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The role of teachers' knowledge of disabilities on their instructional modification practices for learners with special educational needs

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and instructional modification practices employed at Napo Elementary School in Carcar City Division during School Year 2025–2026. The study involved 30 teacher-respondents and examined their demographic profile. A descriptive-correlational research design was utilized, and data were gathered using structured survey questionnaires. Frequency count, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient were used in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that the respondents were predominantly female and mostly in the middle-age group, indicating a generally mature teaching workforce with substantial classroom experience. Most held graduate-level education, showing continuous professional development, while the majority had considerable years of teaching experience. In terms of position, most were mid-level classroom teachers actively engaged in instructional delivery. Teachers demonstrated a generally moderate level of knowledge of disability categories, with adequate understanding of general disability types but limited depth in more complex conceptual areas. Instructional modification practices were also moderately implemented, particularly in lesson adaptation and instructional delivery, while consistency in differentiated instruction and assessment modification remained limited. Correlation analysis showed that there was no significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. The study concluded that knowledge alone did not determine the actual application of inclusive instructional strategies. It is recommended that targeted training, instructional coaching, mentoring, and strengthened professional learning communities be implemented to enhance both teacher competence and consistent application of inclusive education practices in the school setting.

Keywords: Inclusive education, teachers' knowledge on disability categories, instructional modification practices, action plan, Napo Elementary School.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has emerged as a major educational priority across the world, advocating equal access to quality education for all learners regardless of disability, learning differences, or behavioral conditions. As schools continue to embrace inclusive practices, teachers are increasingly expected to create learning environments where every student can actively participate and achieve meaningful learning outcomes. This responsibility requires teachers to possess adequate knowledge of various disability categories and the ability to implement appropriate instructional modifications that address individual learner needs while ensuring that curriculum standards are achieved. Such competencies are fundamental to the successful implementation of inclusive education and the provision of equitable learning opportunities for students with disabilities (Charcos et al., 2025).

International studies consistently identify teacher competence as a crucial factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education. Weiss et al. (2025) emphasized that the professional identity development of special education teacher candidates significantly influences their readiness to teach learners with diverse educational needs. Their findings indicate that teachers with stronger professional competence and confidence are better equipped to implement inclusive instructional practices effectively. Similarly, Wang et al. (2025) found that although learners with disabilities may be physically included in mainstream classrooms, limited teacher competence often reduces the quality of students' inclusive learning experiences. Likewise, Almughyiri (2026) reported that teachers' knowledge of autism and their implementation of transition-related instructional strategies substantially contribute to the success of individualized educational support, highlighting the importance of specialized instructional competencies.

Regional evidence further supports these findings by emphasizing the role of teacher expertise in inclusive education. Tveitnes et al. (2025) found that the professional knowledge of mainstream teachers significantly influences their capacity to implement inclusive instructional practices effectively. Their study revealed that insufficient teacher knowledge often results in inconsistent instructional accommodations that may hinder learners' academic development. Likewise, Krämer and Zimmermann (2025) reported that teachers' perceptions of learners with disabilities, often shaped by existing beliefs and assumptions, influence instructional decisions, classroom interactions, and students' educational outcomes. These studies collectively suggest that awareness of inclusive education policies alone is insufficient; teachers must also possess the competence to apply their knowledge through effective instructional modifications that respond to learners' diverse educational needs.

Within the Philippine educational system, the implementation of inclusive education has been strengthened through various policies and reforms that promote equitable access to quality education. Despite these initiatives, many public schools continue to encounter challenges related to teacher preparedness, professional development, and the availability of instructional resources. Pantaleon et al. (2025) reported that although Filipino teachers generally demonstrate awareness of inclusive education policies, many still experience difficulty applying inclusive practices during classroom instruction. Similarly, Charcos et al. (2025) revealed that regular teachers often struggle to accurately identify disability categories and implement appropriate instructional modifications that effectively address learners' individual educational needs. These findings indicate that while teachers possess theoretical awareness, translating such knowledge into effective classroom practice remains a continuing concern.

These challenges are likewise evident in Napo Elementary School, where regular teachers are expected to accommodate learners with diverse educational needs within inclusive classrooms. As a public elementary school implementing inclusive education, Napo

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Elementary School serves learners with varying abilities, including those with autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, learning disabilities, speech and language impairments, and other developmental conditions. Consequently, teachers are required to provide appropriate instructional support while ensuring that all learners meet the prescribed curriculum competencies.

