



Teacher competencies in inclusive education in Latin America Competencias docentes en educación inclusiva en Latinoamérica

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ABSTRACT

The research objective is to reflect on teaching skills in inclusive education in Latin America. For the preparation of this research article in reflection mode, a bibliographic selection was made of 26 scientific articles related to the objective of the study. An emerging theoretical analysis was generated using the analytical-synthetic method. Nine categories were identified that enrich the study of teaching competences in inclusive education in Latin America: i) teaching competences, ii) inclusive pedagogical practices, iii) accessibility and technology, iv) legal framework and educational policies, v) inclusive educational management, vi) teacher perceptions and attitudes, vii) teacher training, viii) inclusion in higher education, ix) theories and reflections. These nine categories show that the development of teaching skills for inclusive education must be a comprehensive and multidimensional process that combines technical, ethical and structural aspects, promoting a transformative, equitable and fair education in the region.

Descriptors: inclusive education; ability grouping; classroom techniques; teaching method innovations. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

Se prescribe como objetivo de investigación reflexionar sobre las competencias docentes en educación inclusiva en Latinoamérica. Para la elaboración de este artículo de investigación en modalidad reflexión, se llevó a cabo una selección bibliográfica 26 artículos científicos relacionados con el objetivo de estudio. se generó un análisis teórico emergente utilizando el método analítico-sintético. Se identificaron nueve categorías que enriquecen el estudio de las competencias docentes en educación inclusiva en Latinoamérica: i) competencias docentes, ii) prácticas pedagógicas inclusivas, iii) accesibilidad y tecnología, iv) marco legal y políticas educativas, v) gestión educativa inclusiva, vi) percepciones y actitudes docentes, vii) formación docente, viii) inclusión en la educación superior, ix) teorías y reflexiones. Estas nueve categorías evidencian que el desarrollo de competencias docentes para la educación inclusiva debe ser un proceso integral y multidimensional que articule aspectos técnicos, éticos y estructurales, promoviendo una educación transformadora, equitativa y justa en la región.

Descriptorios: educación inclusiva; agrupamiento por aptitudes; técnica didáctica; innovación pedagógica. (Fuente: Tesoro UNESCO).

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Reflection articles



INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, inclusive education has become an essential principle in contemporary education systems, aimed at guaranteeing the right of all students to a quality education, regardless of their individual, social or cultural characteristics. Therefore, it not only seeks the integration of students with special educational needs (SEN) or in vulnerable situations, but also promotes the transformation of pedagogical, curricular and organisational practices to address diversity in an (Watkins, D'Alessio & Kyriazopoulou, 2009). From this perspective, the role of the teacher is paramount, as they are responsible for implementing inclusive strategies that allow for the active participation and meaningful learning of all students.

In the case of Latin America, inclusive education faces specific challenges derived from the structural, economic and cultural inequalities that characterise the region. Although regulatory frameworks and educational policies promoting inclusion have been developed, their effective implementation remains limited. According to Hernández-Pico & Samada-Grasst (2021), the lack of resources, insufficient teacher training and exclusionary attitudes in some educational contexts hinder the consolidation of inclusive environments. In this vein, Escalante-Puma, Villafuerte-Álvarez & Escalante-Puma (2022) point out that, in many cases, inclusive policies fail to translate into concrete pedagogical practices, which highlights a significant gap between theory and practice.

In this sense, teaching skills become a central axis for inclusive education, as they not only encompass technical and pedagogical knowledge, but also emotional and social skills that allow teachers to manage diversity in the classroom. In view of this, Fernández-Batanero (2013) proposes that teachers should be capable of designing adapted teaching strategies, fostering a climate of respect and collaboration, and using technological tools that facilitate the learning of students with SEN. However, as Silva, Bento & Seixas (2024) point



out, the initial and ongoing training of teachers in the region often lacks pedagogical work that addresses these skills in a systematic way.

