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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teachers' Competence in the Implementation of Instructional Materials in Facilitating Inclusive Education

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| ABSTRACT

During the academic year of 2023-2024, this research examined teachers' competence in utilizing instructional materials to support inclusive education at Cogon Elementary School in Tagbilaran City. Using a descriptive-correlational approach, information was gathered from 40 teachers through a survey based on Parson's (2017) Structural-Functionalist Theory and Ostroff et al.'s (2012) study. The demographic characteristics showed that the majority of participants were women, between 36 and 40 years old, had completed some postgraduate studies, and had been teaching for a minimum of 13 years. The research looked at five main areas of expertise: special education laws and policies, proficiency in assessments and individualized education programs (IEPs), comprehension of various disabilities and learning needs, evidence-based teaching strategies, and awareness of inclusive practices. Findings showed that participants exhibited strong knowledge of special education laws and policies (average score 2.70), yet showed only intermediate understanding in the areas of assessment and IEP development (average score 2.01). Teachers showed a strong preference for visual aids (mean score 3.03) and manipulatives (mean score 2.93) in their instructional approaches, but expressed less confidence in using assistive technology devices (mean score 2.29) and augmentative and alternative communication systems (mean score 2.26). Examination of the data using Pearson's correlation coefficient showed no significant correlation ($r = 0.029$, $p = 0.858$) between teachers' competence levels and their implementation of instructional materials in inclusive settings. The research found that focused efforts were necessary to improve teachers' abilities in certain aspects of inclusive education, specifically in utilizing specialized instructional materials and technologies. Suggestions comprised of holding workshops for professional development, promoting joint lesson planning between general and special education teachers, introducing peer observation and feedback mechanisms, and enhancing resource distribution to support teachers in building better inclusive classrooms. These results impact teacher training programs and school policies in Philippine elementary schools, highlighting the importance of ongoing professional development and support for implementing inclusive education practices.

| KEYWORDS

Inclusive education, teacher competence, instructional materials, special education, individualized education program (iep)

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

Inclusive education has become a major educational priority because it promotes equitable access to learning opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities (Finkelstein et al., 2019). In this context, teachers play a central role in making inclusion effective through their daily classroom practices. Teacher competence is essential because it shapes how instruction is adapted, how diverse needs are addressed, and how participation is encouraged among learners (Majoko, 2019). Teachers who are competent in inclusive education are more capable of responding to learner diversity through flexible strategies and support systems (Kuyini et al., 2016). Without such competence, the implementation of inclusion may remain limited in practice.

A strong foundation in special education laws and policies is necessary because teachers must understand the rights of learners and the responsibilities of schools in inclusive settings (Makarova et al., 2021). Knowledge of these legal and policy frameworks helps teachers align their classroom practices with inclusive principles and educational standards (Lecitivo & Paita, 2024). In addition, competence in assessment is important because inclusive teaching requires teachers to identify students' strengths, needs, and learning barriers accurately. Expertise in individualized education programs also supports the planning of targeted instruction and interventions for learners with varying disabilities and learning needs (Mngo & Mngo, 2018). These competencies make inclusive education more organized, lawful, and responsive to individual learners.

Competence in understanding different disabilities and learning needs is also critical because inclusive classrooms consist of learners with varied cognitive, behavioral, sensory, and physical characteristics (Brown et al., 2022). When teachers understand these differences, they can provide more suitable and responsive learning experiences (Sanir et al., 2022). Evidence-based teaching strategies and interventions are equally important because they help teachers address academic and behavioral needs more effectively (Finkelstein et al., 2019). Teachers who use inclusive and active teaching methods are more likely to foster participation and socio-emotional support in diverse classrooms (Stromholt et al., 2023). Awareness of inclusive practices therefore goes beyond attitude alone and includes practical knowledge that allows teachers to translate inclusion into everyday instruction (Lecitivo & Paita, 2024).

Instructional materials are essential in facilitating inclusive education because they support access, participation, and comprehension among learners with diverse needs (Kuyini et al., 2016). Visual aids and manipulatives help make abstract concepts more concrete and understandable for many learners (Sanir et al., 2022). Adaptive books and sensory materials are likewise helpful because they respond to differences in reading ability, sensory processing, and engagement (Marchan et al., 2025). The use of individualized education programs also serves as an instructional guide for planning accommodations and support for specific learners (Majoko, 2019). Thus, instructional materials are not only classroom tools but also key supports in the actual delivery of inclusive education.