In the course of classroom instruction, teachers frequently encounter situations that require modifications to lessons, teaching strategies, learning materials, and assessment activities. For instance, a teacher may need to simplify learning tasks for a learner with an intellectual disability, utilize visual supports for a learner with autism, or provide differentiated assessment activities for students with diverse learning needs while simultaneously maintaining effective instruction for the rest of the class. These instructional decisions depend largely on teachers' understanding of disability categories and their ability to apply suitable instructional modifications that address learners' individual needs.

Within the context of Napo Elementary School, teachers likewise experience varying levels of preparedness and confidence in implementing inclusive education. While many teachers demonstrate commitment to supporting learners with disabilities, differences in professional preparation and practical experience may affect the consistency with which instructional modifications are applied. In some instances, teachers may rely primarily on general teaching strategies because they are uncertain about the specific characteristics of certain disabilities or the most appropriate accommodations to provide. As a result, instructional practices may not always fully address learners' educational needs, potentially affecting their classroom participation, engagement, and academic achievement. These local classroom experiences reflect the concerns identified by Charcos et al. (2025) regarding the challenges encountered by Filipino teachers in implementing inclusive instructional practices.

Considering these realities, there is a need to examine whether teachers' knowledge of disability categories is associated with their instructional modification practices in inclusive classrooms. Understanding this relationship is important because effective instructional modifications depend on teachers' ability to accurately identify learners' needs and select appropriate teaching strategies that support meaningful participation and learning. Determining the strengths and areas for improvement among regular teachers will also provide school administrators with evidence that can guide professional development initiatives and strengthen inclusive education practices within the school.

Although numerous studies have examined inclusive education, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices in Cebu, particularly in Napo Elementary School. Most previous investigations have focused on teachers' attitudes, perceptions, or general awareness of inclusion, with fewer studies examining how teachers translate their knowledge into actual instructional practices. This gap underscores the need for localized evidence that reflects the experiences of regular teachers implementing inclusive education in public elementary schools.

Specifically, this study aims to determine the level of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories, assess the extent of their instructional modification practices in inclusive classrooms, and examine the significant relationship between these variables. The findings will serve as the basis for a proposed action plan intended to strengthen teachers' competencies in implementing appropriate instructional modifications and to further enhance inclusive, equitable, and effective learning experiences for all learners at Napo Elementary School.

Statement of the problem

This study assessed regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the instructional modification practices they employed at Napo Elementary in Carcar 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 used to assess the level of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the extent of their instructional modification practices at Napo Elementary School. It described the research design and the flow of the study using the input-process-output (IPO) model, followed by an overview of the school's inclusive classroom settings where the study will be conducted. It also provided details on the respondents, the instruments used for data collection, the procedures for gathering data, and the statistical techniques applied for analysis. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality, informed consent, voluntary participation, and the protection of participants' rights, were emphasized to ensure that the study was conducted with rigor, integrity, and adherence to ethical research standards.

This study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the level of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the extent to which they had implemented instructional modification practices at Napo Elementary School during the School Year 2025–2026. The descriptive component profiled the teachers in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, and years of teaching experience, while also describing the extent to which they implemented instructional modifications to support diverse learners in inclusive classrooms. The correlational component determined whether a significant relationship existed between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. It allowed the researcher to investigate the natural relationship between teachers' knowledge and their classroom practices as they occurred in the actual school setting. Furthermore, the design was suitable because it generated empirical evidence that could serve as the basis for developing interventions and improving inclusive education practices. As Creswell and Creswell (2022) noted, descriptive-correlational research effectively describes the current status of a phenomenon while examining potential relationships among variables. In the context of Napo Elementary School, this design provided meaningful insights into how teachers' knowledge of disability categories related to their instructional modification practices.

The flow of the study was presented through the input-process-output model. The input of this study consisted of the key variables that served as the basis for examining inclusive education practices among regular teachers at Napo Elementary School. These included the teachers' demographic profile, specifically age, gender, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and teaching position. These characteristics provided the context for understanding how teachers' personal and professional backgrounds may have influenced their

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knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices in inclusive classrooms. The study also focused on the level of regular teachers' knowledge of disability categories, which reflected their understanding of the different types of disabilities, defining characteristics, learning challenges, and appropriate educational strategies. This variable was essential because teachers' comprehension of student needs directly informed how they planned and delivered instruction. Closely related was the extent of instructional modification practices employed by regular teachers, which measured how frequently and effectively teachers adapted lessons, assessments, and classroom management to accommodate learners with diverse abilities. Finally, the study examined the significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices, which was the core of the research problem. By analyzing this relationship, the study sought to determine whether greater knowledge of disabilities corresponded to more effective or extensive use of instructional adaptations, thereby providing insights for designing targeted interventions, professional development, and strategies to enhance inclusive education outcomes.

