



Assessing Teachers' Competencies and Pedagogical Practices in Inclusive Classes of Exceptional Students

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Abstract: This study explored the competencies and pedagogical practices of public-school teachers in the Philippines in managing inclusive classes for exceptional students. Specifically, it aimed to assess the teachers' profile, level of competence, and extent of utilization of inclusive teaching strategies, as well as determine the relationship between their competencies and pedagogical practices. A descriptive-correlational research design was used, and the study was conducted at Cebu Technological University during the school year 2025–2026. Purposive sampling was employed to select 42 public school teacher-respondents enrolled at the university. Data were gathered using a three-part researcher-made questionnaire: Part 1 focused on the teachers' profile (age, years of experience, training); Part 2 measured their level of competence in handling inclusive classes (10 items); and Part 3 assessed their extent of utilization of pedagogical practices (10 items). The data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's *r*. Results showed that most teachers had relevant teaching experience and some training in inclusive education. The respondents demonstrated a high level of competence in managing inclusive classes and frequently employed appropriate pedagogical practices. A strong positive correlation was found between the teachers' level of competence and their extent of utilization of inclusive teaching strategies, indicating a statistically significant relationship. The study concludes that teachers with higher competence in inclusive education tend to implement more effective teaching practices. It is recommended that further research be conducted to validate and strengthen these findings and to support continuous professional development in inclusive education.

Keywords: Teacher competencies, pedagogical practices, inclusive education, exceptional students, descriptive method, Cebu, Philippines.

Chapter 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Inclusive classrooms are increasingly recognized as a vital strategy for promoting equity, diversity, and high-quality education for all learners, including those with special educational needs. Teachers in these settings must go beyond mastery of subject matter; they must employ differentiated instruction, individualized support mechanisms, inclusive assessment practices, and foster a positive classroom culture that accommodates diverse learning needs (Sharma & Sokal, 2022). Globally, teacher competence has emerged as a key predictor of success in inclusive education settings. A meta-analytical study covering over 40 countries concluded that teachers with training in special education exhibit stronger self-efficacy and more inclusive teaching attitudes, thereby contributing to better learner outcomes (Guerin et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, the implementation of inclusive education is mandated through Republic Act No. 11650, also known as the “Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act.” This law requires that all learners, regardless of disability, be accommodated equitably within the general education system, with appropriate support services and reasonable accommodations (Official Gazette, 2022). Despite this strong legal framework, significant discrepancies remain between inclusive education policies and actual classroom implementation. Recent evaluations by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) identified gaps such as delays in the issuance of implementing rules and regulations (IRR), the lack of systematic child identification mechanisms, and under-resourced Inclusive Learning Resource Centers (Senate of the Philippines, 2024).

Existing research further indicates that many public-school teachers in the Philippines are inadequately prepared to manage inclusive classrooms. Studies report a lack of specialized training, limited access to professional development, high pupil-to-teacher ratios, and insufficient instructional materials (Alfonso & Celestino, 2023). These constraints hinder teachers' ability to design and deliver pedagogical approaches responsive to the unique cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and psychomotor needs of exceptional learners (Macalindong & de Guzman, 2024).

In inclusive education, the role of general education teachers is crucial. They serve as front-line implementers of inclusive strategies, particularly in public elementary schools where learners with disabilities are integrated into regular classes. These teachers must demonstrate the ability to diagnose diverse learner needs, employ flexible instructional strategies, manage classroom behaviors, and collaborate effectively with Special Education (SpEd) personnel (Reyes & Santos, 2022). However, many continue to express low confidence and readiness in supporting inclusive practices due to the barriers.

This study therefore seeks to examine the current competencies and pedagogical practices of receiving general education teachers in inclusive classrooms within selected public elementary schools in the Philippines. It aims to determine whether teachers are adequately equipped both in knowledge and practice to address the diverse needs of exceptional learners. With the increasing implementation of inclusive education in the country, the study also investigates the alignment between policy intent and on-the-ground realities. Ultimately, this research intends to contribute evidence-based insights that may inform teacher training programs, institutional support mechanisms, and policy improvements for more effective inclusive education delivery at the grassroots level.

Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on the following theories: Social Learning Theory by Bandura (1977), Constructivism Theory by Vygotsky (1934), and Multiple Intelligence Theory by Gardner (1959). Also, this is supported by the following Philippine legal bases: 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article XIV, Section 1) that “The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.” Moreover, Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013)

Institutionalizing the K-to-12 Program, and Republic Act No. 11650 (IE Act of 2022), a Philippine law that ensures all learners with disabilities have access to quality and inclusive education.

Recent research highlights the continued relevance of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT) in education. Research underscores that SLT is a critical factor in developing student behavior through observation and imitation, with significant effects at the elementary level (Amsari et al., 2024; Ortiz Jr.).

In this context, teachers who understand the principles of SLT are more likely to appreciate the need to model focused behavior and encourage memory retention (Ortiz Jr. et al., 2025). In IE settings, SLT provides a framework for professional development programs, enhancing teachers' ability to accommodate diverse learners (Ndale, 2025). The application of the theory even lends itself to

innovative pedagogical methods, such as using game-based learning technology in graduate business education.

This has found favor among students by improving comprehension of key topics and measuring social interactivity and problem-solving skills within a cohort model (Smith & Conway, 2025). Together, these studies show both the legacy of Social Learning Theory in driving educational practice and its continuing potential to inform contemporary issues in teaching and learning.

Social Learning Theory highlights the role of vicarious reinforcement in shaping behavior, especially in educational environments. It is known that the readiness to learn and imitate by observing others receiving rewards for desirable behaviour (Bandura et al., 1963). This concept is fundamental in inclusive classrooms, as many of those students need structured time watching successful models before they begin tasks (McCarty & Light, 2022). Peer-moderated learning and visual modelling, for example, have been shown to facilitate a form of vicarious learning in students with profound communication difficulties within the lifestream (Kleinert et al., 2022).

However, people are properly behaviorally trained and apply what they want fairly and in a predefined situational context, except in real-world situations. In that case, they relax quickly once guided by experience, or strong modeling to defeat attacks of psychological problems rooted mainly in performance anxiety, like fears or confinements (Zhang et al., 2025). Intuitively, one would assume that vicarious reinforcement learning by observation and/or through implicit reward for a correct performance when watching others' competent learning activities (Bandura, 2021) would support learning.

Recent research highlights the importance of effective teaching strategies in promoting student learning. When used correctly, teacher modeling can provide an effective way to introduce new concepts and skills before students are exposed to written text (Burden, 2025). Teachers should also recognize both the explicit and implicit aspects of role modeling to avoid any negative repercussions on students (Steinert, 2025). Combining low-context traditional writing forms with high-context storytelling and community-based knowledge, multicontextual teaching roots practice within the broader learning environment to create a diverse tapestry of communication and collaboration opportunities for students (Serra et al., 2023).

In addition, teacher modeling through collaborative prompts may increase students' cognitive conceptual understanding, thus increasing the quantity and quality of connections made during small group work (Chen et al., 2022). The studies provide important support for the notion that explicit demonstration and alternatives to didactic teaching are required for deep learning.

Recent research emphasizes the importance of inclusive education practices in diverse classroom settings. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion by understanding group dynamics and promoting acceptance (Vasileiadis & Stampliakas, 2025). Inclusive education in public schools is indeed beneficial only if the teachers at these schools can take advantage of individualized learning opportunities and work together with their co-workers (Gentilini, 2021). The implementation of inclusive practice in secondary education requires school-wide strategies and classroom practices that support all students equitably whilst celebrating difference (de Bruin, 2020).

Teachers can use differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and culturally responsive teaching to support the learning needs of all learners (Alarcon & Pineda, 2024). These supports cultivate environments in which all students can be successful academically and socially. Meaningful inclusion involves creating an environment in the classroom where diversity is seen as simply a part of life, inclusive values are noted and reinforced, and opportunities for participation are equitable all learned best through role-modeling by teachers.

In this regard, new studies have been directed to create modern educational environments by focusing particularly on the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in Vygotsky's constructivist theory. ZPD emphasises support in the form of peer and model assistance, co-teaching, and participating actively in learning (Xue, 2023). This is even more important in IE

because of the diversity of participants' needs, and to comply with Sustainable Development Goal (Ashoumi & Yusuf, 2024).

Further, many studies have revealed the power of ZPD-based teaching in enhancing collaboration among students in technological-mediated classrooms (Mudi & Samanta, 2024). However, a significant challenge in implementing constructivist teaching methods is the resource requirement and the difficulty of assessing student learning. To overcome this issue, the research further finds ties between the ideas of Vygotsky and other constructivist perspectives, e.g., Bruner's discovery learning theory that foregrounds active knowledge building for learners (Tohari & Rahman, 2024).

Vygotskian constructivism emphasizes the importance of scaffolding in education, particularly for language learners and early childhood education. Whilst the principle of scaffolding is gradually reducing targeted support as students develop independence (Asrifan et al., 2025). This type of student-focused learning is a new concept, as Suhaimi et al. (2025) state that students who are actively involved at the centre of the activities in their class, similar to a traditional classroom setting, where students sit silently while teachers deliver the subject matter. The effective scaffolding strategies include decomposing tasks into sub-tasks, providing visual supports, and peer tutoring (Nurillayevich, 2025), as well as developing metacognitive skills in students.

These points out that one of the key role's teachers must undertake is to establish conditions that will aid learning and enhance metacognitive skills (2023). If scaffolding and ZPD are two sides of the same coin, an important point that needs to be made here is that Vygotsky did not propose a pedagogy based on mediational dialogue/scaffolding at all (Rigopouli et al., 2025). However, scaffolding is still an important tool to employ in building reading skills, while also fostering independence and critical thinking.

Research today highlights the significance of Vygotsky's social constructivist approach to teaching in IE. Social interactions and collaborative activities, according to Khosravizadeh (2023), improve group skills within the Zone of Proximal Development. Saputra and Dianita (2025) examine the combination of Socratic dialogue with egalitarian pedagogy that encourages a greater degree of critical and equalizing thought in social studies classes. What they learned is that these strategies cultivate mutual reliance, a collaborative approach to problem-solving, and togetherness. One must remember that the teachers also play the role of facilitators while guiding and supporting students (Khosravizadeh, 2023). This is consistent with Vygotsky's social model of cognitive development that emphasizes the need to establish a supportive social setting for learning (Gillani & Eynon, 2023; Khotinets & Shishova, 3023). This illustrates how the theory of Vygotsky explains that children internalize concepts through social interactions, and it lays down the fundamental principle on which the cognitive development of a child is to be built.

