



Teacher Competency Framework for Inclusive Education

(To be endorsed by the Ministries of Education, Commonwealth Asia)

The draft has been prepared by Dr B. Shadrach, Director, COL-CEMCA for further discussion with the ministries of education and other stakeholders in Commonwealth Asia.

1. Introduction

The Teacher Competency Framework for Inclusive Education is a strategic initiative designed to assist Commonwealth governments and institutions in leveraging technologies to improve and expand learning for sustainable development. This framework aims to standardise the professional expectations for teachers working in diverse classrooms, ensuring that students with disabilities are effectively mainstreamed into the educational system.

2. Defining the Modern Inclusive Teacher

The role of the teacher is evolving from a traditional lecturer to a facilitator of diverse learning needs. An inclusive teacher is defined not just by their pedagogical skills, but by their commitment to legal and social obligations regarding equity in education.

Core Elements of Competencies:

- **Attributes:** The personal values, beliefs, and attitudes that foster an inclusive environment.
- **Knowledge:** Understanding of diverse learning needs, legal frameworks, and specialised instructional strategies.
- **Practice:** The application of inclusive techniques in real-world classroom settings.

3. Universal Applicability to the Teaching Workforce

The Teacher Competency Framework for Inclusive Education is designed as a universal standard applicable to all teachers across the school system, regardless of their subject specialization or grade level. It moves away from the traditional misconception that inclusive education is the sole domain of "special education" specialists. In the modern diverse classroom, every educator—whether teaching mathematics, language, sciences, or the arts—is a teacher of students with diverse needs. By adopting these competencies, all teachers are empowered to fulfill their legal and social obligations, ensuring that every learner is physically, socially, and cognitively integrated into the mainstream educational experience.



4. The Five Dimensions of Competency

The framework is structured around five key dimensions that represent a paradigm shift in how inclusive education is approached:

Dimension	Focus Area	Description
1	Screening and Identification	Competencies required to accurately identify the specific needs of learners early in the educational process.
2	Recognition as a Collective	Moving toward a paradigm where the need for inclusion is recognised as a collective responsibility of the school and community.
3	Accommodating and Mainstreaming	Developing the practical skills to physically and socially integrate learners into mainstream classrooms.
4	Pedagogical and Assessment Strategies	Devising instructional and assessment methods that are flexible enough to cater to all learners.
5	Technology Integration	Strategies for using assistive and educational technologies to bridge learning gaps.

4.1. Screening and Identification of Needs

This foundational dimension focuses on the teacher's ability to recognize diverse learning requirements at the earliest possible stage.

- **Competencies:** Teachers must be proficient in using screening tools to identify physical, cognitive, and emotional barriers to learning.
- **Implementation:** This involves moving beyond clinical diagnoses to functional assessments that determine how a student's specific needs impact their classroom participation.

4.2. Recognition of the Need as a Collective

This dimension represents a shift from viewing inclusive education as the sole responsibility of "special education" teachers to a shared responsibility of the entire school community.

- **The Shift:** Moving from "individualised isolation" to "institutional ownership".
- **Competencies:** Teachers must be able to lead collaborative discussions with peers, administrators, and parents to create a holistic support network for the learner.

4.3. Accommodating and Mainstreaming Learners

This dimension focuses on the physical and social integration of learners into the general education classroom.

- **The Shift:** Moving from "segregated settings" (special schools) to "mainstream integration" where every child belongs in the same classroom.
- **Competencies:** Skills in modifying the physical environment and classroom social dynamics to ensure that students with disabilities are not just present, but are active participants in the social fabric of the school.

4.4. Devising Pedagogical, Instructional, and Assessment Strategies

Instructional methods must evolve to be flexible enough for all learners without compromising academic standards.

- **The Shift:** Moving from a "one-size-fits-all" curriculum to a "Universal Design for Learning" (UDL) approach.
- **Competencies:** Teachers must develop skills in differentiated instruction and varied assessment methods (e.g., oral exams instead of written ones) that allow students to demonstrate knowledge in ways that suit their abilities.

4.5. Devising Strategies for the Use of Technologies

The final dimension leverages modern tools to bridge the gap between a student's disability and the curriculum.

- **The Shift:** Moving from "technology as an add-on" to "technology as an essential equaliser".
- **Competencies:** Proficiency in using Assistive Technologies (AT) and Open Educational Resources (OER) to personalise the learning experience. This includes the "Teacher in the Loop" AI approach to ensure technology serves pedagogical goals.

5. Key Pillars of Teacher Development

To achieve these competencies, teacher development must focus on several critical areas identified by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and CEMCA:

- **Student Learning and Engagement:** Ensuring that all students, regardless of ability, are actively participating in the curriculum.
- **Curriculum Design:** Designing flexible curricula that allow for multiple points of entry and expression.
- **Partnering with Stakeholders:** Collaborating with parents, healthcare professionals, and community leaders to support the learner.
- **AI and Digital Literacy:** Developing "Teacher in the Loop" AI awareness and the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) to personalise learning.

These Four Key Pillars of the Teacher Competency Framework serve as the structural support for the five dimensions, ensuring that the teacher's professional development is both holistic and future ready.

5.1. Student Learning and Engagement

This pillar shifts the focus from "content delivery" to "learner participation." It emphasizes the teacher's ability to create an environment where every student, regardless of their physical or cognitive ability, feels a sense of belonging and agency.

- **Core Competency:** Identifying individual learning styles and emotional triggers to maintain high levels of motivation.
- **Inclusive Objective:** Ensuring that students with disabilities are not just physically present but are cognitively engaged in the same learning goals as their peers.

