

Teacher Preparation for Inclusive and Diverse Classrooms: Pedagogical Competence, Professional Identity and Systemic Support

Dr. Wajih Ahmad Khan¹, Dr. Syed Md Kahful Wara², Alishan Fatma³, Arzan Fatma⁴, Dr. Zaki Ahmad⁵

¹Principal, Mithila B.Ed. College, Darbhanga, Bihar 846004

²Assistant Professor, MANUU College of Teacher Education Darbhanga, Bihar

³Research Scholar, MANUU, College of Teacher Education, Darbhanga, Bihar

⁴Senior Research Fellow, MANUU, College of Teacher Education, Darbhanga, Bihar

⁵Principal, Shaheed Peer Ali Teachers' Training College, Madhubani, Bihar

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64880/theresearchdialogue.v5i3.01>

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Received: 25-09-2026

Accepted: 01-10-2026

Published: 02-10-2026

Corresponding Author:

Dr. Wajih Ahmad Ahmad Khan

Email: khanwajih75@gmail.com

Keywords:

Teacher Education, Inclusive Classrooms, Diversity in Education, Pedagogical Competence, Professional Development, Educational Equity

OPEN ACCESS

Abstract

Classrooms in many parts of the world are becoming increasingly diverse and therefore require teachers who are able to respond effectively to learners' varied social, cultural, linguistic & cognitive needs. Inclusion Schooling based on equity and social justice is not just a policy, but should be incorporated into an ongoing systematic teacher preparation program that are prepared to navigate complex classroom challenges in order to make good on inclusive hopes. This paper examines the role of teacher education in preparing prospective educators to teach in inclusive and diverse classrooms, with a special reference to an Asian context.

Using a methodological style of an integrative review the study integrates theoretical concept, policy framework, research evidence and case examples from Asia. This article explores attempts within teacher preparation to address difference through pedagogy, the shaping of professional identity, and institutional support structures. It is an assertion (and a rationale) that preparation for inclusive classrooms happens through growth across three interrelated areas: Inclusive Pedagogical Competency, Reflective and Ethical Teacher Identity, and Empowering Systemic Contexts.

Structural changes, however, are at odds with the very idea of inclusive education and none of these have been explicitly analysed building on the existing structures for teachers (Giroux et al. in press), although in recent teacher education policy textual analysis more attention is increasingly drawn towards such issues as an all-inclusive approach to teacher quality (Derwing; 2010). Factors including limited pre-service preparation, insufficient exposure to a wide range of children and limited in-service professional development restrain teachers from adequately responding to inclusion pressures. While on the other hand, practices of contextually

specific approaches to teacher preparation, community Engagement and ongoing professional development may indicate better inclusive teaching outcomes.

It contributes to the literature by providing a conceptual framework towards implementing teacher education for inclusive and diverse classes, with an emphasis on Asia. Its assertion is that preparing teacher educators for inclusion is not a technical task, but rather a transformative undertaking requiring a rethinking of the content of teacher education programmes, professional cultures and governance.

Introduction

The question of classroom diversity is not a new one. Students: have different abilities, are from different language and cultural backgrounds, come from diverse socio-economic circumstances, identify with many genders and may be disabled. While the diversity presents multiple opportunities, it also poses several challenges to educational systems. Though they too can foster equity, empathy and social cohesion mixed ability and racially diverse classrooms demand a level of pedagogic training and professional sensitivity many teachers feel ill equipped to deliver.

As a result, inclusive education has been vigorously pushed on as an international challenge embraced by policy pronouncements (e.g., United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and Sustainable Development Goal-4 dedicated to equivalent quality instructing for all-semester students (United Nations, 2015). In Asia, a multicultural region noted for high social stratification, linguistic diversity and economic disparity, inclusion emerges as a particularly difficult but imperative challenge. Teachers, too, are being told to ‘do’ diversity in contexts that value large classes with a standardized curriculum and high-stakes testing.

Though teachers are at the heart of inclusion, studies indicate that current teacher education programs do not adequately prepare them for stretched classrooms. Research in Asian countries indicates that teachers suffer from low self-efficacy, insufficient professional competencies and lack of institutional support enabling them to engage effectively with students from disadvantaged or special education backgrounds (UNESCO 2019). This disconnection raises important questions about the quality and effect of teacher training.

The paper transverses some points concerning the preparation of teachers for inclusive and diversified classes, about pedagogical competences, constructions of professional identity and forms of support from the system. The aim of the paper is to bring together persistent challenges and potential solutions for improving teacher preparation, by combining readings of literature with policy frameworks and illustrative case examples. The assertion is that the essence of this claim is that ‘isolation’ can’t create inclusion but needs instead a systemic revolution in teacher education.