Assistive technology devices, adaptive tools, and augmentative and alternative communication systems further strengthen inclusion by helping learners overcome barriers in communication, movement, and participation (Taylor et al., 2020). These technologies allow students with disabilities to access the curriculum in ways that match their needs and abilities (Zilz & Pang, 2019). Research also shows that integrated assistive tools can improve the participation of learners with motor and speech impairments in classroom activities (Encarnação et al., 2017). However, many teachers still report limited competence and experience in implementing assistive technology effectively (Park & Manning, 2023). This suggests that the success of inclusive education depends not only on the availability of materials, but also on teachers' knowledge and confidence in using them (Crider et al., 2014).

Despite the growing number of studies on inclusive education, there remains limited local evidence on teachers' competence in implementing instructional materials in specific public elementary school settings such as Cogon Elementary School. Existing studies have examined inclusive teaching practices, teacher preparedness, and resource challenges in broader settings. However, fewer studies focus specifically on the level of teacher competence across legal knowledge, assessment, disability awareness, interventions, and inclusive practices within one local school context. There is also limited evidence on which varieties of instructional materials are actually available and used in facilitating inclusive education at the elementary level. This gap makes it necessary to conduct a school-based inquiry that can generate context-specific findings for Cogon Elementary School.

In response to this gap, the present study will assess the teachers' competence in the implementation of instructional materials in facilitating inclusive education at Cogon Elementary School. It will examine competence in special education laws and policies, assessment and individualized education programs, understanding of disabilities and learning needs, evidence-based strategies, and awareness of inclusive practices. It will also identify the instructional materials used, including visual aids, manipulatives, adaptive books, assistive technology devices, sensory materials, AAC systems, adaptive tools, and individualized education programs. The findings may help guide training, resource provision, and school-based interventions that can strengthen inclusive teaching practices (Park & Manning, 2023). In this way, the study seeks to contribute to the improvement of inclusive education practices in the local school setting.

Literature Review

Teachers' competence is widely recognized as a key factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Research shows that teachers need competence in adapting instruction, conducting assessment, managing diverse classrooms, and responding to the needs of learners with disabilities. For example, (Majoko, 2019) found that screening and assessment, differentiation of instruction, classroom and behavior management, and collaboration are essential competencies for inclusive education. Similarly, (Kuyini et al., 2016) reported that teachers considered adapting instructional materials and behavior management among the most important skills in inclusive classrooms. In another study, (Mngo & Mngo, 2018) found that teachers with training in special

education were more supportive of inclusion and felt better prepared to teach students with disabilities. These findings suggest that teacher competence is central to translating inclusive policies into effective classroom practice.

Instructional materials are also essential in facilitating inclusive education because they help address the diverse needs, abilities, and learning styles of students. Studies indicate that the use of appropriate materials such as visual aids, manipulatives, adaptive books, sensory resources, and assistive technologies can improve access to learning and participation in inclusive classrooms. (Finkelstein et al., 2019) emphasized that instructional support is one of the major themes of high-quality inclusive teaching practices. In relation to assistive technology, (Taylor et al., 2020) explained that teachers need to understand how assistive technology can be embedded in classroom instruction to improve curriculum access for students with disabilities. Likewise, (Zilz & Pang, 2019) concluded that assistive technology benefits learners in inclusive settings, although many teachers are still not adequately prepared to use advanced technologies effectively. This body of literature shows that instructional materials are not only supportive tools, but essential components of effective inclusive teaching.

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach utilizing a descriptive correlational design to investigate teachers' competence in the implementation of instructional materials in facilitating inclusive education. The descriptive component was used to determine the current level of teachers' competence and the extent of their use of instructional materials, while the correlational aspect examined the relationship between these variables. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive correlational design is appropriate for describing existing conditions and exploring relationships without manipulating variables. Similarly, Best and Khan (2007) emphasized that descriptive research focuses on interpreting present conditions, behaviors, and emerging patterns. The study was conducted at Cogon Elementary School in Tagbilaran City, Bohol, Philippines. The respondents of the study were the teachers of the said school, selected through appropriate sampling techniques. A structured survey questionnaire was used as the primary data-gathering instrument to measure teachers' competence and their use of various instructional materials in inclusive education. This research also adopted the Systems Modeling Approach, which views the teaching-learning process as an interconnected system where teacher competence and instructional materials influence inclusive education outcomes. Data collection was conducted through the distribution of questionnaires, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. For data analysis, descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean were used to describe the variables. Pearson-r correlation was employed to determine the significant relationship between teachers' competence and their implementation of instructional materials. The findings of the study provided insights into current practices and served as a basis for improving inclusive education strategies.

