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Research Article

Teachers' Perceptions and Instructional Practices toward Inclusive Education: Basis for a Strategic Training Program

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education has become a key priority in educational reform, promoting equitable access, participation, and learning opportunities for students with diverse educational needs. In the Philippines, national policies such as Republic Act No. 11650 mandate the provision of appropriate educational programs and support services for learners with disabilities within inclusive learning environments. This study assessed the perceptions and instructional practices of Special Education and General Education teachers regarding inclusive education in selected secondary schools in the Division of Naga City, Cebu, and examined the relationship between teachers' attitudes and their competence in implementing inclusive practices. A quantitative descriptive–correlational research design was employed involving 20 teachers, comprising 10 Special Education and 10 General Education teachers. Data were gathered using adapted versions of the Multidimensional Attitudes toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) and the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis were used to analyze the data. Findings revealed that both Special Education and General Education teachers demonstrated moderately positive attitudes toward inclusive education (Special Education mean = 3.13\$; General Education mean = 3.11\$). Teachers also reported moderately high competence in inclusive teaching practices, including knowledge of inclusive strategies (Special Education mean = 3.46\$; General Education mean = 3.38\$), instructional skills for diverse learners (Special Education mean = 3.03\$; General Education mean = 3.10\$), and classroom management and assessment strategies (Special Education mean = 3.00\$; General Education mean = 3.10\$). Significant positive relationships were found between teachers' attitudes and their knowledge of inclusive practices ($r = 0.86$), instructional skills ($r = 0.88$), and classroom management strategies ($r = 0.95$). The findings suggest that while inclusive education practices are increasingly evident in secondary schools through differentiated instruction, collaborative teaching, and supportive classroom environments, challenges remain in specialized training, assessment adaptation, and disability-specific instructional competencies. Based on these results, a strategic training program was developed to strengthen teachers' preparedness,

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enhance inclusive instructional competencies, and promote collaborative support mechanisms. The expected outcome of the program is the development of a more competent, confident, and inclusive teaching workforce capable of effectively supporting learners with diverse educational needs in mainstream secondary classrooms.

Keywords: *Differentiated instruction, Inclusive education, Instructional competence, Professional development, Teacher attitudes*

Introduction

Inclusive education has emerged as a central global priority in the 21st century, grounded in the commitment to uphold every learner's right to quality, equitable, and accessible education. International frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) call on education systems to remove barriers and respond to learner diversity through inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered approaches (UNESCO, 2020). Globally, recent policy and research emphasize that inclusive education can only be fully realized when teachers are empowered as agents of change who possess the values, knowledge, and skills needed to support all learners in regular classrooms (Dignath et al, 2022; Sasikala, 2023).

In the Philippines, this global mandate is reflected in a series of policy reforms. Republic Act No. 11650, or the Inclusive Education Act of 2022, institutionalizes the right of learners with disabilities to be educated alongside their peers in regular schools and mandates the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers nationwide. The Department of Education (DepEd) further reinforces this commitment through the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP, 2030) and the MATATAG Curriculum, both of which highlight inclusive education and learner well-being as core principles of basic education reform (DepEd, 2023; DepEd, 2024). These policies underscore that inclusion is not merely a special program but a guiding framework for the entire basic education system.

Teachers, however, are the key actors in translating inclusive policies into classroom realities. Research consistently shows that teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward inclusion whether positive, neutral, or resistant directly

influence how they design learning experiences, differentiate instruction, manage diverse classrooms, collaborate with families and specialists, and assess learners with disabilities (Sharma & Sokal, 2016; Yada, 2022; Lindner, 2023). While many teachers endorse the ideals of inclusion, they often report feeling underprepared because of limited training, large class sizes, inadequate resources, and competing instructional demands (Monteiro et al., 2019; Alassaf, 2025). Competence in areas such as instructional adaptation, classroom and behavior management, assessment modification, collaboration, and the use of assistive technologies is therefore critical to making inclusion effective in practice.

