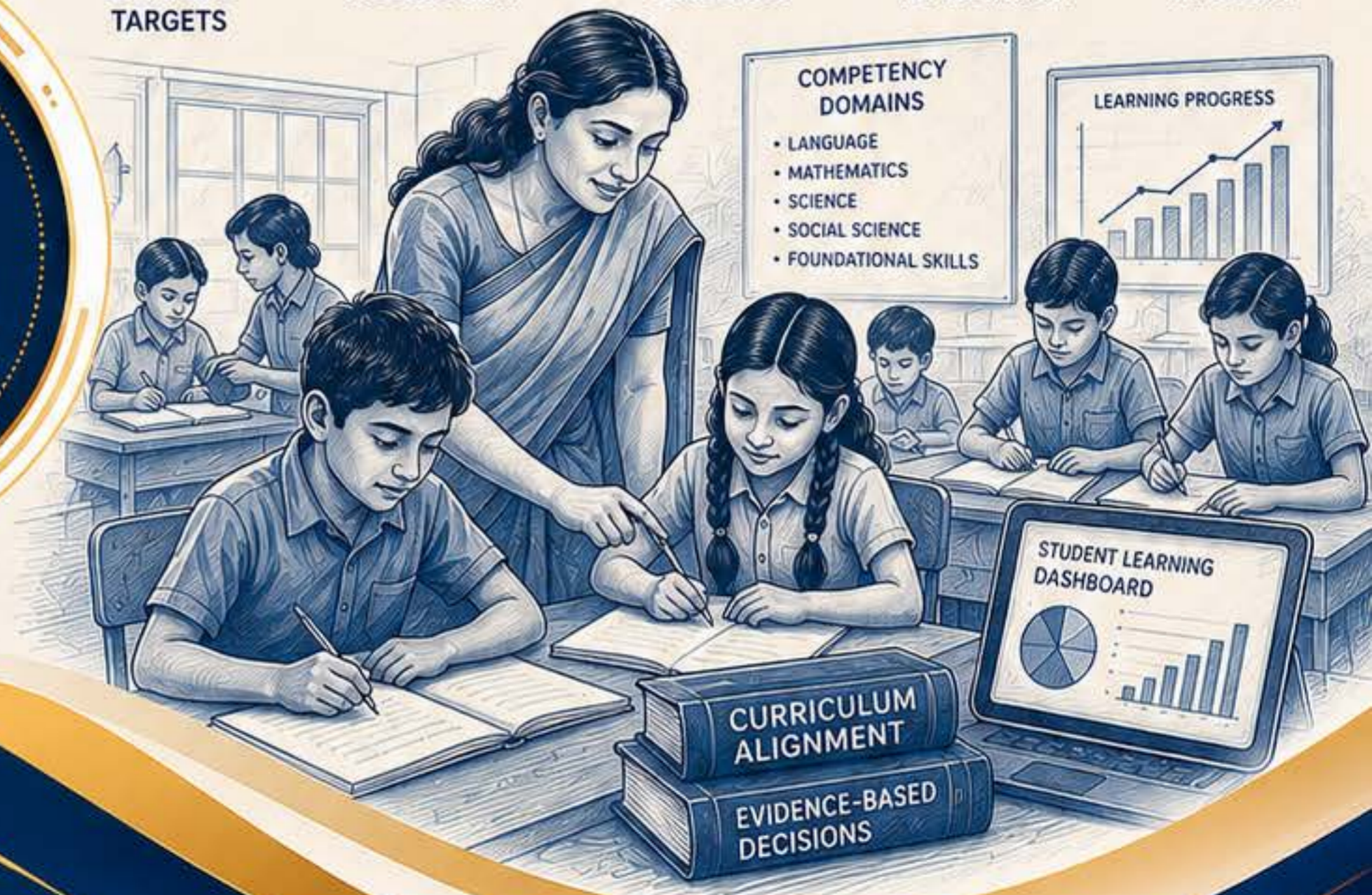
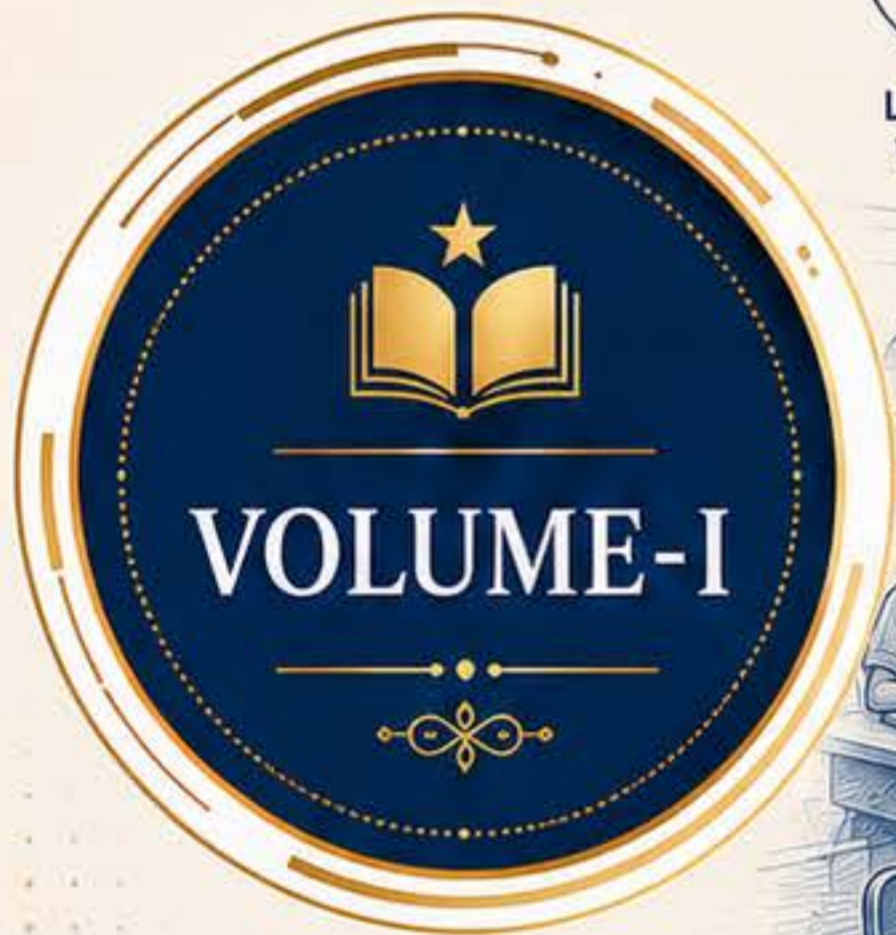