On the other hand, the use of accessible technologies has emerged as a resource for education, in view of which, the views of Calderón-Delgado et al. (2024) should be taken into account, indicating that digital tools, such as screen readers and adaptive learning platforms, can significantly improve the educational experience of students with disabilities; however, heterogeneous access to these technologies in rural areas and marginalised communities represents a significant challenge for the region (Escalante-Puma et al., 2022).

In this order, it is prescribed as a research objective to reflect on teaching competences in inclusive education in Latin America.

Theoretical frame of reference

Inclusive education in the context of teaching competences becomes a central axis for the implementation of inclusive practices that respond to diversity in the classroom. In this sense, the following is presented:

Inclusive education in the Latin American context

Inclusive education is understood as a continuous process that seeks to identify and eliminate the barriers that limit the learning and participation of all students, especially those with special educational needs (SEN) or in vulnerable situations. According to Watkins, D'Alessio & Kyriazopoulou (2009), it should not be limited to the physical integration of students in regular classrooms, but rather implies a transformation of pedagogical, curricular and organisational practices to address diversity.

In the Latin American context, inclusive education faces specific challenges derived from social, economic and cultural inequalities, in this order. Escalante-Puma, Villafuerte-Álvarez & Escalante-Puma (2022) point out that, although legal frameworks and educational policies that promote inclusion have been developed in the region, their effective implementation is still limited due to factors such as



the lack of resources, insufficient teacher training and the persistence of exclusionary attitudes. In countries such as Ecuador, Chile and Colombia, inclusive education is in a transition stage, where regulatory advances have not yet been fully translated into inclusive pedagogical practices (Hernández-Pico & Samada-Grasst, 2021).

Teaching competences for inclusive education

Teaching competences are the set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that teachers must develop in order to respond to the needs of all students in an inclusive environment. These competences are organised into three fundamental dimensions:

a) Pedagogical competences

These competences refer to the ability of teachers to design, implement and evaluate teaching strategies that respond to the diversity of the classroom. Therefore, Fernández-Batanero (2013) emphasises that teachers must be able to adapt the curriculum content, use active methodologies and design accessible materials to guarantee the participation of all students. Likewise, Delgado-Muñoz, Mendoza-Catagua & Salcedo-Quijije (2024) indicate the importance of differentiated planning and the use of approaches such as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which allows the needs of all students to be addressed from the outset.

b) Emotional competences

Inclusive education requires teachers to develop emotional skills that enable them to manage diversity in the classroom effectively. These competences include empathy, patience and the ability to handle conflict. For his part, Sebastián-Heredero (2017) points out that teachers must be aware of their own prejudices and actively work to promote a climate of respect and acceptance in the classroom. In consideration, emotional competencies are essential to build

positive relationships with students and their families, which contributes to strengthening the educational community.

c) Technological skills

The use of accessible technologies is a key resource for facilitating the learning of students with disabilities, while Calderón-Delgado et al. (2024) emphasise that tools such as screen readers, augmentative communication applications and virtual learning environments can significantly improve the educational experience of students with SEN. However, the lack of teacher training in the use of these technologies and inequalities in access to technological resources represent significant challenges in the region.

Challenges in teacher training

The initial and ongoing training of teachers is a determining factor for the implementation of inclusive education. Likewise, Silva, Bento & Seixas (2024) point out that, in many Latin American countries, teacher training programmes do not comprehensively address the skills needed to teach students with SEN, and this generates a gap between the demands of the inclusive classroom and the preparation of teachers.

a) Initial Training

In initial training, education degree curricula tend to lack a systematic focus on inclusion, and Laspina-Olmedo & Montero (2023) propose that teacher training programmes include specific content on diversity, universal design for learning and interdisciplinary collaboration strategies. It is essential that future teachers have practical experiences in inclusive contexts, which will allow them to develop specific skills to address diversity.

b) Continuing education

Continuing education is essential for updating teaching skills in line with advances in research and educational technologies. For their part, Navarrete-Ramírez et al. (2022) highlight the importance of training programmes that combine theory



and practice, allowing teachers to reflect on their experiences and improve their pedagogical practices. Likewise, it is necessary for these programmes to include a component of raising awareness of diversity, which fosters positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Inclusive pedagogical practices