Philippine studies mirror these global patterns. Recent investigations reveal that Filipino teachers generally express support for inclusive education but face persistent challenges related to pedagogical knowledge, classroom environment adaptations, and sustained professional development opportunities (Macabinta, 2025). Research conducted in Cebu and neighboring divisions has documented varying levels of teachers' preparedness, acceptance, and readiness to receive learners with special educational needs, highlighting the need for contextualized, evidence-based training that directly addresses their classroom realities (Jugan et al., 2024; Moon, 2023; Macabinta, 2025).

In Naga City, Cebu, the integration of learners with disabilities into public secondary schools reflects both noteworthy progress and ongoing constraints. Schools are expected to align with national directives such as RA 11650 and the MATATAG Curriculum, yet they lived experiences of both Special Education (SPED) and General Education teachers remain insufficiently explored. Understanding their perceptions of inclusive education and examining

their actual instructional practices is crucial, as these directly shape learners' academic outcomes, classroom participation, and socio-emotional well-being. Guided by these considerations, this study aims to determine and analyze teachers' perceptions and instructional practices toward inclusive education in order to identify strengths, gaps, and training needs that will serve as the basis for developing a strategic training program to enhance their competence in implementing inclusive education.

Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in the Division of City of Naga, Cebu, where inclusive education programs have already been implemented. These schools provide educational services to learners with diverse needs, including students with disabilities and those experiencing learning difficulties. Both Special Education teachers and General Education teachers in these schools collaborate in implementing inclusive education practices.

The school environment enhanced the ecological validity of the study because the respondents were actively engaged in teaching learners with diverse educational needs. The school setting therefore provided a realistic context in which teachers' perspectives, instructional practices, and perceived competence in inclusive education could be meaningfully investigated.

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive correlational research design to examine the attitudes and competence of Special Education (SPED) and General Education teachers toward inclusive education and to determine the relationship between these variables. A descriptive correlational design is appropriate when the objective of the research is to systematically describe existing conditions and examine the statistical relationships among variables without manipulating them.

In this study, the descriptive component was used to determine the level of teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their perceived competence in implementing

inclusive practices. Meanwhile, the correlational component examined whether a statistically significant relationship exists between teachers' attitudes and their competence in inclusive teaching. This design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand how teachers' perceptions toward inclusive education may relate to their self-efficacy and professional capabilities in inclusive classroom environments. Such a design allows the researcher to measure naturally occurring perceptions and behaviors within real educational settings while identifying potential associations between constructs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Respondents and Sampling Procedures

A purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method that allows the researcher to deliberately select individuals who possess characteristics relevant to the objectives of the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015).

The inclusion criteria required that participants must (1) be currently teaching in secondary schools within the Division of the City of Naga, Cebu; (2) have experience teaching learners with diverse educational needs; and (3) be actively involved in inclusive education practices. The respondents consisted of all ten (10) Special Education (SPED) teachers assigned to the division and ten (10) General Education teachers who were handling inclusive classes, resulting in a total sample of twenty (20) participants.

Given the limited number of Special Education teachers assigned to inclusive education programs within the division, a total enumeration approach was adopted for the Special Education group. Total enumeration is appropriate when the target population is small and when obtaining information from all available members increases the comprehensiveness of the data collected (Etikan et al., 2016). To provide a basis for comparison, ten General Education teachers involved in inclusive classroom implementation were purposively selected.

Although the sample size was relatively small ($N = 20$), it represented a substantial proportion of teachers directly involved in inclusive education within the participating schools.

The study was designed primarily to provide contextual insights into the implementation of inclusive education within the Division of the City of Naga. Nevertheless, the relatively small sample size may limit the statistical power of the Pearson correlation analysis and the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results should be interpreted cautiously and should not be generalized beyond similar educational contexts without further validation through larger-scale studies.

Research Instrument

Two validated survey instruments were utilized to measure the key variables of the study: teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their competence in implementing inclusive practices. Teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education were assessed using an adapted version of the Multidimensional Attitudes Toward Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) developed by Mahat (2008). The instrument measures three dimensions of attitudes toward inclusion: affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. For this study, fourteen (14) items were retained from the original instrument. Minor adaptations were made to improve contextual relevance and readability for Filipino secondary school teachers. Specifically, selected terms and statements were simplified, educational terminologies were localized to align with Philippine inclusive education policies, and examples relevant to the local school setting were incorporated without altering the underlying constructs being measured.

