



Digital Competence of Teachers for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-05-06-001>

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Article Info: - Received : 19 May 2026

Accepted : 25 June 2026

Published : 30 June 2026

Abstract

The increasing integration of digital technologies in education has transformed teaching practices and created new opportunities for supporting students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Teachers' digital competence plays a crucial role in selecting, adapting, and implementing digital tools that facilitate personalized instruction, learner engagement, and equitable educational opportunities. The present study examined the level of teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities and investigated differences based on gender and type of school. The study also explored the relationship between teachers' digital competence and their use of digital technologies. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A sample of 300 school teachers from Government and Private schools was selected using simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Teachers' Digital Competence Scale and the Digital Technology Use Scale for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities. The collected data were analysed using Mean, Standard Deviation, Independent Samples t-test, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The findings revealed that teachers possessed a moderately high level of digital competence ($M = 38.18$, $SD = 6.86$) and a high level of digital technology use ($M = 39.89$, $SD = 7.02$). Significant differences were found in teachers' digital competence based on gender ($t = 2.634$, $p = .010$) and type of school ($t = 4.012$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, a very strong positive relationship was identified between teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities ($r = .830$, $p < .001$). The study concludes that strengthening teachers' digital competence through continuous professional development and institutional support can enhance the effective integration of digital technologies in inclusive classrooms and improve educational opportunities for students with learning disabilities.

Keywords: *Digital Competence, Digital Technology Use, Learning Disabilities, Inclusive Education, Teachers, Assistive Technology, Digital Pedagogy, Teacher Professional Development.*



1. Introduction:

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed teaching and learning, making digital competence an essential professional competency for teachers. In inclusive education, teachers are expected to integrate digital technologies effectively to provide equitable learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities. Digital competence encompasses the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and ethical practices required to use digital technologies confidently, critically, and responsibly in educational settings (Holmes et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2024).

Students with learning disabilities often experience persistent difficulties in reading, writing, spelling, mathematics, and information processing. Digital technologies, including assistive technologies, adaptive learning systems, and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based educational tools, have demonstrated considerable potential in addressing these challenges by providing personalized instruction, immediate feedback, and accessible learning resources (Luckin, 2018; Celik et al., 2022). These technologies support differentiated instruction and enhance students' participation and academic achievement in inclusive classrooms.

Teachers play a central role in the successful integration of digital technologies. Research indicates that teachers with higher levels of digital competence are more confident in selecting appropriate digital resources, designing inclusive learning activities, and using assistive technologies to support students with diverse learning needs (Celik et al., 2022). However, inadequate professional training, limited access to digital infrastructure and insufficient knowledge of assistive technologies continue to hinder effective technology integration in many schools (UNESCO, 2024).

In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes technology integration, digital literacy, and inclusive education as key strategies for improving educational quality.

Despite these policy initiatives, empirical research examining teachers' digital competence for supporting students with learning disabilities remains limited. Most existing studies have focused on general digital literacy rather than teachers' competence in using digital technologies specifically to address the educational needs of students with learning disabilities. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine the digital competence of teachers in supporting students with learning disabilities and to provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening technology-enabled inclusive education.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Digital Competence Framework

The present study is primarily based on the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu) developed by Redecker (2017). The framework identifies the digital competencies required by teachers for effective technology integration in education. It consists of six competence areas: Professional Engagement, Digital Resources, Teaching and Learning, Assessment, Empowering Learners, and Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence. The framework emphasizes that digitally competent teachers can create learner-centred, technology-supported, and inclusive learning environments. In the present study, DigCompEdu provides the theoretical basis for examining teachers' digital competence in supporting students with learning disabilities.

2.2. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Framework

The study is also supported by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Framework proposed by Mishra and Koehler (2006). The TPACK framework explains that effective technology integration requires teachers to combine technological knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content knowledge. Teachers who possess these interconnected competencies are better able to

design meaningful learning experiences using digital technologies. In inclusive classrooms, TPACK enables teachers to integrate assistive technologies and digital instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students with learning disabilities.

2.3. Inclusive Education Theory

The study is further grounded in the principles of Inclusive Education Theory, which advocates equal educational opportunities for all learners regardless of their abilities or disabilities. Inclusive education promotes participation, accessibility, equity, and individualized support within mainstream classrooms. Teachers play a significant role in implementing inclusive education by adapting instructional methods, learning materials, and classroom environments to meet the diverse needs of students. Digital competence enables teachers to effectively utilize assistive technologies and digital learning resources to support students with learning disabilities, thereby promoting inclusive educational practices.

3. Conceptual Framework

➤ Independent Variable

Teachers' Digital Competence

➤ Dependent Variable

Support for Students with Learning Disabilities through Digital Technologies

The framework proposes that higher levels of teachers' digital competence contribute to more effective use of digital technologies, assistive technologies, and inclusive instructional practices, resulting in improved learning opportunities for students with learning disabilities.