Constructivist principles in public schools with limited resources help teachers to maximize resources available and adapt instruction to diverse needs. This may require flexible grouping, differentiated tasks, and the use of multicultural and multilingual resources. Vygotsky proposed that, in so doing, teachers can promote an inclusive learning environment where exceptional learners can acquire their ZPDs and participate in a community of practice in which contextual knowledge is developed. These proper practices lead to the academic development and growth of all learners (Wibowo et al., 2025) as they also provide self-confidence, fulfilling the requirements of autonomy and social interactions.

Originating from the work of Howard Gardner in 1959, Multiple Intelligences Theory calls into question the single fixed capacity model of intelligence, which predominantly assesses linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities (Xiang, 2025). Gardner, as cited by Thariq (2025), identified at least eight distinct intelligences—linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic—each representing different ways of processing information and solving problems. In inclusive public-school settings, this framework is especially relevant for addressing the diverse strengths and needs of exceptional students.

Archival data and research documentation have indicated that Gardner's Multiple Intelligences (MI) theory has a transformational influence on IE. Arias-Macias (2025) explains that MI theory makes it necessary that professionals respect and recognize cognitive differences to shift from deficiency-centered weaknesses-based tactics toward strengths-based criterion-referenced assessments. They also preferred methods that allow personalization of teaching styles to meet students' needs, which in turn optimizes their grades and self-esteem. Inclusion of MI-based pedagogy: The implementation of the multiple intelligence-based approach not only promotes engagement, creative thinking, and solving abilities, but also helps in cognitive diversity in different subjects like biology (Afnan et al., 2025).

However, barriers remain, such as undertrained teachers and resources not configured to accommodate remote learning. However, researchers have suggested that institutional support and ongoing teacher training are required to combat these barriers (Arias-Macias et al., 2025), together with the design of resources for health science education that focus on MI as a driver of quality-based learning. Utilising MI theory within education has the potential to reinvent time-old practices and offer more inclusive student-focused learning spaces.

Pedagogically, teachers can design lessons that integrate varied learning modalities, ensuring that multiple intelligences are engaged (Anggoro et al., 2024). This can manifest in the integration of movement to facilitate learning in mathematical skills for kinesthetics learners, as well as using music to promote memory improvement for auditory learners and implementing project-based learning tasks with acute dependency on nature for those who exhibit a predominant naturalistic intelligence (Mumtazah et al., 2025).

In a similar scenario, differentiated instruction based on multiple intelligences can boost exceptional students' engagement, augment motivation, and improve achievement in these highly talented students. Even with limited resources in public schools, MI-informed teaching is possible by creative modifications like utilizing peer support, project-based approaches, and community services.

Teachers can use informal assessments to determine students' intelligence profiles for instructional planning and personalisation supports (Taheri Hosseinkhani, 2025). When teachers use Gardner's theory, intelligence is viewed in the context of each student as a whole; it allows for a multiplicity of gifts and creates diversity. It is a strategy that can not only drive academic excellence for highly able students but also increase their confidence, promote inclusivity, and enable such students to contribute meaningfully to a multitude of areas within the school community (Abror et al., 2025; Yadav et al., 2025).

The 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XIV Section 1: The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible (Alcazar, 2023). Inclusive public schools, as the legal and moral imperative for teachers in inclusive public-school settings to ensure that students who have disabilities or are gifted, or simply just not underperforming academically, are given every opportunity to learn continues unabated (Naruka & Sharma, 2024). This constitutional requirement creates an awareness for the teacher to be an IE advocate (Mosala & Sefotho, 2025; Trombetta, 2024). It entails that the concept of access becomes broader than merely being wheelchair accessible in classrooms to a curriculum and instructional modification and supportive learning environment (Van Huis, 2025).

Teachers can pedagogically protect this constitutional principle by using strategies such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), scaffolding, a Multisensory approach, and peer-assisted learning to cater to different needs (Nasr, 2024). By collaborating with parents, specialists, and community stakeholders, this also ensures they the support structures are there (Wongkittirungrueang & Cheausuwantavee, 2025). Embedding inclusive practices in the Constitution, on the other hand, not only bridges the gap between teaching and legal space but also sustains every learner's dignity as well as their right to education. This empowers teachers to become active agents of social justice, ensuring no student is left behind (Frost et al., 2025; Ngcobo, 2025).

Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, institutionalized the program K-to-12, stretching basic education to 13 years in parity with global benchmarks (Mirasol et al., 2021). The law supports learner-centred, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate education so that all students can access high-quality learning opportunities regardless of ability or background (Mpolomoka et al., 2025; Kenny et al., 2023).

Republic Act No. 10533 specifically highlights how public-school teachers, particularly those in an inclusive classroom setting, should consider the diverse needs of exceptional learners when designing their curriculum. By being aware of this law, teachers can then understand why flexibility and differentiation in lesson planning are so important. Teachers need to be capable of teaching content, using mother tongue-based instruction in early grades, as well as including life skills in the curricula, addressing individual learning profiles of all students (Barruga, 2025; Goyibova et al., 2025).

In the same light, teachers can take advantage of this round by having different tasks to address in their classes, plus varied assessment methods, and incorporating hands-on experiential learning activities. In addition, collaborative learning and the use of assistive technologies can help exceptional students achieve curriculum standards (Sitoy et al., 2025; Khanna & Bhola, 2023). By understanding RA 10533 a guideline on IE, teachers must use teaching strategies that aim to promote national policy and fulfill the principles of equity and inclusivity, wherein children with special needs can develop in all aspects of language that will enable them to relate socially (Jugan et al., 2024; Barrot, 2023; Peteros et al., 2022).

The Inclusive Education Act of 2019, or Republic Act No. 11650, is a comprehensive law to guarantee the right of learners with integrated disabilities to the best possible education accessible and appropriate in public mainstream schools (Custodio et al., 2025). To teachers, this law increasingly focuses on the awareness and comprehension of learners' varying needs concerning physical differences, mental differences, as well as socio-emotional needs (Medina, 2025). This highlights the need for teachers to evolve their pedagogy to be more inclusive of diverse learning styles and abilities, creating a classroom climate conducive to the success of all students. This includes differentiating instruction, the use of an IEP, as well as in cooperative learning (Ozodova, 2025), to deliver a rigorous curriculum relevant to learners with needs and accessing it alongside their peers.

The importance of staff professional learning is emphasised in RA 11650, which is also about preparing teachers to recognise barriers to learning and implement evidence-based interventions (Falcon et al., 2025). In addition, it includes the implementation of accessibility best practices, assistive technologies, and universal design in daily teaching. With a complete understanding of this law, teachers can advocate for inclusive policies in schools and use their insights on equity to provide more equitable educational opportunities and shape an environment of respect and understanding for all learners. All papers unanimously affirm that RA 11650 confers teachers with the capacity to affect a paradigm shift in enabling students with disabilities to reach their full potential in an inclusive environment (Mangao Jr. et al., 2025; Dumitru et al., 2024).

Recent literature on teachers' competency working with students who have disabilities in inclusive classrooms has piqued interest for further study. IE aims to ensure that all learners, including those with disabilities or special needs, have equitable access and learn in the mainstream classroom. How practical this approach is for students depends, in large part, on teacher expertise and practices related to the full range of learner needs. Research also shows that effective teachers can change instruction methods, use accessible technology, and offer personalized support to help exceptional students academically and socially. It is important to know about the competency of teachers to enhance inclusive practices and provide quality education for all learners.

Across diverse global contexts, research consistently reveals that while teachers express strong support for IE, significant barriers hinder its full realization. One examination of the character of inclusive early childhood education in Kosovo conducted by Zabeli and Gjelij (2020) found that preschool teachers had a conceptual understanding of IE but faced serious resource, training, and

administrative deficits. Similarly, Spandagou et al. During the past 5 years, there have also been growing concerns in Australia that preservice teachers, although committed to inclusive practice, do not feel equipped to teach a diverse classroom of learners (2023).

In Ghana, Issaka et al. (2022) found that these general trends were followed somewhat by pre-service teachers under the country's new four-year basic education curriculum. Enthusiasm for inclusion was high, tempered by serious doubts about whether there were enough resources, service provider expertise, or institutional backing to translate policy into practice. These findings underscore a universal challenge: good intentions and positive attitudes, though essential, are insufficient to guarantee successful inclusive education. All these studies call for targeted, professional learning opportunities and resources to support teacher practice as well as the development and implementation of inclusive practices at an institutional level. In the absence of these critical pillars, the chasm between policy ideals and classroom realities will remain, fettering the transformative effects of IE to unchain equitable learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of ability or origin.

Research in the areas of sociocultural studies demonstrates that teacher perceptions of students, expectations, and cultural knowledge powerfully influence the educational performance of learners with exceptionalities. For example, research in Turkey shows very different attitudes corresponding to Special education teachers and general education teachers towards their autistic students. In contrast, most of the SpEd teachers described that they felt ready to support these students with a better understanding of their needs; on the other hand, most of the general education teachers mentioned difficulties in showing uncertainty since they have limited training and materials in implementing an inclusive programme (Kara & Peker, 2022).

Similarly, Flanagan (2020) highlighted how teacher expectations shaped by factors such as ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and classroom behavior—significantly impact student achievement. In general, teachers set high expectations for students who behave well and are academically proficient, as they hold them to be capable of meeting such expectations, but hold lower expectations for children of specific ethnic backgrounds or who display challenging behaviours. This action reinforces inequities in learning outcomes.

In higher education, Ko (2021) used a social historical view to reframe the experiences of Black male students with learning disabilities and show how they experience challenges related to being Black in academic settings while also having others perceive them as exceptional. These students frequently reported marginalization and a lack of culturally attuned support tailored to their needs. Collectively, such findings highlight that we require systemic overhauls in teacher prep: holistic training that equips all teachers (regardless of discipline) to meet diverse learning needs; the eradication of biases that influence teacher assumptions; and the embrace of inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogies that acknowledge and honor how identity, culture, and exceptionalities intersect to mediate student flourishing.

The growing research evidence based on the use of such structured, evidence-based frameworks for differentiating instruction for students with disabilities and other learning needs highlights their relevance in this instance. Cook and McDuffie-Landrum (2020) also emphasized that successful co-teaching with well-known instructional models synthesizes previous research and practice to enable teachers better to address the unique needs of each student. Through this collaboration, teachers reported increased confidence and ability to use data to provide personalized instruction, with positive impacts on students with disabilities.

Similarly, Leko et al. Specifically, based on the findings from Gandy and Scott (2021), focusing on the impact of inner-city environments, ambaC electronically searched for determinants that influence secondary SpEd teachers' literacy instruction with students who had learning disabilities. They found that teacher beliefs about effective reading instruction, knowledge of evidence-based practices, and support from their schools were important markers of their ability to differentiate learning opportunities. Those teachers who had access to ongoing professional development and

time to collaborate were also more likely to be successful in tailoring lessons to the individual needs of students. Powell and colleagues relate these insights to the field of math.