Advancing grade-level competency and learning outcomes in Indian schools

Policy Monograph Series



Towards an
Equitable, Inclusive and
Future-Ready Education System



Education *for* Viksit Bharat 2047:

Policy Monograph Series

VOLUME - I



Towards an Equitable, Inclusive and
Future-Ready Education System

Advancing grade-level competency and learning outcomes in Indian schools



A state-level policy framework for
quality, equity, assessment,
and learning recovery



Dr. Harshvardhan Singh



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Advancing grade-level competency and learning outcomes in Indian schools: A state-level policy framework for quality, equity, assessment, and learning recovery

Author: Dr. Harshvardhan Singh

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This policy monograph is intended for academic, policy, institutional, and professional use. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and are intended to contribute to evidence-based discussion on school education quality, grade-level competency, learning outcomes, teacher capacity, inclusive education, assessment reform, and state-level implementation. References to government policies, public data systems, and official frameworks are used for educational and analytical purposes.

While reasonable care has been taken to ensure accuracy, the author and publisher do not claim that the recommendations contained in this monograph are exhaustive or universally applicable in every state, district, or school context. State governments, education departments, SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, schools, NGOs, and other institutions are advised to adapt the framework according to their local administrative structures, language contexts, learner profiles, policy priorities, and available resources.

The publication does not represent an official policy document of any government department, ministry, statutory body, or public institution unless explicitly stated. Any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the author.

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About the Author

Dr. Harshvardhan Singh is an education researcher, psychometrician, and curriculum-evaluation professional working in the areas of educational measurement, learning assessment, teacher education, inclusive education, research tool development, and school education quality. His academic and professional work focuses on evidence-based educational reform, learner diversity, pedagogical improvement, psychometric scale development, and policy-relevant educational research.

Dr. Singh's work is situated at the intersection of educational policy, classroom practice, and measurement. He has engaged extensively with issues related to learning outcomes, teacher effectiveness, differentiated instruction, inclusive education, student support systems, diagnostic assessment, and the development of standardized and researcher-constructed tools for educational research. His academic interests include the design of valid and reliable instruments, interpretation of learner data, improvement of classroom pedagogy, and translation of research evidence into practical institutional frameworks.

A significant part of his work concerns the improvement of school education quality through assessment-informed planning and teacher capacity building. He has contributed to research and writing on educational equity, inclusive classrooms, children with diverse learning needs, specific learning disabilities, neurodiversity, pedagogical support, and the role of schools in ensuring meaningful learner participation. His policy-oriented writing emphasizes that educational reform must move beyond access and enrolment toward measurable learning, classroom support, and system-level accountability.

Dr. Singh's professional orientation is strongly connected with the idea that learning improvement requires coordination between policy design, teacher preparation, school leadership, assessment systems, data use, and community engagement. He views educational measurement not merely as a testing activity, but as a tool for diagnosis, remediation, planning, and equity. His work advocates for practical frameworks that can be used by policymakers, SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, school leaders, teacher educators, NGOs, and educational researchers.

In this monograph, Dr. Singh brings together his interests in learning outcomes, competency-based education, foundational literacy and numeracy, inclusive education, socio-emotional learning, teacher capacity, diagnostic assessment, remedial support, and state-level monitoring. The proposed framework is intended to support Indian states in moving from enrolment-based schooling success to learning-assurance-based school education reform.

Preface

India's school education system has achieved remarkable expansion in access over the past several decades. Schools have reached more communities, enrolment has improved, and public policy has increasingly recognized education as a foundation for equity, citizenship, social mobility, and national development. Yet the next stage of school education reform requires a deeper question: are children learning meaningfully at the level expected for their grade?

This monograph has been written in response to that question. The central concern of this book is the gap between schooling participation and learning assurance. A child may be enrolled in school, attend classes, receive textbooks, sit for examinations, and move from one grade to another, yet still lack the ability to read with comprehension, write meaningfully, use numbers confidently, reason, communicate, solve problems, and understand grade-appropriate concepts. Such a situation reveals the limits of judging school success only through access, infrastructure, or administrative indicators.