4. Review of Related Literature

The review of related literature provides an understanding of previous research on teachers' digital competence and its role in supporting students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms. It highlights the importance of digital technologies, assistive technologies, and professional development in enhancing teachers' instructional practices. The review also examines recent studies on digital competence, technology integration, and inclusive education to identify existing research

trends and gaps. These studies provide the theoretical and empirical foundation for the present investigation on teachers' digital competence for supporting students with learning disabilities.

Celik et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review examining the opportunities and challenges of Artificial Intelligence in education. The review highlighted that teachers' digital competence is a prerequisite for effectively integrating AI-supported instructional tools into classrooms. The authors emphasized that professional development programmes should focus not only on technical skills but also on pedagogical decision-making and ethical use of AI. These findings suggest that strengthening teachers' digital competence is essential for providing effective support to students with learning disabilities.

Montenegro-Rueda et al. (2023) investigated the digital competence of special education teachers in Spain through the perceptions of school management teams. The study found that although teachers recognized the educational value of digital technologies, many lacked adequate competence in using assistive technologies for students with special educational needs. The researchers recommended continuous professional development and institutional support to improve inclusive teaching practices.

Smestad (2023) reviewed contemporary literature on teachers' digital competence and concluded that digital competence extends beyond the operation of technological devices. It includes instructional planning, digital assessment, communication, collaboration, and ethical responsibility. The study emphasized that digitally competent teachers are more capable of adapting instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of learners, including students with learning disabilities.

UNESCO (2024) introduced the AI Competency Framework for Teachers, emphasizing that educators should develop competencies related to digital literacy, ethical AI use, learner-centred pedagogy, and inclusive educational practices. The framework highlights that teachers' digital competence is fundamental for ensuring equitable access to technology-supported learning experiences for all students.

Utami et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review of professional development programmes designed to enhance digital competence among special education teachers. The review found that most training programmes significantly improved teachers' confidence and technology integration skills. However, the authors noted that many programmes focused on general digital literacy rather than technologies specifically designed to support students with disabilities.

Melo-López et al. (2025) examined the influence of Artificial Intelligence on inclusive education and reported that AI-based educational technologies facilitate personalized learning, early identification of learning difficulties, and adaptive instruction. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these technologies depends largely on teachers' digital competence and their ability to integrate AI into everyday classroom practice.

Blomberg Kjellström et al. (2026) conducted a scoping review of teachers' digital text competencies in inclusive education. The review found that teachers' ability to use digital tools for reading and writing instruction plays an important role in supporting students with learning disabilities. The authors concluded that strengthening teachers' digital competence through targeted professional development can improve literacy outcomes and promote inclusive educational practices.

Hamid et al. (2025) systematically reviewed the impact of digital competence and assistive technologies on students with learning disabilities. The review found that digital tools such as text-to-speech software, adaptive learning systems, and interactive educational applications significantly improved students' academic engagement and learning outcomes. However, successful implementation depended largely on teachers' digital competence and their ability to select appropriate technologies according to individual learning needs.

Shi et al. (2025) investigated the influence of professional development programmes on teachers' digital pedagogy. Their findings demonstrated that digital pedagogy competence and teachers' digital self-efficacy significantly enhanced work engagement while reducing emotional exhaustion. The study concluded that training programmes integrating

technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge better prepare teachers to create inclusive digital learning environments.

Utami et al. (2025) conducted a systematic review of professional development programmes designed for special education teachers. The authors found that most training initiatives focused primarily on technical digital skills while giving limited attention to inclusive pedagogy, accessibility, and assistive technologies. They argued that future professional development should be tailored to the practical challenges faced by teachers working with students with disabilities.

Samaniego López et al. (2025) systematically reviewed the role of technology in inclusive education. Their findings indicated that digital technologies promote accessibility, individualized instruction, and active learner participation. Nevertheless, they also identified persistent challenges, including insufficient teacher preparation, inadequate infrastructure, and unequal access to digital resources. The study concluded that teachers' digital competence remains a key factor in determining the success of technology-supported inclusive education.

Dhouib et al. (2025) reviewed the effectiveness of smart learning environments for students with disabilities. The review demonstrated that adaptive digital environments support personalized learning, improve learner engagement, and enhance academic achievement. However, the authors emphasized that these benefits can only be realized when teachers possess sufficient digital competence to design, implement, and monitor technology-supported learning experiences.

Sathya et al. (2026) developed and evaluated the SmartPD professional development model based on the DigCompEdu framework. The study reported significant improvements in teachers' competence across multiple digital domains, particularly in facilitating learners' digital competence and technology-enhanced teaching. These findings indicate that structured professional development programmes can substantially strengthen teachers' readiness to support diverse learners through digital technologies.