Hamilton et al. (2023) investigated the use of data-based individualization (DBI) for students in middle school with learning disabilities. Their findings confirmed that DBI empowers teachers to use student performance data to make targeted instructional adjustments, significantly improving both personalization and learning outcomes. Together, these studies emphasize a strong message: support teachers with guidance frameworks, ongoing professional learning experiences, opportunities to collaborate with others, and data tools to enable differentiated instruction. Schools can accomplish this by embedding these strategies within their educational practice, thereby providing targeted support and reducing learning disparities to promote the success of all students, regardless of ability.

Research underscores the critical role of targeted preparation in equipping teachers to design inclusive lessons that meet diverse learning needs. Scott et al. (2022) found that embedding frameworks within teacher preparation programs significantly strengthens pre-service teachers' ability to develop instructional plans for all learners, including those with disabilities. This allowed them to expand their instructional design experience and diversify the types of learning opportunities they could develop. Karal and Peker (2022) reiterated these findings, demonstrating that preschool teachers in inclusive early childhood settings had a general understanding of inclusive practices but were restricted in their efforts as they had few resources available to help them be successful with children with psychological disabilities. The study underscored that ongoing access to training and resources is necessary for supporting teachers in delivering differentiated instruction so that every student can participate effectively no matter where they fall along the talent spectrum.

New research stresses the need for collaboration and evidence-based solutions to improve Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for SpEd students. Kurth et al. (2020) consider the parent and community involvement elements in the actual IEP documents. While parent input was included in many IEPs, the level of detail varied greatly: broad and generic comments versus rich and detailed contributions. Results highlighted the importance of increased formal engagement. They indicated a necessity for better teacher preparation on how best to communicate and work together collaboratively with parents, along with specific suggestions about types of structures, methods, and tools that can help make parent involvement more consistent and meaningful.

Consistent with this viewpoint, Toews and Kurth (2021) found that when tailored to student IEP goals, shared reading interventions for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities were effective at enhancing literacy skills. The importance of targeted goals to make real progress was an overarching theme from the study: ensuring that instructional strategies are focused on specific objectives outlined within each student's IEP. In concert, they call for a two-fold approach to improve IEP development: greater levels of parental collaboration as well as the systematic integration of evidence-based, individualizing instructional practices such as shared reading into practice if our goal is to use IEPs not just compliantly, but transformative for student learning.

Effective behavior management is a cornerstone of IE, yet research reveals persistent gaps in teacher preparation and support. Concerning behavior management, McGuire (2022) discovered that most preservice general teachers enter classrooms unprepared to meet the diverse needs of their students with disabilities, which suggests there is a need for more extensive and context-specific preparation.

Also, Gilmour et al. (2022) found that teacher burnout is related to lower confidence in managing behaviors among teachers of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. These results indicate that unless we remove the stress burdens of teaching and provide laser-targeted resources, teachers' capacity to develop effective strategies meets resistance. Based on these observations, Hirsch et al. built a machine-learning model that could predict outcomes and make recommendations for new treatments to be considered by the decision maker.

Stoolmiller and colleagues (2005) researched preservice teacher preparation. This means teachers who pass such courses would not be more skilled in recognizing and dealing with behavioral issues, so they may still lack confidence and competence as classroom managers (Myers & Pilkington, 2024). Together, these studies emphasize the need to include rigorous, evidence-based training in classroom management during teacher preparation and professional development, as well as the importance of taking steps to promote teacher well-being simultaneously. When teachers have the tools, such as strategies to support a variety of behaviors and ways to build resilience in a challenging learning or teaching environment, more effective schooling communities can be developed that allow better success for all students especially those with special needs.

Recent research underscores the transformative role of specialized and context-sensitive assessment tools in accurately identifying and addressing the needs of learners with exceptionalities. Likewise, Sudha (2020) successfully formulated a mathematics assessment to cater to the role of intellectual impairments and confirmed that the tool is highly reliable in identifying the cognitive fabric and learning profile.

According to teachers, the tool gave them a better way of making learning needs more explicit, and tailored interventions were necessary, which suggests that such measures should be made part of routine practice. Similarly, Espina et al. (2021) successfully implemented the previously adapted functional skills assessments remotely for learners with SEN during the COVID-19 lockdown. These tools provided important windows into the talents and supports needed by individual students, spotlighting once again the necessity for agility and flexibility in assessment during times of crisis.

Continuing this focus on relevance to local context, Bampoe et al. (2025) designed a culturally relevant speech and language test for children who speak English in Ghana. In some, the speech and language delays were identified in English Learners through atonement to linguistic and cultural congruence. Teachers and clinicians who said it worked and called for the intervention to be used in schools. Together, these studies underscore the importance of having assessment tools that are both specialized and flexible and culturally responsive to ensure accurate assessments, inform individualized interventions, and promote equitable educational outcomes across contexts and conditions.

Kramer-Roy et al. (2020), probing the developing role of occupational therapists in school settings in Pakistan. This study sought to identify the ways that occupational therapists collaborate with teachers and other school employees to meet the therapy needs of students with disabilities. The study revealed that occupational therapists played a significant role in facilitating school-based participation among the students within their schools, working collaboratively with teachers and various professionals. Partners collaborated to create plans that addressed the unique circumstances of students. Conclusions: Occupational therapists working as part of school teams enhance support for students with disabilities; thus, interdisciplinary collaboration in education systems is important.

Collaboration between teachers and community stakeholders emerges as a critical driver of IE, particularly for students with disabilities and SpEd needs.

Pacheco et al. (2022), Partnerships between secondary education special teachers and community rehabilitation service providers resulted in significant collaborations, creating a combined effort of resources and expertise for even more student support. What they found only validated the need for ongoing PD to build these relationships.

Mosia and Lepphoto (2023) argue for participation as a means of alleviating school resource scarcity and offering specialised services, at the same time creating an equity environment within schools. They insist that national policy should promote such partnerships as part of what it means to be an inclusive school.

In line with these views, Gavade and co-workers' Study (2023) investigated teacher responses in low-income schools for children with identified needs during the COVID-19 pandemic in India and found that teachers did not resort to any systematic support but banked on informal channels as well

as community provisions to ensure such learners continued their education. These efforts are great examples of resilience, adaptability, and thinking on the fly to make use of what tools were at our disposal to provide still a service that we knew students had to have.

Together, these studies shed light on the transformative power of combining institutional partnerships with community collaborations and ad-hoc networks of support within education. By cultivating these multi-layered networks, schools can ensure that students with disabilities receive consistent, contextually relevant, and holistic support, even in resource-constrained or crisis conditions.

Research across diverse contexts consistently affirms that teacher training is a decisive factor in advancing the inclusion of children with disabilities. Ginja and Chen (2023), for example, observed in Ethiopia that teacher training programs exist, but they tend not to provide the type of coverage on IE that would help teachers despite their frequently positive attitudes feel better prepared to carry out evidence-based practices.

Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2022) have charted the maze of professional development activities for disability inclusion across the Asia-Pacific, which appeared as fragmented and inconsistent. Yes, there are programs in place, but they occur separately, and teachers still expressed a need for structured education that would strengthen their competence towards including all children.

Building on these results, Symeonidou (2022) has used the integration of disability arts and narratives with teacher education to illustrate disruptive anti-oppressive pathways in which hegemonic binaries have been disputed. This model of professional learning went beyond developing empathy in teachers to also develop an awareness, through first-hand experiences, of a little piece of what it might be like to walk in the shoes of students with disabilities, leading to more aggressive buy-in for inclusive practices.

These studies all point toward a clear and compelling challenge: to develop coherent, concentrated programs of preservice training and professional development that are informed by multiple perspectives. When teachers are trained in the practical (technical) and social (cultural) aspects of IE, they will do more than bridge intention with practice but realize both policy mandates to create optimal teaching and learning conditions for students, irrespective of their abilities or backgrounds.

Teacher pedagogical practices in inclusive classrooms have become a central area of research for improving the education of children with disabilities. Teachers need to use a variety of teaching techniques which can meet the diverse needs of different learners, ensuring that they can access learning experiences on an equal footing. Such strategies include elements of effective pedagogy such as differentiation, use of assistive technology, and embedding social-emotional development, and collaboration with parents and specialists. There is compelling evidence across studies that the ability of teachers to differentiate instruction and use student-centered approaches affects educational engagement, academic achievement, and psychological well-being positively in students with special needs. The investigation of these practices is vital to improving the quality and enhancing the effectiveness in IE.

Top recent research, therefore, has been dedicated to understanding the necessity of individualized instruction for exceptional students, primarily as teachers differ dramatically in this role, and creating an overall inclusive learning environment amongst this group is reliant mainly on how its members conduct it. Ambady et al. (2020) stated that teachers of students with high-needs or intellectual disabilities employed methods like keeping content to a minimum and leveraging assistive technology devices to enhance the engagement of said students as well as their sense of belonging within class.

Alvarado-Alcantar and Keeley (2020) further examined the extent to which multimedia services within an interactive interface reinforced anxiety and recall in the development of individualized learning tools for students with specific learning disabilities and a high school world history blended course. In addition, Gilson (2021) discussed the importance of ongoing teacher education for those teaching gifted students based on a study that found evidence to suggest that young

children can benefit from appropriate challenge with a challenging curriculum. Taken together, these studies show that teacher flexibility is based on continuous professional improvement and innovation, thereby contributing to meeting the academic and developmental needs of exceptional students by providing a fair option for learning success in the inclusive classroom at all levels.

Current research continues to stress the importance of teacher implementation of a variety of learning strategies for equitable opportunities for all students while also promoting differentiation as an instructional approach to assist with addressing differences in learner needs.

Gibbs (2025) determined that good and innovative school leadership is key to creating the necessary conditions in which these differentiated practices will grow, as leaders who champion, exemplify, and fund both with money and professional development give teachers the power to teach to student needs. Shareefa (2023) further included the differentiated instruction in the same line of multi-grade classrooms and found that flexible grouping, tiered assignments, and diversity of instructional methods have been proven to support teachers in regards to meeting the diverse academic needs among students which results in providing a personalized learning experience that can increase student engagement while ultimately focus on academic success.

Furthermore, Bondie (2025) proved that mixed-reality simulations were capable of immersing teachers in hands-on experiences to practice differentiation strategies to support a wide range of learners thoroughly. These studies affirm that teacher adaptability, supported by strong leadership and innovative professional learning experiences, is essential for creating inclusive classrooms where all students receive individualized instruction that promotes both academic success and meaningful engagement.

Recent research underscores the critical importance of teachers integrating diverse learning styles visual, auditory, and kinesthetics into their instructional practices to meet the varied needs of students effectively. Studies highlight that employing multimodal strategies not only enhances engagement but also improves learning outcomes across disciplines.