The process of this study followed a systematic approach guided by a descriptive-correlational research design, which allowed for both profiling teachers and analyzing the relationship between their knowledge of disability categories and instructional modification practices. The first step involved the submission of the transmittal letter to the school principals and relevant authorities to secure permission for conducting the research in the selected schools. This ensured that the study was conducted with the approval and cooperation of school administrators, adhering to ethical standards. Once approval was obtained, the distribution of questionnaires to the selected teachers took place. The questionnaires were designed to gather information on teachers' demographic profiles, level of knowledge of disability categories, and the extent of their instructional modification practices. After participants had completed the instruments, the collection of data occurred, ensuring that responses were secured confidentially and systematically. Following data collection, data processing involved organizing, coding, and preparing the responses for analysis, which ensured that the information was accurate and ready for statistical examination. Finally, the statistical treatment, analysis, and interpretation of data were conducted to describe teachers' demographic profiles, levels of knowledge, and instructional practices, as well as to determine the presence and significance of relationships between knowledge of disability categories and instructional modification practices. The findings from these analyses provided evidence-based insights to guide recommendations and interventions for enhancing inclusive education. The output of this study was the Action Plan designed to enhance teaching strategies for diverse learners in inclusive classrooms. Based on the findings regarding teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices, the Action Plan provided practical recommendations and strategies for improving inclusive education.

The study was conducted at Napo Elementary School, located in Napo, Carcar City, Cebu. This public elementary school serves students from surrounding neighborhoods, including those with special educational needs. Teachers at Napo Elementary School regularly adapt instructional materials, teaching strategies, and classroom management practices to support learners with disabilities. Its inclusive environment provides a representative context for assessing both teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the extent of instructional modifications they employ. As a public elementary school catering to learners from surrounding communities, including those with special educational needs, the school also serves as a relevant setting for understanding inclusive education practices, since its teachers regularly adapt instructional materials, teaching strategies, and classroom management approaches to address diverse learning requirements. This inclusive environment provides a

practical and representative context for examining how teachers apply their knowledge of disability categories and implement instructional modifications, further strengthening the study's relevance across different school settings.

The respondents of this study will consist of 30 regular teachers from Napo Elementary School, selected through purposive sampling. Napo Elementary School, located in Napo, Carcar City, Cebu, is a public elementary school that serves students from surrounding neighborhoods, including those with special educational needs. Its teachers regularly adapt instructional materials, teaching strategies, and classroom management practices to support learners with disabilities, making the school a representative setting for examining inclusive practices. Purposive sampling will ensure that only teachers who meet the study's criteria participate, allowing the researcher to focus on educators with direct experience in inclusive classrooms who actively implement instructional modifications for students with disabilities. The inclusion criteria require teachers to regularly handle classes with learners of varying abilities, possess practical knowledge of disability categories, and be engaged in inclusive education strategies. Participants must also have at least one year of teaching experience in classrooms where students with disabilities are present. These criteria ensure that the selected teachers can provide meaningful and relevant information about their knowledge and practices. Teachers who do not interact with students with disabilities, have limited or no experience in implementing instructional modifications, or were not involved in inclusive classroom settings were excluded. This ensures that all respondents can provide accurate and reliable data to meet the study's objectives, strengthening the validity of the research and providing a strong basis for examining the relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. The distribution of the respondents by grade level showed that Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3, Grade 4, Grade 5, and Grade 6 each had a frequency (f) of 5, which corresponded to 16.67% of the respondents for each grade level, for a total of 30 respondents, equivalent to 100.00%.

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 Napo Elementary School. The instrument consisted of three parts. Part I 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. Part II 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. Part III 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 systematically carried out to ensure the proper collection of relevant and reliable information from the identified respondents. It followed an organized process consisting of the preliminary stage, actual data gathering, and post-data gathering activities. The study began with the researcher securing formal approval from the

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principal and school authorities of Napo Elementary School through a transmittal letter. Upon receiving approval, coordination was established with designated school representatives to identify the 30 teacher-respondents who were directly involved in managing inclusive classrooms. The purpose, objectives, and significance of the study were clearly explained to all participants, emphasizing that their participation was entirely voluntary and that their responses would be kept strictly confidential. Each teacher-respondent signed an informed consent form before participating, confirming their understanding of the study and their willingness to participate without any penalty or effect on their professional standing. In the actual data gathering stage, the primary instrument used 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 raised by the respondents. To minimize disruption to classroom activities, teachers completed the survey during their non-teaching hours or at their convenience. This procedure helped ensure that the responses were accurate, consistent, and reliable while respecting the schedules and responsibilities of the participating teachers. After the questionnaires were collected, the researcher carefully reviewed each instrument for completeness, consistency, and accuracy. All valid responses were organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. Throughout the entire process, strict ethical principles, including confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent, were observed to protect the rights, welfare, and privacy of the participants, thereby ensuring the integrity and credibility of the study conducted at Napo Elementary School.

