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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Enhancing Educational Opportunities: Teaching Practices and the Progress of Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

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| ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the educational experiences, availability of resources, development of learners with Intellectual Disabilities (ID), and teachers' practices in the special needs education settings in Central School in Cebu, Philippines, for the academic year 2024-2025. A descriptive-correlational design was employed, surveying 40 Special Needs Education teachers. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed high mean scores on learning experiences, indicating that the learning environment is positive and inclusive of students with intellectual disabilities, providing them with immense support. In all, the resource availability was high; visual aids and teacher training were also available. Assistive technology and adaptive furniture represented significant shortages. The overall educational progress of learners revealed moderate proficiency in cognitive, motor, and language development. The teachers employed many strategies to handle and support ID learners; however, the study found that some of these good practices were moderately practiced. Although quality of education related positively with teacher effectiveness, the weak link between resource availability and developmental outcomes called for more strategic use of available resources. The study concludes that continuous professional development for teachers on evidence-based practices and strategic investments in resources, especially in the areas of assistive technology and adaptive furniture, are core areas to improve learning experiences and development outcomes among students with ID. Thus, a very valued contribution to keep practice currently informed and on areas of further development, the researcher recommends an action plan toward better support of educational opportunities for learners with intellectual disabilities.

| KEYWORDS

Descriptive–correlational, educational opportunities, intellectual disabilities, Philippines, teaching practices.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Learners with intellectual disabilities (ID) face unique educational challenges that affect their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Intellectual disabilities encompass a broad range of conditions characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors, including conceptual, social, and practical skills. These limitations often hinder their capacity to meet academic standards, understand complex concepts, and engage in problem-solving tasks.

Inclusive education is a guiding principle for modern educational systems and is essential for ensuring that all students can thrive academically and socially. It requires adapting teaching methods, curricular materials, and assessment practices to accommodate the diverse needs of all learners, including those with intellectual disabilities. This approach acknowledges that learners have varying strengths and challenges, emphasizing flexibility and personalized support. By implementing inclusive education practices, schools aim to provide equitable learning experiences that bridge achievement gaps and foster a supportive

community for students of all abilities. Inclusive education benefits the entire learning community, creating a culture of inclusivity and respect (Cabanero, 2023). The international scene has recently seen a marked improvement in the educational status of learners with intellectual disabilities due to promotion for inclusive education by global organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF.

Most countries have adopted policies ensuring access and equality in education. However, a few children with ID are yet to have access to quality special education resources, indicating gaps. Large-scale trained teachers and specialized services are not accessible to the low-income regions. On its part, the Philippines has reciprocated through national efforts with the passing of the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, RA 7277, and the Enhanced Basic Education Act, RA 10533, both legislative acts fighting for accessible educational opportunities for learners with disabilities. Despite all these inclusive education policies, services to learners with ID are still greatly disparate in both quality and access across regions. The contributory factors have ranged from a lack of finance, fewer qualified teachers, to a lack of training in the continuity of learning processes for learners with ID. Resource and training availability dictate the status of learners with ID in special needs education. Whereas some divisions and districts have already initiated special education programs and resources therein, some of them experience specific challenges to offer regular or consistent support. This gap only reflects that more investments are needed in special education and in teachers' training throughout their professional lives, to make equal opportunities in education for learners with intellectual disabilities at all local levels a reality. The Philippines has implemented laws supporting the inclusion and protection of persons with disabilities. Republic Act No. 7277, known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, mandates the full participation of persons with disabilities in society. This act aims to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities by ensuring access to quality education, equal opportunities, and necessary support systems. By mandating that educational institutions accommodate learners with disabilities, RA 7277 reinforces the government's commitment to inclusive education, providing a legal framework that protects the rights and welfare of individuals with intellectual disabilities and promotes equal access to learning opportunities. Teachers of learners with ID all over the world report using adapted practices. These include the following: differentiated instruction, behavioral support strategies, and the use of assistive technology. For example, the U.S. and Canada stress an inclusive classroom environment where the teacher employs an individualized strategy for every learner's particular needs. Studies indicate that such adapted practices yield measurable academic and social gains for learners with ID, thus helping them to thrive in different learning environments.

Guided by the Department of Education, there are supposed to be practices on a national level wherein teachers adopt individualized learning plans, behavior management techniques, and life skills development in schools. In real life, these often get diluted due to a lack of training and resources, making full implementation of inclusive strategies by teachers very hard and the needed support of learners with ID a piped dream. Locally in Region VII, these practices vary among teachers in support of learners with ID, because some divisions and districts provide more systematic training in special education practices than others. Some teach in schools in which special education programs are developed-including differentiated instruction and adaptive technologies training; others teach in areas with sparse resources and less professional development. This inconsistency underlines an extended need at all levels in support and resources for teachers to prepare them in their work for supporting learners with ID. Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, strengthens inclusive education by mandating that the K-12 curriculum accommodate diverse learning needs. This act calls for the integration of inclusive practices across all educational levels, ensuring that learners with disabilities, including those with intellectual disabilities, receive appropriate support to succeed academically. RA 10533 emphasizes the importance of differentiated instruction and personalized learning strategies, encouraging schools to adopt flexible approaches that meet the unique needs of all students. Through this law, the government aims to enhance the quality of education by making it more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the individual capabilities of each learner.

At the school level, teachers at the elementary schools in the Philippines wrestle every day with adapting the curriculum and teaching to allow these ID learners to keep pace in the regular class. The classroom-based research by Garcia et al. (2020) demonstrated that the core of adapting instruction to meet the needs of all students was a relationship between teacher collaboration, differentiated instruction, and classroom management techniques. While each of these had its separate initiatives, there was an acknowledged need for a universal and integrated action plan that stitched together best practices and stimulated an exciting approach toward teaching.

The research also covers the existing gap through an analysis of the teaching practices in the Philippine elementary schools. In this focused investigation, the research tries to shed light on effective strategies and inform areas where additional support or training is warranted. This study ultimately aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based approaches that would enhance educational opportunities for learners with intellectual disabilities and support both local and national goals for an inclusive and supportive educational environment.

2. Theoretical Background

This study is anchored on the Theory of Multiple Intelligences by Gardner (1983). Gardner postulated that individuals possess varieties of intelligences such as linguistic, logical-mathematical, and bodily-kinesthetic, which should be identified and addressed in the educational arena, particularly for learners with intellectual disability. This serves as one of the foundational theories for differentiated instruction in learners of diversity. Gardner (1983).

The study also gives attention to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, there is great emphasis on social interaction and scaffolding of learning, especially within the learner's "zone of proximal development" or ZPD. ZPD refers to the range of tasks that learners can execute with guided assistance but cannot perform independently. Teachers are very important in this regard in that they provide structured support through which learners, even those with intellectual disability, can achieve a higher level of cognitive, motor, and language development. The emphasis of Vygotsky's theory on social learning is that the key to realizing learners' developmental potential lies in collaborative activities, including peer interactions and cooperative tasks. It is through such interactions that the teacher can scaffold learning-for example, gradually reducing support as learners gain confidence and independence. In so doing, learners will more actively engage in the learning process. As such, it holds great relevance for addressing diverse needs among students with intellectual disabilities (Vygotsky, 1978).

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory plays an important role and describes how individuals progress through discrete developmental stages, each characterized by discrete cognitive capabilities. Understanding these development stages is important for teaching, especially when working with learners who have intellectual disabilities. A teacher will be able to apply appropriate instructional strategies that consider the current cognitive capacity of the learner, thus nurturing growth in cognitive, motoric, and linguistic aspects of his being.

Skinner's Behaviorism assigns a central role to reinforcement in developing behavior and enhancing learning, especially among people with intellectual disabilities. Strategies on positive reinforcement, like the use of reward systems, motivate learners toward the realization of certain learning goals through academic and social engagements in developing a sense of success and improvement.

These theories point to weaknesses in current practice, including a lack of differentiation at the lesson planning stage and a lack of use of social learning techniques. Targeted interventions to address such weaknesses, including individualized lesson planning and cooperative learning, have the potential to greatly enhance educational opportunities for learners with ID.