Liita et al. (2015) confirmed that implementing the Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic (VAK) learning model increased students' writing capability, which indicates that a teaching approach based on multiple sensory modalities can also improve performance and support different individual learning predispositions. This is further supported by Ibrahim and Hussein (2016), who noted that visual, auditory, and kinesthetics learning styles are distributed evenly among undergraduate nursing students, suggesting the need for teachers to use a variety of teaching modalities to bridge these differences. Taken together, these results illustrate the importance of acknowledging and integrating students' processing differences to provide inclusive yet efficacious learning environments. With multimodal instructional strategies in the classroom, teachers can enable students to understand on a deeper level, reaching their full potential and supporting all learners to achieve academic success.

This paper highlights recent research on the role of assistive technology (AT) in helping students with disabilities. It asserts that comprehensive education must include these technologies as one crucial component for teachers to meet students' needs in an inclusive learning environment. Khazanichi and Khazanichi (2022) did indeed show that the use of AT in K-12 classrooms led to significantly increased levels of both student engagement and academic outcomes through the assistance of devices (notably iPads) and adaptive software, with teachers reporting feeling more comfortable as they were required to serve a very diverse group of learners. The study underscored that effective implementation requires teachers to have access to both adequate training and appropriate AT resources.

Similarly, Lohmann et al. (2019) examining AT use in preschool settings support these conclusions about the positive impact of providing students with communication and adaptive learning technology on promoting student engagement, increased communication skills, and improved academic functioning. The research points out that assistive technology success hinges upon broad and continued professional development in using assistive technology for teachers. In line with these results,

Schladant et al. (2023) provided the first evidence that focused in-service and pre-service training can markedly impact the use of assistive technology strategies, increasing teachers' ability to meet the range of students with disabilities encountered in early literacy instruction. Together, these studies concur that continuous training, availability of resources, and purposeful inclusion of assistive technology are necessary to empower teachers with tools to provide equitable, personalized instruction fostering participation, skill acquisition, and academic achievements for all.

This study provides evidence for the implementation of social learning strategies, peer tutoring in particular, that make use of collaborative learning environments to influence academic performance and student engagement. Ige et al. (2020) supported that students who attended peer tutoring sessions improved their understanding and retention of financial accounting concepts, reinforcing the idea that this technique has an advantage as a tool for active learning and reinforcement of subject mastery.

Petancio (2021) discovered that cooperative learning of mentorship for elementary education teaching interns not only enhanced content mastery, but it also lessened mathematics anxiety, which demonstrated that peer tutoring increases cognitive facets and alters their optimistic effects.

These findings align with the study of Chinyama (2020) in secondary schools, which showed that student-piloted peer education activities on healthy living, as practiced by local health facilities for reducing stigma and discrimination at school, facilitated enhanced social-emotional competencies such as communication, collaboration, and empathy among students.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that peer-assisted learning transcends traditional academic gains, fostering interpersonal skills, emotional resilience, and a supportive classroom culture. By integrating peer tutoring and peer-led initiatives into instructional practices, teachers can create dynamic, inclusive learning environments that empower students to excel academically while simultaneously developing critical social and emotional capacities necessary for lifelong success.

Recent studies show the value of individualized support for these students and how tailored interventions can lead to improved learning outcomes. Individualized approaches also help teachers tend to the needs of students with disabilities so that instruction is responsive and effective.

Baker et al. (2022) featured the work of mathematics coaches and specialists in providing targeted supports with coaching and found that individualized support from specialized teachers results, on average, in statistically significant increases for students in terms of mathematics achievement. In doing so, it became apparent that not all students learn the same, and that offering personalized interventions would be essential to address these diverse learning needs and promote academic success.

The study of McConomy et al. (2022) has shown that when differentiation is explicitly used, it not only leads to the development of discrete skills, but also facilitates active engagement, which often results in greater participation within general education environments. Together, these studies highlight the importance of targeted and personalized interventions (such as specialized instruction, coaching, or adaptation) to strengthen the academic prowess of exceptional learners and enhance educational access and equity.

Research published in the past year strongly suggests that the success of many exceptionally gifted learners depends on the careful monitoring and, if necessary, remedial guidance by teachers. In a study by Mohamed and Elhoweris (2022), preservice early childhood teachers trained to identify varied forms of giftedness could support the individual needs of students. Thus, the researchers feel there is a need for professional development to prepare teachers to identify and educate gifted children to improve academic success and overall functioning.

Lenzer et al. (2024) link education and inclusive pedagogy perspectives to assist teachers in preparing them for and reflecting on their development of inclusive curricula. These researchers also found that structures were able to help students have equal access to education. It concluded that the frameworks are helpful tools for promoting inclusive teaching.

For instance, research by Hettiarachchilage and Haldolaarachchige (2014) asked whether changing some learning tasks influences student outcomes. The study proposed that this instructional technique enhances student engagement and better student outcomes, both in peer collaboration and in the communication among students at various levels of competency. According to the study, this made classroom activities built for group work a more viable option when aiming towards inclusive education.

This will enable us to grasp the critical situational aspects, such as how a teacher can be competent in teaching kindergarten children or what implementation of pedagogical practices means, in an elementary school context. Philippine Legal mandates are integrated with educational theories and relevant literature. These theories also offer sets of principles that guide teachers in recognizing the variety of learning needs while empowering all learners to better connect with classroom activities.

Article XIV, Section 1 of the Philippine 1987 Constitution; RA 10533 or Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, and RA 11650, otherwise known as IE Act of 2022 each provides the legal underpinnings for the state's obligation to provide, among others, equitable quality education, highlighting the role that teachers are enjoined with in making learning environments accessible. Linked research studies support the conclusion that the capacity and performance of teachers, in both knowledge and pedagogy, influence improving academic results, social integration, and life quality of students with SpEd needs.

This study asserted that appropriate professional development, exposure to inclusive pedagogical practices, and knowledge of legal requirements increase teachers' confidence in their ability to handle these students effectively. Taken together, however, a theoretical approach in parallel with legislation and research recognises the importance of teachers as human rights enablers for inclusion supporters. More importantly, it prepares them to meet their legal obligations and empowers exceptional learners with the same academic and social opportunities that support an inclusive and affirmative educational system in the Philippines.

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

This research assessed the teachers' competencies and pedagogical practices in inclusive classes of exceptional students at public schools in the Philippines, during the school year 2025-2026, as a basis for an action plan.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 gender.
 - 1.2 highest educational attainment; and
 - 1.3 length of service?
2. What is the respondents' level of competence in handling inclusive classes?
3. What is the respondents' extent of utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive classes?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' competence in handling inclusive classes and the pedagogical practices they utilize?
5. Based on the study's findings, what action plan can be crafted?

Statement of Null Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between the respondents' competence in handling inclusive classes and the pedagogical practices, they utilize.

Significance of the Study

This is very significant as it considers teachers' awareness and teaching practices in inclusive classrooms, especially with students with special needs. It seeks to analyze gaps that could be obstructing IE and the knowledge spaces. The findings will benefit teachers by promoting reflective teaching, assist school administrators in planning targeted training, and contribute to improved learning outcomes for exceptional students. Additionally, the study provides valuable insights for parents, paraprofessionals, researchers, and future researchers in understanding and enhancing IE practices in the Philippines.

School Administrators. This study will serve as a valuable platform for assessing the current state of IE practices within schools. By evaluating teachers' awareness and pedagogical approaches in inclusive classrooms, the research will help school administrators identify existing strengths and areas that require improvement. The findings can guide the development of strategic plans for ongoing support, resource allocation, and capacity-building initiatives. Furthermore, the study will inform evidence-based policy decisions, professional development programs for teachers, and funding priorities that collectively enhance the effectiveness of IE and ensure equitable learning opportunities for exceptional students.

Teachers. This study investigates the experience of teachers in their content knowledge and instructional practices for students with disabilities, including unique abilities. The purpose is to improve practice in professional development by seeing what works and where improvements are needed. This information will enable educators to continue building classrooms, schools, and districts that help all our students thrive...it is a win-win.

On the other hand, this process of analyzing teachers' competency and pedagogical practices provides valuable information to help educators develop inclusive strategies, meet diverse needs, and drive professional growth. The findings of this study can inform training areas related to genetics, increase the confidence of teachers in their teaching abilities in high schools, and provide equal learning opportunities for students with exceptionalities, which could gradually improve the effectiveness and commitment of teachers towards IE.

Exceptional Students. Although the impact is indirect, this study serves to improve an exceptional student's education by encouraging accurate teaching practices and improving attention to their individual needs. The fact that the research helped pinpoint where instruction performed poorly buoys a push for creating even more equitable and inclusive learning environments. In the end, these modifications can result in better academic success, enhanced social adaptation, and overall wellness of gifted children.

Parents. The results provide consolation and information on the education that their children receive in inclusive programs. It supports an effective partnership between home and school by promoting open lines of communication and a collective understanding of shared responsibility in the child's learning.

Paraprofessionals. The study highlights their role in the inclusive classroom and reiterates the need to work with teachers to provide adequate instructional support for students with different educational needs. A measure of competence and research on pedagogical practices empower paraprofessionals with the necessary knowledge to meet teachers' expectations and accommodate exceptional learners in inclusive environments. It helps make gaps in skillset, focus on training areas, and improve collaboration. This will provide tangible help, drive success for the student, and encourage inclusive behavior in paraprofessionals, enhancing their confidence and professionalism for an IE delivery.

Researcher. This research adds to the limited knowledge base on IE concerning current information on teacher knowledge and teaching approaches. It can indicate trends, challenges, and potential areas for future academic inquiry.

Future Researchers. The review is a reference resource for cross-national perspectives on teacher preparation, inclusive classroom practices, and outcomes for students. It offers stimulating directions for the ongoing research into the changes that IE requires. This will allow future SpEd researchers to investigate effective teaching strategies and inclusive practices that deal with exceptional learners and competent students. The theory also lays the groundwork for understanding gaps, creating tailored interventions, and implementing programs based on evidence to promote learning across multiple populations. This research drives innovation impacts public policy, and changes teacher preparation. The prediction of inclusion by these variables is not only crucial for researchers but also for policymakers interested in measuring educational equity and ensuring that all students with disabilities have access to a free, appropriate public education within inclusive settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, the study flow, the research environment, the respondents, the research instrument, the data gathering procedure, the statistical treatment, and the scoring procedure that will help achieve the objectives of the study.

Design

This study employed a **descriptive correlational research design** to determine the relationship between teachers' competencies particularly their awareness of inclusive education and the pedagogical strategies they employ when teaching exceptional learners in inclusive classroom settings.

This design is appropriate for research that seeks to explore existing relationships between variables as they occur naturally, without manipulation or intervention.

According to Raju and Kumari (2025), a descriptive correlational approach enables researchers to study multiple variables and analyze the statistical relationships among them in real-world contexts. In this case, the study focused on how teachers' competencies including knowledge, attitudes, and training related to inclusive education are associated with their instructional practices, classroom management strategies, and accommodations for exceptional students.