Teachers' competence in implementing inclusive education was measured using an adapted version of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP) Scale developed by Sharma and Sokal (2016). The instrument assesses teachers' self-efficacy across three domains: inclusive instructional strategies, classroom management, and collaboration with colleagues and specialists. Eighteen (18) items were selected and adapted to reflect the realities of inclusive education implementation in Philippine secondary schools. Adaptations primarily involved simplifying language, contextualizing examples, and aligning selected statements with current Department of Education policies on inclusive education.

Prior to data collection, both instruments underwent content validation by three experts in special education and educational research to ensure clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness. Feedback from the validators resulted in minor revisions in wording while preserving the original constructs of the instruments.

The internal consistency of the adapted instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The adapted MATIES obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.87$, while the adapted TEIP obtained a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.91$, indicating acceptable to high internal consistency for use in the present study.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process followed systematic and ethical procedures. Prior to the administration of the survey instruments, formal approval was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of the City of Naga, Cebu, as well as from the principals of the participating secondary schools. Letters of permission were submitted explaining the purpose of the study, its significance, and the ethical safeguards implemented during the research process.

After obtaining the necessary approvals, the researcher coordinated with school administrators to identify teachers who met the inclusion criteria. The selected teachers were informed about the objectives of the study and were assured that their participation would be voluntary and that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained before the administration of the questionnaires.

The MATIES and TEIP instruments were distributed either in printed form or through secure digital platforms, depending on the preference of the participating schools. Respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires at their convenience. The researcher remained available to clarify instructions but refrained from influencing the responses to minimize response bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Upon completion, the questionnaires were retrieved and checked for completeness before encoding the data into statistical software for analysis.

Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, educational attainment, teaching experience, and participation in inclusive education training. Frequencies and percentages were computed for categorical variables, while means and standard deviations were calculated to describe teachers' attitudes and competence levels.

Instrument reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the adapted MATIES and TEIP instruments. The obtained reliability coefficients were interpreted using established guidelines, where values of 0.70 or higher indicate acceptable reliability and values above 0.80 indicate good internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 4.50–5.00 (Very High), 3.50–4.49 (High), 2.50–3.49 (Moderate), 1.50–2.49 (Low), and 1.00–1.49 (Very Low).

To determine the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education and their competence in implementing inclusive practices, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) was employed. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level. In reporting the results, Pearson correlation coefficients were presented as r values, while coefficients of determination were reported as R^2 values to maintain consistency with accepted statistical reporting conventions.

Result and Discussion

Profile of the Respondents

Age. The age profile of the respondents revealed a notable descriptive difference between Special Education (SPED) teachers and General Education teachers handling inclusive classes. The majority of Special Education teachers were within the 31–40 age bracket (50%), followed by those aged 41 years and above (40%). In contrast, all General Education teachers assigned to inclusive classrooms were below 30 years old (100%). These results indicate that Special Education teachers in the

Division of Naga City tend to be older and have longer professional experience than their General Education counterparts.

It should be noted, however, that the age distributions were analyzed using descriptive statistics only. No inferential statistical test was conducted to determine whether the observed difference between the two groups was statistically significant. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as descriptive patterns rather than evidence of statistically significant group differences.

The observed age profile may suggest that SPED positions are often occupied by more experienced teachers who have acquired specialized training and classroom expertise over time. Florian and Spratt (2013) reported that teachers with greater professional experience often demonstrate stronger instructional confidence and adaptability when working with diverse learners. Similarly, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) emphasized that experienced teachers develop professional judgment and problem-solving skills that support the implementation of inclusive pedagogical practices. Nevertheless, younger General Education teachers may also contribute positively to inclusive education through their openness to innovation, technology integration, and contemporary teaching approaches.

Gender. Among SPED teachers, 80% are female while only 20% are male, and a similar pattern appears among General Education teachers, with 90% female and 10% male. The findings descriptively show that teaching positions in both SPED and General Education remain predominantly occupied by female teachers. According to UNESCO (2021), caregiving-oriented fields such as early childhood and special education tend to attract more women due to societal expectations associating women with nurturing and relational roles. Research further suggests that female teachers often demonstrate higher levels of empathy, patience, and emotional sensitivity, traits that contribute positively to handling learners with special needs (Sharma et al., 2021). Because SPED is largely staffed by women, female teachers frequently acquire more hands-on experience in individualized instruction, behavior management, and inclusive practices,

increasing their competencies in supporting students with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2021).