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Clear expectations and consistent routines in structured learning environments help to reduce behavioral challenges by creating an orderly and predictable setting that fosters learning. Skinner's framework emphasized evidence-based behavioral strategies and how there were gaps in current practices for which reinforcement systems were lacking. Addressing such gaps by infusing systematic reinforcement methods could pay dividends in improving the educational experiences and outcomes of learners with intellectual disabilities significantly. Skinner (1953; 1957).

Global and national frameworks stipulate the right of learners with ID to inclusive education by underlining accessibility, reasonable accommodation, and capacity building for teachers. As asserted, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), under Article 24, persons with disabilities have a right to inclusive education. The implication of this is a call for the education systems to be reasonably accommodated and accessible, hence equitable to the learners with ID. On the other hand, the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) also affirms inclusive education policies: thus, it insists that schools should consider flexible, adaptive teaching approaches to deliver programs that cater to a diverse range of needs among their mainstream students. At the national level, both the Philippine Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (RA 7277) and the Enhanced Basic Education Act (RA 10533) firmly established the inclusive education legal framework.

RA 7277 mandates access to education and services for persons with disabilities, while RA 10533 ensures that the K-12 curriculum incorporates learners with special needs, including those with ID, into mainstream settings. Complementing these laws, DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009, provides guidelines for integrating children with special needs into regular classrooms, emphasizing the importance of teacher capacity building to effectively implement inclusive education strategies. These policies bring to the fore critical gaps in teacher training and systemic accommodations. While legal mandates have fostered a sense of inclusion, many educators have not had the professional preparation or received the resources to put theory into practice.

Inclusive education will be a reality only when these gaps are mended through comprehensive teacher training, curriculum adaptations, and systemic reforms. These international and national policies give this study a strong framework that will ensure the practices of teachers handling learners with ID are in line with established educational principles and supported by legal mandates.

Differentiated instruction, peer support programs, and assistive technology. The adaptive practices of teachers played the most prominent role in encouraging meaningful participation and access to the curriculum. (Maciver et al., 2018). Inclusive practices, supported by strategies fitted to their needs, led to enhanced social competence and improved attainment, reinforcing the call for teacher-led frameworks to create inclusiveness and engagement. (Fisher & Meyer, 2002). Teaching features of self-determination, such as decision-making and goal- setting skills, is a very important method of teaching for engagement, autonomy, and providing greater educational and personal growth opportunities. (Wehmeyer & Abery, 2013). Specific strategies, like summarization, simplification, and visual supports, have a particularly great effect on reading comprehension and engagement and further illustrate how adapting content can provide increased accessibility of academic material for students with intellectual disabilities. (Hudson et al., 2013). Systematic instruction, characterized by explicit, step-by-step teaching and frequent reinforcement was effective in both academic and life skills for students, pointing out that structured teaching methodologies do play an important role in education. (Collins, 2012). Simplified hands-on instructional methods facilitate both student engagement and mastery of academic content for students with extensive cognitive disabilities. This shows the need for methodologies that are easy and responsive. (Browder, & Spooner, 2006). Problem-solving strategies greatly enhance the cognitive and functional abilities of students, hence providing more justification for the need for systematic and skill-based teaching methodologies in the classroom. (Ayres et al., 2011).

Teachers who create more inclusive environments have learners who exhibit more social and cognitive engagement, thus placing a further emphasis that teacher practices are pivotal in promoting better cognitive development among students with ID. (Siperstein et al., 2011). They play a critical role in carrying out adapted approaches to the instruction of cognition, motor, and language skills, which may very well obtain drastic differences in these development areas for students (Harris, 2006). Other effective strategies included planned peer contacts and social skills training that had a significant increase in the level of social acceptance and interactions among the selected students with intellectual disabilities. (Carter & Hughes, 2005).

Training increased their knowledge of inclusive practice; however, the majority of teachers were skeptical about the capability to successfully implement this strategy in their classrooms. Teachers had grievances of requiring more detailed levels of support and resources (Forlin & Chambers 2011). For that, the researchers proposed a framework for inclusive pedagogy by asking teachers to view diversity as a strength. They put forth that flexibility in teaching strategies was necessary to support students with or without disabilities (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). The attitudes of the preservice teachers about inclusion improved after the course with a significant decrease in biases. Simultaneously, the study showed that there was a cultural difference in readiness to embrace inclusive practices (Sharma & Sokal, 2015). Individualized instruction, systematic teaching strategies, and the importance of collaboration among educators and support staff. This book lays down a pathway to develop both academic and functional skills among students with severe disabilities, which in turn, are the keys to independence and social interaction (Westling et al., 2015). Explicit teaching, reinforcement, and ongoing assessment for adjusting the instruction. The authors emphasize visual supports, assistive technology, and simplified instructional content are all accommodating resources to provide students with enhanced learning and participation opportunities (Spooner et al., 2017).

Differentiated instruction and IEPs to make their instruction meet the unique needs of their students, highlighting just how tailored support can increase academic engagement and success, says Kurth and Mastergeorge (2010). Inclusive settings have been shown to enhance the academic achievement and adaptive behavior of intellectual disability students, especially when they are well-supported by a teacher according to Dessemontet et al. (2012). Individualized learning strategies include task analysis and scaffolded learning to reach better functional and academic skills. The collaboration of educators and families increases, thus enhancing students' educational opportunities. (Westling & Fox, 2019) In building relationships with and supporting the students individually, students with intellectual disability develop a sense of belonging that fosters a college-going culture and eventual academic engagement and achievement, say Stiefel et al. (2018). Robinson and Truscott (2014) found out that such proactive teachers' practices, structured social activities, and collaborative learning were pivotal to promoting inclusion and ensuring positive social and academic outcomes. In supporting students with intellectual disability in their motor development, the practice of teachers related to team-based strategies along with individual accommodations becomes vital (Hunt et al., 2003). Responsive interaction techniques and environmental modification by teachers facilitate language acquisition. This is for the argument that relevance of teacher practices in language development (Hawkins & Heflin, 2011).

Teachers' approaches, in particular individual and adaptive ones, had positively contributed to cognitive, motor, and language development of students, hence, reiterating the need for strategic and individualized teaching practices (Brown & Faragher,

2014). Practicing cognitive-behavioral strategies, teachers reported the development of students in their cognitive and behavioral competencies. This suggests that more clearly structured methods result in better facilitation of the cognitive development process for the disabled student population in special educational settings. Chowdhury, M., & Benson, B. A. (2011

The effective method of teaching through differentiation of tasks and offering physical accommodations is found to be directly related to the developmental outcomes of learners. The argument of inclusive adapted teaching therefore stands effective, Lemay, M. (2009)

Functional skill training and techniques for differentiated instruction are taught to increase the student academic and development, thus individualized education plan is recommended Heward, W. L., 2013.

The teachers who implemented evidence-based training for social skills demonstrated practical improvement in students' motor and social interaction skill, thus social and motor development would work and may be improved by specific teacher, Wang, P., & Spillane, K. K., 2009.

Practices that ensure student voice and choice in learning activities are associated with higher gains in developmental areas of particularly those related to cognitive and language skills, and thus, teacher responsiveness has presented quite significant implications for the educational experiences of students. Rose, R., & Shevlin, M. (2010).

Well-organized, systematic instruction while considering that better outcomes from teacher-directed skill-building and scaffolded activities result in a few developmental domains. Gargiulo, R. M., & Bouck, E. C. (2020)

Learners with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) possess varying challenges in their learning processes and require special teaching strategies that allow for equal learning opportunities. Many educational systems worldwide have adopted inclusive practices to better meet the diverse needs of learners. Accordingly, a critical area of focus for improvement in educational outcomes lies in the practice of teachers who teach learners with ID, especially in schools at the local level. This study will measure the current practices in selected schools in Cebu to determine effective strategies that promote learning among students with ID and will serve as a basis for the development of an action plan.

