

Special Needs Education (SNEd) Professional Development Trainings on Teachers' Instructional Competence and Inclusive Teaching Practices

Lerry M. Fillarca

University of Perpetual Help System DALTA, Graduate School of Education, Las Piñas City, Philippines

Fillarcalerry87@gmail.com

Date Submitted:

March 21, 2026

Date Accepted:

July 19, 2026

Date Published:

September 28, 2026

DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.23018152

ABSTRACT

This study examined Special Needs Education (SNED) professional development trainings in relation to teachers' instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices in public elementary schools in the MIMAROPA Region, Philippines. Using a quantitative descriptive-correlational design, the study involved 34 regular or permanent teachers selected through total enumeration of the accessible population. Data were gathered through an expert-validated, pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, independent-samples t-test, one-way analysis of variance, Pearson product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression at the .05 level of significance. Results showed Very High instructional competence in lesson planning and preparation ($M =$

3.64, $SD = 0.30$), instructional delivery ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.31$), classroom management ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.25$), and assessment practices ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.31$). Inclusive teaching practices were Very High in differentiated instruction ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.29$), inclusive strategies and accommodations ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.25$), and adaptation of teaching and learning materials ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.38$), while Filipino Sign Language and other communication strategies were rated High ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.38$). Instructional competence did not significantly differ by age, sex, teaching experience, or number of SNED-related trainings. A significant positive association was found between instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices ($r = .395$, $p = .021$). However, the number of SNED-related trainings did not significantly predict instructional competence ($R^2 = .000$, $p = .909$) or inclusive teaching practices ($R^2 = .071$, $p = .128$). The findings indicate the need to sustain existing strengths while strengthening communication accessibility and emphasizing the quality, relevance, and classroom application of professional learning rather than training frequency alone.

Keywords: *Special Needs Education (SNED), professional development, instructional competence, inclusive teaching practices, communication accessibility, inclusive education*

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a central international and national commitment because equitable participation in education requires schools to respond to learner diversity rather than place the burden of adaptation on learners. Sustainable Development Goal 4 calls for inclusive and equitable quality education, while the global inclusion agenda emphasizes the removal of barriers that exclude learners with disabilities from meaningful participation in schooling (United Nations, 2015; UNESCO, 2020). In the Philippines, this commitment is reinforced by Department of Education policies that position inclusive education as a strategy for increasing the

participation of children with special educational needs and by the long-term national vision for an inclusive and empowered society (Department of Education, 2009; National Economic and Development Authority, 2016).

Within this policy environment, teachers are the principal agents who translate inclusion from policy into day-to-day classroom practice. Their instructional competence is reflected in how effectively they plan lessons, deliver instruction, manage diverse classrooms, and assess learners with different needs. In inclusive settings, these competencies require more than routine pedagogical proficiency because teachers must anticipate learner variability, make appropriate accommodations, differentiate tasks, provide accessible feedback, and continuously adjust instruction. Shulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge framework underscores this integration of what teachers know with how they represent knowledge for particular learners, while Bandura's (1997) social cognitive perspective highlights the role of confidence, experience, and environmental support in professional action.

Professional development is therefore commonly used to strengthen teachers' preparedness for inclusive education. Effective professional learning is most useful when it is sustained, focused on instructional practice, connected to teachers' work, and reinforced through collaboration and feedback (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002). A meta-analysis by Donath et al. (2023) similarly showed that professional development can support the implementation of inclusive education, although the magnitude and durability of effects depend on program characteristics and implementation conditions. Virtual and school-based professional learning has also been used to extend teachers' knowledge of inclusive practices and provide more flexible access to specialized content (Montalbano et al., 2024).

Inclusive teaching practice itself is multidimensional. Differentiated instruction requires teachers to vary content, process, products, and learning conditions in response to learner readiness and needs (Tomlinson, 2014). Inclusive pedagogy also calls for approaches that expand learning opportunities for everyone rather than designing separate experiences only for those identified as having additional needs (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). For learners with hearing, language, or other communication barriers, accessibility is particularly important because communication is a prerequisite for participation, comprehension, and interaction. The global disability evidence base continues to identify communication and accessibility barriers as major constraints on educational participation (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011).