While male teachers are fewer in number, their presence in SPED remains valuable. Studies have shown that male educators can serve as important role models, particularly for learners especially boys who exhibit behavioral or emotional challenges, and a more gender-balanced teaching workforce can contribute to diverse perspectives and stronger classroom dynamics (Florian and Spratt, 2013). The results of this study are consistent with related research in the Philippines, where more than 80% of the basic education teaching force is female (DepEd, 2020), as well as international studies that similarly report female dominance in SPED professions (Florian and Spratt, 2013). Moreover, Sharma et al., (2021) found that female teachers often hold more positive attitudes toward inclusive education, which is closely linked to competence and willingness to teach students with disabilities. Overall, the gender profile of the respondents underscores the importance of supporting both male and female teachers in developing inclusive competencies. It also highlights the need to encourage greater male engagement in SPED to promote diversity and strengthen the professional landscape for teaching learners with special needs.

Educational Attainment. The result of the study show that a majority of the Special Education (SPED) teachers (80%) had earned units in a master's degree, while only 20% were bachelor's degree holders. In contrast, among General Education teachers, 60% had earned master's units, 30% had completed a full master's degree, and 10% had earned doctoral units. Descriptive results of this study indicate that General Education teachers reported a slightly higher level of completed graduate education than SPED teachers. However, no statistical test was conducted to determine whether these differences were significant. Despite this, the high proportion of SPED teachers pursuing graduate studies (80%) implies a strong commitment to professional development, which is essential when working with learners with diverse needs.

Higher educational attainment has been consistently linked to increased teacher competence, particularly in areas requiring specialized skills such as managing students with

disabilities. According to Darling-Hammond (2017), advanced degrees often enhance teachers' instructional decision-making, reflective practice, and adaptability in complex classroom environments. In special education, additional training is even more critical, as it equips teachers with evidence-based strategies in behavior management, differentiated instruction, and individualized education planning (Florian and Spratt, 2013). Thus, SPED teachers with graduate-level training, even if still in-progress, are likely to demonstrate more confidence and proficiency in handling behavioral and learning difficulties.

Comparatively, several related studies support the finding that teachers with higher educational attainment generally exhibit stronger competencies in inclusive or special education settings. Teachers with graduate degrees displayed more positive attitudes and higher self-efficacy in managing students with disabilities. Postgraduate training significantly improves teachers' readiness and behavioral management skills in inclusive classrooms (Sharma et al., 2021). In the local context, research by Rogayan Jr et al. (2022) in the Philippines found that teachers who pursued continuing education were more competent in adapting instruction and managing challenging behaviors among special learners.

The educational profile of the respondents implies further that although General Education teachers had more completed graduate degrees, SPED teachers were also actively engaged in advanced studies, which likely contributes to their competencies and professional behavior when handling special students. Continuous graduate education remains a crucial factor in improving teacher performance, particularly in specialized and demanding fields such as special education.

Length of Service. The study shows 10% of the respondents have less than five years of teaching experience, while a significant majority of 90% have served for more than five years. In contrast, among general education teachers, 60% have less than five years of experience, and 40% have more than five years. The descriptive findings indicate that SPED teachers generally reported longer teaching experience than General Education teachers. Experience in special education is generally

associated with improved classroom management, enhanced pedagogical strategies, and a deeper understanding of individualized instruction, which are critical for effectively handling students with special needs. Research indicates that teaching experience contributes to the development of teachers' self-efficacy, confidence, and instructional skills when working with diverse learners (Zee & Koomen, 2016). As teachers accumulate years of practice, they often gain practical knowledge that enhances their ability to manage inclusive classrooms and implement differentiated instruction (Podolsky et al., 2019). However, years of service alone do not necessarily guarantee higher competence. Studies emphasize that the quality of teacher preparation, ongoing professional development, and institutional support systems significantly influence teachers' effectiveness in inclusive education (Zhou et al., 2023). Consequently, continuous professional development and access to structured training programs are essential to strengthen teachers' pedagogical competencies and ensure effective instruction for learners with special needs.