On the global scale, the concept of inclusion for learners with disabilities has been advocated through frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The UNCRPD sums up that inclusive education is about preventing exclusion of learners with a disability from general education systems based on disability (UN, 2006). The World Health Organization- WHO also underscores the need for tailoring teaching methods to suit the special needs of the student with ID for better learning outcomes. Learners with ID could attain full potential through individualized instruction and evidence- based strategies, (Schalock et al.,2010)

Inclusive education has gathered momentum in the world, with countries trying to assert the rights of learners with intellectual disabilities. The Salamanca Statement, 1994, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, have pinpointed a need for policies and practices that are inclusive and promote equal opportunities for learning by all students. International research also demonstrated the success of teacher strategies in a number of countries where an attempt to respond to learners' needs with intellectual disabilities was made and focused on such strategies as differentiated tuition, social-emotional support, and collaborative learning. The international frameworks taken together emphasize the necessity of identification and enhancement of inclusive practices in schools (Ainscow, 2020).

The country has equally shown its concern for inclusive education through various legislations such as, among others, the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (RA 7277) and more recently by Republic Act 10533 mandating DepEd to include special needs learners into the K-12 curriculum. To boot, DepEd Order No. 72, s. DO 2009 stipulates the inclusion of children with special needs, but it focuses on capacity building and professional development of teachers on how to handle students with ID. The Department of Education, through the Special Education (SPED) Program, encourages collaboration between regular and SPED teachers in crafting learning plans that accommodate learners with disabilities. It has been one of the most important agendas in the policies of the Department of Education in the Philippines, especially after the passing of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, also known as Republic Act No. 10533, mandating the addressing of diverse needs of learners. However, this hype for inclusive education for learners with intellectual disability is, in actual practice, still confronted by certain barriers regarding teacher preparedness and the availability of appropriate resources. The current study will try to contribute to these national efforts by assessing teachers' practices in handling learners with intellectual disabilities and provide insights into how those gaps in the Philippine education system can possibly be bridged (DepEd Order No. 72, s. 2009).

The various schools in the region have organized local programs concerning learners with intellectual disabilities. For instance, Rama et al. 2019 studied challenges and success factors that SPED programs face in Cebu; even then, the structure and consistency of teacher training, access to resources and administrative support were still wanting. Various schools in the Visayas area, particularly those in Cebu, provide additional competency building for teachers through a series of workshops and/or collaboration between public schools and non-government organizations. Region VII or Central Visayas, particularly Cebu, has developed an inclusive education promotion wherein schools such as the Guadalupe Elementary School, Talisay City Central School, Mandaue City Central Special Education School, and Consolacion Central School have indeed opened their doors to accommodate learners with intellectual disabilities. Despite such efforts, challenges remain to be addressed in the region for an appropriate and continuous use of strategies in inclusive education. This study would like to propose a region-specific action plan that could uplift the performance of learners with intellectual disabilities more by studying the current best practices of teachers across schools in Region VII. Ong, R. & Sison, M. (2022). "Inclusive education initiatives in Central Visayas: Progress and challenges." Visayas Journal of Education, 10(3), 45-58.

The present study therefore gave an indication of what worked and what needed adjustment to come up with an action plan geared at improving educational opportunities for learners with ID. This was in line with international and national ideals for inclusive education that emphasized the imperative for affording equal opportunity for every learner irrespective of ability to succeed academically.

As a result, students with ID require specialized teaching approaches and support systems tailored to their individual needs, allowing them to progress in both academic and social environments. Addressing these needs is essential for their holistic development and effective integration into society. Special educational settings now present more opportunities for the development of learning environments that correspond better to the individualized needs of learners with ID, where educators themselves can already apply an individualized education program, use assistive technologies, and work in teams to address each learner's particular challenge. Special education settings have a few individualized resources and methods that help bridge gaps in learning, build up social skills, and support cognitive and emotional development. This would, in turn, enhance the educational experience and future opportunities of learners with ID. The concept of inclusion centers on ensuring that all learners, regardless of their abilities, have access to equitable educational opportunities. For learners with intellectual disabilities, inclusion fosters a sense of belonging, acceptance, and participation in regular classroom settings. Inclusive practices enable these learners to interact with their peers in meaningful ways, promoting both social and academic growth. Additionally, inclusion encourages a collaborative approach in classrooms, where students of varying abilities learn from each other and build empathy, acceptance, and respect. The push for inclusion underscores the commitment to embracing diversity and promoting an educational environment where every learner is valued and supported.

Empirical research has demonstrated that learners with intellectual disabilities benefit significantly from specialized instructional approaches and inclusive education practices. Studies reveal that when learners with ID are provided with structured and individualized teaching strategies, they show measurable progress in cognitive and social skills (Jones & Thomas, 2020). Additionally, research highlights the positive impact of inclusive education on the social adaptation and self-esteem of students with intellectual disabilities, as they engage more actively in school activities and build supportive peer relationships (Smith & Brown, 2019). These findings underscore the importance of adopting evidence-based practices that address the specific educational needs of students with intellectual disabilities, as they promote meaningful learning experiences and personal growth.

This study particularly addressed the gaps in teacher practices and resources that limited educational opportunities for learners with intellectual disabilities in the selected schools in Cebu. While the principles of inclusive education have emphasized equal access and support for all learners, there were certain practical gaps that hampered the full realization of these for learners with ID. Teachers often faced difficulties in adapting curricula, lacked specialized resources, and experienced limited support for implementing individualized learning strategies. These challenges, particularly in the state schools of Cebu, were documented in studies by Rama et al. (2019) and Ong and Sison (2022), which noted resource shortages, a lack of training in specialized methodology, and the absence of organized guiding frameworks for supporting learners with ID. Despite the extant literature on special education and inclusive practice, there was a need to address the research gap into what strategies. Filipino teachers utilize in supporting learners with intellectual disabilities, more so at the local level in Region VII. Few had considered daily school practices in this region, or explored how teachers might view the challenges posed by a lack of resources and poor training. It was thus this omission that provided a very real case for the conduct of an in- depth study into current practice that would have the added benefit of informing the development of effective teaching strategies able to help meet the needs of learners with ID in the Philippines.

The study, therefore, embarked on a scientific exploration of what teachers were doing presently to address learners with intellectual disabilities as a means of laying a foundation toward formulating specific learning strategies that would increase educational opportunities for learners with intellectual disabilities. Through such an analysis, the present study aimed to fill in the gaps within the approaches to teaching and support structures that would provide an enabling environment of learning for the promotion of an equitable education system for learners with intellectual disabilities. This showed a deep commitment to evidence- based formulation of strategies which would particularly address the unique needs of the targeted students in securing maximum academic and social achievement. Apart from resource limitations, teachers also faced specific challenges related to the needs of their students with ID in the areas of cognitive, motor, and language development. Local research stated that due to a lack of specialized support, learners may not reach their full developmental potential. The current practices were investigated to determine those critical areas where gaps exist, such as differentiated instructional materials, professional development opportunities, and collaborative support networks.

These findings are used to inform the development of a practical, evidence-based action plan that could help address these gaps. The plan targets real challenges faced by teachers in the development of better instructional approaches, improved teacher training, and access to appropriate resources. This study therefore aimed at contributing to the development of a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that would enable learners with ID in Cebu to reach their fullest potential academically and socially.

2. Objectives Of The Study

This study aimed to assess the practices of teachers handling and supporting learners with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) in special needs education settings that would find effective strategies for improving their educational opportunities in a Philippine elementary school, for the school year 2024-2025, serving as the basis for an Action Plan.

It sought to answer, specifically, the following sub-questions:

1. What is the extent of educational opportunities in handling and supporting learners with intellectual disabilities in special needs education settings, along with i) learning experiences, and ii) availability of resources?
2. As perceived by teacher respondents, what is the level of educational state progress among learners with intellectual disabilities in terms of cognitive development, motor development, and language development?
3. What is the extent of teacher respondents' practices in handling and supporting learners with ID as to their cognitive, motor, and language development?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the following: a) educational opportunities and teacher-respondent's practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor, and language development; b) educational state progress and teacher-respondent's practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor and language development?
5. What intervention may be formulated based on the findings?