Conceptual Framework: Teacher Preparation and Inclusive Education

Introduction on Preparing Teachers for the Inclusive Environment within larger theoretical perspectives of educational equity and professional practice. Inclusive education has been broadly characterized as a model which

aims to accommodate all individuals with and without disabilities in general education classrooms, with adequate support (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson, 2006). This view has now cultivated an orientation to “fixing” learners, rather than transforming the facts and circumstances through which teaching happens and learning takes place.

From the sociological perspective, inclusive education embodies social justice and equity theories that argue that equitable education is essential for ensuring there are no structural inequalities (Kauffman et al. Sen (1999) argued that the central purpose of development is to expand the real freedoms of peoples, and sees education as an instrument for participation and agency. This leads us to the role of being a teacher not only as an informational delivery system, but rather as a facilitator for learning mental power.

Indeed, research in teacher education has also highlighted important insights about the role of professional identity for inclusion. Teachers get a lot of reflection through the diversity and characteristics (Flores & Day 2006). Entry preparation, then, is not simply a matter of absorbing technical skills-it also means developing our reflexive ethical caring professional selves.

This article employs a conceptual framework for understanding teacher preparation for inclusive classrooms in three key dimensions:

- Pedagogical skill for inclusive teaching and assessment strategies.
- Professional identity (beliefs and attitudes about diversity).
- Systems support that include institutional-level structures, policy and professional development opportunities

This framework facilitates a holistic examination of teacher preparation while avoiding (...) The answer is to link our practice to an overarching conceptual framework So I headed straight for the framework as the most relevant TED-related concept at hand.

Literature Review: Developing Teachers for the Inclusive and Diverse Classroom

Global Perspectives of Inclusive Teacher Education

International Consensus about the Principles and Best Practices Related to Inclusive Education of SWDs (Artiles, Kozleski, Trent, & Osher, 2010; Pijl et. al., 2010).

Teacher preparedness, the readiness of teachers to teach inclusive classrooms is one of the pillars for inclusion and there is international evidence that suggest that teachers are a key factor for the success of an inclusive system. Teacher have had training on inclusive pedagogies and are far more at ease and successful in catering for the range of diversity presented by learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). But the international studies also reveal that inclusion is often approached as a distinct issue, rather than integrated into generic teacher training.

Specific to free access Some teacher preparation programs are offering siloed training, with separate listings for students of special education instruction and live offerings on diversity. While these types of courses help to raise

awareness, they do not typically provide teachers with strategies that can be used across subjects and contexts. Critics argue that creating a division sends the message that inclusion is an "add on" and that not all teachers need to be responsible for it.

Teacher Preparation in Asian Context

As any profession, early childhood professionals' preparation is a key priority for many countries; China where long cultural tradition views children as future resource and power.

In Asia, the systems of teacher educator operate in diverse cultural and political and institutional environment. For instance, teachers in Japan or South Korea, where teacher preparation system is meanwhile a long-term tradition but barriers to manage diversity remain firmly as standardization and competition pressure (Allan & Kambarami 2017). In south Asia, countries have the added challenges of limited resources; large class sizes and inequitable access to professional development.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India, also acknowledges the need for trained and inclusive teacher education and recommends curriculum reform in pre-service and in-service training programs to address diversity, including special needs (Ministry of Education, 2020). Yet the rollout is patchy, particularly in remote and low-income locations. Research indicates that many teachers rely on informal approaches rather than formal training in their attempts to address inclusive education, pointing to some inadequacies in formal preparation.

Despite these challenges, however, innovative initiatives are emerging. The study provides evidence that high intensity school based professional development and learning communities of practice may be beneficial in the context of teacher training at the community level to increase teacher's inclusive practice. The projects suggested a need for locally embedded and practice-oriented approaches to teacher education.

Inclusive Pedagogical Competencies for Diverse Classrooms

When preparing teachers to teach in inclusive and diverse classrooms, an articulation of which pedagogic competencies are necessary for granting access to effective teaching all learners is needed. What can be regarded as inclusive pedagogy involves more than simply incorporating difference; it means creating learning environments that recognize diversity, not as a challenge, but an asset. Evidence shows that teachers with an inclusive pedagogy enable diverse classrooms to grow while maintaining high levels of expectation for all (Florian & Spratt, 2013).