Despite the strong rationale for SNED professional development, participation in training does not automatically establish that new knowledge is translated into stronger instructional performance. Research on teacher efficacy and inclusive practice suggests that teachers' attitudes, efficacy, and contextual support interact with professional learning in shaping classroom implementation (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023; Sahli Lozano et al., 2024; Wüthrich & Sahli Lozano, 2025). The present study addressed the need for localized evidence in the MIMAROPA Region concerning whether the number of SNED-related trainings is associated with measurable differences in instructional competence and whether stronger competence corresponds with stronger inclusive teaching practices.

Accordingly, this study examined teachers' instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices in Special Needs Education and considered the role of selected profile variables and SNED-related professional development. Specifically, it described respondents by age, sex, years of teaching experience, and number of SNED-related trainings; assessed instructional competence in lesson planning and preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment; assessed inclusive practice in differentiated instruction, inclusive strategies and accommodations, communication strategies, and material adaptation; tested differences in instructional competence across teacher profiles; examined the association between instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices; and tested whether the number of SNED-related trainings predicted the two outcome variables. The study was intended to provide an evidence-based basis for sustaining effective inclusive practices and for targeting areas that still require professional reinforcement.

Literature Review

SNED Professional Development and Teacher Preparedness

Professional development in Special Needs Education is intended to build the knowledge, skills, and professional judgment required to respond to learner diversity. Strong professional learning is not defined only by attendance; it is characterized by content focus, active learning, collaboration, modeling of effective practice, coaching or expert support, feedback and reflection, and sufficient duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Guskey (2002) further argues that meaningful teacher change is linked to changes in classroom practice and evidence of improved outcomes, underscoring the distinction between participating in professional development and applying what has been learned.

Evidence specific to inclusion supports the value of structured professional learning but also cautions against treating training exposure as a simple proxy for competence. Donath et al. (2023) found that professional development can support inclusive education implementation, while Montalbano et al. (2024) demonstrated the potential of virtual professional development to build school-based professionals' knowledge of inclusive best practices. These findings suggest that access matters, but they also imply that content quality, relevance to actual classroom problems, opportunities for practice, and ongoing reinforcement are important for transforming professional learning into sustained instructional behavior.

Teacher profile variables are frequently examined alongside training because age and experience may shape professional routines, while efficacy and attitudes may affect teachers' willingness to adopt inclusive practice. However, evidence does not support a simple demographic explanation of inclusive competence. Sharma and Sokal (2015) showed that teacher education can influence beliefs about inclusion, and more recent work indicates that efficacy for inclusive practice is a meaningful construct across in-service, pre-service, and special education teacher groups (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023; Wüthrich & Sahli Lozano, 2025). Thus, professional preparedness is better understood as a product of learning opportunities, beliefs, experience, and organizational conditions rather than demographics alone.

Instructional Competence in Inclusive Education

Instructional competence in inclusive education encompasses lesson planning and preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment. These domains are interdependent: planning identifies goals and accommodations; delivery translates plans into accessible learning experiences; classroom management creates conditions for participation and belonging; and assessment generates evidence that guides subsequent instructional decisions. Shulman's (1986) concept of pedagogical content knowledge is particularly relevant because competent teaching requires transforming subject matter into forms that are understandable and appropriate for specific learners rather than merely possessing content knowledge.

Lesson planning and instructional delivery become more demanding when learner needs vary widely. Inclusive teachers must anticipate barriers, select accessible resources, explain ideas through multiple representations, provide individualized support, and adjust pacing or tasks in response to learner understanding. Differentiation provides one established approach to this work by intentionally modifying instruction according to readiness, interest, and learner profile (Tomlinson, 2014). Inclusive pedagogy extends this principle by encouraging teachers to expand ordinary classroom opportunities so that differences are addressed without unnecessarily marginalizing individual learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

Classroom management and assessment are equally central to competence because participation depends on safe, predictable, and responsive classroom conditions. Teachers need routines that support all learners, positive approaches to behavior, and monitoring practices that prevent exclusion from activities. Assessment must likewise allow learners multiple ways to demonstrate understanding and should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate disability-related needs. Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory helps explain why these competencies can strengthen through mastery experiences, observation of effective practice, supportive feedback, and repeated opportunities to apply strategies in authentic settings.

Inclusive Teaching Practices and Communication Accessibility

Inclusive teaching practices operationalize the principles of inclusion through concrete classroom decisions. In this study, they were examined through differentiated instruction, inclusive strategies and accommodations, communication strategies, and adaptation of teaching and learning materials. Differentiation and accommodations help reduce barriers by allowing teachers to vary tasks, time, grouping, supports, and modes of participation. These practices are consistent with the broader premise that inclusive education should increase participation in common learning environments rather than rely primarily on separate or remedial arrangements (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Tomlinson, 2014).