In this study, the length of service of the respondents suggests potential strength in experience; however, to ensure high competence in special education, it is essential to complement experience with training, adaptive practices, and ongoing support, as experience alone may not fully reflect a teacher's ability to meet the complex needs of learners with disabilities.

Number of Inclusive Education trainings attended. The data reveal that the majority of both Special Education (SPED) and General Education teachers had attended fewer than five trainings related to inclusive education, with 80% of SPED teachers and 70% of General Education teachers falling within this category. Only a small proportion of SPED teachers (10%) had participated in more than five training sessions, while none of the General Education teachers had comparable extensive training. Notably, 10% of SPED teachers and a significantly larger proportion of General Education teachers (30%) reported having no training at all. Descriptive results show that SPED teachers generally attended more inclusive education trainings than General Education teachers. However, the study did not examine

whether the observed differences were statistically significant.

Training in inclusive education has consistently been linked to more positive attitudes and stronger competencies among teachers. Studies such as Florian and Spratt (2013) found that educators who participated in more training sessions demonstrated increased self-efficacy and more favorable attitudes toward accommodating learners with special needs. This aligns with the current findings, wherein the limited number of trainings, especially among General Education teachers, may lead to lower preparedness and potentially fewer positive attitudes toward inclusion. Similarly, Gülsün et al. (2023) emphasized that teachers' competence in implementing inclusive practices improves significantly with sustained professional development, suggesting that the respondents with fewer than five trainings may still be in the early stages of skill development.

The findings further indicate that teachers who attended more than five trainings though only represented by a small percentage of SPED teachers are likely to possess stronger competencies, particularly in instructional adaptation, behavior management, and individualized support. This supports the conclusions of Florian & Spratt (2013), who reported that extended training exposure fosters greater confidence and more effective inclusive teaching strategies. Conversely, the notable proportion of untrained General Education teachers underscores a critical gap, as their lack of exposure may negatively influence their attitudes, resulting in hesitance or discomfort in handling students with special needs.

Teacher's attitudes toward inclusive education. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into how secondary schools in the Division of Naga City are responding to the mandates of DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021 (DepEd, 2021), which requires schools to provide accessible and inclusive learning environments for learners with disabilities through competent teachers, appropriate instructional strategies, and collaborative support systems.

The results revealed that both Special Education (SPED) and General Education teachers demonstrated moderately positive attitudes

toward inclusive education, with mean scores of 3.13\$ and 3.11\$ respectively. These findings suggest that teachers generally support the philosophy of inclusion, which is consistent with the policy directive that promotes the integration of learners with disabilities into regular classrooms whenever feasible. Teachers' recognition that inclusive settings enhance social interaction, communication, and emotional development among learners reflects the broader goals of inclusive education articulated in the policy guidelines. This finding supports earlier research by Florian & Spratt, (2013) which found that teachers often recognize the social benefits of inclusion even when they hold reservations about its academic or logistical feasibility. This reinforces Mahat's (2008) findings using the same MATIES scale, where teachers tended to value the social dimension of inclusion.

However, despite these positive perceptions, teachers reported moderate levels of confidence in their ability to implement inclusive practices, particularly in areas such as assessment adaptation, behavioral management, and referral procedures. This finding indicates that while schools are making progress in embracing the principles of inclusion, there remain gaps in teacher preparedness that may affect the full implementation of the policy. DepEd Order 44 emphasizes the need for continuous capacity-building programs for teachers, and the limited number of inclusive education trainings reported by respondents highlights an area where further institutional support is necessary.

Teachers' Competence in Implementing Inclusive Education

Knowledge of Teachers on inclusive teaching practices. The results showed that both SPED and General Education teachers demonstrated moderately high knowledge of inclusive teaching practices, with mean scores of 3.46\$ and 3.38\$ respectively. These findings suggest that teachers frequently apply inclusive instructional strategies such as the use of visual aids, step by step instructions, task modification, and peer assisted learning. These strategies are essential components of inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes adapting instruction to ensure that all learners

particularly those with disabilities can participate meaningfully in classroom activities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2021).

These practices represent essential elements of inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes adapting instruction to accommodate diverse learning needs. Teachers' ability to modify lessons and provide flexible learning opportunities indicates that inclusive instructional practices are already being integrated into classroom teaching within the Division of Naga City.