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. With regard to informed consent, all teacher-respondents from Napo Elementary School were fully informed of the purpose, objectives, and scope of the study before their participation. Clear instructions on completing the adapted survey questionnaire and the estimated time required were provided. Each participant signed an informed consent form, confirming voluntary participation and acknowledging that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or effect on their professional standing. With regard to confidentiality and anonymity, all personal information and responses were treated with strict confidentiality. Identifying information, such as participants' names, did not appear in any report or publication, and all responses were coded to ensure anonymity. Access to the raw data was restricted to the researcher and authorized personnel involved in the data analysis, and the collected data were securely stored in both physical and digital formats. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. No teacher was coerced or pressured to participate, and those who chose not to participate or to withdraw from the study experienced no consequences regarding their teaching responsibilities, professional evaluations, or relationship with the school administration. The study also adhered to the principle of beneficence by generating findings that may contribute to improving inclusive classroom practices and strengthening teachers' instructional modification strategies for learners with diverse educational needs, and every effort was made to ensure that no physical, psychological, or professional harm resulted from the participants' involvement. Finally, formal approval was obtained from the principal and school authorities of Napo Elementary School before the conduct of data collection, and coordination with designated school representatives ensured that all research activities were carried out in

accordance with school policies, promoting transparency, respect, and cooperation throughout the research process.

The data collected from the 30 teacher-respondents at Napo Elementary School were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to ensure accurate and meaningful interpretation. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the teachers' demographic profiles, their level of knowledge of disability categories, and the extent of their instructional modification practices. Correlational analysis was then applied to determine whether a significant relationship existed between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. Frequency was used to determine the number of respondents in each category of the demographic profile, including age, gender, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and teaching position. It provided the actual count of respondents under each category, enabling the researcher to describe the composition of the study participants and establish a clear profile of the teacher-respondents in the inclusive school setting. Percentage was employed to determine the proportion of respondents in each category of the demographic profile. It converted the frequency counts into percentages, allowing for easier comparison and interpretation of the distribution of respondents according to age, gender, educational attainment, years of teaching experience, and teaching position, and it provided a clearer understanding of the characteristics of the participants relative to the total number of respondents. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of teachers' knowledge of disability categories and the extent of their instructional modification practices. It provided an overall assessment of the respondents' perceptions and identified areas of strength and aspects requiring further improvement. The standard deviation was used to determine the variability or consistency of the respondents' answers. It indicated the extent to which the responses clustered around or deviated from the mean, thereby providing additional insight into the consistency of teachers' knowledge and instructional modification practices. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used as the inferential statistical tool to determine whether a significant relationship existed between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. It measured the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables, providing evidence of whether teachers' knowledge was associated with the implementation of instructional modifications in inclusive classrooms.

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 of teachers' knowledge of disability categories, the numerical rating 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. The numerical rating 2 corresponded to the scale 2.51–3.25 with the descriptive rating Agree, interpreted as generally knowledgeable with some gaps. The numerical rating 3 corresponded to the scale 1.76–2.50 with the descriptive rating Disagree, interpreted as limited knowledge and struggling with instructional strategies. The numerical rating 4 corresponded to the scale 1.00–1.75 with the descriptive rating Strongly Disagree, interpreted as lacking knowledge and the ability to support learners effectively. For the scoring of instructional modification practices, the numerical rating 4 corresponded to the scale 3.26–4.00 with the descriptive rating Strongly Agree, interpreted as frequently applying effective instructional modifications. The numerical rating 3 corresponded to the scale 2.51–3.25 with the descriptive rating Agree, interpreted as generally applying modifications but inconsistently. The numerical rating 2 corresponded to the scale 1.76–2.50 with the

descriptive rating Disagree, interpreted as rarely applying instructional modifications. The numerical rating 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 study involved 30 regular teachers of Napo Elementary School in Carcar City, Cebu, during the School Year 2025-2026. They were selected through purposive sampling, with five teachers from each of Grades 1 to 6 (16.67% per grade level). The study used a descriptive-correlational design. Data were gathered with an adapted three-part survey questionnaire on demographic profile, knowledge of disability categories, and instructional modification practices. Responses were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, and the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The discussion below is grounded in the data gathered. The results are interpreted in direct relation to the study's objectives: to describe the respondents' profile, determine their level of knowledge of disability categories and the extent of their instructional modification practices, and test the relationship between the two variables.

