Digital Training for Inclusive Education. The role of support teachers' competences in new technologies and active methodologies

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Background and objective. Inclusion means more than physical presence: it requires participation, wellbeing, recognition of individual differences and growing autonomy. Support teachers translate these principles into classroom decisions, coordinating with curricular teachers. The TASCLE project asks which competence areas should be prioritised for inclusive teachers; this paper focuses on digital competence, since technologies can widen access or remain peripheral depending on teachers' capacity to select, adapt and evaluate them – not to claim that technology alone produces inclusion, but to examine whether the evidence supports digital training as a necessary enabling condition.

Theoretical positioning. Digital competence here means the capacity to choose, adapt and critically evaluate digital and assistive technologies in relation to learners, tasks, accessibility and classroom organisation – not mere device use. Active methodologies give learners a meaningful role in constructing and communicating knowledge; their inclusive value depends on design choices that reduce barriers and support interaction. Participation means engagement in shared learning and classroom life; autonomy means an increasing ability to access tasks, make choices and act with reduced adult mediation. Assistive technology is one part of the broader category of technologies for inclu-

sion, which also covers tools for accessibility, communication, collaboration and representation.

Method. *Delphi design and participants.* A national Delphi design defined and validated a competence framework for curricular and support teachers across three thematic areas – Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Technologies for Inclusion. For the Technologies area, 30 professionals (support and curricular teachers, inclusion coordinators, teacher-education/technology experts, school leaders) were recruited through a network of lower- and upper-secondary schools, with relevant expertise or at least five years of experience required.

Procedure and analysis. Statements, developed from literature and expert input, were rated on a 1-5 Likert scale in Round 1; a statement was considered established at ≥85% agreement, retained for further investigation at 50-84%, and excluded otherwise. In Round 2, selected experts examined feedback through interviews and focus groups, returning results to participants for structured revision. Attrition, response rates and item-level distributions are not reported in the source material.

Classroom material and ethics. Numerous classroom cases have been studied within the project's teacher-training and internship activities; a few are presented here as examples, each involving a class of 20-25 students over roughly two months. Le tavole sociali (upper secondary) used generative-AI image prompting as an access route to a literary task otherwise reliant on handwriting. Scongelare il silenzio (lower secondary) re-engaged an isolated student via a digital escape room and physically mirrored flashcards, in role-structured cooperative pairs. Oltre le sneakers (economics/geography) supported a student with performance anxiety through graduated grouping and anonymous polling. Il monachesimo (history) used concept maps and high-readability materials for students with special educational needs and specific learning disorders.

Metodologie ludico-didattiche documented, via an e-portfolio, accessible formats built in from the outset.

None of the cases includes a systematic outcome measure, so they illustrate how digital competence can be operationalised rather than demonstrate its effects. The study operated within TASCLE's ethical framework, authorised by the University of Verona, with informed participants and anonymised data throughout.

Findings. Across the three competence areas, all were rated highly important, but Technologies combined the lowest perceived possession with the widest importance-possession gap, identifying digital competence as the most urgent training priority. This is a perceived gap, not evidence that training improves outcomes: it supports a priority, not proof that a specific technology increases participation or autonomy.

These cases illustrate patterns consistent with Section 2's mechanism – technology as an alternative access route (image generation instead of handwriting, anonymous polling instead of public speaking), graduated grouping, and digital-to-physical transitions. Without outcome measures, they illustrate plausible mechanisms rather than demonstrate effects.

Discussion and implications. The Delphi study identifies where the largest perceived training need lies; the classroom cases offer an initial illustration of how technology might address it, through cooperative grouping, graduated exposure and alternative access routes – though they cannot yet confirm measurable gains. The two strands are complementary, not proof that the survey gap is resolved in practice.

The findings justify a continuous curriculum addressing accessibility, assistive technology, tool selection, data protection and active methodologies. The paper's main contribution is identifying Technologies for Inclusion as the most urgent competence area, without claiming that digital training alone is a decisive driver of inclusion.

Conclusion. The TASCLE Delphi study indicates a substantial perceived mismatch between the importance of, and possession of competence in, Technologies for Inclusion – a defensible basis for prioritis-

ing digital competence in support-teacher education. A few illustrative classroom cases, among the numerous examples studied, show how such training might be operationalised as accessible task design, but do not yet demonstrate gains in participation or autonomy.

Continuous, methodologically grounded digital training is therefore a justified priority and a plausible enabling condition for inclusive practice, with its effects still to be established through systematic classroom evidence.

Keywords: inclusive education; support teachers; digital competence; Delphi study; active methodologies; assistive technology; teacher education.

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