Communication accessibility is a particularly consequential aspect of inclusion. Learners who are deaf or hard of hearing, who have speech and language difficulties, or who use alternative communication systems require instructional interactions that are understandable and usable. The World Health Organization and World Bank (2011) identify communication barriers as a persistent dimension of disability-related exclusion, making accessible communication a core educational concern. In the Philippine SNED context, the use of Filipino Sign Language, visual supports, gestures, alternative and augmentative approaches, simplified language, and specialist collaboration can help teachers reduce communication barriers and increase meaningful classroom participation.

Inclusive practice also depends on teachers' perceived capacity to implement such strategies. The Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices literature shows that efficacy for collaboration, instruction, and behavior management can be measured reliably and is relevant to teachers' inclusive intentions and practices (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023). Cross-national evidence further indicates that attitudes and self-efficacy are associated with intentions to use inclusive practices, although their relationships vary across contexts (Sahli Lozano et al., 2024). These findings support the need to examine inclusive practices as a distinct outcome rather than assume that professional development attendance necessarily produces equivalent levels of implementation.

Instructional Competence, Inclusive Practice, and the Research Gap

Instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices are conceptually related but not identical. Competence describes teachers' capacity to plan, deliver, manage, and assess instruction, whereas inclusive practices describe the extent to which teachers use differentiated, accessible, and accommodating strategies in response to diversity. A teacher may possess strong general instructional skills yet still require specialized knowledge or resources to communicate effectively with particular learners. Conversely, sustained engagement with inclusive practice may strengthen teachers' broader instructional judgment by requiring continuous reflection, adaptation, and problem solving.

Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory and Shulman's (1986) pedagogical content knowledge framework jointly support this expected relationship. Mastery, observation, feedback, and supportive professional environments can strengthen teachers' beliefs and actions, while pedagogical content knowledge enables teachers to transform curriculum into accessible learning experiences. Professional development can contribute to both processes, but its influence depends on whether it provides relevant opportunities to develop and apply the knowledge required in practice. This helps explain why the quality and application of training may be more consequential than the simple number of sessions attended.

The empirical gap addressed by this study was therefore contextual and analytical. Limited localized evidence from the MIMAROPA Region simultaneously described teacher profile and SNED training exposure, assessed instructional competence and inclusive practice, tested differences across teacher groups, and examined whether training frequency predicted the two outcomes. The study responded to this gap through a quantitative analysis of an accessible population of SNED teachers. The conceptual framework below presents the original input-process-output logic used to organize these variables and the proposed practical output.

