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Assessing regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional adaptation

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional adaptation practices at Zapatera National High School, Cebu City Division, during School Year 2025–2026, as basis for a proposed Action Plan to strengthen inclusive teaching practices. It employed a descriptive-correlational research design involving 50 regular teachers selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire and analyzed using frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. Findings revealed that the teachers demonstrated a moderate level of knowledge of disability categories, with greater familiarity with general disability classifications but limited knowledge of specific conditions, particularly autism spectrum disorder. Instructional adaptation practices were also moderately implemented, particularly in instructional delivery and classroom organization, while differentiated instruction and collaboration with special education personnel were less consistently practiced. Correlation analysis revealed a negligible negative and non-significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional adaptation practices. The study concluded that knowledge of disability categories alone does not significantly influence teachers' instructional adaptation practices. Thus, the proposed Action Plan is recommended to strengthen teachers' knowledge and competencies in implementing inclusive and responsive instructional practices for learners with diverse educational needs.

Keywords: Education, teachers' knowledge of disability categories, instructional adaptation practices, descriptive-correlational research, Zapatera National High School.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education promotes equal opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities, to participate meaningfully in regular classrooms. Globally, the focus of inclusive education has moved beyond simply placing learners with disabilities in mainstream classes toward creating learning environments that respond to their individual needs. UNESCO (2020) emphasized that meaningful inclusion requires schools to address barriers in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the learning environment. Teachers therefore play an important

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role in making inclusion work because they are directly responsible for understanding learner differences and providing appropriate classroom support.

One important aspect of inclusive teaching is teachers' knowledge of disability categories. Regular classrooms may include learners with different cognitive, behavioral, communication, sensory, physical, and socio-emotional needs. Understanding these conditions can help teachers recognize learning difficulties and make appropriate instructional decisions. Tometten et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of teachers' knowledge of special educational needs in relation to learners' academic achievement and social participation in mainstream classrooms. However, knowing the characteristics of different disabilities may not be enough. Teachers must also be able to translate this knowledge into appropriate instructional adaptation practices, such as adjusting instructional delivery, differentiating activities, modifying learning materials, organizing the classroom, and collaborating with other school personnel. Thus, teachers' knowledge and their actual classroom practices are both important in providing meaningful inclusive education.

In the Philippines, inclusive education has been strengthened through Republic Act No. 11650, otherwise known as the Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education Act. The law ensures that learners with disabilities have access to inclusive, equitable, and quality education and appropriate support based on their individual needs (Republic Act No. 11650, 2022). It also provides mechanisms for identification, referral, intervention, teacher training, instructional support, and the establishment of Inclusive Learning Resource Centers. These provisions show that regular teachers are expected to possess the knowledge and skills needed to respond appropriately to learners with disabilities.

Despite these policies, putting inclusive education into actual classroom practice remains challenging. Teachers may support the principles of inclusion but still experience difficulty in addressing the specific needs of learners with disabilities. Traya and Lopez (2023) found that mainstreaming learners with special educational needs in regular classes influenced teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy toward inclusion. Their findings highlight the importance of teacher preparedness and confidence when working with learners who require additional educational support. Recent Philippine studies have likewise identified teacher preparation, professional development, availability of resources, and institutional support as important factors in the successful implementation of inclusive education. These concerns suggest that the effectiveness of inclusion depends not only on existing policies but also on teachers' ability to apply these policies within actual classroom situations.

The same concern is relevant in the local context. Studies conducted in Cebu and nearby areas have continued to highlight the need to strengthen teachers' preparedness for inclusive education. Karaan et al. (2025), for instance, examined teachers' awareness and preparedness in developing and implementing Individualized Education Plans for learners in inclusive settings and emphasized the importance of preparing teachers to address individual learning needs. Similarly, Obcial et al. (2025) reported that although inclusive education practices were evident in a Cebu public school, areas involving teacher preparation, specialized resources, and support services still needed improvement. These findings show that challenges in implementing inclusive education are also present within the local educational setting.

Moreover, Zapatera National High School in Cebu City, regular teachers handle learners with varied abilities, learning characteristics, and educational needs. In the classroom, teachers may encounter learners who have difficulty sustaining attention, following instructions, communicating with others, completing reading and writing activities, regulating behavior, or accomplishing tasks at the same pace as their classmates. These situations may require teachers to adjust the way lessons are delivered, provide additional guidance, differentiate activities, modify learning tasks, or coordinate with parents and other school

personnel. However, responding appropriately to these situations can become challenging when teachers have limited knowledge of particular disability categories or are uncertain about the most appropriate instructional adaptations to use. Despite these classroom realities, there remains limited school-based evidence showing the extent of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and how such knowledge is reflected in their instructional adaptation practices at Zapatera National High School.