Demographic profile of the respondents

The respondents were predominantly female. Of the 30 teachers, 27 (90.00%) were female and 3 (10.00%) were male. By age bracket, 4 respondents (13.33%) were above 53 years old, all female, with no males (0, 0.00%) in this group. The 44-53 bracket was the largest, with 10 respondents (33.33%): 9 females (30.00%) and 1 male (3.33%). The 34-43 bracket had 8 respondents (26.67%), composed of 7 females (23.33%) and 1 male (3.33%). The 24-33 bracket likewise had 8 respondents (26.67%), with 7 females (23.33%) and 1 male (3.33%). The predominance of female teachers reflects the continuing feminization of the teaching profession. It suggests that instructional practices in this setting may be shaped by approaches often associated with nurturing, collaborative, and learner-centered teaching. The concentration of respondents in the middle-age groups indicates that most were at a mature professional stage in which experience and stability in practice are well established. From the perspective of Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, cognitive maturity and accumulated experience contribute to improved problem-solving and instructional decision-making, which matters in inclusive classrooms with diverse learners (Piaget, 1972). In relation to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, experienced teachers are better able to provide the scaffolding that helps learners with disabilities move toward independent learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The Universal Design for Learning framework likewise stresses flexible instructional planning that accommodates learner variability, and the maturity and exposure to classroom diversity of these respondents may strengthen their capacity for differentiated and inclusive strategies (Meyer et al., 2014). Morris et al. (2022) emphasized that individuals with disabilities often face additional costs and barriers in accessing education and other social services. This underscores the need for adequately prepared educators who can implement inclusive practices that reduce learning barriers and promote equitable access. Experienced teachers are better positioned to recognize varying learner needs, adapt strategies, manage diverse learning behaviors, and provide accommodations, thereby creating flexible, supportive, and responsive learning environments.

In terms of highest educational attainment, 20 respondents (66.67%) had master's units, 7 (23.33%) were master's graduates, and 3 (10.00%) held a bachelor's degree. Most

respondents were therefore engaged in or had completed graduate-level studies. This indicates a generally well-qualified workforce committed to professional growth. The dominance of teachers with master's units suggests that many were still completing graduate studies, which may further enhance their instructional competence. The master's graduates represent a group with advanced training that can contribute to more effective planning in inclusive settings requiring adaptive and differentiated strategies. Piaget's theory holds that higher cognitive functioning develops through progressive stages of learning and experience. Teachers with higher attainment are therefore expected to show stronger reasoning, reflective thinking, and problem-solving in managing diverse classroom needs (Piaget, 1972). From the standpoint of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, advanced preparation deepens teachers' understanding of child development, learning theories, assessment practices, and differentiated instruction. This enables them to provide timely guidance matched to learners' developmental levels and to gradually reduce assistance as students gain confidence and competence (Vygotsky, 1978). The Universal Design for Learning framework similarly suggests that theoretically well-grounded teachers are better able to apply multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. They are also more likely to recognize that learners differ in how they access information, process concepts, and demonstrate understanding, and so to build lessons with varied materials, flexible activities, and diverse assessments (Meyer et al., 2014). These findings align with Hall et al. (2022), who emphasized that professional understanding and training significantly influence how educators interpret and respond to diverse learner needs, including disability and functional difficulties. Higher attainment may also strengthen collaboration with colleagues, parents, and other education professionals in planning interventions.

Regarding years of teaching experience, 12 respondents (40.00%) had 11-15 years of experience, 7 (23.33%) had 16 years and above, 6 (20.00%) had 1-5 years, and 5 (16.67%) had 6-10 years. Most respondents therefore belonged to the mid-career to experienced category, with a substantial proportion having long years of service. They have been exposed to varied classroom situations, curriculum demands, and learner diversity, which is important in inclusive settings where teachers must adapt instruction to different abilities and needs. The presence of both early-career and highly experienced teachers also indicates a balanced workforce in terms of professional exposure. In relation to Cognitive Development Theory, teaching experience refines reasoning, decision-making, and reflective thinking, so teachers with longer service are more likely to analyze classroom problems and design appropriate responses for diverse learners. From the perspective of the Zone of Proximal Development, experienced teachers provide more effective scaffolding for learners with disabilities who need structured assistance to progress toward independence. The Universal Design for Learning similarly emphasizes flexible and responsive strategies, and teachers with longer service are more likely to have developed adaptive practices that offer multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. Konuk Er et al. (2023) likewise noted that teachers' knowledge and understanding of learning disabilities are influenced by professional experience and exposure to learners with diverse needs. Experience thus contributes significantly to awareness and competence in identifying and addressing learning difficulties.