The purpose of this monograph is to provide a practical state-level policy framework for improving grade-level competency and learning outcomes in Indian schools. It argues that India's next educational priority should be to ensure that every child is not only in school, but also learning, progressing, and receiving the support required to achieve meaningful grade-level competencies. This shift from access to learning assurance is essential for quality education, equity, and national development.

The book is written for policymakers, state education departments, SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, school leaders, teacher educators, NGOs, educational researchers, and institutions working in school education reform. It is not intended to be a conventional B.Ed. or M.Ed. textbook. Instead, it is designed as a short policy monograph that offers clear arguments, practical frameworks, implementation indicators, monitoring formats, and recommendations for state-level action.

The monograph is built around the idea that grade-level competency is not the same as textbook completion. A textbook may be completed without children acquiring the intended learning. True competency requires understanding, application, reasoning, communication, problem-solving, and the ability to use learning in meaningful contexts. This requires alignment among curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher support, school leadership, and monitoring systems.

Foundational literacy and numeracy receive special attention in this work because they form the base of all future learning. A child who cannot read with understanding or use numbers meaningfully in the early grades is likely to struggle across the curriculum in later grades. However, the monograph also argues that FLN cannot be achieved through mechanical reading and numeracy drills alone. It requires school readiness, oral language development, play-based learning, socio-emotional security, teacher-led diagnostic assessment, local language support, and timely remedial teaching.

Another major concern of this monograph is teacher capacity. Teachers are the central agents of learning improvement, but they cannot be expected to transform learning outcomes without adequate support. Professional development must therefore move beyond one-time training events. Teachers need classroom-linked mentoring, diagnostic tools, competency-based lesson examples, differentiated instruction strategies, inclusive education support, and practical remedial modules. SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, and school heads have a critical role in building this teacher support ecosystem.

The book also emphasizes inclusive education and socio-emotional learning as essential conditions for grade-level competency. Children with disabilities, specific learning difficulties, language barriers, socio-economic disadvantage, irregular attendance, migration backgrounds, or emotional vulnerability may require additional support to participate and learn meaningfully. Inclusion must therefore mean learning access, not only school access. Similarly, children learn better when classrooms are safe, respectful, encouraging, and free from humiliation or exclusion.

A key argument developed in the monograph is that education data must be used for improvement rather than only for reporting. Public education data systems such as UDISE+, NAS, and PGI provide valuable evidence for planning. UDISE+ helps understand school conditions, infrastructure, enrolment, teachers, and facilities. NAS provides system-level learning achievement patterns. PGI supports broader monitoring of state-level performance. However, these sources must be connected with classroom-level assessment and school-level learning data. Data becomes meaningful only when it leads to action: teacher support, remedial teaching, resource allocation, inclusion planning, school improvement, and district-level academic review.

The core contribution of the monograph is the proposed **Grade-Level Competency Learning Improvement Framework**, or **GLC-LIF Model**. This framework includes eight interrelated components: access and readiness, teacher capacity, classroom pedagogy, learning assessment, remedial support, inclusion and socio-emotional learning, data-based monitoring, and community/governance support. The model is intended to help states move from fragmented programme implementation to integrated learning assurance.

This book has been written with a practical orientation. It includes policy arguments, conceptual explanations, implementation roadmaps, monitoring indicators, risk mitigation strategies, final recommendations, and usable appendices. The appendices provide tools such as grade-level competency monitoring checklists, school learning improvement plan templates, teacher reflection formats, district review formats, inclusive classroom support checklists, and FLN–SEL integration matrices. These are intended for direct adaptation by schools, teachers, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, and district education officials.

The broader purpose of this monograph is to support a reform conversation that is both ambitious and grounded. India's aspiration for Viksit Bharat 2047 requires an education system that builds human capability at scale. Such a system must ensure that every child acquires the competencies required for further education, livelihood, social participation, democratic citizenship, and lifelong learning. Enrolment is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Infrastructure is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Assessment is necessary, but it is not sufficient. The real measure of educational progress is whether children are learning with dignity, equity, and confidence.

This monograph is offered as a policy-oriented contribution to that goal. It calls for a school education system in which every child is visible, every learning gap is addressed, every teacher is supported, every school is guided, and every state builds a coherent system for learning assurance. The future of Indian school education must be defined by a simple but powerful commitment: **every child in school, every child learning, every child supported, and every child progressing toward meaningful grade-level competency.**

Acknowledgement

This policy monograph is the result of sustained reflection on the changing priorities of Indian school education. It is written at a time when the national conversation on education is moving beyond access and enrolment toward learning outcomes, grade-level competency, foundational literacy and numeracy, inclusive classrooms, teacher capacity, assessment reform, and evidence-based implementation.

I acknowledge the significant contribution of India's public education policy ecosystem, particularly the National Education Policy 2020, NIPUN Bharat, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023, UDISE+, the National Achievement Survey, the Performance Grading Index, Samagra Shiksha, PARAKH, and related national and state-level initiatives. These frameworks and data systems have created an important foundation for thinking about school education quality, learning assurance, teacher support, assessment, inclusion, and system monitoring.

I also acknowledge the work of teachers, school heads, teacher educators, SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, district officials, inclusive education resource persons, education researchers, NGOs, and community-level stakeholders who work directly with schools and learners. Their everyday efforts reveal that improving learning outcomes is not merely a policy target; it is a classroom, school, and community responsibility.

Special acknowledgement is due to the many learners whose educational experiences remind us that access to school is meaningful only when it leads to learning, confidence, participation, and dignity. Children who struggle silently in classrooms, children with disabilities, first-generation learners, multilingual learners, children affected by poverty or migration, and learners who require additional support are at the heart of this monograph's concern.