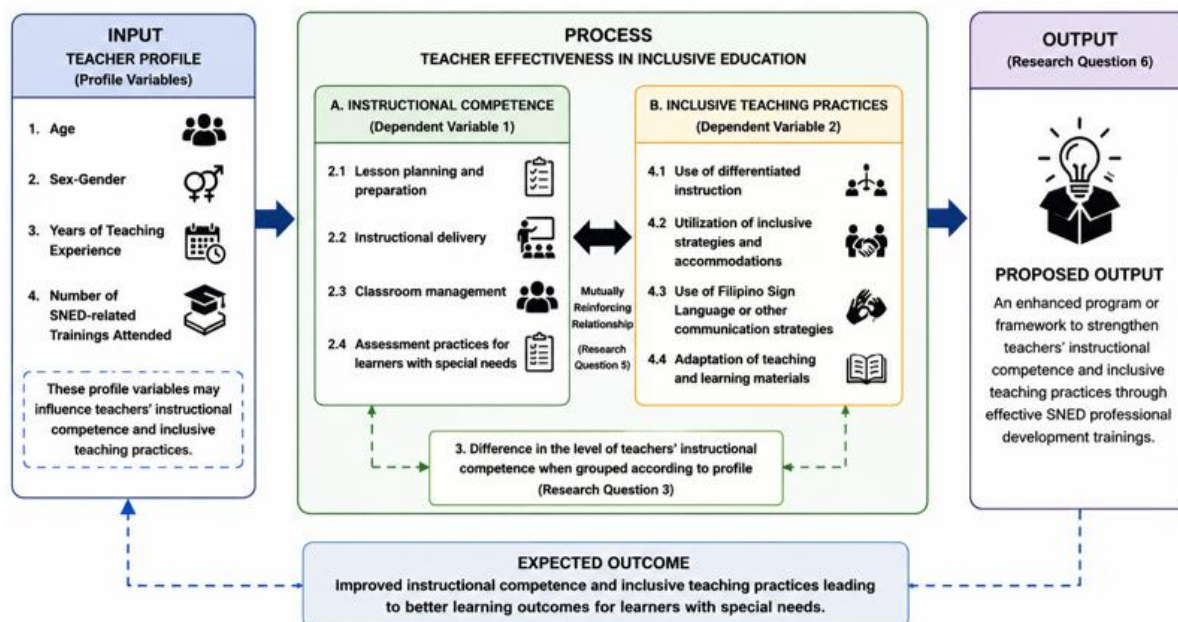


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational design with a comparative component. It examined naturally occurring variables without experimental manipulation and was appropriate for determining relationships among SNED professional development exposure, instructional competence, and inclusive teaching practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The design also permitted comparison of instructional competence across respondent profile categories. All data were numerical, and no qualitative interviews or thematic analysis were included. The study treated the number of SNED-related professional development trainings as the principal training-exposure indicator and instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices as the main outcome variables.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among public elementary schools implementing Special Needs Education programs in the MIMAROPA Region, Philippines. Guinbirayan Elementary School in Santa Fe, Romblon served as the researcher's institutional reference and coordination point, but respondents were not restricted to that school. Eligible teachers from different public elementary schools in the region participated through an online survey. This regional coverage provided perspectives from teachers working in varied school contexts while maintaining a common focus on inclusive and special needs education.

Participants and Sampling Technique

The accessible population consisted of SNED teachers in public elementary schools in the MIMAROPA Region who were reachable through the regional SNED teachers' communication group during data collection. Total enumeration was used: all accessible eligible teachers were invited, and 34 regular or permanent teachers completed the questionnaire and constituted the final study population. Participants were required to be assigned to SNED or directly handling learners with special educational needs, to have attended at least one SNED-related

professional development activity or have experience implementing inclusive education practices, to be actively teaching, and to provide voluntary consent. Teachers who did not meet the inclusion criteria or did not complete the questionnaire within the collection period were excluded.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-made structured questionnaire developed from the review of related literature, the study's conceptual framework, and expert consultation. Part I gathered age, sex, years of teaching experience, and number of SNED-related trainings attended. Part II measured instructional competence in lesson planning and preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment practices for learners with special needs. Part III measured inclusive teaching practices in differentiated instruction, inclusive strategies and accommodations, Filipino Sign Language or other communication strategies, and adaptation of teaching and learning materials. Items in Parts II and III used a four-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree).

Content validity was established through review by experts in inclusive education and educational measurement, who evaluated item clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives. The instrument was also pilot-tested with teachers who were not part of the final respondents. Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha with .70 as the minimum acceptable threshold. The reliability results supported use of the questionnaire in the main data collection.

Data Gathering Procedure

Before data collection, the researcher secured institutional permission and completed validation and pilot testing of the questionnaire. The finalized survey was administered online to qualified teachers using total enumeration of the accessible population. Data collection was organized over approximately three to four weeks, including permissions and instrument finalization, validation and pilot testing, survey administration, and retrieval/checking of responses. Completed questionnaires were reviewed for completeness and consistency, after which responses were coded, organized, and cleaned before statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

Data were processed in IBM SPSS Statistics version 28. Frequency counts and percentages described respondent profiles. Means and standard deviations summarized instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices. An independent-samples t-test was used for the two-group sex comparison, while one-way ANOVA was used for age, years of teaching experience, and number of SNED-related trainings. Pearson product-moment correlation assessed the association between instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices. Simple linear regression tested whether the number of SNED-related trainings predicted instructional competence and inclusive teaching practices. All inferential tests used an alpha level of .05.