This gap provides the main reason for conducting the present study. While previous studies have examined teachers' attitudes, preparedness, self-efficacy, and general practices toward inclusive education, there is still a need to determine whether teachers' knowledge of disability categories is related to the instructional adaptations they actually employ in regular classrooms. Understanding this relationship is important because having knowledge about disabilities does not necessarily mean that teachers can consistently translate such knowledge into appropriate classroom practices.

Hence, the present investigation examined how well regular teachers understand disability categories and how extensively they adjust instruction in response to learner diversity at Zapatera National High School during School Year 2025–2026. It further explored whether teachers' level of understanding is associated with the adaptations they use in their classrooms. Evidence generated from the study will guide the formulation of an Action Plan intended to address areas requiring additional teacher development and school support. Ultimately, the study seeks to help strengthen classroom practices that respond more appropriately to learners with varied educational needs.

Statement of the problem

This study assessed regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the instructional modification practices they employed at Zapatera National High School in Cebu City Division during the School Year 2025–2026 as a basis for a proposed action plan.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the teacher respondents in terms of age, gender, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and teaching position?
2. What is the level of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories?
3. What is the extent of instructional modification practices employed by regular teachers?
4. Is there a significant relationship between regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices?
5. Based on the findings of the study, what action plan can be proposed to improve regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and strengthen their instructional modification practices?

METHODOLOGY

This section presented the research methods and procedures employed to assess regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices at Zapatera National High School. It described the research design and framework using the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, the research environment, the respondents, the data collection instrument, and the procedures followed in conducting the study. The section also explained the statistical techniques used for data analysis and discussed the ethical considerations observed, including confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, and the protection of participants' rights, to ensure the rigor and integrity of the research.

The study used a descriptive-correlational research design to describe regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional adaptation practices at Zapatera National High School during School Year 2025–2026. The descriptive aspect enabled the researcher to establish the existing levels of the two variables, while the correlational aspect examined whether variation in teachers' knowledge was associated with variation in their reported instructional practices. No variable was manipulated because the investigation focused on conditions as they naturally occurred within the school setting.

The flow of the study was presented through the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model. The input began with the information needed to describe the teacher-participants and examine the principal variables. Background characteristics included age, gender, highest educational attainment, length of teaching experience, and teaching position. The investigation then focused on teachers' understanding of disability categories, their reported instructional adaptations, and the possible association between these two areas. In the process stage, after the necessary permission to conduct the study was obtained, the researcher distributed the survey questionnaires to qualified participants. Completed responses were retrieved, checked, organized, coded, and prepared for analysis. Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were subsequently applied to answer the research questions and examine the proposed relationship between the variables. In the output stage, the findings from the investigation served as the empirical basis for constructing the proposed Action Plan. The plan was designed around the specific areas of teachers' knowledge and classroom practice that were found to require further strengthening, thereby translating the results of the study into practical school-based interventions.

The study was conducted at Zapatera National High School, located on Sikatuna St., Zapatera, Cebu City, which catered to secondary-level students and actively supported inclusive education programs. The school featured classrooms equipped with learning resources that accommodated students with diverse needs, including assistive materials and adaptive learning tools. It also provided inclusive support facilities, such as resource rooms and guidance services, that enabled teachers to implement tailored instructional strategies. The teaching practices emphasized differentiated instruction, collaborative learning, and individualized support, creating a practical environment for observing and examining how instructional modifications were applied effectively at the high school level. The school also served learners with varying abilities and educational backgrounds, requiring teachers to employ flexible instructional approaches that addressed individual learning needs. These classroom conditions provided valuable opportunities to examine how teachers translated their knowledge of disability categories into actual teaching practices. In addition to its physical and instructional resources, Zapatera National High School fostered a supportive school culture that encouraged teachers to collaborate and share best practices for inclusive education. Regular professional development sessions and mentoring programs were available to help teachers enhance their skills in managing diverse classrooms. This combination of facilities, resources, and a collaborative teaching environment provided an ideal setting for investigating how instructional modifications were implemented.