Blomberg Kjellström et al. (2026) examined teachers' digital text competencies

within inclusive educational settings. The review found that teachers' ability to use multiple digital text formats, scaffold learning activities, and integrate digital resources contributed to greater learner engagement and individualized instruction. The authors argued that digital competence should include the ability to design accessible digital materials for students with learning disabilities.

Muammar et al. (2022) assessed teachers' digital competence using the DigCompEdu framework and reported that educators generally demonstrated moderate levels of competence across digital domains. While teachers showed confidence in using basic digital technologies, they experienced greater difficulty in designing learner-centred digital activities and assessing students through technology. The study concluded that professional development should focus on strengthening pedagogical applications of digital technologies rather than only technical proficiency. These findings are particularly relevant for teachers supporting students with learning disabilities, who require differentiated digital instruction

5. Research Gap

The review of related literature indicates that teachers' digital competence plays a crucial role in integrating digital technologies and assistive tools into inclusive classrooms. Previous studies have primarily focused on teachers' general digital competence, Artificial Intelligence in education, and technology integration in mainstream classrooms (**Celik et al., 2022; Smestad, 2023**). Similarly, several studies have highlighted the importance of professional development in improving teachers' digital skills (**Utami et al., 2025; Shi et al., 2025**).

Although a few studies have examined digital competence in special and inclusive education (**Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023; Hamid et al., 2025**), limited research has specifically investigated teachers' digital competence for supporting students with learning disabilities in regular inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, most studies have been conducted in European and other international contexts, with relatively little empirical evidence from India.

In addition, previous research has largely emphasized technology adoption and digital literacy, while insufficient attention has been given to teachers' practical use of digital competence for supporting students with learning disabilities. Therefore, there is a need to examine the digital competence of teachers and its role in supporting students with learning disabilities in inclusive educational settings. The present study attempts to address this gap by investigating teachers' digital competence in relation to supporting students with learning disabilities in the Indian school context.

6. Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of digital competence among teachers for supporting students with learning disabilities.
- To examine the use of digital technologies by teachers for supporting students with learning disabilities.
- To compare the digital competence of teachers based on gender.
- To compare the digital competence of teachers based on the type of school (Government, Government-Aided, and Private).
- To determine the relationship between teachers' digital competence and their use of digital technologies for supporting students with learning disabilities.

7. Hypotheses

- There is no significant difference in the digital competence of teachers for supporting students with learning disabilities based on gender.
- There is no significant difference in the digital competence of teachers for supporting students with learning disabilities based on the type of school.
- There is no significant relationship between teachers' digital competence and their use of digital technologies for supporting students with learning disabilities.

8. Methodology

8.1. Research Design

The present study employed a quantitative research approach using a descriptive survey design. The survey method

was considered appropriate because it enables the collection of data from a large number of teachers regarding their digital competence in supporting students with learning disabilities. The study aimed to examine teachers' digital competence, compare it across selected demographic variables, and explore its relationship with the use of digital technologies in inclusive classrooms.

8.2. Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised school teachers working in Government and Private schools that implement inclusive education. A sample of 300 school teachers was selected from Government, Government-Aided, and Private schools in Sivagangai Madurai and Ramnad Districts. The sample was selected using the Random Sampling Technique to ensure adequate representation of teachers from different types of schools.

8.3. Research Instruments

Two Research Instrument were used for data collection

- **Teachers' Digital Competence Scale (TDC):** The Teachers' Digital Competence Scale was developed by the researcher to assess teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence in using digital technologies to support students with learning disabilities.
- **Digital Technology Use Scale for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities (DTSLD):** The Digital Technology Use Scale for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities was developed by the researcher to assess teachers' use of digital technologies and assistive tools in supporting students with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

8.4. Statistical Techniques

The following statistical techniques will be used analysed the data collected for the study "Digital Competence of Teachers for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities"

8.5. Mean and Standard Deviation

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the level of teachers' digital competence and their use of digital technologies for supporting students with learning disabilities. The mean indicates the average score, while the standard deviation measures the variability of the respondents' scores.

8.6. T-test

T-test will be used to find out the significant difference between two groups such as

- Gender (male and female teachers)
- Type of School (Government and Private)

8.7. Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between teachers' digital competence and their use of digital technologies for supporting students with learning disabilities.

These statistical techniques will help interpret the collected data and test the hypotheses of the study.

8.8. Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms, and participation was voluntary. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality and anonymity were assured.

9. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the level of teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities. Independent Samples t-test was employed to examine the significant differences based on gender and type of school. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities. The level of significance was fixed at 0.05.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Teachers' Digital Competence and Digital Technology Use for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities (N = 300)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Teachers' Digital Competence	300	38.18	6.86	Moderately High
Digital Technology Use for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities	300	39.89	7.02	High

➤ **Result**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities. The mean score of teachers' digital competence was 38.18 (SD = 6.86), indicating a moderately high level of digital

competence. Similarly, the mean score of digital technology use was 39.89 (SD = 7.02), indicating a high level of digital technology use among teachers. The standard deviation values indicate moderate variability in the responses of the teachers.