I am also grateful to the broader community of scholars, policymakers, practitioners, and institutions working to strengthen educational measurement, diagnostic assessment, teacher education, inclusive education, socio-emotional learning, and remedial support. Their work continues to shape the evolving understanding of what quality education must mean in a diverse and democratic society.

This monograph is offered as a practical contribution to state-level education reform. Any limitations, errors, or omissions remain my own responsibility.

Dr. Harshvardhan Singh

2026

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Methodological Note / Source Note

This policy monograph is based on a review and synthesis of official policy documents, public education data systems, national assessment frameworks, curriculum documents, and credible institutional resources related to school education quality, learning outcomes, foundational literacy and numeracy, assessment reform, inclusive education, teacher capacity, and state-level implementation.

The monograph is conceptual, analytical, and policy-oriented in nature. It does not present primary survey data, field-based statistical findings, or independent empirical estimates. No unverified statistics have been added. Wherever numerical or system-level references are used, they are drawn from official or publicly available sources such as the Ministry of Education, NCERT, NIPUN Bharat, UDISE+, NAS, PGI, Samagra Shiksha, PARAKH, NITI Aayog, and related government documents.

The purpose of the monograph is not to evaluate a single state, scheme, district, school, or programme. Instead, it develops a state-level policy framework that can be adapted by different education systems according to their own administrative structures, language contexts, learner profiles, institutional capacities, and implementation priorities.

The analysis is organized around the policy shift from access-based schooling to learning-assurance-based schooling. The monograph uses official frameworks such as NEP 2020, NCF-SE 2023, NIPUN Bharat, UDISE+, NAS, PGI, Samagra Shiksha, and PARAKH to develop practical arguments on grade-level competency, FLN, school readiness, socio-emotional learning, teacher capacity, diagnostic assessment, remedial teaching, inclusive education, and data-based monitoring.

The proposed **Grade-Level Competency Learning Improvement Framework**, or **GLC-LIF Model**, is an original policy framework developed for this monograph. It is not presented as a government-approved model, but as a structured policy tool that may be adapted by state education departments, SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, schools, NGOs, and educational researchers working on learning improvement.

The appendices are designed as practical tools. They may be adapted for school-level monitoring, teacher reflection, remedial planning, district-level review, inclusive classroom support, and FLN–SEL integration. These tools are intended to support implementation and should be contextualized before use in any state, district, or school system.

The monograph follows an evidence-informed approach. It does not claim that one framework alone can solve all learning challenges. Rather, it argues that improvement in grade-level competency requires coordinated action across curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, teacher support, school leadership, inclusion, socio-emotional wellbeing, community participation, and state-level monitoring.

Executive Summary

Improving Grade-Level Competency and Learning Outcomes in Indian Schools: A State-Level Policy Framework for Quality, Equity, Assessment, and Learning Recovery

Purpose and Central Argument

India has made major progress in expanding school education access, but the next stage of reform must focus on whether children are actually learning at the expected grade level. The central argument of this policy monograph is that India's school education system must move from **enrolment-based success** to **learning-assurance-based success**. In practical terms, this means that the success of schooling should not be judged only by enrolment, attendance, infrastructure, textbook completion, or examination participation. It should be judged by whether every child can demonstrate meaningful grade-level competencies in literacy, numeracy, reasoning, communication, problem-solving, socio-emotional participation, and subject understanding.

The National Education Policy 2020 provides the broad policy foundation for this shift. It calls for foundational literacy and numeracy, competency-based learning, reduced rote dependence, formative assessment, teacher development, inclusion, and holistic education. It identifies foundational literacy and numeracy as an urgent national priority and emphasizes that assessment should support learning rather than merely rank students.

This monograph therefore proposes a state-level learning improvement approach that connects **grade-level competency, foundational literacy and numeracy, school readiness, socio-emotional learning, teacher capacity, diagnostic assessment, remedial support, inclusive education, and data-based monitoring**. Its core policy position is that learning improvement cannot be achieved through one isolated intervention. It requires a coordinated system that works from the state level to the district, block, cluster, school, and classroom levels.

The Problem: Grade-Level Learning Gaps

Grade-level learning gaps occur when children are enrolled in a particular grade but are unable to demonstrate the expected competencies for that grade. These gaps may appear in reading comprehension, writing, number sense, mathematical operations, subject vocabulary, conceptual understanding, reasoning, or classroom participation. The problem is not simply that children perform poorly in tests; the deeper concern is that many children may move through grades without acquiring the foundational and subject-level competencies required for later learning.

Learning gaps are cumulative. A child who does not acquire foundational literacy and numeracy in the early grades may face difficulty in reading textbooks, understanding word problems, learning science and social science, writing answers, and participating confidently in classroom activities. Over time, these gaps may lead to low confidence, irregular attendance, examination fear, grade repetition, disengagement, and dropout risk.

The National Achievement Survey is important because it provides system-level evidence on student learning. NAS is a national large-scale assessment designed to obtain information about learning achievement of students and does not provide scores for individual students or schools. Its purpose is to help understand learning patterns across the system and support remedial action at different levels.

However, NAS alone cannot solve classroom-level learning gaps. It can inform state and district planning, but teachers need regular classroom-level diagnostic assessment to know which child needs which support. Therefore, a state learning improvement strategy must combine large-scale learning evidence with school-level and classroom-level assessment.