The respondents of this study consisted of 50 regular teachers from Zapatera National High School, selected through purposive sampling. This method ensured that only teachers who met the study's criteria and had direct experience in inclusive classrooms were included, allowing the researcher to focus on educators actively involved in implementing instructional modifications for learners with disabilities. The inclusion criteria required teachers to regularly handle classes with learners of varying abilities, possess practical knowledge of disability categories, and apply inclusive education strategies. Participants were required to have at least one year of teaching experience in classrooms where learners with disabilities were present. These criteria ensured that the selected teachers were able to provide meaningful and relevant

information regarding their knowledge and instructional practices. The distribution of respondents by grade level showed that Grade 7 had f = 9 (18.00%), Grade 8 had f = 8 (16.00%), Grade 9 had f = 8 (16.00%), Grade 10 had f = 9 (18.00%), Grade 11 had f = 8 (16.00%), and Grade 12 had f = 8 (16.00%), for a total of f = 50 (100.00%).

Teachers who did not handle learners with disabilities, had limited or no experience in implementing instructional modifications, or were not engaged in inclusive classroom practices were excluded from the study. This ensured that all respondents contributed accurate and reliable data aligned with the study's objectives. At Zapatera National High School, the selected 50 teachers were those who routinely adapted lessons, implemented differentiated instructional strategies, and supported learners with diverse learning needs. Their classroom experiences provided essential insights into how knowledge of disability categories influenced the actual application of instructional modification practices in real teaching contexts. By selecting 50 respondents through purposive sampling and applying clear inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study ensured that the data collected were relevant, focused, and reliable. This approach strengthened the validity of the research and provided a solid foundation for examining the relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices in an inclusive secondary school setting.

This study utilized an adapted survey questionnaire as the primary research instrument to gather data on regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices at Zapatera National High School. The instrument consisted of three parts. The first part gathered the respondents' demographic profile, including age, gender, educational attainment, length of service in teaching, and teaching position, which provided essential background information for describing the teacher-respondents. The second part measured the level of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories in inclusive education and included ten statements assessing their understanding of various disability types, their defining characteristics, learning needs, and appropriate instructional responses in inclusive classrooms. Respondents rated each statement using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). This section was adapted from Thomas and Uthaman (2023), who developed an instrument on teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward inclusive education of learners with disabilities. The third part assessed the extent of instructional modification practices employed by regular teachers and also consisted of ten indicators focusing on lesson modification, instructional delivery, assessment adjustments, use of alternative materials, individualized tasks, classroom accessibility, collaboration with special education personnel, homework modification, differentiated instruction, and reflective practice. It likewise used a four-point Likert scale and was adapted from established inclusive education practice frameworks aligned with Lozano et al. (2022), particularly the Concerns about Inclusive Education Scale (CIES).

The data gathering procedure was carried out systematically to ensure the proper collection, organization, and preparation of the data needed to address the objectives of the study. Appropriate ethical considerations and school protocols were observed throughout the process to protect the rights, privacy, and confidentiality of the teacher-respondents. The procedure was undertaken in three stages: the preliminary stage, the data gathering stage, and the post-data gathering stage. In the preliminary stage, the study began with the researcher securing formal approval from the principal and school authorities of Zapatera National High School through a transmittal letter. Once consent was granted, the researcher coordinated with designated school representatives to identify teacher-respondents who were actively engaged in managing inclusive classrooms. The purpose, objectives, and significance of the study were clearly explained to all participants, emphasizing that participation was entirely voluntary and

that responses would be kept strictly confidential. Each teacher-respondent was asked to sign an informed consent form prior to participation, confirming their understanding and agreement to take part in the study without any penalty or impact on their professional standing.

In the data gathering stage, the primary instrument for data collection was a printed, adapted survey questionnaire divided into three sections: the respondents' demographic profile, the level of teachers' knowledge of disability categories, and the extent of instructional modification practices employed. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires, provided clear instructions, and addressed any questions from the respondents. To minimize disruption to classroom activities, teachers were allowed to complete the survey during non-teaching hours or at their convenience. This ensured that responses were accurate, consistent, and reliable while respecting the schedules and responsibilities of the participating teachers. In the post-data gathering stage, after the questionnaires were collected, the researcher reviewed each instrument for completeness, consistency, and accuracy. Valid responses were then organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives.

In conducting this study on teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices in inclusive classrooms, strict ethical principles were observed to protect the rights, well-being, and confidentiality of all participants at Zapatera National High School. With respect to informed consent, all teacher-respondents were fully informed about the purpose, objectives, and scope of the study prior to participation. Clear instructions on completing the adapted survey questionnaires and the estimated time required were provided. Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form, confirming their voluntary participation and understanding that they could withdraw at any time without penalty or impact on their professional standing. With respect to confidentiality and anonymity, personal information and responses were treated with strict confidentiality. Identifying details such as names did not appear in any report or publication, and all data were coded to ensure anonymity. Access to the raw data was limited to the researcher and authorized personnel involved in data analysis, with secure storage maintained both physically and digitally.