Inclusive pedagogical practices are those strategies and methodologies that allow teachers to address diversity in the classroom effectively. These practices include:

- a) **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** This approach seeks to design materials and activities that are accessible to all students from the outset, eliminating the need for subsequent adaptations (Sebastián-Heredero, 2017).
- b) **Cooperative learning:** Promotes collaboration between students with different abilities, fostering inclusion and mutual respect (Silva, Lopes & Quadros, 2024).
- c) **Reasonable adjustments:** These consist of specific adaptations for students with SEN, such as the use of materials in Braille, sign language interpreters or the allocation of additional time in assessments (Escala, Arriagada & Gallardo, 2024). In the university environment, Herrera-Seda, Pérez-Salas & Echeita (2016) emphasise that inclusive practices must go beyond curricular adaptations, promoting a cultural change in educational institutions that fosters awareness and commitment from the entire academic community.

Impact of technology on inclusive education

Technology has transformed the way inclusive education is approached, offering tools that facilitate access to learning for students with disabilities. Therefore, Calderón-Delgado et al. (2024) analyse how accessible technologies can improve the educational experience of students, allowing for greater personalisation and accessibility of content. However, unequal access to technology in the region represents a significant challenge, especially in rural areas and marginalised communities (Escalante-Puma et al., 2022).



Therefore, teacher training, the use of accessible technologies and the promotion of inclusive pedagogical practices are elements that constitute a more equitable and fair education in the region, and it is important that educational and research actors will be fundamental in overcoming these challenges and guaranteeing the right to education for all.

METHOD

For the elaboration of this research article in reflection mode, a bibliographic selection was made of 26 scientific articles related to the objective of the study. These articles were selected from recognised databases such as Scopus, Redalyc, SciELO, Web of Science.

The procedure began with the selection of articles published between 2009 and 2024 in indexed and open access journals, based on topics related to inclusive education, teaching skills and educational policies in the Latin American context.

The inclusion criteria considered the relevance of the research, publication in peer-reviewed journals and availability of the full text. On the other hand, documents that were duplicates, of low methodological quality or that did not directly address the topic under study were excluded.

Subsequently, a content analysis was carried out to identify patterns, concepts and categories in the texts scrutinised, and then the data obtained was organised in an analysis matrix that allowed the information to be classified into nine documentary categories, which are presented in Table 1. These categories were defined and described based on the grouping of references from which they were fed with the frequent ideas presented in the text.

From the systematised information, an emerging theoretical analysis was generated using the analytical-synthetic method, based on breaking down the key elements of the documentary categories to examine them in detail and, subsequently, integrate them into a comprehensive vision. In this way, it was possible to articulate a theoretical contribution that not only describes the



teaching competences for inclusive education, but also reflects on their importance in the construction of equitable and transformative educational environments.

RESULTS

Based on the documentary review of 26 scientific articles related to the subject of study, nine documentary categories have been constructed as enriching the state of the art in Latin America, which are presented in summary form in Table 1, with the purpose of systematising the relevant information, to be analytically processed as a basis for the theoretical construction of a reflective corpus on the importance of developing such competences in teachers with the intention of promote an inclusive, equitable and fair education that truly integrates students, teachers and the educational community in a transformative pedagogical action of the participants.

Table 1. Documentary categories on teaching skills in inclusive education in Latin America.