2.1 Statement of the Null Hypothesis

Based on the objectives of the study, the following null hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

Ho: there is no significant relationship between the following: a) educational opportunities and teacher-respondents' practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor, and language development; b) educational state progress and teacher-respondents' practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor and language development?

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

This study made use of a descriptive correlational research design. It describes the profiles of teacher-respondents relative to demographic and professional characteristics, such as level of education, years of teaching experience, and specialized training in special education. Summarize the scope of teacher practices, pointing out concrete strategies that have been tried in the classroom to accommodate learners with ID. The educational opportunities were correlated with the teacher-respondent's practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor, and language development. The educational state progress was also correlated with the teacher-respondent's practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor, and language development. An adapted survey questionnaire was used to determine the Junior High School Mathematics teachers' knowledge of, attitudes toward, and experiences with the gamification activities in the classroom.

3.2 Environment

This study was conducted in Philippine elementary schools. The schools were chosen with a great deal of caution since they responded to a certain criterion involving the peculiar nature and relevance to the research. The school should be eligible for selection, having programs in special education well organized to address learners with intellectual disabilities, either in resource rooms or self-contained classrooms. The targeted schools were chosen because they have active special education programs, have enrichment programs that address learners with ID, and are well-resourced settings with competent teachers. Such an environment offers structured programs to enable investigation of various teaching practices and strategies involved in developing cognitive, motor, and language skills.

3.3 Respondents

The respondents were 40 teachers from the elementary schools. The sampling in this study was also to be representative because it involved different sets of teachers who have different grade levels and backgrounds. Such diversity ensures that the practices and insights are represented comprehensively to add weight to an all-rounded understanding of the educational needs and approaches relevant to the learners with intellectual disabilities.

3.4 Instrument

The research instrument designed for this study was a well-constructed tool to source relevant data from teachers handling learners with ID. This instrument was prepared in the study entitled "Teachers' Practices in Handling Learners with Intellectual Disabilities: A Basis for Developing Learning Strategies to Enhance Educational Opportunity". This present study investigated the educational opportunity provided, the teaching practices of the teachers, and the development of special education learners. It also attempted to trace the relation between Data educational opportunities and teacher practices, while showing what needed to be corrected and how to plan remedial actions. It focused on key areas: the level of educational opportunity, defined by learning experience and the availability of resources; perceived learner progress in terms of development in cognitive, motor, and language areas among teacher respondents; and the extent of the teacher practices to ensure the former. It also sought to investigate the relationship between educational opportunities and teacher practices, and to gather insights for developing evidence-based strategies and recommendations that would promote educational opportunities for learners with intellectual disabilities. This tool was also designed to take the researcher through an in-depth exploration of the main aspects regarding the handling and support given by the teachers to the learners with intellectual disability.

3.5 Gathering Procedure

This paper was submitted to the Research Technical Committee of the college for approval. Upon approval, data gathering ensued. A formal letter of request was forwarded to the Office of the School Principal requesting permission to conduct the study. The researcher shared the questionnaire with the selected teachers with the help of school administrators. Each teacher was given a necessary amount of time to fill out the survey. The researcher availed of existing school records about the cognitive, motor, and language development of learners with intellectual disabilities. These, coupled with assessments done by teachers, provided data that helped analyze the correlation between teacher practices and learner outcomes. There was no disruption in classes during the administration of the survey questionnaire. Participation was strictly voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was guaranteed.

Pre-data collection stage. The pre-data gathering was the stage where all the preparations were undertaken to ensure that permission and ethical compliance were obtained. A letter of request was drafted and addressed to the Principals of the elementary schools, where permission was sought to conduct the study with teachers handling students with intellectual disabilities. Informed consent forms were also prepared for the purpose of ensuring that all respondents fully understood the purpose, nature, and confidentiality of the study. Informed consent forms clarified that their participation was purely voluntary and that their respective responses were anonymous and utilized only for research purposes. Once permission and consent were secured, the researcher collated the survey instruments and prepared them for delivery.

3.6 Statistical Treatment

In analyzing the data on the extent of educational opportunities in handling and supporting learners with intellectual disabilities in special needs education settings, along with learning experiences, and availability of resources, weighted means and standard deviations were computed.

To determine the level of educational state progress among learners with intellectual disabilities in terms of cognitive development, motor development, and language development, weighted means and standard deviations were also utilized.

To describe the extent of teacher respondents' practices in handling and supporting learners with ID as to their cognitive, motor, and language development?

The significance of the relationship between a) educational opportunities and teacher-respondents' practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor, and language development; b) educational state progress and teacher-respondents' practices in handling and supporting learners with IDs as to their cognitive, motor and language development, the t-test of paired observations was employed.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The research followed the guidelines on ethics to protect the rights of respondents. Informed consent was sought from respondents, while their responses were kept confidential and anonymous. Permission was sought from school authorities to permit access to learner records for approval on ethical considerations for protocols to be followed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Extent of Educational Opportunities

The availability of adequate resources significantly influenced the quality of learning experiences. With access to technology, updated textbooks, and specialized equipment, the learning experience could be made more engaging and deeper. Additionally, qualified teachers and supportive staff members were important in the provision of effective instruction and guidance. By ensuring that students had the necessary tools and support, educators could create optimal learning environments that empowered students to reach their full potential.

4.2 Learning Experiences

The quality of learning experiences substantially influenced the students' engagement, motivation, and overall academic achievement. By understanding what comprises positive learning experiences, educators could create more effective and inclusive classrooms. A well-rounded education involves not only academic knowledge but also the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and social-emotional skills. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Learning Experiences (N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: Students with intellectual disabilities receive adapted lesson plans that are tailored to their individual learning needs.	2.65	0.95	Often
Q2: Students with intellectual disabilities receive one-on-one instruction when they encounter challenging tasks.	3.02	1.02	Often
Q3: Students with intellectual disabilities actively participate in hands-on activities designed to engage them in the learning process.	2.82	0.90	Often
Q4: Students with intellectual disabilities are included in group activities that allow them to interact and collaborate with peers.	3.25	0.84	Always
Q5: Students with intellectual disabilities are exposed to real-world applications that help them connect classroom learning to everyday situations.	3.20	0.82	Often
Q6: Students with intellectual disabilities receive constructive feedback regularly, guiding them to understand and improve their performance.	3.13	0.82	Often
Q7: Students with intellectual disabilities are encouraged to set and review personal learning goals, fostering a sense of growth and achievement.	3.13	0.85	Often
Q8: Students with intellectual disabilities are given opportunities to express themselves, sharing their thoughts, ideas, and opinions.	3.28	0.72	Always
Q9: Students with intellectual disabilities are motivated through positive reinforcement, recognizing their efforts and task completion.	3.32	0.69	Always
Q10: Students with intellectual disabilities are encouraged to reflect on their learning, helping them understand their progress and achievements.	3.10	0.84	Often
Average Weighted Mean	**3.09**	**0.85**	**Often**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Always; 2.51 – 3.25 Often; 1.76 – 2.50 Sometimes; 1.00 – 1.75 Rarely/Never

The results on the extent of educational opportunities along learning experiences reveal that a weighted mean of 3.09, the average interpreted as "Often," suggesting that an average student with ID received supportive learning environments quite often. Whereas there was variation across indicators, the overall trend seemed to be positive regarding the learning experience. However, the standard deviation stood at 0.85, and this indicated variability in the implementation of these practices. The results indicate that, overall, teachers were committed to providing experiences that would afford students with intellectual disabilities a more supportive and inclusive environment. High scores were recorded on indicators reflecting one-on-one instruction, group activities, and positive reinforcement, meaning the students were motivated and involved. Furthermore, many of the lower-scoring indicators reflected areas where adapted lesson plans could be improved, along with the making of real-world applications.

The school, however, should have prioritized furthering the learning experiences of students with intellectual disabilities through highly individualized education plans. In all other aspects, teachers needed ongoing professional development that would support effective differentiated instruction and inclusive practices. Partnerships could be established with the families and community organizations, which might offer further levels of support and resources. Schools could have addressed identified areas of improvement and made a strong commitment to inclusive education to provide the best learning environment for all their students. The data underlined the commitment of teachers to provide an inclusive learning environment to students with intellectual disabilities by emphasizing individualized support, group collaboration, and positive reinforcement. However, it was felt that further opportunity for growth existed in strengthening adaptation of lesson plans and real-life applications to meet the diverse student needs.