Results

Table 1. Special Education Laws and Policies

Special Education Laws and Policies:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I have a thorough knowledge of laws and policies related to special education.	2.43	Competent
2. I can articulate the rights and protections afforded to students with disabilities.	1.95	Less Competent
3. Individuals with disabilities deserved to be educated.	3.20	Competent
4. Quality and relevant education should be offered to individuals with special needs.	3.23	Competent
Composite Mean	2.70	Competent

The data in Table 1 indicate that teachers are generally competent in terms of Special Education Laws and Policies, as reflected by the composite mean of 2.70. The highest-rated items show that teachers believe individuals with disabilities deserve education (3.20) and should receive quality and relevant instruction (3.23). However, lower ratings in articulating rights and protections (1.95) suggest gaps in deeper legal understanding. Overall, while teachers demonstrate positive attitudes, there is a need to strengthen their knowledge of specific laws and policies

Table 2. Assessments and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

Expertise in Assessments and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I am skilled in conducting various assessments to evaluate students' strengths and needs.	2.18	Less Competent
2. I am knowledgeable about the different components of an IEP.	1.95	Less Competent
3. I am knowledgeable including goal setting, accommodations, and modifications.	1.95	Less Competent
4. I can develop and implement implemented individualized educational plans for their students.	1.95	Less Competent
Composite Mean	2.01	Less Competent

The data in Table 2 reveal that teachers are generally **less competent** in terms of expertise in assessments and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), as indicated by the composite mean of 2.01. All indicators received low ratings, particularly in knowledge of IEP components, goal setting, accommodations, and implementation (1.95). This suggests that teachers may lack sufficient training and experience in designing and applying individualized plans. The findings highlight a need for professional development to enhance teachers' skills in assessment and IEP preparation.

Table 3. Different Disabilities and Learning Needs

Different Disabilities and Learning Needs:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I have a solid understanding of the different disabilities I may encounter in their classrooms.	2.30	Fairly Competent
2. I have a solid understanding in autism, learning disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or emotional disturbances.	2.30	Fairly Competent
3. I am aware of the characteristics, challenges, and appropriate instructional strategies to support students with disabilities.	2.45	Fairly Competent
4. I can handle children with different disabilities.	2.35	Fairly Competent
Composite Mean	2.35	Fairly Competent

The data in Table 3 indicate that teachers are fairly competent in understanding different disabilities and learning needs, with a composite mean of 2.35. All indicators fall within the fairly competent range, suggesting a moderate level of knowledge and awareness. Teachers show some understanding of various conditions such as autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities, as well as their characteristics and challenges. However, the results also imply that their competence is not yet fully developed, highlighting the need for further training to enhance their ability to effectively handle diverse learners.

Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies and Interventions:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I am well-versed in evidence-based teaching strategies.	2.25	Less Competent
2. I apply interventions that have been proven implemented for students with disabilities.	2.33	Less Competent
3. I apply differentiated instruction, multisensory techniques, assistive technology, or behavior management strategies.	2.28	Less Competent

4. I use positive reinforcement strategies in dealing children with disabilities.	3.03	Competent
Composite Mean	2.47	Less Competent

Table 4. Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies and Interventions

The data in Table 4 show that teachers are generally less competent in applying evidence-based teaching strategies and interventions, with a composite mean of 2.47. Most indicators received low ratings, particularly in being well-versed in strategies (2.25), applying proven interventions (2.33), and using differentiated or multisensory approaches (2.28). However, teachers demonstrated competence in using positive reinforcement strategies (3.03), indicating strength in behavior management. Overall, the findings suggest a need for further training to improve teachers' use of effective instructional strategies for learners with disabilities.

Table 5. Awareness of Inclusive Practices

Awareness of Inclusive Practices:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I have a deep understanding of inclusive practices and be able to implement collaborate with general education teachers.	2.78	Competent
2. I see to it that I create inclusive learning environments.	2.68	Competent
3. I can modify instruction, materials, and assessments.	2.78	Competent
4. I manage to meet the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms.	2.48	Less Competent
Composite Mean	2.68	Competent

The data in Table 5 indicate that teachers are generally competent in their awareness of inclusive practices, as shown by the composite mean of 2.68. Teachers demonstrated competence in understanding inclusive practices, creating inclusive learning environments, and modifying instruction, materials, and assessments, all with relatively high mean scores. However, a lower rating in meeting the diverse needs of students (2.48) suggests some challenges in fully addressing classroom diversity. Overall, while teachers show good awareness, further support is needed to strengthen practical implementation in inclusive settings.