Ethical Consideration

The study observed institutional and research ethics requirements. Permission and ethical clearance were secured before data gathering. Respondents received information about the purpose, procedures, expected duration, and potential risks or benefits of participation and provided informed consent. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could decline or withdraw without penalty. Responses were coded or anonymized, handled confidentially, and stored with access limited to authorized research personnel. Data handling was aligned with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), and identifiable information was retained only as long as necessary for the study and then disposed of securely.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. *Profile of the Respondents (N = 34)*

Variable	Category	f	%
Age	25–34	11	32.40
	35–44	5	14.70
	45–54	13	38.20
	55 and above	5	14.70
Sex	Male	6	17.60
	Female	28	82.40
Teaching experience	0–9 years	9	26.50
	10–19 years	8	23.50
	20–29 years	12	35.30
	30 years and above	5	14.70
SNED-related trainings	0–4	3	8.80
	5–9	7	20.60
	10 and above	24	70.60

The respondents were predominantly female (82.40%). The largest age group was 45–54 years (38.20%), followed by 25–34 years (32.40%). In terms of experience, 35.30% had taught for 20–29 years, while 26.50% had 0–9 years of experience. Training exposure was substantial: 70.60% reported attending 10 or more SNED-related professional development activities. The profile therefore reflects a predominantly female and generally experienced group with considerable exposure to SNED training.

These characteristics provide context but should not be interpreted as determinants of competence. Research on inclusion indicates that professional beliefs, efficacy, and learning opportunities may explain classroom practice more directly than demographic characteristics alone (Sharma & Sokal, 2015; Sahli Lozano et al., 2023). The high frequency of reported training participation also makes the later regression results especially important: if most respondents have substantial exposure, the number of trainings may show limited variation and may not capture the quality or classroom relevance of those experiences.

Teachers' Instructional Competence

Table 2. *Summary of Teachers' Instructional Competence*

Domain	M	SD	Interpretation
Lesson planning and preparation	3.64	0.30	Very High
Instructional delivery	3.56	0.31	Very High
Classroom management	3.87	0.25	Very High
Assessment practices	3.59	0.31	Very High

All four instructional competence domains were rated Very High. Classroom management obtained the highest domain mean ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.25$), followed by lesson planning and preparation ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.30$), assessment practices ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.31$), and instructional delivery ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.31$). At the item level, the strongest planning practice was selecting materials appropriate for learners with diverse abilities ($M = 3.82$), while preparing plans that address the needs of all learners, including those with special needs, was comparatively lower ($M = 3.38$). In classroom management, encouraging positive interactions among learners of different abilities received the highest item mean ($M = 3.94$).

The consistently high scores indicate that respondents perceived themselves as capable of planning, delivering, managing, and assessing instruction in inclusive settings. This pattern is consistent with Shulman's (1986) view that effective teaching depends on the integration of pedagogical judgment with knowledge of

learners, and with inclusive pedagogy's emphasis on extending ordinary learning opportunities to diverse learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The relatively lower means for planning that explicitly addresses all learners and for adjusting grading or evaluation criteria ($M = 3.32$) suggest that competence was strong overall but not uniform across every specialized aspect of inclusion.

The results should also be interpreted in light of the study's self-report design. Very High ratings represent respondents' reported practice rather than direct classroom observations. Nevertheless, the low standard deviations across the four domains show relatively consistent responses within the accessible population. Professional learning research suggests that sustained, practice-connected development is most likely to preserve and deepen such competence over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Guskey, 2002).

Inclusive Teaching Practices

Table 3. *Summary of Teachers' Inclusive Teaching Practices*

Domain	M	SD	Interpretation
Differentiated instruction	3.74	0.29	Very High
Inclusive strategies and accommodations	3.62	0.25	Very High
Filipino Sign Language/other communication strategies	3.12	0.38	High
Adaptation of teaching and learning materials	3.48	0.38	Very High

Inclusive practices were also rated strongly, but one domain showed a clear opportunity for further development. Differentiated instruction received the highest mean ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.29$), followed by inclusive strategies and accommodations ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.25$) and adaptation of teaching and learning materials ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.38$); all were interpreted as Very High. The use of Filipino Sign Language or other communication strategies was rated High rather than Very High ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.38$). Within that domain, collaboration with specialists to improve communication had the strongest item rating ($M = 3.29$), whereas direct use of Filipino Sign Language had the lowest ($M = 2.82$).

The high differentiated-instruction rating is consistent with the principle that inclusive teaching requires multiple pathways for participation and learning (Tomlinson, 2014). Likewise, strong ratings for accommodations and material adaptation align with inclusive pedagogy, which seeks to broaden what is ordinarily available to learners rather than respond only after barriers become evident (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). These patterns suggest that respondents reported routine use of flexible instructional approaches and accessible resources.