One of the field's fundamental principles is differentiated instruction that allows teachers to engage in content, process and products based on how students learn their needs, interests, preferences and learning profiles. Differentiation is one strategy for addressing variability, without the resort to separation or labelling (in heterogeneous classrooms). However, studies from Asian contexts show that many teachers find it impossible to implement differentiation due to restrictive curricula and an exam-oriented culture of teaching (Sharma & Sokal, 2016).

Another important one is to be assessment literate (to be inclusive). The conventional assessments may be skewed towards certain linguistic, cultural or cognitive modalities at the expense of those from historically marginalized groups. Inclusive educators interact continuously with formative assessment, flexible forms of assessment and feedback-focused practices rather than sorting students. In some countries, such as Singapore and Japan, curriculum revisions in the past years have focused on assessment for learning as an inclusion strategy to lessen performance anxiety effects (OECD, 2018).

Classroom management for inclusion is an additional level of proficiency. Positive Behaviours in Diverse Classrooms: Proactively addressing the zero-sum power game It actively drives teachers to manage a plan to boost mutual respect, cooperation and equality in terms of emotional safety. The needs also require teachers to be equipped for gender-related disability, bullying and exclusion as well as differences due to social cultural backgrounds. In addition to the ideal accustoming each other, you can get affective and social endorsement which leads classroom includes climate of learning.

Teaching Learners with Diverse Needs

Gender-Responsive Teaching

Education Access is just one part of gender diversity in schools, which also means involvement, voice and agency in learning. We cannot over emphasize the power of teachers to challenge gender stereotyping and promote a more egalitarian learning environment. That gender-sensitive teaching refers to the use of inclusive language, equal participation in class and balanced representation of representatives as well as positive role models in curricular materials (ÚNTERHALTER, 2017).

In many Asian contexts, teacher expectations and classroom practices show subtle gender biases. Suggestions from South Asia show that in any case girls are more often than not arranged towards compliance and repetitive pondering, whereas boys get more openings for initiative and inquiry-based work. Gender-oriented teacher courses help increase awareness and classroom behaviours (UNESCO, 2015).

Integration of Children with Disabilities

In some parts of Asia, even what sort of support teachers are providing to be welcoming of special needs students is sporadic. While inclusive education continues to be an emerging policy trend, qualitative research with teachers shows limited preparedness. Barriers include insufficient disability-specific strategies, poorly resourced support service and high student numbers [WHO & World Bank, 2011].

Effective preparation emphasizes universal design for learning (UDL) and pedagogy that is aligned with flexible delivery and support to serve all learners. UDL supports offering varied ways to represent topics and ways for students to engage with the work and express themselves instead of advocating planning itemized intervention. Inclusive schools' evidence from Inclusive Education programmes in Indonesia and Thailand indicates that targeted

teachers coached on UDL principles exhibit greater confidence and willingness than their non-trained peers to work inclusively (UNICEF, 2019).

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity poses substantial pedagogic challenges, particularly in multilingual contexts. Many educators are stuck with systems wherein powerful languages have advantages over those of oppressed minoritized language users. In this context, preparing teachers to be inclusive means learning about culturally responsive pedagogy and multilingual practices.

Early grade, mother tongue based instruction has long been proven to improve understanding, engagement and persistence among marginalised learners (UNESCO 2016). Culturally responsive educators who respond to students' abandonment from their own linguistics environment can create positive affirmative learning opportunities, validating identity and equity. And without this training, linguistic diversity can be a space for exclusion rather than enrichment.

Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Education: Bridging the Gap

Inclusion classrooms are even more complex and require teacher professional development at two moments of time: preservice and in-service. And although both matter, there seems to be a disconnect between academic preparation and reality in the classroom.

Pre-Service Teacher Education

It shapes teachers' beliefs, attitudes and pedagogical knowledge to prepare for inclusive practice as its central aim of pre-service teacher training. Yet, in many an Asian teacher education context, there are just a couple of theoretical courses on inclusion and, these detached from the practicum. Preservice teachers might walk away from their training with a theoretical knowledge of inclusive practices, but they may have little idea of how to actually implement those practices in real classrooms.

Clinical practice has been relevant for strong consolidation of inclusive competence in diverse school types. Pre-service teachers are getting practical and a little more reflective identity by working with diverse learners in many instances under supervision. They have also more recently emphasized balanced theory and practice with school-based teacher training in countries like Japan and South Korea but the congruence assured between university placement and exposure to diversity remains patchy.

In-Service Professional Development

Continuous in-service training is essential for sustaining and expanding inclusiveness practices. Diversity is constantly evolving, and teachers would benefit from fresh opportunities over time to keep their knowledge up to date. But in many Asian countries, professional development for teachers "remains short-term and superficial, with no relevance to the day-to-day concerns of teachers".