As to teaching position, 21 respondents (70.00%) were Teacher III, while Master Teacher, Teacher II, and Teacher I each had 3 respondents (10.00%). Most respondents therefore occupied mid-level positions, with smaller proportions in entry-level and senior roles. This suggests a workforce that is still actively engaged in direct classroom instruction while progressing in its careers, with varying levels of responsibility, experience, and expertise. Teaching position matters in inclusive education because it often reflects exposure to training, leadership roles, and instructional decision-making. Master Teachers are typically expected to mentor colleagues and model effective strategies, while the Teacher III majority are likely to

be actively implementing classroom-based interventions and inclusive practices. These findings can be connected to Ginevra et al. (2022), who emphasized that teachers' attitudes toward students with disabilities are influenced by the type and quality of information they receive about learners' profiles. Teachers in higher positions are often more exposed to professional development and structured information systems, which may foster more informed and positive attitudes. From the standpoint of Cognitive Development Theory, progression in rank may be associated with cognitive growth through experience and professional learning, and with more refined analysis of classroom situations. In relation to the Zone of Proximal Development, teachers in higher positions often facilitate professional learning among peers, providing scaffolding not only for students but also for less experienced teachers, which reinforces collaboration within the workforce. The Universal Design for Learning also highlights flexible instructional leadership, and teachers in advanced positions may guide the adaptation of curriculum and instruction to learner needs. Overall, the respondents were predominantly mid-level teachers, particularly Teacher III, and many had already acquired substantial classroom experience and opportunities to refine their instructional practices.

Level of knowledge of disability categories

The respondents' knowledge of disability categories was measured through ten indicators. The aggregate mean was 3.36 with an aggregate standard deviation of 0.46, interpreted as Moderately Knowledgeable. The respondents were therefore generally moderately knowledgeable in identifying, understanding, and applying concepts related to disability categories in the classroom. The highest-rated indicator was "I can distinguish between physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities" (weighted mean 3.80, SD 0.41), followed by "I know how different disability categories affect a student's learning needs" (weighted mean 3.77, SD 0.43). Both were interpreted as Knowledgeable. Respondents thus showed stronger understanding in recognizing broad distinctions among disability types and their general impact on learning. The remaining eight indicators were interpreted as Moderately Knowledgeable. Among them, "I am confident in explaining the educational needs of students with autism spectrum disorder" had a weighted mean of 3.40 (SD 0.50), and "I am familiar with the learning challenges associated with emotional and behavioral disorders" had 3.37 (SD 0.49). "I understand how multiple disability categories can co-occur in one student" had 3.33 (SD 0.48), and "I can match instructional support strategies to specific disability categories" had 3.30 (SD 0.47). "I can describe appropriate classroom expectations for each disability category" had 3.23 (SD 0.43), and "I can identify each major disability category recognized in inclusive education" had 3.17 (SD 0.38). The lowest ratings were for "I understand the defining characteristics of students with intellectual disabilities" (3.13, SD 0.63) and "I know the legal and educational definitions of disability categories used in schools" (3.13, SD 0.43). This indicates that conceptual and legal foundations were less developed than practical identification skills. The overall moderate level suggests that teachers possess functional awareness of disability categories but have gaps in deeper theoretical and legal understanding. This pattern may reflect teacher preparation and professional development that emphasize classroom application over specialized theoretical training. As noted by Sivrikaya et al. (2023), teachers' content knowledge on specific learning disabilities varies across competencies, with stronger performance often seen in practical identification than in conceptual or legal domains. Neca et al. (2022) similarly emphasized that inclusive education requires sustained professional development to strengthen teachers' understanding of disability-related concepts.

Theoretically, Cognitive Development Theory suggests that knowledge progresses from concrete understanding to abstract and formal reasoning. The stronger performance in identifying disability types reflects concrete understanding, while the weaker performance in legal and definitional aspects reflects limited advancement to higher-level conceptual reasoning. In relation to the Zone of Proximal Development, teachers appear to be at a developing stage of competence where continuous training and collaboration can serve as scaffolding for more complex aspects of disability categories. The Universal Design for Learning emphasizes understanding learner variability in order to design inclusive instruction. Deeper understanding of disability categories enables teachers to anticipate learning barriers and provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. It also supports the selection of appropriate resources, technologies, and assessment methods, and the creation of accessible environments that encourage participation and academic success. The findings imply that although teachers are generally aware of disability categories, their theoretical and legal understanding needs strengthening. Without comprehensive understanding of disability characteristics and inclusive education policies, teachers may struggle to select appropriate modifications and accommodations, which can lead to inconsistent practices and limit the effectiveness of interventions. These results underscore the importance of targeted professional development on disability classifications, legal frameworks, and instructional alignment.