Support of pupils' social participation may be an important characteristic of special educational settings; still, there is further scope to explore how knowledge about teachers' practices in special educational settings might be utilized with a view to supporting pupils' social participation in mainstream settings. Therefore, there was a general good case of the teachers maintaining proper, supportive, and inclusive learning of these students with intellectual disability challenges, which provided possible avenues for further consideration concerning improved activities in the classrooms involving practical applications of the given material with adapted lesson plans. Klang et al. (2019). These findings support previous research on the need for individualized instruction and relevant learning experiences for students with disabilities to be successful (Thompson et al., 2018). Schools can create an optimal learning environment for all students by addressing these identified areas for improvement and by continuing to be highly committed to inclusive education.

4.3 Availability of Resources

Sufficient resources would involve including students with intellectual disabilities and actively engaging them in all learning. Resources would have a major impact on engagement, motivation, and accomplishment of the students and include specialized materials, assistive technology, and qualified support staff. With proper quality investment and continued support, school students with intellectual disabilities are empowered to succeed in all areas academically, emotionally, and with social dignity. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3. Availability of Resources (N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: Specialized learning materials are readily available to support the unique learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities (e.g., manipulatives, visual aids).	2.67	0.92	Agree
Q2: Assistive technology tools are accessible and frequently used by students with intellectual disabilities (e.g., tablets, text-to-speech software).	2.50	0.96	Agree
Q3: Adaptive furniture and equipment are available to support the physical comfort and accessibility needs of students with intellectual disabilities.	2.53	0.93	Agree
Q4: Resource rooms or specialized spaces are accessible to provide additional support to students with intellectual disabilities when needed.	2.65	0.95	Agree
Q5: Qualified support staff (e.g., teaching assistants, paraprofessionals) are available to provide individualized support to students with intellectual disabilities.	2.57	1.04	Agree
Q6: Families of students with intellectual disabilities are provided with resources and guidance (e.g., materials, workshops) to assist in supporting their child's learning at home.	2.65	0.95	Agree
Q7: The learning environment is consistently maintained as quiet, organized, and sensory-friendly, meeting the needs of students with intellectual disabilities.	2.88	0.99	Agree
Q8: Visual aids and cues are accessible to help students with intellectual disabilities better understand and engage with classroom content.	2.95	0.85	Agree
Q9: Flexible curriculum materials are available and accessible, allowing students with intellectual disabilities to work with adapted texts and materials suited to their learning levels.	2.82	0.87	Agree
Q10: Training opportunities for teachers on new resources and strategies for supporting students with intellectual disabilities are regularly provided and encouraged.	2.82	0.87	Agree
Average Weighted Mean	**2.70**	**0.93**	**Agree**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Always; 2.51 – 3.25 Often; 1.76 – 2.50 Sometimes; 1.00 – 1.75 Rarely/Never

The results on the availability of resources to students with intellectual disabilities show a weighted mean of 2.70, which falls within the category "Agree", indicating that, on average, students with intellectual disabilities had adequate resources to support their learning. While there is variation across the indicators, the overall trend shows a positive level of resource availability. However, the standard deviation was 0.93, which means a variability in lower and higher dispersion in the accessibility and quality of such resources.

From the data, it is apparent that the respondents generally agreed on the resource availability for students with intellectual disability. Relatively high scores in some of the indicators, like visual aids, flexible curriculum materials, and teacher training opportunities, suggested that an effort was being made to provide friendly learning environments. However, the low scores regarding assistive technology and adaptive furniture indicated some room for improvement. The findings showed a general view among the respondents that the resources were generally accessible to students with intellectual disability, especially in visual aids, flexible curriculum materials, and teacher training. However, the relatively lower availability of assistive technology and adaptive furniture pointed to critical gaps that needed to be addressed to have fully supportive and inclusive learning environments.

The schools should have emphasized adequate funding for specialized resources and equipment to further enhance the learning experiences of students with intellectual disabilities. There should have been regular reviews of resource needs and access so that students had what they needed to succeed. In addition, there was a need for the teachers' continuing professional development so that they would be informed on how to use whatever resources were available effectively. Schools could have created an inclusive and empowering learning environment with an investment in quality resources and support. A study by Okongo et al.(n.d.) established that there was a shortage of teaching and learning resources in the pre-school centers within

Nyamira North sub-county; 78% of the respondents said this inadequacy has hindered the implementation of inclusive education. The study recommends the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources and increasing funds to acquire materials suitable for SNE learners. The data showed that there was agreement regarding the availability of resources for students with intellectual disabilities, but there was still room for improvement in areas such as assistive technology and adaptive furniture. These findings also echoed previous research that claims that an adequate provision of resources and support is very significant to guaranteeing the success of students with disabilities (Thompson et al., 2018). By addressing the identified areas of improvement and investing in quality resources, schools would have provided an inclusive and effective learning environment for all learners.

4.4 Level of Educational State Progress

The educational state of learners with intellectual disabilities significantly influences their overall development and quality of life. Factors related to it that could make a big difference in this are access to inclusive education, availability of specialized resources, and the quality of teacher training. By creating supportive and inclusive learning environments, the school can help these learners with intellectual disabilities to reach their full potential to live satisfying lives.

4.5 Cognitive Development

Cognitive development was a complex process through which mental processes such as thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving were modified. It included aspects such as attention, memory, language, and creativity. Early childhood experiences were important in the development of cognition since the brains of young children were very malleable at that stage. Providing stimulating learning environments and engaging in cognitive activities are some of the ways caregivers and educators can foster optimal cognitive development in young children. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Educational State Progress (Cognitive Development, N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: Can use fine and gross motor skills to handle objects or perform tasks.	2.35	0.83	Somewhat proficient
Q2: Able to performs physical tasks or actions quickly and efficiently.	2.55	0.83	Moderately proficient
Q3: Indicates control of body movements-such as balance, coordination.	2.70	0.76	Moderately proficient
Q4: Able to understand and follow movement directions in activities.	2.57	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q5: Able to engage in group physical activities or exercises.	2.55	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q6: Can recognize patterns or sequences in simple activities or materials.	2.73	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q7: Demonstrates basic counting skills and understands quantities.	2.60	0.81	Moderately proficient
Q8: Can follow multi-step instructions when given guidance.	2.78	0.83	Moderately proficient
Q9: Shows curiosity and asks questions to understand more about topics or objects.	2.78	0.76	Moderately proficient
Q10: Can identify familiar people, places, or objects in pictures or within their environment.	2.80	0.79	Moderately proficient
Average Weighted Mean	**2.64**	**0.80**	**Moderately proficient**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very proficient; 2.51 – 3.25 Moderately proficient; 1.76 – 2.50 Somewhat proficient;1.00 – 1.75 Poorly/Not proficient

In the data shown in Table 4, intellectual disabilities showed a moderate proficiency in fine and gross motor skills, following directions, and pattern skills, as indicative of some strengths in development. However, the identified area of improvement regarding following complex instructions and encouraging curiosity indicated that structured, visually supported, and practice-oriented activities had to be carried out for further developing their cognitive and adaptive skills.

Osei (n.d.). found out that the optimal development of cognition for students with intellectual disability should be promoted by evidence-based instructional strategies, including explicit instruction, visual supports, and hands-on learning activities. This is further supported by the importance of early intervention and continuous assessment to determine individual needs and proper interventions. Collaboration among teachers, parents, and therapists would have brought a holistic approach in terms of

cognitive development. The school is supposed to offer appropriate supportive learning environments that could enable students with intellectual disability to excel. Interactive and direct teaching approaches were found to be the best methods of instruction in adaptive skills teaching. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the Ghana Education Service, in collaboration with head teachers, provide regular workshops on Effective Instructional Methods for Teaching Adaptive Skills. These workshops would help update teachers on best practices and ensure consistent use of student-centered teaching approaches. Effectiveness of instructional strategies in teaching adaptive skills to learners with intellectual disabilities in unit special schools in Ghana.