However, teachers reported slightly lower confidence in implementing strategies that require specialized expertise, such as individualized learning plans, disability specific instructional interventions, and assistive technologies. This finding suggests that while teachers possess foundational knowledge of inclusive teaching, additional professional training is needed to strengthen their capacity to support learners with more complex needs.

Instructional skills for diverse learners.

The findings of the study revealed that both Special Education (SPED) and General Education teachers in the City of Naga, Department of Education division, demonstrate moderately high instructional skills in addressing the needs of diverse learners, with mean scores of 3.03 and 3.10 respectively. Although SPED teachers are expected to have a stronger background in handling learners with disabilities, the results interestingly show that General Education teachers report slightly higher overall competence. Both groups exhibit strong skills in essential inclusive practices such as adjusting lessons to meet diverse needs, managing classroom behavior, collaborating with support staff, utilizing available or improvised materials, and creating welcoming classroom environments. These competencies indicate that teachers are generally capable of fostering inclusive learning spaces and adapting instruction to support a range of learner abilities.

The moderate mean scores indicate that teachers are developing the skills necessary for inclusive classrooms but require further support, particularly in specialized areas such as functional behavior assessment, disability-specific pedagogy, and understanding of referral procedures. The slight edge in competency among General Education teachers further

suggests an increasing readiness to take part in inclusive education initiatives, which echoes similar findings from national and international studies. Studies by Florian & Black-Hawkins (2021) in the Philippines, and Sharma et al. (2021) internationally confirm that teachers often feel confident in general inclusive strategies but still require targeted professional development to handle disability-specific challenges effectively.

Use of Classroom Management and Assessment Strategies Appropriate for Inclusive Settings

The result indicates that both Special Education (SPED) and General Education teachers in the City of Naga Division demonstrate moderately high self-rated competence in applying classroom management and assessment strategies appropriate for inclusive settings, with overall mean scores of 3.0\$ and 3.1\$ respectively. These results suggest that teachers generally feel capable of employing varied assessment methods, managing classroom behavior, supporting diverse learners, and collaborating with families and other professionals. Notably, General Education teachers rated themselves slightly higher in most items, including providing alternate explanations, gauging student comprehension, and engaging parents implying a growing readiness among them to participate actively in inclusive education initiatives.

However, slightly lower ratings in areas such as adapting assessments for students with disabilities and managing physically aggressive behaviors indicate that both groups may still require targeted professional development. These findings align with the work of Florian & Spratt (2013), who emphasized that teachers often feel more confident with general pedagogical strategies than with specialized tasks required for inclusion.

Similarly, studies by Florian & Black-Hawkins (2021) found that while teachers show positive attitudes toward inclusion, gaps remain in specific competencies such as individualized assessment adaptations and behavior management for students with complex needs. Overall, the results show that the City of Naga teachers possess foundational readiness for inclusive classrooms, but continuous capacity-

building is essential to ensure they can fully support learners with special needs.

Significant Relationship Between the Teacher's Attitudes and Their Level of Competence in Inclusive Education

Relationship between teachers' attitude and knowledge towards inclusive learning.

In this study there is a strong positive relationship between teachers' attitudes and their knowledge of inclusive learning in the Division of Naga City. The regression equation $y = 1.555x - 1.03$ and the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.7452$ indicate that approximately 74.52% of the variance in teachers' knowledge can be explained by their attitudes toward inclusion. Converting this to a Pearson correlation coefficient yields $r \approx 0.86$, which reflects a strong positive correlation. This means that teachers who display more positive attitudes toward inclusive education also tend to have higher levels of knowledge about inclusive instructional strategies, assessment modifications, and behavioral support practices. However, teachers with less favorable attitudes toward inclusion possess comparatively lower knowledge about handling diverse learners. This pattern emphasizes that teachers' belief systems significantly influence their professional competence and willingness to apply inclusive teaching practices.