5.2. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Curriculum Design

- **The Three UDL Principles:**
 1. **Multiple Means of Representation:** Presenting information in various formats (text, audio, video, tactile).
 2. **Multiple Means of Action and Expression:** Allowing students to demonstrate knowledge through different media (speech, writing, drawing, digital tools).
 3. **Multiple Means of Engagement:** Using diverse interests to fuel student persistence.
- **Inclusive Objective:** Removing the need for "special" accommodations by making the base curriculum accessible to all from the start.

5.3. Partnering with Stakeholders

Inclusive education cannot happen in a vacuum. This pillar recognizes that a student's success depends on a cohesive ecosystem involving the school, the home, and the community.

5.4. AI and Digital Literacy (The "Teacher in the Loop" Model)

In the modern Commonwealth Asia context, technology is the primary equaliser. This pillar focuses on the teacher's ability to navigate the digital landscape, specifically the ethical and practical use of Artificial Intelligence.

- **Core Competency:** Using AI to personalise learning materials and leveraging Open Educational Resources (OER) to reduce costs and increase accessibility.
- **Inclusive Objective:** Mastering "Teacher in the Loop" AI—where the teacher uses AI tools to identify learning gaps and provide instant feedback, while maintaining the human empathy and pedagogical oversight necessary for inclusive growth.

Pillar	Focus	Goal
Engagement	The Learner's Mindset	Active participation and psychological safety.
UDL	The Curriculum	Flexible pathways for access and expression.
Partnerships	The Ecosystem	Collaborative support across home and school.
Digital Literacy	The Tools	Using AI and OER as accessibility equalizers.

6. Implementation: The "Botswana Draft" Model

The Teacher Competency Framework for Inclusive Education was collaboratively developed during a Pre-Conference Workshop held in Gaborone, Botswana, on September 9, 2025, as part of the Pan-Commonwealth Forum 11 (PCF11). This landmark workshop, convened by COL-CEMCA, brought together education officials, policymakers, and practitioners from six Commonwealth Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

The workshop employed a participatory approach where country representatives shared their existing inclusive education frameworks, identified common challenges, and collaboratively mapped competencies essential for teachers working in diverse classrooms. Through intensive consultation and consensus-building exercises, this framework was developed using a structured "Discover-Define-Develop-Deliver" methodology. The outcomes of this workshop were encapsulated in the Botswana Statement, which articulated the collective commitment of participating nations to advance inclusive education through teacher capacity building and regional collaboration.

This framework thus represents not just a theoretical construct, but a practical blueprint born from the lived experiences and collective wisdom of Commonwealth Asian education systems, designed for regional relevance while maintaining global standards.

6.1. Discover: Understanding the Need - Researching the current scenario and country-specific challenges.

This initial phase is focused on research and situational analysis to ensure the framework is grounded in reality.

- **Assessment of Current Scenarios:** Conducting country-level reviews to understand the current status of inclusive education across participating Commonwealth Asian nations.
- **Best Practice Identification:** Sharing innovative practices and successful local models that can be scaled or adapted.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Consulting with education professionals to identify the specific gaps in teacher competencies related to students with disabilities.

6.2. Define: Establishing Standards - Clearly articulating the specific needs of the educational landscape

Once the needs are identified, this phase focuses on articulating the precise requirements for the framework.

- **Competency Requirements:** Clearly defining what knowledge, attributes, and practices are essential for an inclusive teacher in the regional context.
- **Paradigm Shift Mapping:** Identifying the specific transitions required, such as moving from individual isolation to collective responsibility in schools.
- **Standard Setting:** Finalising the objectives for the competency framework to ensure they meet both international standards and local legal obligations.

6.3. Develop: Strategic Planning - Creating the draft framework and project plan.

This phase involves the creation of a concrete blueprint for the framework's rollout.

- **Project Plan Creation:** Developing a comprehensive plan that outlines the timeline, resources, and institutional support needed for implementation.
- **Curriculum & Tool Design:** Designing the training modules, screening tools, and pedagogical strategies that will form the core of the teacher development program.
- **Network Building:** Planning for the creation of a collaborative regional network to support ongoing professional development.

6.4. Deliver: Execution and Rollout - Implementing the framework through regional networks and professional development.

The final phase is the active implementation of the developed project plan.

- **Pilot and Deployment:** Rolling out the competency framework to schools and teacher training institutions.
- **Technology Integration:** Deploying strategies for using assistive technologies and Open Educational Resources (OER) to personalise learning.
- **Monitoring and Networking:** Utilising the regional network to share contributions, track progress, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the inclusive education model.

7. Conclusion and Future Outlook

The goal of this framework is to create a collaborative regional network across Asia and the broader Commonwealth to share best practices. By professionalising inclusive education through these competencies, institutions can ensure that no learner is left behind due to a disability.

Reference Attribution:

- *Shadrach, B. (2025). Teacher Competency Framework for Inclusive Education in the Schools of Commonwealth Asia. Commonwealth of Learning (COL) & CEMCA.*
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Annexure 1

Pre-conference Workshop, PCF 11, Participating Institutions

Country	Institution
Bangladesh	Directorate of Primary Education, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh
India	Ministry of Education, Government of India (GoI)
	National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), India
	Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), India
	Ashoka University, India
	ChangeInkk Foundation
	Score Foundation
Malaysia	Universiti Sains Malaysia, School of Educational Studies, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia
Maldives	Department of Inclusive Education, Ministry of Education, Maldives
Pakistan	Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan
Sri Lanka	National Institute of Education (NIE), Ministry of Education, Sri Lanka



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