From Textbook Completion to Competency-Based Learning

A major shift required in school education is the move from textbook completion to competency-based learning. Completing a textbook chapter does not guarantee that learners have understood, applied, or internalized the concept. A child may copy answers, memorize definitions, or complete exercises but still be unable to explain ideas, solve problems, interpret information, or use learning in real situations.

Competency-based learning focuses on what the learner can demonstrate. It includes understanding, application, reasoning, communication, problem-solving, creativity, and transfer of learning. In this approach, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment must be aligned. Curriculum should define clear competencies; pedagogy should provide opportunities to develop them; assessment should generate evidence of whether learners have achieved them.

The National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023 is significant because it is aligned with the 5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical structure of NEP 2020. This structure supports a developmental view of learning across foundational, preparatory, middle, and secondary stages, rather than treating schooling as a uniform textbook sequence.

For states, competency-based learning requires practical tools: grade-wise competency maps, teacher guides, classroom activities, diagnostic assessment formats, item banks, rubrics, remedial modules, and school-level learning trackers. Without these operational tools, competency-based education may remain a policy slogan rather than a classroom reality.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy as the Base of Learning

Foundational literacy and numeracy are the base of all future learning. Foundational literacy includes oral language, vocabulary, print awareness, decoding, reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and expression. Foundational numeracy includes number sense, counting, comparison, patterns, shapes, basic operations, measurement, spatial understanding, and mathematical reasoning.

NIPUN Bharat provides the national mission framework for foundational literacy and numeracy. It was launched to create an enabling environment so that children acquire foundational competencies in reading with understanding and numeracy. The mission is closely aligned with NEP 2020 and places early learning at the centre of school reform.

FLN should not be understood as mechanical reading and calculation. Reading without comprehension is not foundational literacy. Counting without number sense is not foundational numeracy. Writing without meaning is not functional literacy. The goal of FLN is to enable children to understand, communicate, reason, and learn independently.

This monograph emphasizes that FLN cannot succeed through reading drills and numeracy worksheets alone. It requires school readiness, oral language development, play-based pedagogy, local language support, teacher-led diagnosis, socio-emotional security, and timely remediation. Early-grade learning must be joyful, participatory, developmentally appropriate, and inclusive.

School Readiness and Early Learning

School readiness is a critical but often underestimated condition for grade-level learning. Children enter Grade 1 with different levels of oral language, social confidence, motor development, attention,

curiosity, early numeracy, print exposure, and emotional adjustment. If schooling begins immediately with formal textbook instruction without readiness support, many children may fall behind from the beginning.

The foundational stage must therefore be treated as a developmental continuum, not as a sudden transition from pre-school or home environment into formal academic pressure. School readiness includes listening, speaking, play, movement, drawing, storytelling, counting, peer interaction, self-regulation, and comfort with classroom routines.

Vidya Pravesh, NCERT's three-month play-based school preparation module for Grade 1, is relevant because it supports children's transition into formal schooling through age-appropriate activities and is linked with the broader FLN agenda.

State education departments should institutionalize school readiness as part of the learning improvement strategy. It should not be treated as a one-time welcome activity. It should be integrated with Grade 1 pedagogy, early diagnosis, parent communication, Anganwadi-school linkage, and early-grade teacher training.

Socio-Emotional Learning and Classroom Participation

Learning is not only cognitive; it is also emotional and social. A child who is fearful, ashamed, excluded, anxious, bullied, or repeatedly unsuccessful may not participate in classroom learning even when academic instruction is available. Socio-emotional learning therefore directly affects grade-level competency.

Socio-emotional learning includes confidence, persistence, self-regulation, cooperation, communication, empathy, belonging, and willingness to attempt tasks. These capacities are especially important in early grades and for children who are below grade level. Remedial learning will not work if children feel labelled, punished, or humiliated.

The policy implication is that socio-emotional learning should not be treated as an optional enrichment theme. It should be part of classroom practice, teacher training, school leadership, and learning recovery. Safe feedback, peer learning, cooperative activities, storytelling, art, movement, games, and respectful teacher-student interaction all contribute to learning participation.

The Manodarpan initiative also recognizes the importance of psychosocial support and wellbeing of students, reinforcing the need to connect emotional wellbeing with educational participation and learning.

Teacher Capacity as the Main Bridge Between Policy and Learning

Teachers are the central agents of learning improvement. Policies, textbooks, assessment frameworks, dashboards, and learning materials can support reform, but they produce results only when teachers are able to translate them into classroom practice.

Teacher capacity includes subject understanding, pedagogical content knowledge, competency-based teaching, formative assessment literacy, differentiated instruction, remedial planning, inclusive education practices, language-sensitive pedagogy, socio-emotional classroom support, and use of learning data. Teacher capacity should not be understood only as attendance in training programmes. It should be measured through classroom practice and learner progress.

The monograph argues that teachers must be supported, not merely monitored. They need practical resources: competency maps, lesson exemplars, diagnostic tools, learner trackers, remedial modules,

inclusive education guidance, multilingual resources, and mentoring. School heads, DIETs, BRCs, and CRCs must function as an academic support chain.

Samagra Shiksha recognizes the role of BRCs and CRCs in supporting school quality and academic improvement. The framework also emphasizes strengthening these structures, including improving selection and continuous capacity building for block and cluster coordinators.

For effective implementation, teacher professional development must move away from one-time lecture-based training. It should include demonstration lessons, peer learning, classroom observation, analysis of student work, remedial planning, assessment item construction, and mentoring.