The implications of this relationship are substantial for teacher competence and preparedness. A strong positive attitude enhances teachers' openness to professional learning, their confidence in addressing diverse learner needs, and their willingness to implement differentiated strategies all of which are essential in inclusive classrooms. This aligns with the findings of Galaterou & Antoniou (2017), who reported that positive teacher attitudes are linked to greater acceptance and effective implementation of inclusive practices. Similarly, Florian & Spratt (2013) stressed that teacher attitudes heavily influence their self-efficacy and readiness to engage in inclusive education, suggesting that more positive attitudes lead to stronger instructional competence and classroom preparedness. Local studies in the Philippine context, such as those by Brown (2025) also support these findings by showing that

teachers with favorable attitudes tend to demonstrate higher levels of knowledge and more effective inclusive teaching behaviors.

Furthermore, the strong correlation observed in this figure highlights the essential role of teacher attitudes in shaping their knowledge and instructional capacity in inclusive education. It suggests that strengthening teachers' attitudes through professional development, administrative support, and exposure to inclusive practices can directly enhance their readiness and competence to teach learners with special needs. This relationship underscores the importance of prioritizing teacher mindset in policy-making and training initiatives aimed at improving inclusive education in the Division of Naga City.

Relationship between teachers' attitude and its instructional skill towards inclusive learning. The upward-sloping trend line, along with an R^2 value of 0.7669\$, suggests a strong positive relationship between the two variables. This means that as teachers demonstrate more positive attitudes toward inclusion, their instructional skills such as adapting lessons, modifying activities, and managing diverse learners also tend to increase. The regression equation ($y = 1.55x - 1.0567$) further indicates that improvements in instructional skill are associated with meaningful increases in teachers' attitudes toward inclusive practices. In practical terms, teachers who believe in the benefits and feasibility of inclusion are more likely to invest the effort needed to refine skillful strategies for teaching learners with special needs. This finding aligns with several studies. For example, Galaterou & Antoniou (2017) emphasize that positive teacher attitudes significantly predict the effective use of instructional strategies in inclusive settings. Similarly, Florian & Spratt (2013) found that teachers with favorable perceptions of inclusion tend to exhibit stronger competencies in differentiating instruction and managing students with disabilities. Moreover, Philippine-based research (Rogayan Jr et al. 2022) reports that attitudes influence willingness to implement accommodations, particularly in public-school settings where resources may be limited. The similarity across these studies suggests that attitude serves as a foundational factor from which instructional capability grows.

The implications of this relationship are substantial for teacher competency development. A strong positive correlation indicates that improving teachers' attitudes through professional development, exposure to successful inclusion models, and supportive school leadership can simultaneously strengthen their instructional practices. This means that competence in inclusive pedagogy is not solely technical but also shaped by beliefs, openness, and commitment. For the City of Naga Division, this highlights the importance of continuous trainings, mentoring, and inclusive school culture to sustain both attitude improvement and instructional enhancement. When teachers hold positive attitudes, they become more prepared, more confident, and more capable of addressing the learning needs of diverse students, ultimately contributing to a more effective and equitable inclusive education program.

Relationship between teachers' attitude and the use of classroom management towards inclusive learning. The result of the study illustrated a strong positive relationship between teachers' attitude toward inclusive learning and their use of classroom management strategies in the City of Naga Division, Cebu. The Pearson correlation represented by $R^2 = 0.8985$ indicates that approximately 90% of the variance in teachers' attitudes can be explained by their classroom management practices. The slope ($y = 1.0929x$) further shows that as teachers' effective classroom management increases, their attitude toward inclusive education improves correspondingly. This suggests that teachers who feel confident in organizing the learning environment, addressing behavioral concerns, and implementing structured routines tend to view inclusive education more favorably. When educators feel equipped to handle diverse learners through appropriate strategies such as differentiated behavior supports, clear routines, and adaptive instructional techniques their attitudes become more positive, reflecting greater openness and motivation to implement inclusive practices.