The data showed that in many different domains, students with intellectual disabilities had demonstrated moderate levels of cognitive development. There was, however, a huge need for targeted interventions in developing specific skills, such as following multi-step instructions and demonstrating curiosity. These findings supported previous research indicating the need for early intervention and continued support in fostering the cognitive development of persons with intellectual disabilities. (Thompson et al., 2018). Instead, schools could be able to provide an intellectually challenging environment where a student with intellectual disability realizes their full potential.

4. 6 Motor Development

Motor development in early childhood is a basic element in laying down a foundation for physical and cognitive abilities in a child. Fine and gross motor skills-like grasping, crawling, and walking-are basic features in the child's ability to explore his environment, interact with people, and become independent. This would give educators and caregivers ample opportunity to support the optimal motor development of young children by allowing them to be physically active and to experience their surroundings with all their senses.

Table 5. Educational State Progress (Motor Development, N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: Can use fine and gross motor skills to handle objects or perform tasks.	2.87	0.76	Moderately proficient
Q2: Able to perform physical tasks or actions quickly and efficiently.	2.80	0.82	Moderately proficient
Q3: Indicates control of body movements-such as balance, coordination.	2.88	0.65	Moderately proficient
Q4: Able to understand and follow movement directions in activities.	2.78	0.73	Moderately proficient
Q5: Able to engage in group physical activities or exercises.	2.95	0.68	Moderately proficient
Q6: Can manipulate small objects (e.g., pencils, buttons) with precision.	3.05	0.75	Moderately proficient
Q7: Demonstrates ability to jump, hop, or skip with balance and coordination.	3.00	0.82	Moderately proficient
Q8: Can hold and use writing tools (e.g., crayons, markers) with control	3.03	0.73	Moderately proficient
Q9: Shows stamina in physical activities, sustaining effort without quickly tiring.	2.80	0.82	Moderately proficient
Q10: Exhibits hand-eye coordination in tasks such as catching a ball or stacking blocks.	2.93	0.80	Moderately proficient
Average Weighted Mean	**2.91**	**0.76**	**Moderately proficient**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very proficient; 2.51 – 3.25 Moderately proficient; 1.76 – 2.50 Somewhat proficient;1.00 – 1.75 Poorly/Not proficient

Data on indicators of the motor development of the students with intellectual disabilities reveal a weighted mean of 2.91, falling within "*Moderately Proficient*," while on average, these students show a moderately sufficient level of motoric development across the domains. Though the variations did exist among the indicators, the overall trend suggested the need for further support in enhancing motor skills. The standard deviation of 0.76 described the dispersion in the level of motor development among the students.

The findings indicated that the mean skill level among the students with intellectual disability was at a moderate level of proficiency in the skills related to fine motor, gross motor, and hand-eye coordination. The skills needed are targeted

interventions, especially concerning stamina and balance skills. These moderate levels of proficiency suggested that these students may have benefited from structured physical activities, sensory motor activities, and practice opportunities to enhance their motor abilities. The data indicated that students with intellectual disabilities demonstrated moderate proficiency in fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and hand-eye coordination, suggesting foundational strengths in these areas. However, the need for targeted interventions in stamina and balance highlighted the importance of incorporating structured physical activities and sensory-motor exercises to support their overall motor development and physical well-being.

Evidence-based physical education programs adapted to meet the needs of students with ID should have been implemented at the schools to enhance optimal motor development. Occupational therapy and physical therapy services could have provided specialized support regarding individual challenges. Besides, physical activities in everyday life and play opportunities, including everyone, could have helped students develop the necessary motor skills. By providing a supportive and stimulating environment, schools could have helped students with intellectual disabilities reach their full potential in terms of motor development.

In a study by Dwommoh (n.d.), self-injurious behaviors, such as hitting and banging heads against objects, besides inappropriate social behaviors such as impatience, depression, and rebellious tendencies, were observed. The reinforcing tools used were toffees and biscuits. Various teaching methods were employed in providing instructional support for these learners, including play, demonstration, and collaborative methods. The data revealed that the motor development of the learners with intellectual disability was at a moderate level in most of the studied aspects. However, there is a need for targeted interventions to enhance specific skills such as stamina and balance. These findings align with previous research that highlights the importance of early intervention and ongoing support to promote motor development in individuals with intellectual disabilities (Thompson et al., 2018). By providing a supportive and stimulating environment, schools could have helped students with intellectual disabilities reach their full potential in terms of motor development.

4.7 Language Development

Language development was at the core of human cognition and social interaction. The ability to speak and write in a language effectively promotes learning, problem-solving, and the building of relationships. Basic experiences in language, such as reading aloud, storytelling, and conversation, form the foundation upon which future language development can take place. By offering robust language environments and engaging in meaningful communication, educators and caregivers can support the development of strong language skills in young children. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. Educational State Progress (Language Development, N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: Can read English words and phrases.	2.73	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q2: Can speak and write his/her thoughts.	2.55	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q3: Able to understand spoken instructions or commands	2.73	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q4: Can have a simple conversation with peers, classmates or teachers.	2.88	0.72	Moderately proficient
Q5: Sentence structure and vocabulary improve.	2.50	0.78	Moderately proficient
Q6: Can follow stories or narratives when read aloud and recall main ideas.	2.58	0.81	Moderately proficient
Q7: Uses descriptive words to talk about people, objects, or events.	2.65	0.80	Moderately proficient
Q8: Understands and appropriately uses common gestures (e.g., waving, nodding).	2.83	0.64	Moderately proficient
Q9: Can form sentences to express personal needs or preferences clearly.	2.53	0.82	Moderately proficient
Q10: Shows interest in reading activities, either independently or with assistance.	2.60	0.78	Moderately proficient
Average Weighted Mean	**2.66**	**0.77**	**Moderately proficient**

Legend: 3.26 – 4.00 Very proficient; 2.51 – 3.25 Moderately proficient; 1.76 – 2.50 Somewhat proficient;1.00 – 1.75 Poorly/Not proficient

The data showed that in areas such as understanding spoken language, the use of gestures, and the formation of simple sentences among the students with intellectual disability, there existed a moderate level of proficiency. However, there is a great need for targeted interventions on areas of reading and writing and the use of descriptive language. These moderate levels of proficiency suggested that such students may have benefited from structured language activities, speech-language therapy, and opportunities for social interaction to enhance their language abilities. The data indicated that students with intellectual disability demonstrated a good proficiency level in understanding spoken language, using gestures, and forming simple sentences to communicate basic ideas. However, the need for improvement in reading, writing and descriptive language highlighted the importance of structured language activities, speech-language therapy and interactive opportunities to further develop their expressive and receptive language abilities.

Schools should provide effective language intervention strategies that would ensure optimum language development among learners with intellectual disabilities. Such strategies involved early intervention, speech-language therapy, and assistive technology. A language-rich environment, opportunities for social interaction, and the use of visual supports could have helped students develop their communication skills. In addition, collaboration between teachers, parents, and speech-language pathologists could have provided a comprehensive approach to support language development. The schools could have supported the students with intellectual disabilities in realizing their full potential as far as language development is concerned by providing a facilitating and stimulating language environment.

This may therefore call for parallel support for caregivers' psychological well-being as an indispensable ingredient in further improving the efficacy of caregiver-implemented language interventions for school-age children with intellectual disabilities. (Abbeduto, & Thurman (n.d.)). From their study, the trend of language development among students with intellectual disabilities was at the middle level in most areas. However, there was a need for targeted interventions to improve specific skills such as reading, writing, and the use of descriptive language. These findings supported earlier research indicating that early intervention, as well as continued support, were crucial in fostering language development among persons with intellectual disabilities (Thompson et al., 2018). Schools could have empowered students with intellectual disabilities to realize their fullest potential in language development by providing a supportive and stimulating language environment.