Diagnostic Assessment and Remedial Support

Assessment should be used to improve learning, not only to record marks. Diagnostic assessment helps identify what a learner has not yet mastered and why. A child who performs poorly in reading may have difficulty with decoding, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, language exposure, or confidence. A child who performs poorly in mathematics may struggle with number sense, place value, operations, word-problem language, or reasoning. Without diagnosis, remedial teaching becomes general and ineffective.

Remedial support should be targeted, non-stigmatizing, and linked with reassessment. It should not mean repeating the same lesson in the same way. It should use alternative explanations, concrete materials, peer support, local examples, oral work, practice, feedback, and progress tracking.

PARAKH's work on holistic progress cards is relevant because it supports competency-based learning-teaching and makes assessment more comprehensive and holistic. This is consistent with the policy shift from marks-based reporting to learning-oriented assessment.

States should design assessment systems that avoid both under-assessment and over-testing. The goal should not be more tests; the goal should be better evidence and timely support. Every assessment should lead to a teaching decision.

Inclusive Education as a Learning Assurance Requirement

Inclusive education is central to grade-level competency. Children with disabilities, specific learning difficulties, multilingual learners, first-generation learners, migrant children, tribal learners, girls in vulnerable contexts, and children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds may require additional support to achieve grade-level learning.

Inclusion should not be understood only as enrolment in regular schools. A child may be physically present but academically excluded if the classroom, language, materials, teaching methods, or assessment formats are inaccessible. Inclusive education requires physical access, learning access, adapted materials, assistive devices, reasonable accommodations, teacher support, peer acceptance, and sensitive assessment.

A state-level learning improvement framework should therefore embed inclusion into FLN, assessment, remediation, teacher training, classroom observation, school leadership, and data monitoring. Inclusion cannot be a separate programme running parallel to learning improvement. It must be built into the learning assurance system.

Using UDISE+, NAS, PGI, and School-Level Data for Planning

Education data systems can support learning improvement when they are used for decisions. UDISE+ is useful for school profile, infrastructure, enrolment, teachers, facilities, and other administrative indicators. It helps states understand school conditions and plan resource allocation.

NAS provides system-level evidence on learning achievement patterns and helps identify learning gaps across grades, subjects, districts, and learner groups. It is especially useful for state and district academic planning.

PGI supports system-level monitoring across major domains such as learning outcomes, access, infrastructure, equity, governance processes, and teacher education and training. Its value lies in helping states identify system strengths and weak links rather than using ranking as an end in itself.

However, these systems must be integrated with school-level assessment. UDISE+ can show whether schools have enabling conditions. NAS can show broad learning patterns. PGI can support system review. Classroom assessment can identify which child needs which support. A state learning improvement system should bring these sources together into a data-to-decision cycle: diagnose, plan, teach, assess, remediate, monitor, and revise.

The Proposed State-Level Framework

The monograph proposes a **Grade-Level Competency Learning Improvement Framework**, or **GLC-LIF Model**, as a state-level policy architecture. The model includes eight components: access and readiness, teacher capacity, classroom pedagogy, learning assessment, remedial support, inclusion and socio-emotional learning, data-based monitoring, and community/governance support.

This framework is designed to help states move from fragmented programme implementation to integrated learning assurance. It recognizes that learning improvement requires inputs, processes, learning support, assessment and remediation, and monitoring indicators. It also assigns roles to the State Education Department, SCERT, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, school heads, teachers, parents, and community institutions.

At the state level, the framework requires competency maps, assessment tools, teacher development modules, district learning profiles, and data integration systems. At the district level, it requires learning outcome review, DIET-led academic planning, and block-wise support. At the block and cluster levels, it requires classroom mentoring through BRCs and CRCs. At the school level, it requires learning improvement plans, diagnostic assessment, remedial schedules, inclusive support, and parent communication.

Implementation Direction

The implementation plan should be phased. In the short term, states should establish the learning improvement architecture, prepare competency maps, conduct baseline diagnosis, institutionalize school readiness, and orient teachers and academic support structures. In the medium term, they should strengthen classroom pedagogy, teacher mentoring, district learning profiles, remedial systems, inclusive education, and school-level assessment. In the long term, they should institutionalize learning assurance through annual planning, budgets, CPD systems, state assessment reforms, public reporting, and continuous improvement.

The guiding principle should be simple: every child's learning must be visible, supported, and reviewed. The system should not wait for annual examinations to discover learning gaps. It should identify them early, respond through teaching support, and monitor progress continuously.

Key Recommendations for State-Level Implementation

1. **Adopt grade-level competency as the central measure of school quality.** States should evaluate school success not only through enrolment, infrastructure, or examination participation, but

through children's demonstrated ability to read, write, reason, communicate, solve problems, and apply learning at the expected grade level.