Table 6. Awareness of Visual Aids

Visual aids:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I use visual aids such as charts, diagrams, pictures, and graphic organizers.	2.93	Preferred
2. I used to illustrate concepts and support understanding.	3.08	Preferred
3. Visuals are used especially for students with learning disabilities or visual impairments.	3.18	Preferred
4. I develop colorful and interactive multisensory teaching materials.	2.95	Preferred
Composite Mean	3.03	Preferred

The data in Table 6 reveal that visual aids are highly preferred by teachers in facilitating inclusive education, as reflected by the composite mean of 3.03. All indicators received high ratings, indicating consistent use of visual materials such as charts, diagrams, and graphic organizers. Teachers also frequently use visuals to support understanding, particularly for students with learning disabilities or visual impairments. Additionally, the development of colorful and interactive multisensory materials is evident. Overall, the findings suggest that visual aids are widely utilized and valued as effective instructional tools in inclusive classrooms.

Table 7. Manipulation

Manipulations	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I used manipulative materials for students with learning disabilities.	2.95	Preferred
2. I use counting blocks, tangrams, or fraction tiles.	2.73	Preferred
3. I help students engage with abstract concepts.	2.98	Preferred
4. I provide a hands-on approach to learning.	3.05	Preferred
Composite Mean	2.93	Preferred

The data in Table 7 indicate that the use of manipulative materials is **preferred** by teachers in supporting inclusive education, as reflected by the composite mean of 2.93. All indicators received favorable ratings, showing that teachers regularly use materials such as counting blocks, tangrams, and fraction tiles. These tools help students better understand abstract concepts through hands-on learning experiences. Additionally, the high rating for providing a hands-on approach (3.05) suggests that teachers value active engagement. Overall, manipulative materials are widely utilized as effective instructional tools in inclusive classrooms.

Table 8. Adaptive Books

Adapted books:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I use adapted books that are modified to meet the individual needs of students.	2.80	Preferred
2. I let my students read adapted books.	2.95	Preferred
3. I guide my students on how to read the adapted books.	3.05	Preferred
4. I require parents and significant others to support students in reading using adapted books.	2.95	Preferred
Composite Mean	2.94	Preferred

The data in Table 8 show that adapted books are preferred by teachers as instructional materials in inclusive education, with a composite mean of 2.94. All indicators received high ratings, indicating that teachers actively use adapted books to meet the individual needs of learners. Teachers also guide students in reading and encourage parental support to reinforce learning at home. The highest rating (3.05) highlights teachers' active role in assisting students during reading activities. Overall, adapted books are considered effective tools in supporting diverse learners in inclusive classrooms.

Table 9. Assistive Technology Devices

Assistive technology devices:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I utilize various assistive technology tools.	2.95	Preferred
2. I use a lot of devices depending on students' needs.	2.30	Less Preferred
3. I use devices like speech-to-text software or text-to-speech software.	1.95	Less Preferred
4. I use communication boards, or specialized apps on tablets to meet the individual needs of the students.	1.95	Less Preferred
Composite Mean	2.29	Preferred

The data in Table 9 indicate that assistive technology devices are generally preferred, with a composite mean of 2.29. Teachers show moderate use of assistive tools (2.95), suggesting some level of familiarity. However, lower ratings in using a variety of devices (2.30), speech-to-text or text-to-speech software (1.95), and communication boards or specialized apps (1.95) reveal limited application of more advanced technologies. This implies that while teachers recognize the importance of assistive technology, there is a need for further training and access to enhance its effective use in inclusive classrooms.

Table 10. Sensory Materials

Sensory materials:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I require sensory materials or activities to enhance their learning experience.	2.48	Less Preferred
2. I use items like fidget toys, sensory bins, weighted blankets, or noise-canceling headphones.	2.55	Preferred
3. I use multisensory teaching materials to motivate my students.	2.60	Preferred
4. Multisensory materials are used to sustain attention and to deepen the students' understanding of the concepts.	2.55	Preferred
Composite Mean	2.54	Preferred

The data in Table 10 show that sensory materials are generally preferred by teachers, as indicated by the composite mean of 2.54. Most indicators received favorable ratings, particularly in using multisensory materials to motivate students (2.60) and sustain attention and deepen understanding (2.55). Teachers also reported using items such as fidget toys and sensory tools (2.55). However, the lower rating on requiring sensory activities (2.48) suggests that their use may not be consistent. Overall, sensory materials are recognized as helpful tools in enhancing inclusive learning environments.