Extent of instructional modification practices

The extent of instructional modification practices was likewise measured through ten indicators. The aggregate mean was 3.33 with an aggregate standard deviation of 0.43, interpreted as Moderately Practiced. Teachers could implement basic adjustments, but these were not yet consistently integrated across all aspects of teaching and learning. The highest-rated indicator was "I adapt classroom seating and routines to increase accessibility for students with disabilities" (weighted mean 3.70, SD 0.47), followed by "I provide individualized task modifications during class activities" (3.50, SD 0.51). Both were interpreted as Practiced. This indicates that teachers were more confident in applying direct, visible, and immediate adjustments that support participation and accessibility. The remaining indicators were interpreted as Moderately Practiced. "I adjust assessment formats (e.g., oral responses, extended time) for students with disabilities," "I consult with special education personnel when planning instructional changes," and "I use differentiated instruction strategies regularly in mixed-ability classrooms" each had a weighted mean of 3.40 (SD 0.50). "I alter the way I present instructions (e.g., visuals, simplified language) for students who struggle with the general curriculum" had 3.30 (SD 0.47), and "I use alternative learning materials to support students with different disability needs" had 3.23 (SD 0.43). "I modify homework or practice assignments for students with identified learning needs" had 3.13 (SD 0.35). The lowest ratings were for "I modify lesson content to suit the learning needs of students with disabilities" and "I reflect on and revise my instructional modifications based on student progress," each with a weighted mean of 3.10 (SD 0.31). This indicates limited consistency in deeper instructional planning and reflective practice. Teachers thus tend to prioritize practical classroom-based modifications over systematic instructional redesign and reflection. This may be influenced by limited collaborative planning time, heavy workload, and insufficient access to structured professional support. Jurkowski et al. (2023) emphasized that effective inclusive teaching is strongly supported by co-teaching and collaboration, where shared planning and instructional responsibility enhance the quality and consistency of adaptations. Cerero et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of digital teaching competencies, noting that the ability to use appropriate tools and technologies can significantly improve instructional adaptation. The moderate level of practice in this study suggests room for improvement in integrating

collaborative and technology-enhanced approaches. From a theoretical perspective, the Universal Design for Learning requires proactive planning that incorporates multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. The moderate practice level indicates partial implementation of these principles, particularly in lesson content modification and reflective adjustment. Strengthening teachers' understanding of UDL can help them design lessons that anticipate learner diversity from the outset rather than relying on modifications after difficulties arise. In relation to the Zone of Proximal Development, teachers can provide some scaffolding but may need further support through collaboration and professional learning communities. Effective scaffolding requires accurate identification of learners' current abilities and assistance that gradually leads to independence, and mentoring, peer collaboration, and sharing of inclusive strategies may strengthen individualized support and teachers' confidence. Cognitive Development Theory likewise supports the view that instructional competence improves through experience and reflective practice. The moderate level of practice reflects developing expertise that can be enhanced through continuous professional development, as teachers become more proficient in selecting, adapting, and evaluating strategies and in refining their approaches through reflection.

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, with significance set at $p<0.05$ (two-tailed). The computed r-value was 0.006, indicating a negligible positive correlation. The p-value was 0.975, which is greater than 0.05, so the result did not meet the criterion for statistical significance. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between the two variables, was therefore not rejected. There is no significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. Although a slight positive correlation was observed, it was too weak to suggest any meaningful association between knowledge and actual practice in inclusive classrooms. This result differs from Porter et al. (2022), who emphasized that educator knowledge across instructional support levels is associated with the quality of instructional decision-making and implementation, suggesting that higher knowledge generally contributes to better practice. The discrepancy may be attributed to contextual limitations in the present setting, where knowledge may not be sufficiently supported by training structures, collaboration, or resources that facilitate its application. Teachers may have an adequate understanding of disability categories, yet opportunities to strengthen and apply it through sustained professional development, mentoring, and classroom support may be limited. Consequently, they may struggle to translate knowledge into effective modifications for diverse learners. The result aligns with Aro et al. (2022), who highlighted that learning difficulties are often influenced by behavioral and emotional factors that affect classroom practices beyond teacher knowledge alone. It also aligns with Göransson et al. (2022), who stressed that inclusive education is shaped by broader systemic and structural conditions, so that teacher practices are influenced not only by knowledge but also by institutional arrangements and contextual realities. Instructional modification practices are thus multidimensional and may be shaped more strongly by contextual and systemic factors than by knowledge alone. These include administrative support, access to instructional resources, collaboration among teachers, and opportunities for continuous professional learning, which together affect teachers' ability to plan, implement, and evaluate modifications that respond to

learner diversity. Successful inclusive implementation therefore depends not only on what teachers know but also on the support systems within the school environment.