Table 2: Difference in Teachers' Digital Competence Based on Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Variance			
Male	257	38.48	50.73			
Female	41	36.22	22.08			
Test			t	df	p	Decision
Independent Samples <i>t</i> -test			2.634	73	0.010	Significant

➤ **Result**

Table 2 presents the difference in teachers' digital competence based on gender. The findings revealed that male teachers obtained a higher mean score (M = 38.48) than female teachers (M = 36.22). The obtained *t*-value was 2.634 with *df* = 73, and the corresponding *p*-value was 0.010, which is less

than the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in teachers' digital competence based on gender was rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that teachers' digital competence differs significantly based on gender.

Table 3: Difference in Teachers' Digital Competence Based on Type of School

Type of School	N	Mean	Variance	
Government	192	39.50	26.58	
Private	108	35.83	75.28	
Test	t	df	p	Decision
Independent Samples <i>t</i> -test	4.012	150	< .001	Significant

➤ **Result**

Table 3 presents the difference in teachers' digital competence based on the type of school. Government school teachers obtained a higher mean score (M = 39.50) than private school teachers (M = 35.83). The obtained *t*-

value was 4.012 with *df* = 150, and the corresponding *p*-value was less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it is concluded that teachers' digital competence differs significantly based on the type of school.

Table 4: Relationship between Teachers' Digital Competence and Digital Technology Use for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities

Variables	Pearson's r	Significance	Interpretation
Teachers' Digital Competence and Digital Technology Use	0.830	p < .001	Very Strong Positive Relationship

➤ Result

Table 4 presents the relationship between teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis revealed a very strong positive relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.830$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship between teachers' digital competence and digital technology use was rejected. The findings indicate that teachers with higher levels of digital competence are more likely to use digital technologies effectively to support students with learning disabilities.

10. Discussion of the Present Study

The present study examined teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities. The findings indicated that teachers possessed a moderately high level of digital competence and a high level of digital technology use. This suggests that teachers are increasingly adopting digital technologies to facilitate inclusive teaching and learning.

The study further revealed a significant difference in teachers' digital competence based on gender, indicating that digital competence levels varied between male and female teachers. Similarly, a significant difference was observed based on the type of school, with government school teachers demonstrating higher levels of digital competence than private school teachers. This difference may be attributed to greater access to government-sponsored digital training programmes, digital infrastructure, and professional development opportunities.

Furthermore, the study identified a very strong positive relationship between teachers' digital competence and digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities ($r = .830$). This finding implies that teachers who possess stronger digital competence are more likely to integrate digital technologies effectively into inclusive classroom practices. The findings

support recent research emphasizing that continuous professional development and institutional support enhance teachers' ability to employ digital technologies for improving learning outcomes among students with learning disabilities.

11. Educational Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for educational practice. Educational authorities should organize regular professional development programmes focusing on teachers' digital competence, assistive technologies, and inclusive digital pedagogy. Schools should strengthen their digital infrastructure and ensure equitable access to digital resources. Teacher education institutions should integrate digital competence frameworks and inclusive technology training into both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. These initiatives will enhance teachers' preparedness to support students with learning disabilities effectively.

12. Suggestions for Further Research

- ❖ Similar studies may be conducted with larger samples drawn from different states and educational settings.
- ❖ Future research may compare teachers working in rural and urban schools.
- ❖ Additional variables such as teaching experience, educational qualification, digital self-efficacy, and attitudes towards inclusive education may be incorporated.
- ❖ Experimental studies may be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of digital competence training programmes.
- ❖ Longitudinal studies may examine changes in teachers' digital competence and technology use over time.
- ❖ Future research may investigate the role of artificial intelligence and emerging digital technologies in supporting students with learning disabilities.

13. Conclusion

The study concludes that teachers possess a moderately high level of digital competence and a high level of digital technology use for supporting students with learning disabilities. Significant differences were observed in teachers' digital competence based on gender and type of school, indicating that these demographic factors influence digital competence. Moreover, a very strong positive relationship was found between teachers' digital competence and digital technology use, demonstrating that greater digital competence is associated with more effective use of digital technologies in inclusive classrooms. The findings highlight the need for continuous professional development, improved digital infrastructure, and institutional support to strengthen teachers' digital competence and promote inclusive education. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital competence and technology-enabled inclusive education and provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and teacher education institutions.

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Cite this article as: Mrs. P. Christinal Geetha Anjeline and Dr. A. Pio Albina., (2026). Digital Competence of Teachers for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities. *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies*. 5(6), pp. 864–873.
<https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-05-06-001>