One potential solution is professional learning communities (PLCs) implemented at the school level. Studies indicate that collaborative reflection, peer-mentoring and action research offer teachers a framework for working on the issues of inclusion together. Studies from India and the Philippines show that where teacher support is signal of sustaining, place based job inclusive practices also significantly improvements (UNESCO 2019).

Case Examples: Education for Inclusion of Teachers in Asia

Several Asian efforts illustrate how teacher training yields inclusive and diverse classrooms. Another aspect of Education in India was DIET modularised training on Inclusive Education where teachers were made aware on disability inclusion and promotion of gender (gender equity) although accessibility proved to be a challenge. Bangladesh has been one of the few countries in South Asia that had the correct nationally reformist agenda on both child-centred pedagogy and community engagement; consequently, opportunities for all learners to participate actively were created in classrooms across marginalised areas.

Studies can always incorporate New Zealand with teacher professionalism, mentorship and reflective practice systems that have built capacity for teachers to teach diversity well in Singapore. These cases highlight that good preparedness is grounded in the interplay between policy, institutional support and practice in the classroom.

Teacher Preparation Policy and Institution-Level Implications

While the analysis made in this piece may highlight a greater need for comprehensive changes to teacher preparations to properly equip teachers for inclusive and diverse classrooms. While most stakeholders agree that inclusion ought to be a priority in policy, the extent to which it is realized depends on the ways in which teacher preparation programs are constructed and supported.

One of those, is that inclusive education must be embedded as a strong underlying value across all teacher education programs rather than a specialist area/optional unit. IBSE as inclusive pedagogy should be integrated into subject methods, assessment courses and classroom management courses within pre-service programmes. These inclusion initiatives represent the obligation of adults in all classrooms, not only special education teaching professionals, to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Second, there is a need for structural support at teacher training institutions for inclusive preparation. These offer exposure to different practicum settings, inclusive schools and partner organisations. Without institutions to enforce them, policy commitments could turn out to be hollow.

Third, the teacher educators ought to be inclusive themselves. Research indicates insufficient initial exposure to and professional development about inclusive practice in diversity (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018). It follows that reform investment in teacher education must prioritize professional development for teacher educators.

Finally, the consistency of policy across teacher education and school systems is also essential. The inclusive practices that are taught need to align with school-based expectations and the performance measures used within schools. Teachers are constrained by exam-focused, inflexible schools that contradict inclusive ideals.

Challenges and Systemic Constraints

Despite growing recognition of the importance of inclusive teacher training, many systemic challenges remain that perpetuate obstacles to progress, particularly in Asian education systems.

Resource imbalance is one of the major bottlenecks. Another important aspect of the geography here is that it pertains to teacher education institutions in rural or underserved areas, which are hampered by infrastructure constraints, lack of faculty and minimal exposure to professional development. These differences also create uneven preparation signals and reinforce educational inequities.

Deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs represent yet another challenge. Perceptions of ability and intelligence and difference more generally, are socially conditioned in teachers, just as they are in wider society. Deficit views of students may persist unless teacher training includes opportunities for reflective and critical engagement, which can detract from inclusive practice. Targeted To Attitudes Own the Message: Make it about changing attitudes: not a training one-off but conversation sustained over time.

Policy practice gaps often remain an everlasting challenge. Many inclusive education policies state ambitious goals but provide no practical guidelines for implementation, since they come connected with conditions such as crowded classrooms, a standardized curriculum and restricted support services. Teachers are, in the main, charged with responsibility for inclusion and are expected to fulfil this role without any of the necessary resources and circumstances.

Then there's our good friend the digital divide. New Technologies, New Pedagogies Digital technologies provide the opportunities for differentiated and inclusive learning in new ways while differential access to devices, connectivity, training and pedagogies can reinforce exclusion. This means ed tech has to be framed through an equity lens within teacher preparation programs.

Future Directions for Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Classrooms

In any efforts made beyond October 2023 to build inclusive and diverse classrooms which as your organization have found with regard to teacher preparation long-term systemic change should be prioritized. An area of some promise involves a rethinking of teacher professionalism around collegiality, reflective practice and social responsibility. Inclusive teaching is dynamic is a pedagogical practice changing with the needs of learners.

We should give more weightage to practice based teacher education models. BJI (2000) report placements for extended periods of time in school settings, where experienced and inclusive practitioners are available for mentoring

and reflective supervision can help bridge the theory to practice gap. Teachers who practice in structured ways especially over multiple classrooms are more likely to sustain their use of approaches, as data shows.