The lack of control groups or experimental manipulation makes this design particularly suitable for educational settings, where ethical considerations often prevent experimental interference. Moreover, it enhances external validity by anchoring the findings in the actual experiences of teachers, thereby allowing for practical implications relevant to classroom instruction, teacher training programs, and educational policy.

By employing this design, the study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers' professional competencies influence the implementation of inclusive education for exceptional students, thereby supporting the improvement of inclusive teaching practices and learner outcomes.

Flow of the Study

This study followed a structured process comprising Input, Process, and Output phases, each aligned with the overarching objective of assessing teachers' competencies and pedagogical practices in inclusive classes that serve exceptional learners.

Input. Information from the respondents was collected regarding some demographic characteristics (age, gender, highest educational level attained, years of service in teaching profession and attendance to a professional development course related to inclusive education or not) during that Study input flow focused on assessing teacher knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards inclusive education: here comes their knowledge of inclusive principles in general; competencies about exceptional learners' needs related to inclusion. The study concludes with close examinations of the inclusive classroom teaching strategies and classroom management strategies, as well as the instructional accommodations used by teachers in an inclusive school. Together, these inputs will help provide a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' competencies influence their

pedagogical practices. The results based on these elements will have important implications for teacher training, curriculum development, and policy regarding inclusive education.

Process. The research design adopted was descriptive-correlational, and a validated, researcher-constructed questionnaire tool was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the teachers. First, a transmittal letter was sent to the administration of Cebu Technological University, specifically to the College of Education, to obtain approval to carry out the study. This was followed by an orientation held to acquaint the respondents with the purpose of the research and to provide instructions for completing the survey. Then, questionnaires through Google Forms were distributed to general education and Special education teachers, which the teachers returned upon completion. The collected data were compiled and statistically treated using statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson r.

Output. The expected product of this study is a locally developed an action plan designed to enhance inclusive instruction and support the successful implementation of inclusion strategies. Professional development and curricular support will be provided for both general and special teachers. The data collected from the survey questionnaires were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical formulas to develop an Action Plan.

Environment

This study was conducted among teachers, most of whom are currently enrolled in one of the premier universities offering Special Education (SpEd) programs through online and hybrid modalities. In a public school in Cebu, Philippines, these teachers receive training aimed at equipping them with the knowledge and competencies necessary to effectively address the diverse needs of learners in inclusive classroom settings.

SpEd programs are crucial for training the educators of tomorrow. It is essential to produce teachers who are equipped with the theoretical and pedagogical skills and who implement evidence-based approaches appropriate for diverse exceptional learners from preschool through high school levels in schools throughout their careers. It provides its students with comprehensive coursework, hands-on training, and community immersion that expose them to real classroom settings, enabling them to gain practical experience in handling learners with disabilities, giftedness, and other exceptionalities.

Through the infusion of inclusive education components, CTU can yield compassionate, well-rounded, and competent professionals capable of helping learners with disabilities grow holistically. The school prepares prospective teachers to be effective practitioners who provide equitable opportunities for student learning, advocate for inclusive practices, and are leaders in SpEd within the local community as well as across the nation.

Respondents

The study's respondents were the 42 teachers, including regular and Special Education teachers, who were enrolled at Cebu Technological University during the school year 2025-2026.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Respondents

Type of Teachers	Frequency	Percentage
Gen. Ed Inclusive settings	35	83.33
SpEd settings	7	16.67
Total :	42	100.00

They were chosen using non-probability purposive sampling, as they handle exceptional students in their respective schools in Central Visayas. These respondents have direct contact with extraordinary students and are involved in educating them academically through DepEd's K-to-12 curriculum.

In Central Visayas, teachers of Special education exhibit compassion, dedication, and flexibility in addressing individual differences among their learners. More have training in Special education backgrounds and can implement inclusive activities like differentiating instruction. Their professionalism shows in how they seamlessly deliver academic instruction as well as social-emotional aid, caring for the students. Such teachers participate in ongoing professional learning and reflection to build their capabilities as designers, facilitators, and learners in inclusive, equitable, and learner-centered classrooms.

Instruments

This study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire to gather information regarding the teachers' competencies and their pedagogical practices in inclusive classes of exceptional students with a three-part questionnaire. Prior to the full implementation of the study, the researcher conducted a pilot test to determine the reliability of the research instrument. The questionnaire, which was researcher-constructed and validated by experts, was administered to a group of sixteen (16) teachers who were not part of the actual respondents of the study. This pilot testing aimed to ensure that the instrument would yield consistent and reliable results when used in the actual data gathering phase.

To assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was employed as the statistical measure of reliability. Following the threshold of $\alpha > 0.70$ as recommended by Taber (2018), the results of the reliability analysis indicated high internal consistency in the instrument. Specifically, the Competence domain yielded a Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha = 0.944$, while the Pedagogical Practices domain obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha = 0.922$.

These results suggest that the items included in both domains of the instrument are highly reliable and internally consistent. Therefore, the questionnaire was deemed appropriate for use in the actual conduct of the study.

Data Gathering Procedures

Pre-data Gathering Stage. The researcher wrote a transmittal letter to the Dean of the College of Education asking for approval to conduct the study on the identified respondents. He also attached the Informed Consent and survey questionnaire for the dean's perusal. Also, he forwarded the signed letter to the Chair of the Online Program of Special education for approval to administer the survey questionnaire.

Data Gathering Stage. Once the letter was approved, the researcher administered the survey questionnaires to teachers who were at the locale for their enrollment. Then, he individually checked the survey questionnaire for the completeness of data entries. He then encoded the data using a Data Matrix file that his statistician provided. Then, data hygiene followed. This procedure ensures that all entries are consistent and complete before statistical treatment.

Post-data Gathering Stage. After encoding the data into the Data File (Microsoft Excel), he forwarded the file to his statistician for analysis and interpretation. After receiving the statistical reports from his statistician, he interpreted the data presented in tables. Based on its findings, the researcher made conclusions and recommendations for the study.

Data Privacy. This study strictly adheres to the provisions of Republic Act No. 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which protects the fundamental right to privacy of individuals while ensuring the free flow of information to promote innovation and growth. The privacy, confidentiality, and security of all data collected from the research participants shall be upheld throughout the conduct of this study.

To ensure the confidentiality of data collected from the respondents will be used only for research purposes.

Ethical Considerations. Ethical considerations are essential in research to uphold integrity, avoid mistakes, and foster accountability, trust, mutual respect, and fairness among all involved. In this study, ethical treatment of participants will be a top priority, ensuring that their information remains

confidential and anonymous, informed consent is obtained, and participation is entirely voluntary with the freedom to withdraw at any time. Participants will be treated with respect, and the study will be conducted impartially, without bias or political influence, concentrating solely on the impact of professional development on enhancing the practices of Special education teachers.

In this study, the researcher ensured the respondents' privacy was upheld and respected. Before answering the survey questions, the respondents were informed regarding their rights using the consent form. The idea behind the permission form is that the researcher gave the respondents enough information about the study to enable them to understand its advantages. Additionally, this assures the responders that any information collected and retrieved from them is only accessible to authorized individuals.

By eliminating data fabrication or falsification, this work has ethical implications for addressing and fostering the pursuit of information and the truth. To prevent such risks, the respondents are also given all the information they require on the study's goal, scope, and methodology. Whether you decide to participate in this study is totally up to you.

If the respondents did not want to, they were not obligated to participate in the study. Suppose they decide to stop the inquiry for whatever reason. The responders won't feel under any obligation to continue. If participants choose not to participate in the study or refuse, there will be no harmful effects. The researchers adhered to ethical research standards, preserved all information, and safeguarded identities throughout the survey methods.

Treatment of Data

The following statistical tools were used in the study:

The collected data regarding the profile of teacher respondents, such as their gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service, were analyzed, including frequency and simple percentage.

On the respondents' level of competence in inclusive classes, the gathered data were treated using weighted mean and standard deviation.

On respondents' extent of utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive classes, the gathered data were treated using weighted mean and standard deviation.

To test the significance of the relationship between the respondents' competence in handling inclusive classes and the pedagogical practices they utilize, Pearson r was used.

Scoring Procedures

The following parameters and interpretations were used in data analysis regarding the teacher respondents' level of competence in inclusive classes with exceptional students.

Rate	Mean Range	Verbal Description	Interpretation
5	4.21 - 5.00	Very High	Teachers always agree with the statements on their utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive education classes.
4	3.41 - 4.20	High	Teachers agree with the statements on their utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive education classes.
3	2.61 - 3.40	Moderate	Teachers moderately agree with the statements on their utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive education classes.
2	1.81 - 2.60	Low	Teachers less agree with the statements on their utilization of pedagogical practice in inclusive education classes.

1	1.00 - 1.80	Very Low	Teachers do not agree with the statements on their utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive education classes.
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DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are operationally defined to ensure a clearer understanding of the concepts used in this research.

Action Plan. In this study, this refers to activities designed for teachers to enhance their pedagogical practices and their level of competence in managing exceptional students in inclusive classrooms.

Assessment. The systematic process of documenting and using empirical data to evaluate the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of students.

Awareness. The degree to which teachers understand and recognize the concepts, principles, and needs associated with IE and exceptional learners.

Collaboration. A professional practice in which teachers, special teachers, paraprofessionals, and families work together to support the educational progress of exceptional students.

Differentiated Instruction. An approach where teachers proactively modify content, process, product, or learning environment based on individual student needs and readiness levels.

Disability. A physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment that may hinder a person's full and effective participation in education on an equal basis with others.

Educational Equity. The principle of fairness in education, ensuring that personal or social circumstances are not obstacles to achieving educational potential.

Exceptional Students. Learners who deviate significantly from the average or typical learner, including those with disabilities and those who are gifted or talented.

Giftedness. A high level of cognitive, creative, artistic, or leadership capacity that requires specialized educational programs and/or services.

Inclusion. The educational practice of placing students with exceptionalities in general education classrooms with appropriate support, promoting their participation and learning alongside their peers.

Inclusive Education (IE). A philosophy and practice of educating all students in age-appropriate general education classes, with high-quality instruction, interventions, and support to meet their individual needs.

Individualized Education Program (IEP). A legal document in some education systems that outlines a personalized learning plan and support services for students with disabilities.

Learning Disability. A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language, impacting the ability to listen, think, read, write, or do mathematical calculations.

Level of Teacher Competence in Handling Inclusive Classes. The knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional judgment that enable a teacher to perform effectively in diverse educational settings.

Mainstreaming. The practice of placing students with special needs into regular education classes for at least part of the school day, often with limited support.