Participation was entirely voluntary. Teachers were not coerced or pressured, and refusal to participate had no effect on their teaching duties, professional evaluations, or relationship with school administration. The study also adhered to the principle of beneficence by providing insights that might help improve inclusive classroom practices and support teachers in implementing effective instructional modifications for diverse learners. In terms of ethical approval and coordination, formal approval was obtained from the principal and school authorities of Zapatera National High School before data collection. Coordination with designated school representatives ensured that the study was conducted in accordance with school policies, promoting transparency, respect, and cooperation throughout the research process. This ethical framework ensured that the study was conducted with integrity, protecting participants' rights while generating valuable insights into inclusive teaching practices and the application of instructional modifications at the high school level.

The data collected from the teacher-respondents at Zapatera National High School were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to ensure accurate and meaningful interpretation. Descriptive statistics were first employed to summarize the teachers' demographic profiles, their level of knowledge of disability categories, and the extent of instructional modification practices. These results provided a foundation for understanding the characteristics and current practices of teachers in inclusive classrooms and served as a basis for developing an Action Plan to enhance teaching strategies for diverse learners. Frequency counts and percentages were used to summarize the demographic profile of the teacher-respondents, including age, gender, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and teaching position. This descriptive analysis provided a clear picture of the participants'

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backgrounds, contextualizing their knowledge and instructional practices within the inclusive classroom environment of the school. Weighted mean was applied to determine the level of teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the extent to which they implemented instructional modification practices. This measure allowed the researcher to quantify responses across all indicators, highlighting areas of strength, areas needing improvement, and the consistency of teachers' inclusive practices.

Standard deviation was calculated to examine the variability of responses. This analysis showed how consistent or divergent teachers' knowledge and instructional practices were, helping to identify specific areas where additional support, mentoring, or professional development might be needed to enhance their effectiveness in managing inclusive classrooms. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. This inferential statistic revealed both the strength and direction of the relationship, providing insights into how teachers' understanding of disabilities influenced their ability to implement effective inclusive teaching strategies within Zapatera National High School.

The questionnaire utilized a four-point Likert scale to measure the respondents' level of agreement with each statement, with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). This scaling method encouraged respondents to express a definite opinion by eliminating a neutral option. Higher scores indicated greater teacher knowledge of disability categories and a higher extent of instructional modification practices implemented to support learners in inclusive classrooms. For the scoring procedure for teachers' knowledge of disability categories, a numerical rating of 1 corresponded to the scale 3.26–4.00 with the descriptive rating Strongly Agree, interpreted as highly knowledgeable and confident in addressing students' needs. A numerical rating of 2 corresponded to the scale 2.51–3.25 with the descriptive rating Agree, interpreted as generally knowledgeable with some gaps. A numerical rating of 3 corresponded to the scale 1.76–2.50 with the descriptive rating Disagree, interpreted as limited knowledge and struggling with instructional strategies. A numerical rating of 4 corresponded to the scale 1.00–1.75 with the descriptive rating Strongly Disagree, interpreted as lacking knowledge and ability to support learners effectively.

For the scoring procedure for instructional modification practices, a numerical rating of 4 corresponded to the scale 3.26–4.00 with the descriptive rating Strongly Agree, interpreted as frequently applying effective instructional modifications. A numerical rating of 3 corresponded to the scale 2.51–3.25 with the descriptive rating Agree, interpreted as generally applying modifications but inconsistently. A numerical rating of 2 corresponded to the scale 1.76–2.50 with the descriptive rating Disagree, interpreted as rarely applying instructional modifications. A numerical rating of 1 corresponded to the scale 1.00–1.75 with the descriptive rating Strongly Disagree, interpreted as not applying modifications effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from 50 regular teachers of Zapatera National High School, selected through purposive sampling, during School Year 2025–2026. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design, and data were collected through an adapted three-part survey questionnaire covering the respondents' demographic profile, their knowledge of disability categories, and their instructional modification practices, each of the latter two rated on a four-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, weighted mean, standard deviation, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The discussion is

grounded in the data gathered, and the results are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study. The findings revealed that most respondents were female teachers aged 24–33 years old, holding Bachelor's Degrees or Master's units, with one to ten years of teaching experience, and occupying Teacher III positions. The respondents were moderately knowledgeable in disability categories and moderately practiced in implementing instructional modifications in inclusive classrooms, and the test of relationship showed a negligible negative correlation and no significant relationship between the two variables.