2. **Create a State Learning Improvement Cell.** This cell should bring together the State Education Department, SCERT, Samagra Shiksha, assessment units, MIS/data teams, DIET representatives, and inclusive education experts to coordinate learning improvement.
3. **Prepare grade-wise and subject-wise competency maps.** These maps should align NEP 2020, NCF-SE 2023, NIPUN Bharat, NCERT learning outcomes, and state curriculum, and should be simple enough for teacher use.
4. **Institutionalize school readiness and FLN support in early grades.** Vidya Pravesh or equivalent readiness modules should be implemented seriously, and FLN should be linked with oral language, play-based pedagogy, local language support, and early diagnosis.
5. **Strengthen teacher capacity through classroom-linked professional development.** Teacher training should focus on competency-based pedagogy, formative assessment, differentiated instruction, remedial teaching, inclusive education, multilingual pedagogy, and socio-emotional learning.
6. **Redesign BRC and CRC roles as academic mentoring roles.** Block and cluster-level structures should support classroom observation, teacher mentoring, assessment review, remedial planning, and inclusive classroom practices.
7. **Use diagnostic assessment for remediation, not ranking.** Classroom assessment should identify specific learning gaps and lead to targeted support. It should avoid excessive testing and focus on actionable learning evidence.
8. **Integrate inclusive education into learning improvement.** Children with disabilities, learning difficulties, language barriers, socio-economic disadvantage, irregular attendance, or emotional vulnerability should receive planned support within mainstream learning improvement systems.
9. **Use UDISE+, NAS, PGI, and school-level data together.** UDISE+ should guide enabling-condition planning, NAS should guide learning diagnosis, PGI should guide system review, and school-level assessment should guide classroom remediation.
10. **Institutionalize district and school learning improvement plans.** Every district should prepare a learning improvement profile, and every school should prepare a practical learning improvement plan based on baseline assessment, remedial support, inclusion, teacher needs, and parent engagement.

Closing Policy Message

Improving grade-level competency is not a narrow academic reform; it is a national development priority. A child who learns well is more likely to continue education, participate in society, acquire skills, contribute productively, and live with dignity. A school system that ensures learning for every child strengthens equity, social justice, economic development, and democratic citizenship.

For India's aspiration of **Viksit Bharat 2047**, access to schooling is necessary but not sufficient. The next national commitment must be learning assurance: **every child enrolled, every child learning, every child supported, and every child progressing toward meaningful grade-level competency.**

Key Policy Messages

1. Grade-Level Competency Must Become the Core Measure of School Quality

School quality should not be judged only by enrolment, infrastructure, teacher availability, textbook distribution, or examination completion. These are important enabling conditions, but they do not automatically ensure learning. The central question for school education reform should be whether every child is able to demonstrate expected grade-level competencies. This includes reading with comprehension, writing meaningfully, using numbers confidently, reasoning, communicating, solving problems, and applying concepts in familiar and new situations. States should therefore shift monitoring systems from activity reporting to learning assurance. School improvement plans, teacher training, classroom assessment, district reviews, and resource allocation should all be linked to grade-level learning expectations. A school system becomes truly effective only when children are not merely present in classrooms but are progressing academically, socially, and developmentally.

2. Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Are the Base of All Future Learning

Foundational literacy and numeracy must remain the highest academic priority in early-grade education. A child who cannot read with understanding or use numbers meaningfully by the foundational stage is likely to struggle across the curriculum in later grades. FLN should not be reduced to mechanical reading, copying, counting, or worksheet completion. It must include oral language, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, number sense, mathematical reasoning, and problem-solving. State governments should ensure that FLN is supported through trained teachers, age-appropriate materials, daily classroom practice, diagnostic assessment, and timely remediation. FLN must be treated as a system-wide learning guarantee, not only as an early-grade programme. Strengthening FLN is the most cost-effective way to prevent future learning gaps and improve long-term educational outcomes.

3. School Readiness Should Be Treated as a Learning Policy Priority

Many learning gaps begin before formal textbook instruction starts. Children enter Grade 1 with different levels of oral language, motor development, attention, confidence, social interaction, early numeracy, and exposure to print. If schools begin formal instruction without addressing these differences, many children fall behind from the first year itself. School readiness should therefore be built into state learning improvement strategies. Grade 1 classrooms should include play-based activities, storytelling, songs, conversation, drawing, counting games, peer interaction, and routines that help children adjust to school. School readiness should also be linked with Anganwadi-school transition, parent orientation, early identification of learning needs, and teacher preparation. Treating readiness seriously reduces early failure and creates a stronger foundation for grade-level competency.

4. Socio-Emotional Learning Is Essential for Classroom Participation

Learning cannot improve in classrooms where children feel afraid, excluded, humiliated, anxious, or silent. Socio-emotional learning is not an optional activity; it is a condition for meaningful academic participation. Children learn better when they feel safe, respected, confident, and connected with peers and teachers. This is especially important for children who are below grade level, first-generation learners, children with disabilities, multilingual learners, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Teachers should be supported to build classrooms where mistakes are treated as part of learning, feedback is constructive, and every child gets opportunities to speak, read, attempt, collaborate, and improve. SEL should be integrated into FLN, remedial teaching, classroom routines, school leadership, and teacher training. Emotional security strengthens academic recovery.

5. Teacher Capacity Building Must Move from Training Events to Classroom Support

Teacher development should not be limited to one-time workshops, general orientation, or attendance-based training records. Improving learning outcomes requires continuous, classroom-linked teacher support. Teachers need practical capacity in competency-based pedagogy, formative assessment, differentiated instruction, remedial teaching, multilingual classrooms, inclusive education, and socio-emotional support. SCERTs and DIETs should develop teacher guides, model lesson plans, diagnostic tools, remedial modules, and subject-specific training based on actual learning gaps. BRCs and CRCs should function as academic mentors rather than only compliance monitors. School heads should support teachers through classroom review, peer learning, and academic planning. Teacher capacity improves when the system provides time, tools, mentoring, and trust. Better-supported teachers are the strongest route to better learning outcomes.