Paraprofessional. A trained educational support staff member who assists certified teachers in delivering instruction and managing classroom activities, particularly in inclusive settings.

Pedagogical Practices in Inclusive Classrooms. The methods and strategies used by teachers to facilitate student learning include lesson planning, instruction, assessment, and classroom management.

Professional Development. Continuous learning opportunities are provided to teachers to enhance their teaching skills, particularly in adapting to diverse and inclusive classroom needs.

Special Education (SpEd). Customized instructional programs and services are designed to meet the unique needs of students with disabilities.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL). An educational framework that guides the development of flexible learning environments and curricula to accommodate individual learning differences.

Chapter 2

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This chapter presented the gathered data regarding the teachers' competencies and pedagogical practices in inclusive classes of exceptional students at public schools in the Cebu Philippines, during the school year 2025-2026, as a basis for an action plan.

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

In this study, the teachers' profile consists of their gender, highest educational attainment, and length of service.

Gender

Gender plays a significant part in teachers working with exceptional students in public schools and is indicative of larger trends throughout the teaching profession. The findings of this study reveal a significant gender disparity among teachers handling exceptional students in public schools. Out of the 42 surveyed respondents, 39 (92.86%) are female, while only 3 (7.14%) are male. This result illustrates a pronounced female dominance in the teaching profession, particularly in the field of special education (SpEd) and inclusive education.

Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2. Gender of the Respondents

Gender	f	%
Female	39	92.86
Male	3	7.14
Total	42	100.00

This pattern reflects broader national and global trends. For instance, in a study conducted in Legazpi City, it was found that out of 36 special education teachers, 30 were female and only 6 were male, similarly highlighting the underrepresentation of men in the field (Alfane, 2020). A separate study in Camarines Norte reported a nearly 100% female composition among secondary school SpEd teachers, further reinforcing the idea that SpEd continues to be a female-dominated profession in the Philippines (Rivera & Baldovino, 2023).

The dominance of female teachers in this profession can be attributed to gendered perceptions of teaching as a nurturing profession. According to Liu et al. (2023), characteristics such as empathy, patience, and emotional intuitiveness traits stereotypically associated with women are often viewed as necessary in special education. As such, societal expectations tend to deter male participation in these roles. McDowell (2023) supports this idea by explaining that male teachers often experience a "double bind": conforming to nurturing roles may challenge their masculinity in the public eye, while failing to conform can lead to criticism for lacking emotional sensitivity expected in early and special education contexts.

Despite this imbalance, the presence of male educators in SpEd remains essential. Research suggests that male teachers can serve as positive role models, especially for male students with

disabilities, and can contribute to a more inclusive and gender-balanced educational environment (Liu et al., 2023). Their involvement also helps challenge prevailing gender norms and introduces diverse teaching and interpersonal styles that can benefit all learners.

The findings of this study, therefore, underscore the need for targeted efforts to recruit and retain more male special education teachers. This may include awareness campaigns, scholarships, or mentorship programs aimed at breaking gender stereotypes in the teaching profession (OECD, 2022). Creating an inclusive teaching workforce across genders can positively impact the holistic development of learners with exceptionalities.

Therefore, the dominance of female teachers in SpEd as shown in this study and others reflects societal norms that continue to shape the profession. However, the inclusion of male educators remains a critical component in developing inclusive, balanced, and representative learning environments for all students.

Highest Educational Attainment

This resource provides data on the highest educational level of public-school teachers teaching exceptional students, an essential indicator of teacher quality and preparedness. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3. Respondents’ Highest Educational Attainment

Highest Educational Attainment	f	%
Doctorate Degree	1	2.38
With Doctorate Units	0	0.00
Master’s Degree	15	35.71
With Master’s Units	1	2.38
Diploma in Special Education	2	4.76
Bachelor’s Degree	23	54.76
Total	42	100.00

The data show that among the 42 teacher-respondents enrolled at Cebu Technological University during the school year 2025–2026, the majority (23 or 54.76%) hold a bachelor’s degree, while 35.71% (15 respondents) have completed a master’s degree. In contrast, 2.38% hold a Diploma in Special Education, and 4.76% (2 respondents) reported completing postdoctoral studies. Notably, no teacher respondents held a doctorate, and only one teacher (2.38%) was currently pursuing a master's degree. This distribution reflects broader trends in teacher education, particularly in inclusive settings, where the majority of teachers have baseline qualifications but fewer pursue advanced or specialized studies. Teacher educational attainment is a critical indicator for qualifications exceptional students. As noted by Liu et al. (2023), advanced academic qualifications, such as master’s degrees or specialized diplomas, enhance teachers’ capacity to implement inclusive pedagogical practices and provide differentiated instruction aligned with the needs of diverse learners.

The high percentage of bachelor's degree holders in this study implies that while foundational training is present, many teachers may lack deeper exposure to the theoretical and practical frameworks necessary for inclusive education. According to Rivera and Baldovino (2023), postgraduate training equips educators with better strategies for classroom management, curriculum adaptation, and student engagement in inclusive environments.

On the other hand, the presence of master's degree holders (35.71%) demonstrates a strong commitment among some teachers to professional advancement and specialized learning. This reflects growing awareness of the need for higher qualifications to meet the demands of inclusive education. As OECD (2022) notes, postgraduate education has a direct impact on improving teacher performance, particularly in contexts requiring personalized support and specialized interventions.

However, the very low number of teachers with postdoctoral or diploma-level SpEd training suggests a critical gap in highly specialized expertise among the respondents. This aligns with Geromo et al. (2024), who emphasize that limited access to advanced special education programs in higher education institutions may restrict teachers from developing deep pedagogical competencies in SpEd.

Overall, these findings suggest a positive trend in teacher educational advancement at Cebu Technological University. However, to meet the increasing demands of inclusive education, there remains a need to encourage more teachers particularly those at the undergraduate level to pursue graduate-level studies or certification in special education. This would help ensure that inclusive classrooms are guided by research-based, equity-driven pedagogical practices that address the full range of learner needs.

Length of Service

The number of years of teaching service by exceptional student teachers in the public schools is a proxy measure for experience and dedicated service to inclusive education. This study offers perspectives on how novice and veteran teachers in learning environments give form to this balance. A look into experience is necessary, as it is one dimension that naturally lends itself to instructional effectiveness, classroom management of students with disabilities and exceptionalities. Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4. Respondents’ Length of Service

Length of Service	F	%
More than 15 years	8	19.05
11 – 15 years	11	26.19
6 – 10 years	3	7.14
1 – 5 years	18	42.86
Less than a year	2	4.76
Total	42	100.00

The data collected from 42 teacher-respondents enrolled at Cebu Technological University during the academic year 2025–2026 reveal a diverse range of teaching experience among educators handling exceptional students. The largest proportion of 18 teachers (42.86%) have teaching experience ranging from 1 to 5 years, while 2 teachers (4.76%) have less than one year of experience. This notable presence of novice educators may indicate recent recruitment efforts in response to the growing need for inclusive education or increasing interest among new teachers to specialize in Special Education (SpEd).

On the other end of the spectrum, 11 teachers (26.19%) reported 11–15 years of service, and 8 teachers (19.05%) have more than 15 years of teaching experience. These figures suggest that a significant number of veteran educators are engaged in teaching exceptional students, bringing with them valuable expertise, classroom management skills, and institutional memory that are critical in supporting students with special needs. However, a noticeable gap appears in the 6–10 years range, with only 3 teachers (7.14%) falling into this mid-level category, reflecting a possible discontinuity in retention or progression within that experience bracket.

Research supports the idea that length of service plays a substantial role in shaping teacher effectiveness and attitudes toward inclusion. Evangelio and Escote (2024) emphasized that seasoned teachers tend to exhibit more competent pedagogical behaviors and confidence in handling diverse learners compared to their less experienced counterparts. Furthermore, a study by Tenback et al. (2024) highlighted that while experience alone does not guarantee more inclusive attitudes, it often correlates with increased self-efficacy and readiness in implementing differentiated instruction for students with special needs.

The predominance of early-career teachers implies a need for continuous professional development, mentoring, and capacity-building programs aimed at improving their readiness to address the

unique needs of exceptional learners. Structured induction programs, peer learning opportunities, and specialized training can enhance the competencies of novice educators, as supported by Liu and Sun (2023), who advocate for experience-aligned training to support inclusion.

Meanwhile, the presence of experienced teachers offers an opportunity to build a culture of mentorship and collaboration. Veteran educators can serve as role models and guide newer teachers in navigating inclusive pedagogical practices. However, the gap in mid-career representation suggests a need for retention strategies and career advancement pathways to maintain a steady, balanced teaching workforce.

Therefore, the findings underscore the importance of both sustaining experienced teachers and nurturing the professional growth of new educators. A balanced distribution of teaching experience supported by targeted training and mentorship can ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality inclusive education for exceptional learners in public schools.

RESPONDENTS' LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN HANDLING

INCLUSIVE CLASSES

In this study, the teacher respondents were asked about their perceptions regarding their level of competence in managing exceptional students in inclusive classes. Table 5 presents the results.

Table 5. Level of Competence in Handling Inclusive Classes of the Respondents

S/ N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1.	I have the idea and the principles of IE.	4.24	0.66	Very High
2.	I am exposed to a variety of exceptionalities in students.	3.98	0.84	High
3.	I can individualize for the learning-disabled student.	3.88	0.80	High
4.	I am able to strategically develop lessons that meet all learners, including those with disabilities.	3.76	0.82	High
5.	I am skilled at developing IEPs.	3.26	0.89	Moderate
6.	I am comfortable with behavior situations with special needs students.	3.69	0.64	High
7.	I can use assessment instruments appropriate for individuals with exceptionalities.	3.67	0.75	High
8.	I can also work with special ed teachers, therapists, or other support personnel.	4.02	0.75	High
9.	I have experience in utilizing community agencies and school resources for special students.	3.21	1.05	Moderate
10.	I look for good training on inclusion still.	4.33	0.82	Very High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.80		High
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.80	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20-High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80-Very Low

The results from the data show some trends in terms of the level of readiness and confidence about inclusive education being exhibited by public school teachers as they perform their roles when it comes to handling exceptional students based on group classification. The average mean calculated was 3.80 (SD = 0.80), (High) is indicative that teachers in general show a high level of competency and proactivity in dealing with students having exceptionalities. However, specific indicators highlight areas of strength as well as aspects requiring further professional development.

Teachers scored very high in having the idea and principles of inclusive education (M = 4.24, SD = 0.66) and in their continuous pursuit of training on inclusion (M = 4.33, SD = 0.82). This suggests that teachers possess foundational knowledge of inclusive practices and show willingness to

enhance their skills through ongoing training, which is crucial in fostering inclusive classrooms. Similarly, collaboration with support personnel such as special education teachers and therapists ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.75$) is a significant strength, reflecting teachers' openness to teamwork in addressing diverse learners' needs.