Demographic profile

The respondents were distributed almost evenly across grade levels: 9 teachers (18.00%) in Grade 7, 8 (16.00%) in Grade 8, 8 (16.00%) in Grade 9, 9 (18.00%) in Grade 10, 8 (16.00%) in Grade 11, and 8 (16.00%) in Grade 12, for a total of 50 (100.00%).

In terms of age and gender, of the 50 teachers, 18 (36.00%) were aged 24–33, 17 (34.00%) were aged 34–43, 13 (26.00%) were aged 44–53, and 2 (4.00%) were above 53. By gender, 32 (64.00%) were female and 18 (36.00%) were male. Within the age brackets, the 24–33 group comprised 13 females (26.00%) and 5 males (10.00%); the 34–43 group, 8 females (16.00%) and 9 males (18.00%); the 44–53 group, 10 females (20.00%) and 3 males (6.00%); and the above 53 group, 1 female (2.00%) and 1 male (2.00%). These figures indicate that most participants were in the early to middle stages of their professional careers, a composition that combines relatively recent professional preparation with developing classroom experience. This may be relevant to inclusive education because teachers at different career stages vary in their exposure to learner diversity, professional development, and opportunities to apply adaptive instructional practices. Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory (1972) supports this observation by explaining that individuals in this stage of adulthood demonstrate advanced logical reasoning and cognitive flexibility, which are necessary in adjusting instruction to varied learner needs. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (1978) further explains that professional growth is enhanced through social interaction and guided support, so the presence of both younger and more experienced teachers suggests opportunities for mentoring in which experienced educators scaffold less experienced colleagues. The Universal Design for Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) reinforces these points by emphasizing flexible instructional approaches that address learner variability, and the higher proportion of younger teachers may indicate greater exposure to recent reforms and training that promote differentiated instruction. These results are consistent with Almalky and Alwahbi (2023), who reported that teachers' demographic characteristics influence their perceptions and implementation of inclusive education practices. The predominance of female teachers also reflects the established pattern in basic education, where women constitute the majority of the teaching workforce and are often associated with relational and supportive classroom practices essential in inclusive education.

With respect to highest educational attainment, 22 teachers (44.00%) held a Bachelor's Degree, 18 (36.00%) had Master's units, 8 (16.00%) were Master's graduates, and 2 (4.00%) held a Doctorate Degree, while none (0.00%) had Doctorate units. The distribution reflects a faculty with varied levels of postgraduate preparation, and more than half of the respondents had either pursued or completed studies beyond the bachelor's level, suggesting continuing engagement in professional and academic development. Piaget (1972) explains that continued academic advancement supports higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are critical in designing differentiated instruction and making informed decisions in inclusive settings. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that learning is socially mediated, and the variation in attainment suggests opportunities for peer learning in which teachers with higher qualifications guide those still pursuing graduate studies. The Universal Design for

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Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) underscores the importance of teachers being equipped with advanced knowledge to implement flexible strategies, and teachers engaged in graduate studies are more likely to adopt evidence-based practices such as differentiated instruction and multiple means of engagement. Their continued preparation also strengthens their ability to analyze learner needs, design responsive lesson plans, and apply appropriate instructional modifications that promote equitable participation. These observations are supported by Widana, Sumandya, and Citrawan (2023), who emphasized that teachers' professional and academic preparation significantly influences their ability to design and implement appropriate learning evaluations and instructional strategies for learners with special needs. Many teachers are therefore actively improving their qualifications, and greater access to graduate studies, specialized training, seminars, and capacity-building programs may further strengthen both their theoretical understanding and practical instructional skills.

Regarding years of teaching experience, 19 teachers (38.00%) had 1-5 years of service, 16 (32.00%) had 6-10 years, 8 (16.00%) had 11-15 years, 4 (8.00%) had 16 years and above, and 3 (6.00%) had less than one year. A considerable portion of the participants were thus still within the earlier stages of their teaching careers, and this mixture of beginning and more experienced teachers provides different levels of classroom exposure from which inclusive practices may develop. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that novice and experienced teachers can engage in collaborative learning, with experienced educators scaffolding colleagues in applying instructional modifications for learners with special needs, while Piaget (1972) supports the idea that experience refines processes such as analysis, reflection, and decision-making. The Universal Design for Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) emphasizes flexible instructional planning, and teachers with longer experience, being exposed to more varied classroom situations, often develop a broader range of strategies and draw upon previous experience when selecting modifications, whereas relatively new teachers may still be developing these competencies and may benefit from continuous mentoring and practical guidance. These findings are consistent with Kamran (2022), who emphasized that teachers' experiences significantly influence their perceptions and implementation of inclusive practices, particularly in relation to support systems such as special needs assistants. The variation in experience highlights the importance of sustained professional support that enables teachers at all career stages to strengthen their instructional competence.