Category	Description	References
Teaching Competencies	Skills and knowledge required to implement inclusive practices in teaching.	Delgado-Muñoz et al. (2024), Fernández-Batanero (2013), Founes-Méndez et al. (2023), Navarrete-Ramírez et al. (2022), Nistal-Anta et al. (2024), Sebastián-Heredero (2017), Laspina-Olmedo & Montero (2023), Fonseca-Montoya et al. (2020).
Inclusive Pedagogical Practices and Accessibility Technology	Strategies and methodologies to address diversity in the classroom. Use of technological tools to facilitate learning for students with disabilities.	Silva et al. (2024), Escala et al. (2024), Fonseca-Montoya et al. (2020), Vera-Rivera et al. (2024), Martínez-Sarmiento (2024), Escobar et al. (2020). Calderón-Delgado et al. (2024), Escalante-Puma et al. (2022).
Legal Framework and Educational Policies	Analysis of regulations and policies that promote inclusive education.	Aldana-Zavala (2024), Hernández-Pico & Samada-Grasst (2021), Clavijo-Castillo & Bautista-Cerro (2020).
Inclusive Educational Management	Role of management in implementing inclusive environments.	Flor-Montecé & González-Granda (2023), Laspina-Olmedo & Montero (2023), Herrera-Seda et al. (2016).
Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes	Teachers' opinions and beliefs about educational inclusion.	Martínez-Sarmiento (2024), Escobar et al. (2020), Herrera-Seda et al. (2016), Fonseca-Montoya et al. (2020).
Teacher Training	Initial and continuous training programs and curricula for inclusive education.	Silva et al. (2024), Sebastián-Heredero (2017), Hernández-Pico & Samada-Grasst (2021), Vera-Rivera et al. (2024), Silva et al. (2024).
Inclusion in Higher Education	Challenges and strategies to promote inclusion in universities.	Aguilar-Parra et al. (2024), Clavijo-Castillo & Bautista-Cerro (2020), Escala et al. (2024), Navarrete-Ramírez et al. (2022), Herrera-Seda et al. (2016).
Theories and Reflections	Theoretical and critical analysis of inclusive education and its implementation.	Watkins et al. (2009), Bermejo et al. (2009), Flor-Montecé & González-Granda (2023), Laspina-Olmedo & Montero (2023), Jaramillo-Neira et al. (2024).

Source: Prepared by the author.



The analysis of the documentary categories related to teaching skills in inclusive education in Latin America allows us to study the articulating elements in the construction of equitable and accessible educational environments, which are therefore described below:

Teaching skills

The development of teaching skills is a central axis in inclusive education, as it allows educators to design and implement pedagogical strategies that address the diversity of the student body. According to Delgado-Muñoz et al. (2024) and Fernández-Batanero (2013), these skills should integrate technical dimensions, such as the design of curricular adaptations, as well as ethical dimensions, with an emphasis on valuing diversity as a pedagogical resource. However, Nistal-Anta et al. (2024) and Sebastián-Heredero (2017) warn that teacher training programmes in the region tend to be insufficient in preparing for inclusion, which generates a gap between the demands of the education system and the real capacities of teachers.

Inclusive pedagogical practices

Inclusive pedagogical practices are fundamental to guarantee the active participation of all students in the learning process. Therefore, Silva et al. (2024) and Escala et al. (2024) highlight the importance of methodologies such as collaborative learning, differentiated teaching and the use of adapted materials. These practices not only respond to the individual needs of students, but also foster a culture of respect and equity in the classroom. However, Fonseca-Montoya et al. (2020) and Vera-Rivera et al. (2024) identify significant barriers, such as lack of resources, teacher workload and resistance to change in some institutions.

Accessibility and technology

Digital accessibility and the use of inclusive technologies represent a key resource for inclusive education, especially for students with disabilities. In this

sense, Calderón-Delgado et al. (2024) and Escalante-Puma et al. (2022) highlight that technological tools, such as screen readers, augmentative communication applications and adapted digital resources, can facilitate access to learning and improve the autonomy of students. However, the digital divide in Latin America remains a structural challenge, especially in rural or low-income contexts. This raises the need for public policies that promote digital equity, not only through the provision of technology, but also through teacher training in the pedagogical use of these tools, ensuring that their implementation is effective and sustainable.

Legal framework and education policies

The regulatory framework and education policies are fundamental to guarantee the right to inclusive education. In this category, Aldana-Zavala (2024) and Hernández-Pico & Samada-Grasst (2021) highlight that, although many countries in the region have adopted regulations that promote inclusion, their effective implementation faces significant challenges. These include a lack of resources, the absence of monitoring mechanisms and resistance from some educational stakeholders. This is in addition to the views of Clavijo-Castillo & Bautista-Cerro (2020), who point out that, in some cases, inclusive policies are not aligned with local realities, which hinders their implementation.