On the other hand, moderate ratings were observed in developing IEPs ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.89$) and in utilizing community agencies and school resources ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.05$). These findings suggest that, on the one hand, teachers can modify practices for learners with disabilities, but on the other hand, they might have a complex relationship when it comes to more formalized or more technical tasks, such as developing IEPs and using external resources for supporting students. These are competencies that we need to build through focused training with institutional support.

Results indicate that, overall, public school teachers scored as competent in applying inclusive principles and practices but struggled with niche areas. However, improving professional development programs dealing with IEP, behavior management strategies, and community resource connections can better equip teachers in addressing exceptional learners.

The results suggest that teachers from public schools mostly understand the foundational concepts of inclusive education and implement quite a wide range of standard practices to create conducive learning environments for students with exceptionalities. These effective practices score particularly well in areas such as knowledge of inclusive education, lesson planning, working together with support personnel, and willingness to access more training points, because these teachers are generally able to meet a wide range of diverse learners' needs within their classroom. This result indicates the potential benefits of teacher education coursework and professional development in fostering initial competencies for inclusive teaching.

More concerning are the intermediate ratings in specific domains, including creating IEPs and accessing community resources that represent core deficiencies. These all follow many technicalities for which knowledge alone is insufficient, and practical exposure is also required. Teachers may struggle to personalize instruction and provide wrap-around support for students with exceptionalities without shoring up these competencies.

The practical implication for policymakers and school leaders is self-evident: teachers are to be lauded for their competence with inclusion, but rather than general training, this should be the low-hanging fruit of effective professional development. Providing teachers with improved skills for writing IEPs, more sophisticated behavior management tools, and an understanding of outside support systems will enable them to deliver comprehensive services. Filling in these gaps will help make IE more efficient and durable in public schools.

A study by Makuya and Sedibe (2021) investigated the barriers that teachers experience in the implementation of IE at the Grade 9 level in Gauteng North District Schools, South Africa. Teachers demonstrated a sound understanding of inclusive education practice; however, difficulties were experienced in adapting the school curriculum to cater for student diversity. They found there were limitations on available resources, inadequate training in specialist areas, and little backing from schools. The study revealed the need for focused professional development and organizational support to increase the implementation of inclusive practices in education.

Similarly, Gavade et al. (2023) looked at how teachers used sociotechnical support practices in schools serving low-income communities to support teaching. The study showed that teachers were more capable of integrating assistive technologies, but access and training are limited. The authors of the study concluded that equitable access to technology and training is needed for teaching students with disabilities in remote or hybrid learning models.

RESPONDENTS' EXTENT OF UTILIZATION OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN HANDLING INCLUSIVE CLASSES

In this study, the respondents were asked about their use of pedagogical practices in handling inclusive classes among exceptional students. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. Respondents' Extent of Utilization of Pedagogical Practices in Handling Inclusive Classes

S/ N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	I differentiate learning materials for use with exceptional students.	4.31	0.81	Very High
2	To differentiate, I use techniques that support all kinds of students.	4.43	0.70	Very High
3	I incorporate all learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) to accommodate the needs of the learner.	4.55	0.63	Very High
4	I have assistive tech or tools for students with disabilities (e.g. large print, screen readers)	4.05	0.94	High
5	I used social learning techniques, including peer tutoring.	4.38	0.70	Very High
6	One-on-one support is offered for exceptional students, when required.	4.38	0.73	Very High
7	I keep vigilant eye on perfect wits of my school.	4.31	0.78	Very High
8	I form a classroom with an inclusive nature that respects diversity.	4.67	0.57	Very High
9	I get exceptional students' parents or guardians advocating for their education.	4.36	0.73	Very High
10	I can also adapt to in-class activities so that all students can participate, regardless of ability.	4.57	0.63	Very High
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	4.40		Very High
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		0.72	

Legend: 4.21-5.00-Very High; 3.41-4.20-High; 2.61-3.40-Moderate; 1.81-2.60-Low; 1.00-1.80-Very Low

The overall mean for the practice of pedagogical practices in dealing with inclusive classes among exceptional students is 4.40 (SD = 0.72) and interpreted as very high. This suggests that teachers in public schools are highly competent at adapting inclusive pedagogical strategies to ensure equitable access to education for all students.

The formation of an inclusive classroom that respects diversity also indicated the highest overall mean (M = 4.67, SD = 0.57). This implies that teachers try to create an environment in the classroom where all students are treated with respect and dignity. Second, in-class explanations of how to learn and understand the material were scored highly (M = 4.73, SD = 0.54), followed by teachers' attempts to include different learning methods (M = 4.55, SD = 0.63) and adapt in-class instruction so students at all levels can participate (M = 4.57, SD = 0.63). These findings indicate a robust dedication to individualized learning, intended to suit varied learners.

Other very high-rated practices include peer tutoring (M = 4.38, SD = 0.70), one-on-one support when required (M = 4.38, SD = 0.73), and engaging parents or guardians in advocacy (M = 4.36, SD = 0.73). These strategies highlight the teachers' understanding that inclusive education is not only about academic adjustments but also about collaborative support systems that involve both peers and families.

The lowest but still high-rated indicator is the use of assistive technology (M = 4.05, SD = 0.94). This suggests that while teachers recognize the importance of assistive tools, access to or training in these technologies may be limited compared to other inclusive practices.

The findings reveal that teachers are highly capable of applying varied pedagogical practices to ensure inclusion. However, strengthening support for assistive technology integration could further enhance instructional effectiveness and accessibility for exceptional students. These suggest that teachers in public schools are highly capable of employing a range of pedagogical practices that promote IE. This collection of strategies demonstrates an all-rounded effort to address the needs of gifted students, as it includes: on-the-spot differentiation, various modality options, individual assistance during class time, peer tutoring opportunities, and a supportive classroom climate. These practices show that teachers are working hard to make sure every single student is engaged and assisted in the learning process, no matter their level. In addition to parents and guardians supporting the academic advocacy of students, such an approach justly recognizes that there are numerous dimensions to inclusion, and all these dimensions should be included in the overall system.

Although it performed well in these areas, the slight dip we saw in the use of assistive technology flags a critical area to work on. Accessibility and education for people with disabilities can be improved by incorporating tools such as screen readers, large-print materials, and adaptive devices, which enhance the accessibility of interactive media. The data imply that providing teachers with greater access to assistive technology, as well as training on practical implementation, could bridge this gap and strengthen overall instructional effectiveness.

Consequently, school administrators and policymakers should prioritize initiatives that combine professional development in inclusive strategies with resources for assistive technology. This will allow a teacher to use their pedagogical expertise and to ensure that exceptional students have equal access to learning and can capitalize on their academic potential in inclusive classrooms.

The study of Manini et al. (2022) found that although they employed different ways to address the students' needs, their challenge was experiencing insufficient resources and training for integration. Likewise, Chambers (2020) has reviewed the assistive technology literature to identify trends in existing and emerging ways to support inclusive education. Teachers were found competent in inclusive pedagogical practices, but factors like inadequate training and limited access to material resources restricted integration of assistive technologies. The author promoted fundamentally professional development programs, along with more resources in assistive technologies, to create richer learning experiences that are accessible for all students.

TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESPONDENTS' COMPETENCE AND THEIR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

The study hypothesized that the teacher respondents' competence in handling inclusive classes is significantly related to their pedagogical practices. Table 7 presents the results.

Table 7. Test of Relationship Between the Respondents' Competence in Handling Inclusive Classes and the Pedagogical Practices

Utilized by the Respondents

Variables	r -value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Decision	Remarks
Respondents' Competence and Pedagogical Practices	0.651*	Moderate Positive	0.000	Reject Ho	Significant

*significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

The analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation between the teachers' competence in handling inclusive classes and their pedagogical practices, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.651$. The computed p-value of 0.000 is less than the significance level of 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis, which posited no significant relationship between the two variables. This

indicates that the relationship observed between teacher competence and pedagogical practices is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance.

This result suggests that higher competence in inclusive education among teachers is associated with more effective and diverse pedagogical practices for exceptional learners. Teachers who possess strong knowledge, skills, and confidence in inclusive strategies are better equipped to differentiate instruction, utilize assistive technologies, and adapt their teaching methods to meet the unique needs of exceptional students.

These findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing the critical role of teacher competence in fostering inclusive education. For instance, Leijen et al. (2024) reported that teachers with higher pedagogical knowledge and self-efficacy demonstrate superior instructional quality, which positively influences student learning outcomes. Similarly, Luo and Li (2024) found that teachers' professional competence in inclusive education correlates strongly with the quality and adaptability of their classroom practices.

The significant relationship underscores the importance of continuous capacity-building initiatives, such as professional development programs and specialized training, to enhance teachers' competencies. By strengthening these competencies, teachers can implement pedagogical practices that promote inclusive learning environments, ultimately supporting the academic and social development of exceptional learners.

Chapter 3

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presented the summary, findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

SUMMARY

This research assessed the teachers' competencies and pedagogical practices in inclusive classes of exceptional students at public schools in the Cebu, Philippines, during the school year 2025-2026, as a basis for an action plan.

It employed a descriptive correlational research design to examine the relationship between competencies and pedagogical practices in teaching special students among teachers. The descriptive correlational design lends itself exceptionally well to research seeking to understand relationships between naturally occurring variables, unrestrained by experimental manipulation. Descriptive correlational design is characterized by the lack of control groups or intervention, and thus, application of this approach to educational settings where it may be impossible or ethically irrelevant to manipulate variables, necessitating the use of experimental/controlled situations.

The study's respondents were the 42 teachers, including regular and SpEd teachers, who were enrolled at Cebu Technological University during the school year 2025-2026. The respondents utilized a three-part researcher-made questionnaire to gather information regarding the teachers' awareness and their pedagogical practices in inclusive classes of exceptional students. Part 1 gathers the 3-item profile of the teacher respondents. Part 2 collects the 10-item level of competency in handling inclusive courses. Part 3 gathers the teachers' extent of utilization of pedagogical practices in inclusive classes.

The gathered data were statistically treated using frequency, simple percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson r .

FINDINGS

This study aimed to assess the competence of teachers and their pedagogical practices in inclusive education for learners with exceptionalities in public schools. Based on the gathered data, several key findings emerged.

In terms of the demographic profile of the respondents, the majority were female, held a bachelor's degree, and had teaching experience ranging from one to five years. This profile suggests that a

significant number of teachers engaged in inclusive classrooms are early-career educators. Such a trend reflects national and international patterns in the teaching profession, wherein inclusive education often attracts young and predominantly female practitioners (Sayman, Basoc, & Ricaforte, 2025).

