantly influence inclusive practice; many teachers doubt abilities of students with disabilities. Negative attitudes undermine competency application.

### **9. Recommendations for Sustainable Competency Development**

**Policy Integration:** NCTE and RCI should collaboratively design joint modules integrating theoretical disability understanding with practical classroom strategies, ensuring consistent quality across teacher education programs.

**Competency-Based Professional Development:** Professional development should target identified competency gaps through systematic assessment, not one-size-fits-all approaches. Technology-enabled platforms can scale reach.

**Institutional Accountability:** Schools should be monitored on teacher competency development; competency metrics should be included in school performance assessment.

**Continuous Learning Systems:** Sustainable competency requires ongoing, embedded learning systems (mentoring, PLCs, instructional coaching) rather than isolated training.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher competency represents the critical lever for translating inclusive education policy into equitable classroom practice. Comprehensive competency frameworks specifying knowledge, skills, and dispositions; valid assessment tools measuring competency development; strategic professional development pathways; and institutional systems supporting continuous learning are all essential. Yet current Indian systems remain fragmented, with significant gaps between policy mandates and teacher readiness. Achieving NEP 2020's inclusive education vision requires integrating inclusion throughout all teacher education programs (not specialized tracks), implementing systematic competency assessment, providing targeted continuous professional development, and creating institutional cultures valuing and supporting inclusive teaching excellence.

### **References**

- Amsusuman, T., & Tiwari, S. (2020). Teacher beliefs about students with disabilities: Implications for inclusive practice in Indian schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(7), 778-792
- Dhala, S., et al. (2021). Assessment tools and techniques in inclusive schools: Barriers and opportunities in Indian education. *International Journal of Current Educational Studies*, 1(1), 18-35.
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(3), 423-440.
- Gateway School, Mumbai. (2023). *Inclusive Education Classroom Observation Scale (IECOS): Development and Validation*. Inclusive Education Initiative.
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India.

## **Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways**

- National Council for Teacher Education. (2022). Accessibility Guidelines for Teacher Education Institutions. NCTE Publications.
- Rehabilitation Council of India. (2024). RCI-Recognized Special Education Programs: Curriculum and Certification Standards. RCI Publications.
- Sharma, U., et al. (2012). Teacher efficacy for inclusive practices: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 12(3), 154-164.
- UNESCO. (2023). Artificial Intelligence in Teacher Education: Opportunities for Inclusive Learning. UNESCO Publishing.
- Wang, T. (2025). Facilitating teachers' inclusive education intentions: A framework for teacher competency development. *Nature Education*, 1(2), 1-18.

### ***Acknowledgments***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Naseem (2025). Teacher Competency Frameworks for Inclusive Education in India: Standards, Assessment Tools, and Professional Development Pathways. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 10(4), 51-57. DIP: 18.02.705/20251004, DOI: 10.25215/2455/1004705