As to teaching position, 27 respondents (54.00%) were Teacher III, 12 (24.00%) were Teacher I, 6 (12.00%) were Teacher II, and 5 (10.00%) were Master Teacher, so more than half occupied the Teacher III position. This suggests that a large portion of the participants already had substantial classroom experience and instructional responsibility, while the smaller proportion of Master Teachers represents those who typically hold advanced expertise and serve as instructional leaders. Vygotsky (1978) provides a useful lens here, as Master Teachers and higher-ranked teachers can mentor and scaffold less experienced colleagues in inclusive strategies. Piaget (1972) supports the implication that advancement contributes to more refined instructional decision-making, and the Universal Design for Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) reinforces the importance of flexibility across all ranks, since teachers in higher positions are often more involved in curriculum planning and instructional leadership, while those in entry-level and mid-level positions apply modifications daily and refine their practice through experience and collaboration. These findings are consistent with Saloviita (2022), who emphasized that teachers' professional roles and experiences influence their attitudes and preferences toward inclusive education. Teaching position alone does not determine the quality of inclusive instruction; rather, it is the combination of professional experience, instructional competence, and access to continuous learning that strengthens the

ability to implement effective modifications, and collaboration across ranks may promote more consistent implementation of inclusive practices throughout the school.

Level of knowledge of disability categories

The respondents' level of knowledge of disability categories was interpreted using the scale 4.21-5.00 Highly Knowledgeable, 3.41-4.20 Knowledgeable, 2.61-3.40 Moderately Knowledgeable, 1.81-2.60 Less Knowledgeable, and 1.00-1.80 Not Knowledgeable. The aggregate mean was 3.23 (SD = 0.61), interpreted as Moderately Knowledgeable. All ten indicators were likewise rated Moderately Knowledgeable. The ability to identify each major disability category recognized in inclusive education had a mean of 3.26 (SD = 0.44); understanding the defining characteristics of students with intellectual disabilities, 3.18 (SD = 0.80); familiarity with the learning challenges associated with emotional and behavioral disorders, 3.20 (SD = 0.61); the ability to distinguish between physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities, 3.34 (SD = 0.56); knowing how different disability categories affect a student's learning needs, 3.28 (SD = 0.64); confidence in explaining the educational needs of students with autism spectrum disorder, 3.04 (SD = 0.53); understanding how multiple disability categories can co-occur in one student, 3.18 (SD = 0.60); describing appropriate classroom expectations for each disability category, 3.22 (SD = 0.65); knowing the legal and educational definitions of disability categories used in schools, 3.40 (SD = 0.64); and matching instructional support strategies to specific disability categories, 3.22 (SD = 0.62). The strongest knowledge was thus in the legal and educational definitions (M = 3.40), followed by distinguishing physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities (M = 3.34), while the lowest mean (M = 3.04) concerned confidence in explaining the educational needs of learners with autism spectrum disorder. The pattern suggests a functional understanding of disability categories, particularly at the level of general classification and policy-related concepts, and the lower confidence regarding autism spectrum disorder points to an area where focused professional learning may be necessary. The relatively wider variability for intellectual disabilities (SD = 0.80) compared with the more uniform responses for identifying major categories (SD = 0.44) indicates that teachers' understanding was less consistent in some areas than in others.

These findings are significant because teachers' knowledge of disability categories directly influences how they design, adapt, and implement instruction. Piaget (1972) explains that cognitive understanding becomes more refined through continuous exposure and active engagement, suggesting that the moderate level reflects an ongoing developmental process. Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that such gaps can be addressed through scaffolding, collaboration, and mentoring from more knowledgeable colleagues, particularly special education specialists. The Universal Design for Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) underscores that effective inclusive instruction depends on understanding learner variability and applying flexible strategies, which indicates that teachers may recognize general characteristics of disabilities but may not yet consistently apply this understanding when designing lessons, selecting materials, or modifying assessments. Kamran et al. (2023) similarly emphasized the relevance of teachers' understanding and dispositions in supporting inclusive practices. Mentoring, consultation with special education personnel, collaborative planning, and focused training could therefore help teachers develop greater confidence in making instructional decisions for learners who require additional support.