4.8 Practices of Teachers Handling and Supporting Learners with Intellectual Disabilities

Effective practices of teaching were necessary in handling and supporting the learning and development of learners with intellectual disabilities. In this regard, understanding the particular and unique needs of such students, coupled with evidence-based strategies, would ensure that teachers provide inclusive and active learning environments. Differentiated instruction, explicit instruction, and the use of assistive technology were some of the strategies that can make learning effective for students with intellectual disability. Schools could support teachers through continuous professional development and necessary resources to put effective practices into place that support students' success.

4.9 Cognitive Development

Effective language development was imperative in both academic and social functions. By exposing them to rich language through reading aloud, storytelling, or conversations, caregivers and professionals can facilitate strong language arts skills among children. Early intervention was important for catching up with individuals who faced delays or disorders in language abilities that may impact their communication and learning skills in the long run. Table 7 presents the results of the indicators related to the best practices of teachers in support of cognitive development for students with ID.

With an average weighted mean score of 2.55, ranked as "Moderately Practiced," it thus indicated that these teachers were moderately applying effective practices to support cognitive development on average. While there was variation across the indicators, the general trend suggested that further professional development and support would be beneficial to enhance teachers' practices in this area. The standard deviation of 0.76 showed the variation in the level of implementation for these practices among the teachers.

Table 7. Teacher Practices (Cognitive Development, N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: I prepare special learning materials appropriate for the cognitive capacity of learners with intellectual disabilities.	2.25	0.78	Fairly practiced
Q2: I use differentiated instruction strategies considering different cognitive needs.	2.38	0.74	Fairly practiced
Q3: I am always checking the learners' comprehension by conducting informal and formal assessments, such as quizzes and activities.	2.58	0.71	Moderately practiced
Q4: I break down complicated lessons into simpler, manageable steps for better cognitive comprehension	2.55	0.82	Moderately practiced
Q5: I use multisensory approaches such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic to facilitate cognitive learning.	2.65	0.74	Moderately practiced
Q6: I do regularly provide feedback and reinforcement to help the intellectual development of the learners.	2.50	0.78	Moderately practiced
Q7: Any theory that I discuss, I relate to a practical example that could help the learners in correlating theory to real-life situations	2.70	0.79	Moderately practiced
Q8: A classroom is prepared in a way to enable focused learning and reduce all sorts of distractions.	2.45	0.71	Fairly practiced
Q9: I monitor and record motor development through observation and assessment to revise activities as necessary.	2.70	0.76	Moderately practiced
Q10: I continually observe and record language development to adjust instructional strategies when necessary.	2.75	0.81	Moderately practiced
Average Weighted Mean	**2.55**	**0.76**	**Moderately practiced**

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Fully practiced; 2.50 – 3.24 Moderately practiced; 1.75 – 2.49 Fairly practiced; 1.00 – 1.74 Poorly/Not practiced

Data in Table 7 shows that these practices, such as using differentiated instruction, breaking down complex tasks, and giving feedback, were being implemented at a moderate level by the teachers. However, special preparation of learning materials and multisensory approaches showed a need for further improvement. The moderate practice might have suggested that these needed more training and resources for enhancing the skills of teachers toward fostering cognitive development. Data also revealed that teachers were practicing with moderate intensity some strategies on differentiation, task simplification, and feedback. This reflected foundational commitments toward inclusive practices. However, the need to improve in preparing specialized learning materials and the utilization of multisensory approaches insinuates that targeted professional development and resources were essential to complement their skill in supporting cognitive development.

As such, schools should have attached importance to continuous professional development among their special education teachers in enhancing the cognitive development of students with intellectual disabilities. This training should have focused on evidence-based instructional strategies like differentiated instruction, explicit instruction, and the use of assistive technology. Further, schools should have supported these with the necessary resources such as special materials and equipment. In return for the investment in teacher training and the provision of necessary resources, schools would have provided the most conducive learning environment to help all students reach full cognitive development.

Teaching this population requires long-term prioritization of one's mental and physical well-being. (Abbeduto & Thurman (n.d.)). The data showed that the practices to enhance the cognitive development of the students with intellectual disabilities were implemented moderately by the teachers. This further points to the importance of increased professional support and training on skills development in this aspect. These findings agreed with previous research that emphasized that teacher training on methods of effective instructional strategies for cognitive development in students with intellectual disability is necessary. Thompson et al., 2018. By investing in teacher training and adequate resources, schools could have facilitated optimal learning environments by promoting cognitive development among all students.

4.10 Motor Development

Language development was effective in achieving academic success and social interaction. Rich language experiences, like reading aloud, storytelling, and conversations by educators and caregivers, could support the building of strong language skills in young children. Early language intervention is important for individuals with language delays or disorders since the early years are the best time to acquire the necessary skills for communication and learning.

Table 8. Teacher Practices (Motor Development, N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: The activities I prepare would enhance the fine motor skills of the child, such as writing, drawing, and manipulating the hands.	2.80	0.69	Moderately practiced
Q2: I provide appropriate gross motor activities-jumping, running, and physical exercises-for intellectually handicapped learners.	2.75	0.71	Moderately practiced
Q3: I provide adaptive physical activities for learners with serious motor limitations.	2.83	0.55	Moderately practiced
Q4: I give learners manipulative materials, like blocks and puzzles, through which learners can develop motor skills.	2.72	0.60	Moderately practiced
Q5: I liaise with physical therapists or occupational therapists to complement the motor development in the learners.	2.88	0.65	Moderately practiced
Q6: I modify classroom environments and routines so as to enhance the ability of learners with disabilities to become independently mobile.	2.93	0.69	Moderately practiced
Q7: I do physical breaks or incorporate activities that include movement to support learners during difficult times of motor skills.	2.93	0.69	Moderately practiced
Q8: I employ the use of technology-assisted tools, assistive devices, to enhance motor skills.	2.95	0.60	Moderately practiced
Q9: I monitor and record motor development through observation and assessment to revise activities as necessary.	2.68	0.69	Moderately practiced
Q10: I plan appropriate classroom activities that balance fine and gross motor skills development in the daily curriculum.	2.83	0.71	Moderately practiced
Average Weighted Mean	**2.83**	**0.66**	**Moderately practiced**

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Fully practiced; 2.50 – 3.24 Moderately practiced; 1.75 – 2.49 Fairly practiced; 1.00 – 1.74 Poorly/Not practiced

Table 8 presents the results of the indicators related to teachers' practices in support of motor development in students with intellectual disabilities. The average weighted mean turned out to be 2.83, which fell within the category "*Moderately Practiced*," and on average, teachers were found to be moderately implementing effective practices that support motor development. The indicators did show some variations; the general trend was that in teachers' practices on this dimension, further professional development and support were required. The implementation level dispersion of the practices by the teachers was 0.66 standard deviation.

It came to light that regarding activities like making adaptive physical activities available, the use of manipulative materials, and modification of classroom environments, teachers are at a medium level of implementation. However, there was a need for improvement in providing opportunities for independent mobility and using technology-assisted tools. The moderate levels of practice suggested that additional training and resources could help teachers further develop their skills in supporting motor development. The data indicated that teachers were effective to a moderate degree in providing differentiated instruction, task simplification, and feedback, reflecting foundational dedication to inclusive practices. However, the need for improvement in preparing specialized learning materials and using multisensory approaches suggested that targeted professional development and access to resources were important in enhancing their ability to support cognitive development.

To improve the motor development of students with intellectual disabilities, schools should have prioritized ongoing professional development for teachers in the area of special education. This training should have focused on evidence-based strategies, such as adaptive physical education, occupational therapy, and the use of assistive technology. Additionally, schools

should have provided adequate resources, such as specialized equipment and therapy services, to support teachers' efforts. Investing in teacher training and providing the proper resources could have allowed schools to create an ideal setting for motor skills development among students of all calibers. Data revealed that, while teachers implemented moderate levels of practices to support the motor development of students with intellectual disabilities, additional professional development and support were still needed to enhance teachers' skills. These findings aligned with previous research that highlighted the importance of teacher training and effective instructional strategies in promoting the motor development of students with intellectual disabilities (Thompson et al., 2018). By investing in teacher training and providing adequate resources, schools could have created optimal learning environments that promoted motor development for all students.