Inclusive educational management

Inclusive educational management is an essential component for the creation of school environments that favour the participation of all students, in consideration Flor-Montecé & González-Granda (2023) and Laspina-Olmedo & Montero (2023) emphasise that school managers must lead institutional transformation processes that promote inclusion, such as the adaptation of infrastructures, the implementation of awareness programmes and the promotion of inclusive pedagogical practices logical practices. However, Herrera-Seda et al. (2016) warn that many educational leaders lack specific training in this area, which limits their ability to implement significant changes.

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards educational inclusion are decisive for its success. In this case, Martínez-Sarmiento (2024) and Escobar et al. (2020) highlight that, although some teachers have positive attitudes towards inclusion, others show resistance due to a lack of preparation, ignorance or prejudice towards students with special educational needs. Likewise, Fonseca-Montoya et al. (2020) emphasise that these attitudes can be transformed through awareness-raising and training programmes that not only provide technical knowledge but also promote a change in teachers' beliefs and values.

Teacher training

Teacher training is a cross-cutting issue in inclusive education. In view of this, Silva et al. (2024) and Sebastián-Heredero (2017) emphasise that initial and continuing training programmes should include specific content on educational inclusion, such as the design of curricular adaptations, the use of accessible technologies and attention to diversity. However, Hernández-Pico & Samada-Grasst (2021) point out that, in many cases, these programmes do not sufficiently address the needs of students with disabilities.

Inclusion in higher education

Inclusion in higher education faces specific challenges, such as the lack of adequate support for students with disabilities and institutional resistance to change. Therefore, Aguilar-Parra et al. (2024) and Clavijo-Castillo & Bautista-Cerro (2020) comment that universities must implement reasonable adjustments, such as adapting materials and providing support services, and train their teachers in inclusive practices. Likewise, Escala et al. (2024) point out that, although there has been progress in this area, much remains to be done to guarantee equity in access and permanence for students with disabilities in higher education.

Theories and reflections

Theoretical and critical studies on inclusive education by (Watkins et al., 2009; Bermejo et al., 2009) consider it necessary to manage cooperative work that combines pedagogical, legal and social aspects. In view of this, Flor-Montecé & González-Granda (2023) and Jaramillo-Neira et al. (2024) add that inclusive education not only involves transforming educational practices, but also addressing the structural and cultural barriers that perpetuate exclusion.

Teaching competences for inclusive education

Inclusive education is presented as a transformative paradigm that seeks to guarantee the right to a quality education for all students, regardless of their individual characteristics, abilities or sociocultural contexts. This approach is not limited to the integration of students with special educational needs, but promotes the construction of educational environments that value diversity as a pedagogical and social resource. In this context, teaching skills become a fundamental articulating axis, as educators are the main agents of change in the teaching-learning processes. However, the development of these competences cannot be understood in isolation, but rather as part of a multidimensional process that brings together technical, ethical and structural aspects, framed within an educational context that demands profound transformations.

The technical-pedagogical dimension: Competencies to address diversity

From a technical-pedagogical perspective, teaching competencies for inclusive education imply the ability to design and implement strategies that respond to student diversity. This includes the design of curricular adaptations, the implementation of differentiated methodologies and the use of accessible technologies that facilitate learning for all students, especially those with disabilities or specific educational needs.

The design of curricular adaptations should not be understood as a simple modification of content, but as a reflective process that seeks to guarantee that



each student can access learning based on their own abilities and potential. This requires teachers to be able to identify barriers to learning and participation and to propose strategies to overcome them. Likewise, the use of methodologies such as collaborative learning or differentiated instruction not only responds to individual needs, but also fosters a culture of respect, equity and cooperation in the classroom.