Communication strategies merit more focused attention because access to instruction depends on the ability of learners to understand and express meaning. The comparatively lower FSL score does not imply a general instructional deficit; instead, it identifies a specialized skill area that may require targeted practice, mentoring, collaboration with specialists, and context-appropriate communication supports. This interpretation is consistent with global evidence that communication barriers remain an important dimension of disability-related exclusion (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). It also supports professional learning that is targeted to specific classroom needs rather than merely increasing the number of training events.

Differences in Instructional Competence by Teacher Profile

Table 4. *Tests of Differences in Instructional Competence by Profile*

Grouping variable	Test	Statistic	p	Result
Age	One-way ANOVA	$F = .011$	.998	Not significant
Sex	Independent-samples t-test	$t = -.425$	.674	Not significant
Years of teaching experience	One-way ANOVA	$F = .072$	.974	Not significant
Number of SNED-related trainings	One-way ANOVA	$F = .317$	.730	Not significant

No statistically significant differences in instructional competence were found by age ($F = .011, p = .998$), sex ($t = -.425, p = .674$), years of teaching experience ($F = .072, p = .974$), or number of SNED-related trainings ($F = .317, p = .730$). The data therefore did not support the proposition that any of these profile groupings explained differences in instructional competence within the accessible population.

This finding is compatible with evidence that demographic characteristics are not sufficient explanations of inclusive teaching competence. Professional efficacy and beliefs can differ even among teachers with similar backgrounds, and training may influence practice through its relevance, application, and support rather than through attendance alone (Sahli Lozano et al., 2023; Wüthrich & Sahli Lozano, 2025). The absence of a training-count difference is particularly noteworthy because most respondents had already attended 10 or more SNED-related activities, suggesting that additional counts may not distinguish competence once substantial exposure has accumulated.

Relationship and Predictive Influence of SNED Trainings

Table 5. *Association and Regression Results*

Analysis	Statistic	r	p	Interpretation
Instructional competence ↔ inclusive teaching practices	Pearson r	.395	.021	Significant positive association
SNED trainings → instructional competence	Simple regression: $R^2 = .000$; $\beta = -.020$	—	.909	Not significant
SNED trainings → inclusive teaching practices	Simple regression: $R^2 = .071$; $\beta = -.266$	—	.128	Not significant

Instructional competence was positively and significantly associated with inclusive teaching practices ($r = .395, p = .021$). Thus, teachers who reported higher competence also tended to report stronger inclusive practices. The association was moderate in magnitude and should not be interpreted as causal. It nevertheless supports the conceptual premise that general instructional capability and inclusive implementation are complementary aspects of effective teaching. Shulman's (1986) framework helps explain this connection because teachers must transform knowledge into learner-responsive instruction, while Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between professional beliefs, actions, and environmental experiences.

The regression analyses, however, showed that the number of SNED-related trainings did not significantly predict instructional competence. The model accounted for essentially none of the variance in instructional competence ($R^2 = .000$), and the standardized coefficient was negligible ($\beta = -.020, p = .909$). Training count also did not significantly predict inclusive teaching practices ($R^2 = .071, \beta = -.266, p = .128$). These findings do not establish that professional development is unimportant. Rather, they show that the number of trainings attended, as measured in this study, was not an independent statistical predictor of the two outcomes.

This distinction is important for professional development planning. Research reviews emphasize that effective professional learning depends on features such as content focus, opportunities for active learning, collaboration, coaching, feedback, reflection, and sustained duration rather than attendance frequency alone (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Donath et al., 2023). The finding therefore favors a shift from counting seminars toward examining training quality, relevance, implementation support, and evidence of classroom application. It also supports an emphasis on continuous quality assurance and targeted communication accessibility, where the objective is to sustain already strong practice while addressing the domain with the clearest room for improvement.

CONCLUSION

The study found that the 34 SNED teachers who constituted the accessible population reported consistently Very High instructional competence in lesson planning and preparation, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment. Their inclusive teaching practices were likewise Very High in differentiated instruction, inclusive strategies and accommodations, and adaptation of teaching and learning materials. Communication strategies, including Filipino Sign Language and other specialized approaches, were positively implemented but received the comparatively lower High rating, identifying the clearest area for continued professional strengthening.

Instructional competence did not significantly differ across age, sex, teaching experience, or number of SNED-related trainings. At the same time, instructional competence was significantly and positively associated with inclusive teaching practices. This association indicates that stronger reported instructional competence tended to accompany stronger inclusive practice, but the correlational design does not support a causal conclusion. The number of SNED-related trainings also did not significantly predict either outcome, demonstrating that training frequency alone did not explain differences in competence or inclusive practice within this group.