Regarding the teachers' level of competence in handling inclusive classes, findings revealed a strong willingness among the respondents to pursue further training in inclusive education. This indicates a high level of professional commitment to continuous development, particularly in strengthening their skills and understanding of teaching students with exceptional needs. Nevertheless, the data also revealed that respondents had limited experience in utilizing external resources, such as community agencies and school-based support systems. This highlights an area for future professional development, as collaboration with external support agencies has been identified as a critical factor in successful inclusive education programs (Campado, Toquero, & Ulanday, 2023).

With respect to pedagogical practices, respondents demonstrated high engagement in fostering inclusive classroom environments that respect and celebrate learner diversity. This finding reflects the positive attitudes and efforts of teachers toward creating equitable and supportive learning spaces. However, the relatively infrequent use of assistive technologies and specialized tools for students with disabilities suggests a potential gap in access or training. As emphasized in the study of Campado et al. (2023), while teachers generally recognize the importance of assistive technologies, limitations in availability and training often prevent their full integration into classroom practice.

Finally, the study confirmed a statistically significant and positive relationship between teachers' competence in inclusive education and the pedagogical practices they employ. Teachers who demonstrated higher levels of competence were more likely to implement effective, inclusive teaching strategies, such as differentiated instruction, instructional accommodations, and the use of adaptive tools. This finding underscores the critical importance of equipping teachers with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills to ensure that inclusive education is effectively implemented. Strengthening teachers' competence through sustained professional development and institutional support can lead to improved outcomes for learners with exceptionalities.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study established a significant relationship between teachers' level of professionalism in inclusive education and their pedagogical behaviors in managing learners with exceptionalities in public schools in Cebu Philippines. Findings suggest that teachers who demonstrate a strong grasp of inclusive education principles and a deeper understanding of the needs of students with disabilities are more inclined to adopt effective strategies that support equal participation and learning outcomes for all students. This includes the implementation of differentiated instruction, classroom accommodation, and the use of assistive technologies that address the various learning profiles of students with special educational needs (Benemerito et al., 2024).

This study affirms that the success of inclusive education does not solely depend on the personal dedication or flexibility of individual teachers but significantly hinges on systemic factors such as access to professional development, administrative support, and adequate classroom resources. Sayman, Basoc, and Ricaforte (2025) emphasized that while many teachers exhibit high levels of motivation and willingness, their lack of preparedness, compounded by large class sizes and limited materials, consistently hinders the effective implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices. These findings are consistent with the current study, which identified similar challenges faced by teacher respondents.

Furthermore, evidence from previous studies underscores that continuous professional development plays a vital role in building teachers' competencies. Benemerito et al. (2024) found that teachers who received relevant and sustained training in inclusive education were more capable of

modifying instruction and applying inclusive strategies effectively. Such training also contributes to shaping teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, promoting empathy, and reinforcing their confidence in handling diverse classrooms.

Given these insights, it becomes clear that strengthening institutional support systems is vital to improving inclusive practices. This includes designing capacity-building programs tailored to the real-world challenges faced by public school teachers, providing access to assistive technologies, and ensuring administrative policies promote inclusive values. In turn, these measures will enable teachers to deliver more equitable and responsive education.

Finally, the implications of this study extend beyond individual teacher practice. They point to the need for collective and systemic commitment toward inclusive education. Public schools in the Philippines must prioritize creating environments that are accommodating and supportive of students with special needs. Teachers must be equipped with pedagogical knowledge rooted in inclusive education frameworks to ensure that no learner is left behind. Advancing inclusive education not only fosters academic success but also promotes a more equitable, compassionate, and just society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggested creating an inclusive environment for students through developing specific strategies suited to each student, with collaboration between the staff, parents, and teachers. Policymakers at DepEd should strengthen existing inclusion policies and monitor their effective practice at the school level.

Additionally, the researcher suggested operationalizing the action plan by implementing continuous professional development programs to improve the competencies and pedagogical practice of teachers in inclusive classrooms as a priority agenda. This training focused on delivering individualized lessons for diverse learners. He also said DepEd should work on providing teachers who handle exceptional students with enough resources, instructional materials, and classroom support systems to help them face the struggle.

Future research could also investigate holistic effects on students' learning outcomes and teacher self-efficacy over the long term to inform evidence-based enhancements.

Chapter 4

ACTION PLAN OF THE STUDY

Rationale

Inclusive Education in the Philippines is grounded in the belief that all learners, including those with special educational needs, have the right to quality, equitable, and accessible education. Despite this, public school teachers often face persistent barriers in implementing inclusive practices. These challenges include insufficient training, lack of resources, and varying levels of competence in delivering inclusive instruction. These limitations hinder the effective accommodation of exceptional learners in mainstream classrooms. To address these gaps, a structured and responsive action plan is necessary, with a primary focus on enhancing teachers' competencies and pedagogical practices.

The purpose of this action plan is to provide teachers with sustained in-service professional development, specifically targeting key areas such as differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, behavioral management, and the application of assistive technologies. These training components are designed to empower teachers with the necessary skills to create inclusive learning environments where students with diverse needs can thrive. Teachers who are well-equipped in these domains are more likely to adopt evidence-based teaching practices that facilitate student engagement and academic success (Benemerito et al., 2024).

Moreover, such professional development initiatives contribute to fostering school cultures that promote equity and respect for diversity. Inclusive pedagogy requires teachers not only to

understand students' individual needs but also to advocate for supportive institutional policies. Research indicates that the integration of assistive technologies into instruction is instrumental in supporting learners with disabilities, yet many teachers report a lack of training and access to such tools, underscoring the need for institutional support (Campado et al., 2023). Similarly, studies have highlighted that teachers often struggle with differentiating instruction due to limited experience and preparation, suggesting that focused capacity-building is essential for promoting effective inclusive education (Rosario et al., 2024).

Through the systematic enhancement of teaching capacity, this action plan seeks to contribute to the long-term sustainability of inclusive education in public schools. By investing in teachers' professional growth, the system can ensure that exceptional learners are not only included in mainstream classrooms but are also given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential. This plan underscores the importance of teacher readiness in achieving inclusive education goals and provides a strategic response to one of the most pressing needs in the current educational landscape.

Objectives:

1. **Enhance Teachers' Competence in Inclusive Education** – To equip public school teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to effectively address the diverse learning needs of exceptional students through training on inclusive education principles, laws, and best practices.
2. **Strengthen Pedagogical Practices for Diverse Learners** – To develop teachers' proficiency in differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, classroom management, and the use of assistive technology to create supportive and equitable learning environments for exceptional students.
3. **Promote Collaboration and Sustainable Implementation** – To encourage partnership among teachers, administrators, parents, and specialists in designing and implementing inclusive strategies, ensuring the sustainability and continuous improvement of IE practices in public schools.

Scheme of Implementation

The actualization of the action plan for the training of teacher competencies and pedagogical practices in inclusive classes. A phased and participatory process will be developed in the follow-up. The first step is to conduct a needs assessment to determine where teachers are lacking in their knowledge and skills about inclusive education. From these findings, training modules that focus on differentiated instruction, curriculum modification, classroom management, and the use of assistive technologies will be developed. The second phase will carry forward training through seminars, workshops, and online practical demonstrations of good practice led by inclusive education and special educational needs teachers. Teachers will engage in peer coaching and team planning to increase the extent to which they apply the knowledge they have gained. The third part is the tracking and evaluation element, which involves observing teachers in class and through feedback sessions, to judge the efficacy of the training. Ongoing support and follow-up training will be used to foster sustainability and permanent change to inclusive pedagogy.

Matrix Plan

This is a systematic framework created to provide teachers with the necessary training on how to handle students with exceptional needs who are enrolled in public schools. Usually, this strategy has several areas of emphasis, with objectives and suggested courses of action for each. This matrix enables teachers to take an active role in enhancing their competencies and improving their pedagogical practice to teach exceptional students.

ACTION PLAN FOR LAWAAN 3 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Areas of Concern	Objectives	Strategies	Persons Involved	Budget (in PHP)	Source of Budget	Time Frame	Expected Outcome	Accomplishment	Remarks
A. Teachers' Competencies	To strengthen teachers' knowledge of inclusive education principles, policies, and rights of exceptional students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct seminars and orientation sessions on IE frameworks (DepEd orders, SpEd laws). - Invite experts to share best practices and case studies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Heads SpEd Supervisors Resource Speakers Teachers 	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers gain a deeper understanding of inclusive education principles and legal bases.		
	To develop teachers' pedagogical skills in differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, and classroom management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitate workshops on differentiated lesson planning and curriculum adaptation. - Conduct role-playing, microteaching, and classroom simulation activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher Trainers Master Teachers Curriculum Specialists Teachers 	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers can design and implement inclusive lesson plans effectively.		
	To enhance teachers' competence in utilizing assistive technologies and adaptive learning materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide hands-on training on digital tools, assistive devices, and adaptive learning resources. - Demonstrate classroom-based technology integration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICT Coordinator SpEd Specialists Teachers 	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers confidently integrate assistive technology and materials in teaching.		
	To promote collaboration among teachers, parents, and specialists in supporting exceptional students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize collaborative planning workshops and peer mentoring sessions. - Facilitate focus group discussions with parents and allied professionals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers Parents Guidance Counselors SpEd Specialists School Heads 	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Stronger partnerships between schools, families, and communities in IE.		
	To establish continuous professional growth and reflective practices in IE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement coaching and mentoring programs. - Require reflective journals, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Heads Teachers Peer Mentors Teachers 	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers demonstrate ongoing improvement in inclusive practices through reflection		

		portfolio development, and peer evaluations.					and feedback.		
B. Teachers' Pedagogical Practices	To improve teachers' skills in differentiated instruction to address diverse learning needs.	- Conduct workshops on designing differentiated lesson plans. - Facilitate classroom simulations and microteaching.	SpEd Specialists Trainers Teachers	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers apply differentiated strategies tailored to exceptional students.		
	To strengthen teachers' competence in classroom management for inclusive settings.	- Provide role-playing activities and case study discussions on managing diverse behaviors. - Offer mentoring and peer-coaching sessions.	School Heads Guidance Counselors SpEd Coordinator Teachers	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers utilize effective management strategies that create positive and inclusive environments.		
	To enhance teachers' ability to adapt curriculum and assessments for exceptional students.	- Facilitate training on curriculum modification and IEPs. - Share best practices through collaborative workshops.	Curriculum Specialists SpEd Teachers Teachers	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers effectively design adapted lessons and assessments aligned with student needs.		
	To equip teachers with strategies for integrating assistive technology and adaptive materials.	- Conduct hands-on training on ICT tools, adaptive devices, and multimedia resources. - Demonstrate real classroom applications.	ICT Coordinator SpEd Specialists Teachers	Any available budget	MOOE	One year 2026-2027	Teachers integrate assistive technologies into lessons to support learning access.		

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