The results imply that strengthening classroom management skills is a key component in enhancing teachers' overall competencies toward inclusive learning. Teachers who lack training or confidence in managing diverse

classrooms may develop less favorable attitudes, affecting their willingness to accommodate learners with disabilities. This aligns with the findings of Florian & Spratt (2013) who emphasized that teachers with higher classroom efficacy and behavior-management skills demonstrate more positive attitudes toward inclusion. Similarly, a study by Mohamed Emam and Al-Mahdy (2020) found that effective classroom management reduced teachers' stress and improved their perceptions of inclusive settings. In the Philippine context, research by Rogayan Jr et al., (2022) highlighted that teacher with strong behavioral and instructional management strategies were more prepared and more accepting of inclusive education reforms. Overall, the strong correlation seen in the City of Naga indicates that developing teachers' classroom management competencies through targeted professional development can significantly enhance their readiness and positive disposition toward inclusive learning environments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that secondary schools in the Division of Naga City demonstrate partial alignment with the policy provisions of DepEd Order No. 44, s. 2021 on the provision of educational programs and services for learners with disabilities.

Teachers generally exhibit moderately positive attitudes toward inclusive education and moderate to high levels of competence in implementing inclusive instructional practices, indicating that the fundamental principles of inclusive education are already recognized and practiced within the schools. The presence of differentiated instructional strategies, collaborative practices among teachers, and supportive classroom environments reflects progress toward the policy's goal of ensuring equitable access to education for learners with disabilities.

However, the findings also reveal several areas where policy implementation remains incomplete. Teachers reported limited participation in specialized inclusive education training and expressed lower confidence in areas such as disability-specific assessment, behavioral intervention, and referral procedures.

These gaps suggest that although inclusive education is being practiced, schools may still require stronger institutional support systems to fully meet the standards outlined in the policy guidelines.

The strong positive relationship identified between teachers' attitudes and their competence further emphasizes that improving teacher capacity through sustained professional development can significantly enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education programs. Strengthening teachers' knowledge, instructional skills, and classroom management strategies will not only improve their professional competence but also reinforce positive attitudes toward inclusion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Strengthen Continuous Professional Development on Inclusive Education. The Schools Division Office should intensify and institutionalize continuous professional development programs focusing on differentiated instruction, inclusive assessment, behavior management, disability-specific interventions, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Priority should be given to practical, classroom-based training that enables teachers to effectively address the diverse needs of learners in inclusive settings.
2. Establish Structured SPED-General Education Mentoring Programs. Schools should develop formal mentoring and coaching systems that encourage collaboration between SPED and General Education teachers. Such partnerships may facilitate the sharing of specialized knowledge, classroom strategies, and best practices, thereby improving teachers' confidence and competence in implementing inclusive education.
3. Investigate Factors Influencing Teachers' Perceived Competence. Since General Education teachers reported slightly higher competence in some domains despite having less specialized training than SPED teachers, future professional development initiatives

should explore possible explanations for this finding. One possible hypothesis is that recent exposure to MATATAG curriculum orientations, inclusive education seminars, and learner-centered teaching approaches may have enhanced General Education teachers' confidence in implementing inclusive practices. Another possibility is that the difference reflects variations between perceived competence and actual classroom performance. Further research should therefore include classroom observations and performance-based assessments to validate self-reported competencies.

4. Enhance Specialized Training for SPED and General Education Teachers. Teacher development programs should include specialized modules on individualized education planning (IEP), disability-specific instructional strategies, assistive technologies, positive behavior support, transition planning, and inclusive assessment practices. These competencies were identified as areas requiring further strengthening among both teacher groups.
5. Strengthen Administrative and Institutional Support Systems. School administrators should provide adequate instructional resources, assistive technologies, professional learning communities, and scheduled collaborative planning time to support inclusive education implementation. Administrative support is essential in translating positive teacher attitudes into effective classroom practices.
6. Promote Evidence-Based Monitoring and Evaluation of Inclusive Education Programs. Schools and division offices should establish mechanisms for regularly monitoring teachers' competencies, training needs, and implementation challenges. Such monitoring systems can guide the development of responsive interventions and strategic capacity-building programs.
7. Expand Future Research on Inclusive Education Implementation. Future

studies should involve larger samples from multiple school divisions and include additional stakeholders such as school administrators, parents, guidance counselors, and learners with disabilities. Mixed-methods approaches that incorporate interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations are recommended to provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive education practices and teacher competence.

8. Implement the Proposed Strategic Training Program. The strategic training program developed from this study should be pilot-tested and evaluated within the Division of Naga City. Its effectiveness in improving teachers' attitudes, instructional competence, classroom management skills, and inclusive teaching practices should be systematically assessed to determine its potential for wider implementation across other school divisions.

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