6. Remedial Education Must Be Diagnostic, Targeted, and Non-Stigmatizing

Remedial teaching should not mean repeating the same lesson or labelling children as weak. It must begin with diagnosis: what exactly has the child not understood or not yet learned? A child may struggle in reading due to weak decoding, limited vocabulary, poor comprehension, language barriers, low confidence, or irregular attendance. Similarly, difficulty in mathematics may arise from weak number sense, place value confusion, operation errors, or inability to understand word problems. Each gap requires a different response. States should provide teachers with simple diagnostic tools, learner grouping strategies, remedial modules, progress trackers, and reassessment formats. Remediation should be short-cycle, respectful, flexible, and linked with reintegration into grade-level work. The aim is recovery with dignity, not permanent separation.

7. Inclusive Education Must Mean Learning Access, Not Only School Access

Inclusive education cannot be limited to enrolment of children with disabilities or disadvantaged learners. True inclusion means that every child is able to participate, understand, respond, and progress. Children with disabilities, specific learning difficulties, language barriers, migration backgrounds, socio-economic disadvantage, or emotional vulnerability may require additional support. This support may include accessible infrastructure, assistive devices, adapted materials, flexible assessment, language scaffolding, peer support, resource teacher involvement, and individualized learning strategies. State learning improvement plans should integrate inclusion into FLN, classroom pedagogy, assessment, remediation, teacher training, and monitoring. Average learning scores should not hide the needs of vulnerable learners. A system that improves outcomes only for already advantaged students cannot be considered equitable. Learning assurance must be inclusive by design.

8. Diagnostic Assessment Should Guide Teaching, Not Merely Produce Scores

Assessment reform is central to learning improvement. Tests should not be used only for marks, ranking, or promotion decisions. A good assessment system helps teachers understand what learners know, what they can do, and where they need support. Diagnostic and formative assessment should be simple, frequent, competency-based, and directly linked to classroom action. Teachers should use oral questions, reading checks, numeracy tasks, written work, observation, group activities, and short quizzes to identify learning gaps. Assessment data should then inform re-teaching, learner grouping, remedial support, enrichment, and parent communication. States should avoid the mistake of increasing the number of tests without improving instruction. The purpose of assessment should be learning improvement. Every assessment should answer the question: what support will now be provided?

9. District-Level Monitoring Should Focus on Learning Improvement, Not Only Compliance

Districts are the key operational units for translating state policy into classroom change. District-level monitoring should therefore move beyond routine administrative reporting and focus on learning improvement. District education offices and DIETs should prepare learning profiles using school assessment, NAS findings, UDISE+ data, attendance records, teacher availability, infrastructure status, and inclusion indicators. These profiles should identify priority blocks, schools, grades, subjects, competencies, and learner groups. BRCs and CRCs should use this evidence for academic mentoring and school support. Review meetings should ask whether children are improving, which competencies remain weak, which teachers need support, and which schools require additional resources. Monitoring should create action, not paperwork. A district review system is effective only when evidence leads to timely support.

10. Evidence-Based Planning Must Connect UDISE+, NAS, PGI, and Classroom Data

State-level learning improvement requires integrated evidence. UDISE+ helps identify school conditions such as infrastructure, enrolment, teachers, and facilities. NAS provides system-level learning patterns. PGI supports broader monitoring of access, quality, equity, governance, and teacher education. Classroom assessment provides immediate evidence of learner needs. These data sources should not remain separate reporting systems. They should be combined into a practical data-to-decision cycle. States should use evidence to plan teacher deployment, remedial programmes, school readiness support, FLN strategies, inclusive education, district reviews, and resource allocation. Data should not be collected only for dashboards or reports. Its value lies in improving decisions. Evidence-based planning means identifying where learning gaps exist, why they exist, who is affected, and what support must follow.



Advancing grade-level competency and learning outcomes in Indian schools:

A state-level policy framework for quality, equity, assessment, and learning recovery presents a practical policy framework for shifting Indian school education from enrolment-based success to learning-assurance-based success. It argues that the next priority for school reform is not only to bring every child into school, but to ensure that every child learns meaningfully, progresses confidently, and achieves expected grade-level competencies.



The monograph examines the core conditions required for improving learning outcomes: **foundational literacy and numeracy, school readiness, socio-emotional learning, teacher capacity, differentiated instruction, diagnostic assessment, remedial teaching, inclusive education, and data-based monitoring.** It explains how public education, data systems such as UDISE+, NAS, and PGI can be used for state-level planning, district-level review, school improvement, and classroom remediation.



At the heart of the book is the Grade-Level Competency Learning Improvement Framework, or **GLC-LIF Model.** This original framework brings together eight components: **access and readiness, teacher capacity, classroom pedagogy, learning assessment, remedial support, inclusion and socio-emotional learning, data-based monitoring, and community/governance support.** The model is designed for practical use by state education departments, SCERTs, DIETs, BRCs, CRCs, school leaders, teacher educators, NGOs, and education researchers.



Written in a formal, evidence-informed, and implementation-focused style, the monograph includes **policy arguments, frameworks, monitoring indicators, implementation roadmaps, risk mitigation strategies, final recommendations, and practical appendices.** It is intended as a useful resource for institutions working to improve school education quality, equity, assessment reform, and learning recovery in India.



A practical policy monograph for strengthening grade-level competency, foundational learning, teacher support, inclusive classrooms, diagnostic assessment, remedial education, and state-level learning assurance in Indian schools.



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