Synthesis of findings

Taken together, the data from the 30 teacher-respondents show a predominantly female (27, or 90.00%), mid-career, well-qualified workforce. Most had master's units (20, or 66.67%), 19 had 11 or more years of experience (12 with 11-15 years, or 40.00%, and 7 with 16 years and above, or 23.33%), and most were Teacher III (21, or 70.00%). Their knowledge of disability categories was Moderately Knowledgeable (aggregate mean 3.36, SD 0.46), with strength in distinguishing broad disability types and understanding their effect on learning needs, and gaps in intellectual disabilities and legal definitions. Their instructional modification practices were Moderately Practiced (aggregate mean 3.33, SD 0.43), with visible classroom adjustments more developed than lesson content modification and reflective revision. The Pearson correlation showed a negligible positive relationship between the two variables ($r = 0.006$, $p = 0.975$), which was not significant at $p<0.05$, so the null hypothesis was not rejected. These findings address each objective of the study. They also contribute to the inclusive education literature by suggesting that, in this setting, knowledge alone does not account for the extent of instructional modification, and that school-level support systems, collaboration, and sustained professional development deserve attention. This evidence provides the basis for the conclusions and recommendations in the next chapter, including the Action Plan intended to strengthen teachers' knowledge of disability categories and instructional modification practices in inclusive classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the knowledge of disability categories and the instructional modification practices of regular teachers at Napo Elementary School in Cebu Province Division during the School Year 2025–2026, with the aim of providing a basis for a proposed Action Plan that would strengthen inclusive education practices. Data were gathered from 30 teacher-respondents through structured survey questionnaires and were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, and standard deviation to describe the respondents' profile and the extent of the study variables, while Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between knowledge of disability categories and instructional modification practices. Taken together, the results allow several conclusions to be drawn about the respondents and the conditions under which inclusive instruction is carried out in their classrooms.

With respect to the demographic profile, the findings showed that the teaching workforce was predominantly female and generally belonged to the middle-age group, which suggests that the respondents were mostly at a mature stage of their professional careers, where stability and experience in teaching practice are already established. Most of the teachers had also pursued graduate studies, and only a few held a bachelor's degree as their highest qualification, which reflects a generally well-qualified group of educators who are engaged in continuous professional development. In the same way, most of the respondents had considerable length of service, which implies that they were experienced educators who had been exposed to various classroom situations and learner needs over time. Furthermore, the distribution according to teaching position indicated that most were mid-level teachers, with fewer occupying entry-level or higher positions, suggesting that the respondents were largely classroom-based teachers who are actively involved in direct instructional delivery. These

characteristics indicate that the respondents were professionally well positioned to understand and respond to the needs of diverse learners.

Despite this favorable profile, the results revealed that the respondents were generally moderately knowledgeable about disability categories. It can therefore be concluded that although teachers have sufficient awareness of disability types, their characteristics, and their corresponding learning needs, there remain areas that require further strengthening, particularly the more complex and conceptual aspects of disability understanding. A similar pattern emerged in the extent of instructional modification practices, which teachers generally employed at a moderate level across lesson adaptation, instructional delivery, assessment modification, and classroom support strategies. This suggests that instructional adjustments are being implemented in classrooms, but that these practices are not yet fully consistent or maximized across all teaching activities. Hence, it was concluded that the respondents generally possessed moderate knowledge of disability categories and moderately practiced instructional modification strategies in inclusive classroom settings.

Notably, the test of relationship showed that there was no significant relationship between teachers' knowledge of disability categories and their instructional modification practices. This indicates that having knowledge of disability categories does not necessarily translate into the consistent application of instructional modification in inclusive classrooms. It follows that, while teachers have sufficient awareness and experience in handling diverse learners, knowledge alone does not directly lead to the consistent application of instructional modifications. Other factors, such as training, workload, institutional support, and access to resources, may play a more critical role in influencing how inclusive strategies are implemented in actual classroom practice.

In light of these conclusions, it is recommended that the proposed Action Plan be implemented to strengthen teachers' knowledge of disability categories and to enhance their instructional modification practices in inclusive classrooms. The plan includes targeted professional development activities, instructional coaching, mentoring, and collaborative learning opportunities that will equip teachers with the competencies needed to effectively support learners with diverse educational needs. Through such sustained and supportive interventions, the gap between knowing about disability and consistently acting on that knowledge in the classroom may be narrowed, thereby advancing more inclusive and responsive education at Napo Elementary School.

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