Extent of instructional modification practices

The extent of instructional modification practices was interpreted using the scale 4.21-5.00 Highly Practiced, 3.41-4.20 Practiced, 2.61-3.40 Moderately Practiced, 1.81-2.60 Less

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Practiced, and 1.00-1.80 Not Practiced. The aggregate mean was 3.29 (SD = 0.58), interpreted as Moderately Practiced. Modifying lesson content to suit the needs of students with disabilities had a mean of 3.14 (SD = 0.35), Moderately Practiced; altering the way instructions are presented, such as through visuals and simplified language, 3.54 (SD = 0.50), Practiced; adjusting assessment formats such as oral responses and extended time, 3.38 (SD = 0.67), Moderately Practiced; using alternative learning materials, 3.40 (SD = 0.53), Moderately Practiced; providing individualized task modifications during class activities, 3.26 (SD = 0.60), Moderately Practiced; adapting classroom seating and routines to increase accessibility, 3.44 (SD = 0.64), Practiced; consulting with special education personnel when planning instructional changes, 2.90 (SD = 0.54), Moderately Practiced; modifying homework or practice assignments, 3.36 (SD = 0.72), Moderately Practiced; using differentiated instruction strategies regularly in mixed-ability classrooms, 3.04 (SD = 0.70), Moderately Practiced; and reflecting on and revising modifications based on student progress, 3.40 (SD = 0.53), Moderately Practiced. The highest mean (M = 3.54) was for altering the presentation of instructions, followed closely by adapting classroom seating and routines (M = 3.44), while the lowest rating was for consultation with special education personnel (M = 2.90), with the regular use of differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms at 3.04. Teachers were therefore more comfortable with adaptations they could implement directly within their own classrooms, whereas practices requiring sustained differentiation or collaboration with specialized personnel were less consistently applied, which identifies an important area for professional support and collaborative school mechanisms.

These results show how inclusive education was operationalized in actual classroom practice. Piaget (1972) explained that instructional competence develops progressively through experience and reflection, suggesting that teachers were still refining their ability to apply complex modifications consistently, and Vygotsky (1978) emphasized collaboration and guided support, indicating that limited consultation with special education personnel may have hindered optimal development of adaptations. The Universal Design for Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) highlights multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression, and the moderate level of practice suggests that teachers had begun to apply flexible strategies but still needed to strengthen the systematic implementation of differentiated instruction. These findings align with Kamran et al. (2023), who emphasized that instructional practices in inclusive settings are strongly influenced by attitudes, training, and access to support systems, meaning that modifications depend not solely on awareness but also on institutional support and opportunities for skill development. Similarly, Kazmi et al. (2023) highlighted that effective inclusive education depends on consistent application of adaptive strategies that respond to learner diversity, which requires sustained practice, reflection, and appropriate resources. Inclusion had thus been implemented but remained uneven, and strengthening professional learning communities, mentoring systems, and targeted capacity-building may help ensure more consistent implementation across classrooms.

Test of relationship between knowledge and instructional modification practices

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the relationship between the respondents' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. The analysis yielded r = -0.113, indicating a negligible negative relationship, with p = 0.433, which is higher than the 0.05 level of significance (two-tailed). The decision was to not reject the null hypothesis (Ho), and the result was not significant, implying that there was no significant relationship between the respondents' level of

knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. Knowledge of disability categories therefore did not necessarily translate into consistent application of modifications, and increases in knowledge were not associated with improved instructional modifications. This may be attributed to other influencing factors such as self-efficacy, institutional support, availability of resources, and actual classroom experience, since teachers may possess conceptual understanding that has not been fully translated into classroom decisions. The result is supported by Woodcock et al. (2022), who emphasized that teacher self-efficacy plays a crucial role in translating knowledge into inclusive practice, so that even with adequate knowledge, low confidence in managing diverse learners may hinder the application of modifications. Similarly, Safder et al. (2026) highlighted that effective inclusive environments depend not only on teacher knowledge but also on appropriate adaptations and support systems, including technological and instructional resources. Ukwigize et al. (2026) stressed that leadership support for differentiated instruction is essential in enabling teachers to apply their knowledge, and Mahama et al. (2026) found that knowledge alone is insufficient unless accompanied by consistent use of evidence-based inclusive practices in actual teaching.

Theoretically, these findings align with Piaget (1972), who explained that knowledge acquisition does not automatically guarantee application unless it is internalized and reinforced through experience. Vygotsky (1978) further emphasized that teacher development requires scaffolding and collaborative support to bridge understanding and practice, and the Universal Design for Learning Framework (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014) highlights that translating knowledge of learner variability into flexible strategies may not occur without structured support and continuous professional development. Improving inclusive practice thus cannot rely solely on increasing knowledge of disability categories; it must be strengthened by self-efficacy, collaborative support systems, leadership engagement, and sustained training focused on practical instructional modifications. In practice, this calls for targeted professional development that bridges theoretical understanding and classroom application through hands-on experiences in which teachers apply inclusive principles in real classroom scenarios, so that they are not only knowledgeable but also capable and confident.