Taken together, the findings support an approach to inclusive teacher development that sustains existing strengths while moving beyond training counts as a measure of professional growth. The study contributes localized evidence from the MIMAROPA Region showing that instructional competence and inclusive practice are interconnected and that communication accessibility warrants targeted reinforcement. Professional development efforts may therefore be more useful when they emphasize quality, relevance, practical application, coaching, reflection, and continuous quality assurance rather than simply increasing the number of activities attended.

Recommendation

Schools and educational leaders should sustain the high levels of instructional competence and inclusive practice reported by the respondents through regular peer observation, mentoring, collaborative planning, reflective conferences, and evidence-based monitoring. Professional support should include focused opportunities to practice inclusive assessment, accessible lesson design, and classroom adaptations so that existing strengths are maintained rather than treated as one-time achievements.

Targeted capacity building should be prioritized for communication accessibility, particularly the practical use of Filipino Sign Language and other communication approaches for learners with hearing, language, or communication needs. Such activities should include demonstration lessons, coaching, collaboration with specialists, visual communication supports, and opportunities for teachers to practice strategies in authentic classroom contexts. The purpose should be specialized reinforcement rather than broad remediation, because most other inclusive-practice domains were already rated Very High.

The Schools Division Offices, school heads, teacher-education institutions, and professional development providers should evaluate SNED training in terms of quality, relevance, application, and follow-through rather than attendance counts alone. Training programs should be linked to observed classroom needs, incorporate active practice and feedback, and include mechanisms for monitoring how new knowledge is translated into instruction. Curriculum and in-service programs should continue integrating differentiated instruction, accommodations, inclusive assessment, accessible communication, and adaptation of learning materials.

Future research should replicate the study in larger and more varied populations and examine additional factors such as teacher self-efficacy, leadership support, school climate, resource availability, attitudes toward inclusion, and the quality of professional development. Mixed-methods, longitudinal, observational, and intervention studies would help clarify how inclusive competence develops over time and whether targeted communication training produces measurable changes in practice. Including the perspectives of school leaders, parents, learners with special educational needs, and other stakeholders may also provide a more comprehensive view of inclusive education implementation.

References

- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2023). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
- Department of Education. (2009). *DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009: Inclusive education as strategy for increasing participation rate of children*. Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines.
- Donath, J. L., Lüke, T., Graf, E., Tran, U. S., & Götz, T. (2023). Does professional development effectively support the implementation of inclusive education? A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35, Article 30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09752-2>
- Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, 37(5), 813–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2010.501096>
- Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 8(3), 381–391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512>
- Montalbano, C., Lang, J., Coviello, J. C., McQueston, J. A., Hogan, J. A., Nissley-Tsiopinis, J., Ciotoli, F., & Buglione, F. (2024). Inclusive education virtual professional development: School-based professionals' knowledge of best practices. *Education Sciences*, 14(9), 1030. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14091030>
- National Economic and Development Authority. (2016). *AmBisyon Natin 2040*. Government of the Philippines.
- Sahli Lozano, C., Wüthrich, S., Baumli, N., Sharma, U., Loreman, T., & Forlin, C. (2023). Development and validation of a short form of the Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices Scale (TEIP-SF). *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 23(4), 375–388. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12607>
- Sahli Lozano, C., Wüthrich, S., Kullmann, H., Knickenberg, M., Sharma, U., Loreman, T., Romano, A., Avramidis, E., Woodcock, S., & Subban, P. (2024). How do attitudes and self-efficacy predict teachers' intentions to use inclusive practices? A cross-national comparison between Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, and Switzerland. *Exceptionality Education International*, 34(1), 17–41. <https://doi.org/10.5206/eei.v34i1.16803>
- Sharma, U., & Sokal, L. (2015). The impact of a teacher education course on pre-service teachers' beliefs about inclusion: An international comparison. *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, 15(4), 276–284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-3802.12043>
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X015002004>
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners* (2nd ed.). ASCD.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Global education monitoring report 2020: Inclusion and education—All means all*. UNESCO Publishing.
- United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. United Nations.
- Wüthrich, S., & Sahli Lozano, C. (2025). The attitudes to inclusion and Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices scales: Psychometric properties across Swiss in-service, pre-service, and special education teachers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1531782. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1531782>
- World Health Organization, & World Bank. (2011). *World report on disability*. World Health Organization.