Table 11. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) System

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I use AAC systems to support students who have difficulties with verbal communication.	2.13	Less Preferred
2. I use communication boards.	2.28	Less Preferred
3. I use communication devices.	2.58	Preferred
4. I use sign language materials.	2.05	Less Preferred
Composite Mean	2.26	Less Preferred

The data in Table 11 indicate that the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems is generally less preferred by teachers, as reflected by the composite mean of 2.26. Most indicators received low ratings, particularly in using AAC systems (2.13), communication boards (2.28), and sign language materials (2.05). Only the use of communication devices (2.58) was rated as preferred, suggesting limited familiarity with certain tools. Overall, the findings imply that teachers may lack sufficient training or resources in AAC systems, highlighting the need for capacity-building in this area.

Table 12. Adaptive Tools

Adaptive tools:	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I use various adaptive tools to assist students with physical disabilities.	2.35	Less Preferred
2. I use adaptive writing utensils.	2.63	Preferred
3. I use specialized seating.	2.53	Preferred
4. I use adapted computer interfaces.	2.10	Less Preferred
Composite Mean	2.40	Less Preferred

The data in Table 12 indicate that the use of adaptive tools is generally less preferred by teachers, as reflected by the composite mean of 2.40. While adaptive writing utensils (2.63) and specialized seating (2.53) are considered preferred, other tools such as those for assisting physical disabilities (2.35) and adapted computer interfaces (2.10) received lower ratings. This suggests that teachers have limited use of a wider range of adaptive tools. Overall, the findings highlight a need for increased access and training in utilizing adaptive tools effectively in inclusive classrooms.

The data in Table 13 reveal that the use of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) is generally less preferred, as indicated by the composite mean of 2.40. Teachers showed lower ratings in using IEPs as legal documents (1.93) and in understanding instructional materials tailored to individual needs (2.15), suggesting limited application and knowledge. However, higher ratings in explaining the importance of IEPs to parents (2.80) and allowing review by colleagues or principals (2.73) indicate some level of collaboration and awareness. Overall, the findings highlight a need to strengthen teachers' competence in developing and implementing IEPs effectively.

Table 13. Individualized Education Program

Individualized education programs (IEPs):	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. I use IEPs as legal documents that outline the specific educational goals and strategies for students with disabilities.	1.93	Less Preferred
2. I understand specific instructional materials tailored to meet individual student needs.	2.15	Less Preferred
3. I explain to parents the importance of IEP.	2.80	Preferred
4. I let my colleagues or principal review my IEPs.	2.73	Preferred
Composite Mean	2.40	Less Preferred

Table 14. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Teacher's Competence and the Implementation of Instructional Materials in Facilitating Inclusive Education

Variables	Person r Value	P-Value	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
The Level of Teachers' Competence and the Implementation of Instructional Materials in Facilitating Inclusive Education	0.029249	0.85781	Accepted	Not Significant

The data in Table 14 indicate that there is no significant relationship between the level of teachers' competence and the implementation of instructional materials in facilitating inclusive education. This is supported by the computed Pearson r value of 0.029249, which shows a very weak correlation, and the p-value of 0.85781, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. As a result, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that teachers' competence does not significantly influence their use of instructional materials in this context.

Discussions

The findings of the study reveal that while teachers demonstrate a generally positive level of awareness and attitude toward inclusive education, there are noticeable gaps in their competence, particularly in technical and specialized areas. Teachers were found to be competent in understanding inclusive practices and basic special education principles; however, they showed lower competence in assessments, individualized education programs (IEPs), and evidence-based instructional strategies. This suggests that although teachers value inclusion and recognize the rights of learners with disabilities, they may lack the necessary training and practical skills to fully implement inclusive education effectively. These results imply that competence in inclusive education is not only about awareness but also about the ability to apply appropriate strategies and interventions in real classroom settings.

In terms of instructional materials, the study shows that teachers prefer and frequently use traditional and accessible resources such as visual aids, manipulatives, and adapted books, which are effective in supporting diverse learners. However, there is limited use of more specialized tools such as assistive technology devices, AAC systems, adaptive tools, and IEP-based materials. This indicates that teachers tend to rely on familiar materials rather than more advanced or specialized resources that require additional training or support. Furthermore, the absence of a significant relationship between teachers' competence and the implementation of instructional materials suggests that external factors such as availability of resources, institutional support, and training opportunities may influence instructional practices more than competence alone. These findings highlight the need for continuous professional development and improved access to inclusive education resources.

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Conclusion

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