Synthesis of findings

Taken together, the data from the 50 teacher-respondents show a workforce that is predominantly female (64.00%), young to middle-aged, with 22 Bachelor's Degree holders (44.00%), 19 teachers (38.00%) with 1-5 years of service, and 27 Teacher III (54.00%). The respondents were moderately knowledgeable of disability categories (aggregate mean = 3.23, SD = 0.61) and moderately practiced in instructional modifications (aggregate mean = 3.29, SD = 0.58), with the weakest points being confidence in explaining the needs of learners with autism spectrum disorder (M = 3.04) and consultation with special education personnel (M = 2.90). The Pearson test ($r = -0.113$, $p = 0.433$, not significant at the 0.05 level, Ho not rejected) showed that knowledge was not associated with practice. These results address the objectives of the study by describing the profile, the levels of knowledge and practice, and their relationship, and they contribute to inclusive education scholarship by showing that awareness alone does not ensure classroom application. They also provide the empirical basis for the proposed Action Plan, which is presented in the next chapter and targets the specific areas of knowledge and practice found to need strengthening.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the knowledge of disability categories and the instructional modification practices of regular teachers at Zapatera National High School in Cebu City

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Division during School Year 2025–2026. Data were gathered from 50 teacher-respondents through structured survey questionnaires and were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. The results showed that the teaching workforce was largely composed of younger to middle-aged teachers, most of whom were female, held a bachelor's degree, and were in the early to mid-career range. Many had also pursued or completed graduate studies, which reflects ongoing professional development, and most held the position of Teacher III, with smaller proportions of Teacher I, Teacher II, and Master Teacher. It can therefore be concluded that the respondents were a relatively young and developing group of professionals who were still building their instructional competence, and that this profile shaped the context in which their knowledge and practices were examined.

The findings further revealed that teachers' knowledge of disability categories was generally moderate. Respondents were familiar with identifying disability types, understanding legal and educational definitions, and distinguishing among the major categories of disabilities, but they expressed lower confidence in addressing specific conditions such as autism spectrum disorder. The study therefore concludes that teachers' understanding was stronger at a general level and weaker in more specialized areas, and that their knowledge was foundational but not yet advanced. In a similar manner, the extent of instructional modification practices was moderate. Teachers more frequently applied direct strategies such as modifying instructional delivery, simplifying explanations, and adjusting classroom arrangements to support accessibility, whereas collaboration with special education personnel and consistent use of differentiated instruction were less frequently observed. From these results, it can be concluded that instructional modifications were being implemented but had not yet been consistently integrated across all teaching practices.

The test of relationship between the two variables showed a negligible negative correlation that was not statistically significant. This indicates that the respondents' level of knowledge of disability categories had no meaningful relationship with their actual instructional modification practices in the classroom. The study therefore concludes that knowledge of disability categories is an important foundation for inclusive education, but knowledge alone does not necessarily translate into appropriate instructional adaptation. Effective inclusion requires teachers to combine their understanding of learners' disabilities with practical skills in adapting instruction, differentiating learning activities, and providing appropriate classroom support. This underscores the need for continuous professional development that strengthens both teachers' knowledge and their ability to respond to diverse learning needs.

These conclusions carry implications for professional practice, program development, and policy implementation. In professional practice, regular teachers should be given opportunities to strengthen their competencies in inclusive and adaptive instruction. For program development, school-based initiatives should emphasize practical training, collaboration, and sustained instructional support rather than disability awareness alone. Likewise, the implementation of inclusive education policies should be supported by appropriate resources, capacity-building programs, and monitoring mechanisms that help teachers translate policy expectations into responsive classroom practices. In light of these considerations, it is recommended that the proposed Action Plan be implemented to strengthen teachers' knowledge of disability categories, particularly autism spectrum disorder, through targeted professional development activities such as case-based training, simulations, and practical exposure to learner needs. The plan should also prioritize the improvement of instructional modification practices by institutionalizing collaboration with special education

personnel, together with continuous training on differentiated instruction and classroom-based coaching. Through these measures, Zapatera National High School can move from identifying the gaps revealed in this study toward more consistent, responsive, and inclusive classroom practice for learners with diverse educational needs.

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