In this sense, the use of accessible technologies becomes a key resource for inclusion, as well as tools such as screen readers, augmentative communication applications and adapted digital resources can facilitate access to learning and improve the autonomy of students. However, the implementation of these tools requires that teachers not only be technically trained, but also understand how to integrate them pedagogically into their daily practices. This challenge is aggravated by the digital divide that persists in many contexts in Latin America, especially in rural or low-income areas, which highlights the need for public policies that promote digital equity and teacher training in this area.

The ethical dimension and inclusion as a transformative principle

Inclusive education not only requires technical skills, but also a profound change in the attitudes and values of educators. In this sense, the ethical and attitudinal dimension of teaching competences is fundamental, since inclusion cannot be seen only as a normative obligation, but as an ethical commitment to equity and social justice.

Teachers must see diversity as a pedagogical resource and not as a barrier, recognising that each student brings a unique perspective that enriches the educational process. This implies overcoming prejudices and stereotypes that, in many cases, are deeply rooted in traditional educational practices, the tendency to homogenise the student body or to prioritise academic results over the integral development of students can perpetuate dynamics of exclusion.

Perceptions and attitudes towards inclusion vary significantly among teachers, while some show a positive predisposition, others present resistance derived

from prejudice, ignorance or lack of preparation. This resistance not only limits the implementation of inclusive practices, but also affects the educational experience of students. For this reason, it is essential that teacher training programmes include components of awareness-raising and critical reflection that promote a change in the beliefs and values of educators. This process of raising awareness must go beyond the transmission of technical knowledge, fostering a professional ethic oriented towards equity and social justice.

The structural and contextual dimension: Transformation of educational policies and management

Educational inclusion cannot be the sole responsibility of teachers; it requires systemic change in educational policies, institutional management and contextual conditions. Although many countries in the region have adopted regulations that promote inclusive education, its effective implementation faces significant challenges. These include a lack of financial and human resources, a disconnect between policies and local realities, and the absence of evaluative management mechanisms.

In this context, inclusive education management plays a key role in the creation of school environments that favour the participation of all students. Educational leaders have the responsibility to lead processes of institutional transformation that include the adaptation of infrastructures, the promotion of inclusive pedagogical practices and the implementation of awareness programmes aimed at the entire educational community. However, many managers lack specific training in this area, which limits their ability to drive meaningful change. This highlights the need to strengthen the training and support of educational leaders, promoting transformative leadership that fosters inclusion as a cross-cutting theme in educational institutions.

Consequently, educational inclusion must consider the particularities of each context, such as socioeconomic inequalities, the digital divide and cultural barriers. This requires a contextualised approach that allows inclusive strategies



to be adapted to local realities, ensuring that educational policies and practices are relevant and sustainable.

Towards a comprehensive theory of teacher competences for inclusion

Based on these reflections, an emerging theory of teacher competences for inclusive education can be proposed that articulates the technical, ethical and structural dimensions as key elements to guarantee the right to equitable and quality education, which recognises that:

- a) The technical-pedagogical dimension provides the tools necessary to address diversity in the classroom, but these must be accompanied by continuous training that allows teachers to update their knowledge and skills.
- b) The ethical and attitudinal dimension is fundamental to ensure that teachers assume inclusion as a transformative principle, overcoming prejudices and resistance through critical reflection and ethical commitment.
- c) The structural and contextual dimension emphasises that inclusion cannot be the sole responsibility of teachers, but requires a systemic change in educational policies, institutional management and contextual conditions.

In this sense, the development of teaching competencies for inclusive education should be understood as a dynamic and multidimensional process that requires the coordination of efforts at all levels of the education system.

CONCLUSION

Nine categories were identified that enrich the study of teaching competencies in inclusive education in Latin America: i) teaching competencies, ii) inclusive pedagogical practices, iii) accessibility and technology, iv) legal framework and educational policies, v) inclusive educational management, vi) teacher perceptions and attitudes, vii) teacher training, viii) inclusion in higher education, ix) theories and reflections. These nine categories show that the development of teaching skills for inclusive education must be a comprehensive and



multidimensional process that combines technical, ethical and structural aspects, promoting a transformative, equitable and fair education in the region.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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