We need to have a rethink also on continuous professional development. Professional learning shouldn't be individual trust episodes but continual, school-based and collaborative with peers. Professional learning communities, action research and peer coaching are collaborative approaches in which teachers can work with each other to help advance inclusive practices.

Finally, the evidence base for what works well in policy and practice should exceed what is currently in place, recruitment to advanced organisations should be based on a stronger research and evaluation culture abroad. Empirical studies of inclusive pedagogy practices in school classrooms across diverse Asian contexts can provide local evidence that informs reform. In this contextualization, teachers are really important as they can offer embodied perspectives and assessments of limitations.

Conclusion

One of the biggest challenges that modern educational systems are up against is how to best prepare teachers for diverse and inclusive classrooms. Given that the classes are increasingly heterogeneous, inclusive schooling is largely contingent upon teachers' pedagogical skills and professionalism jointly with their relation to institutional resources for support.

This paper has argued that preparing teachers for inclusion needs to be seen as a process of transforming school organization rather than a technical fix. Through three lenses and using literature and cases from Asia, we contend that inclusive teacher preparation requires coherent policy, a connected curriculum and contemplative professional cultures.

Though recognition that inclusion is needed at all levels has advanced, lasting gaps between policy and practice limit the scope of reform. Filling in these gaps necessitates consistent input, a political will that spans across policymakers, teacher educators, schools and communities.

Ultimately, inclusive education is not about making space for difference, but rather about reconceptualising teaching as an equity and dignity driven social justice profession. Which brings us even more urgently to ensure that teacher education is designed to help weak learners learn, an essential part of a contribution to fairer and more integrated societies.

References

- Ainscow, M., Booth, T., & Dyson, A. (2006). *Improving schools, developing inclusion*. Routledge. Retrieved on 20th January 2026 from <https://www.routledge.com/Improving-Schools-Developing-Inclusion/Ainscow-Booth-Dyson/p/book/9780415472728>,
- European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. (2018). *Teacher education for inclusion*. Retrieved on 21th January 2026 from <https://www.european-agency.org/resources/publications/teacher-education-inclusion-profile-inclusive-teachers>

- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 41(4), 403–417. Retrieved on 21st January 2026 from <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2011.618205>
- Florian, L., & Spratt, J. (2013). Enacting inclusion. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 28(2), 119–135. Retrieved on 22nd January 2026 from <https://doi.org/10.1080/08856257.2013.778111>
- Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape teachers' identities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 22(2), 219–232. Retrieved on 22nd January 2026 from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.006>
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India. Retrieved on 20th January 2026 from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
- OECD. (2018). *Education policy outlook: Asia*. Retrieved on 23rd January 2026 from <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-policy-outlook/>
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved on 23rd January 2026 from <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/development-as-freedom-9780198297581>
- UNESCO. (2015). *A guide for ensuring inclusion and equity in education*. Retrieved on 23rd January 2026 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233278>
- UNESCO. (2016). *If you don't understand, how can you learn*. Retrieved on 20th January 2026 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243713>
- UNESCO. (2019). *Teacher policy development guide*. Retrieved on 24th January 2026 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370996>
- UNICEF. (2019). *Inclusive education in Asia*. Retrieved on 23rd January 2026 from <https://www.unicef.org/eap/reports/inclusive-education-asia>
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved on 23rd January 2026 from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- WHO & World Bank. (2011). *World report on disability*. Retrieved on 20th January 2026 from <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564182>

Cite the Article:

Khan, Dr. Wajih Ahmad Ahmad. Wara, Dr. Syed Md Kahful. Fatma, Alishan. Fatma, Arzan. Ahmad, Dr. Zaki. (2026). *Teacher Preparation for Inclusive and Diverse Classrooms: Pedagogical Competence, Professional Identity and Systemic Support*. S The Research Dialogue, An Online Peer Reviewed / Refereed Journal, 5(3) 01-10, ISSN: 2583-438X (Online), Volume 05, Issue 03, October-2026., DOI: - <https://doi.org/10.64880/theresearchdialogue.v5i3.01>

Disclaimer: The views, opinions, interpretations, analyses, conclusions, recommendations, and statements expressed in this research article are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views, policies, or positions of the Publisher, Chief Editor, Editors, Editorial Board, Reviewers, or their affiliated institutions. The author(s) bear full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, authenticity, and integrity of the manuscript and for ensuring compliance with applicable academic and ethical standards, including those relating to plagiarism, AI-generated or AI-assisted content, copyright infringement, data fabrication or falsification, and other forms of research or academic misconduct.