4.11 Language Development

Development in the language field is fundamental during the years of academic advancement, as well as communication between peer groups. Educators could create an experience of robust development regarding speaking vocabulary among kids if provided with an enriched verbal routine comprising reading aloud, storytelling, and discussing various subjects. Indeed, intervention in the early life-stage helped people who suffered language impairments and disorders to develop various sets of language skills with more efficiency. The results of the teacher practices in language development are given in Table 9.

Table 9. Teacher Practices (Language Development, N=40)

Indicator	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Q1: I use visual aids - flashcards, images, and posters - to support language comprehension among people with intellectual disability.	2.68	.694	Moderately practiced
Q2: I encourage learners to participate verbally during classroom activities.	2.45	.714	Fairly practiced
Q3: I use non-verbal communication techniques of gesture and facial expression in teaching language skills.	2.65	.736	Moderately practiced
Q4: I adapt speech and language tasks based on the developmental stage of the learner.	2.75	.670	Moderately practiced
Q5: I allow time for learners to practice receptive and expressive language.	2.40	.672	Fairly practiced
Q6: I collaborate with a speech language pathologist to support the development of languages with learners.	2.50	.716	Moderately practiced
Q7: I employ storybooks, songs, and rhymes to develop language in playful and interactive ways.	2.58	.747	Moderately practiced
Q8: I plan group discussions or pair activities that encourage talking among the learners.	2.67	.656	Moderately practiced
Q9: I provide sufficient processing and wait time for a response on the part of learners in language activities.	2.45	.714	Fairly practiced
Q10: I continually observe and record language development to adjust instructional strategies when necessary.	2.48	.716	Fairly practiced
Average Weighted Mean	**2.56**	**0.70**	**Moderately practiced**

Legend: 3.25 – 4.00 Fully practiced; 2.50 – 3.24 Moderately practiced; 1.75 – 2.49 Fairly practiced; 1.00 – 1.74 Poorly/Not practiced

The results of the indicators on teachers' practices about supporting the language development of students with intellectual disabilities are given in Table 9. The weighted mean average is 2.56, which falls into "*Moderately Practiced.*" This reveals that, on average, effective practices were being moderately implemented by teachers to support language development. There was variation across the indicators, but the general trend was that with more professional development and support, the practice of teachers would be furthered in this area. The standard deviation of 0.70 showed dispersion at the level where these practices were applied by teachers.

According to the data, the level of implementation of these practices by the teachers ranged in moderation, basing on visual aids, adjusting language tasks, and providing opportunities to practice the language. However, it was also noted that some areas needed improvement, such as promoting verbal participation and collaboration with speech-language pathologists. The moderate levels of practice suggested that additional training and resources might have been necessary for the teachers to feel more confident in their ability to support language development. The data showed that the practices which were applied moderately included visual aids, adaptation of language tasks, and provision of language practice opportunities. These showed a

good practice of supporting language development. In addition, verbal participation and cooperation with speech-language pathologists need more improvement, which also indicated that more training and resources are required to be provided to better develop students' language skills and communication.

The schools can show much more interest in the continuous professional development of the teachers as far as special education is concerned. These should be related to evidence-based practices such as early intervention, speech-language therapy, and assistive technology. Besides, adequate resources regarding specialized materials and equipment should have been provided to the teachers to help them in doing their job. In so doing, with proper training provided to teachers and needed resources available, schools would ensure the provision of an optimal environment wherein every child was in a position to effectively acquire their language.

The sole causation of disability to phonological awareness is a critical component of basic reading skill, unrelated to any achievement capacity discrepancy. (Lyon,1996).

Further, the data indicated that teachers were implementing practices to support the language development of students with intellectual disabilities at a moderate level; however, there was still a need for further professional development and support to enhance the skills of teachers to do so. These findings are consistent with prior research suggesting the importance of teacher training, in conjunction with effective instructional strategies, in promoting the language development of students with intellectual disabilities (Thompson et al., 2018). With an investment in teacher training and adequate resources, the schools could have provided favorable learning environments that would help in developing the language of each student.

Understanding the various ways in which educational opportunity is related to teacher practices is an important aspect to improve the learning experiences for students with intellectual disabilities. By investigating these correlations, the areas of potential improvement can be determined and addressed by formulating strategies to optimize outcomes for students. Some notable best practices of effective teachers, such as differentiated instruction, explicit instruction, and the use of assistive technology, will all greatly affect student learning and development. This involves investing in the training of teachers and providing appropriate resources to facilitate the optimal learning environment in schools, necessary for ensuring student success.

4.12 Significance of the Relationship Between Educational Opportunities and Practices of Teachers Handling and supporting learners with intellectual disabilities

This section outlines the methodology of the research that has been conducted to investigate the correlational inference between educational opportunities and the practices that teachers use to handle and support learners with intellectual disabilities. It contains a detailed description of the research design, population, and sampling techniques; data collection instruments, procedures, and the methods of data analysis to ensure that the study is systematic and evidence-based to achieve the stated objectives.

Table 9. Test of the Significance of the Relationship between the Educational Opportunities and Practices of Teachers Handling and supporting learners with intellectual disabilities

Paired Variables (Educational Opportunities with Practices of Teachers along…)	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Result
Cognitive Development	0.117	Very Weak Positive	0.474	Not Significant
Motor Development	0.095	Very Weak Positive	0.558	Not Significant
Language Development	0.182	Weak Positive	0.699	Not Significant

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The correlations between educational opportunities and developmental areas for learners with intellectual disabilities, presented in Table 9, show weak or very weak positive relationships, none of which are statistically significant. For cognitive development, the r-value of 0.117 indicates a very weak positive correlation, with a p-value of 0.474, meaning the relationship is not significant. Similarly, motor development shows a very weak positive correlation ($r = 0.095$) and a p-value of 0.558, again indicating no significant relationship. Language development has a slightly higher but still weak positive correlation ($r = 0.182$), with a p-value of 0.699, confirming a lack of statistical significance.

The results suggest that educational opportunities have minimal measurable impact on cognitive, motor, or language development outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities within the sample. The very weak correlations indicate that any observed relationship between these variables is likely due to chance rather than a consistent or meaningful connection. The non-significant p- values across all three domains reinforce this conclusion, suggesting that other factors, beyond educational opportunities, may play a more critical role in influencing developmental outcomes for these learners.

These findings highlight a potential gap in the effectiveness or implementation of educational opportunities for learners with intellectual disabilities. The lack of significant correlations suggests that simply providing educational opportunities may not be sufficient to impact developmental outcomes. This points to a need for evaluating the quality, relevance, and delivery methods of these opportunities. Enhancing teacher training, adopting specialized instructional strategies, and ensuring individualized support may be necessary to bridge this gap. Additionally, further research could explore other factors, such as the learning environment, family support, or the specific nature of the opportunities provided, to better understand what drives developmental progress for learners with intellectual disabilities. Improvement in the education of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities requires effective knowledge management (Almuaqel, 2024).

The results of this study showed that there was no significant relationship between the educational opportunities and the developmental outcomes of learners with intellectual disabilities. This supported earlier research identifying the multi-dimensionality of the causes that impact developmental growth for this population, as previously noted by Thompson et al. (2018). While educational opportunities were no doubt important, it was clear that other factors-the quality of instruction, individualized support, and family involvement-may all have played more significant roles. Further research was necessary to identify a range of effective strategies and interventions that optimize developmental outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities.

4.13 Significance of the Relationship Between Educational Opportunities and Practices of Teachers Handling and supporting learners with intellectual disabilities

This section outlines the methodology of the research that has been conducted to investigate the correlational inference between educational opportunities and the practices that teachers use to handle and support learners with intellectual disabilities. It contains a detailed description of the research design, population, and sampling techniques; data collection instruments, procedures, and the methods of data analysis to ensure that the study is systematic and evidence-based to achieve the stated objectives.

Table 10. Test of the Significance of the Relationship between the Educational Opportunities and Practices of Teachers Handling and supporting learners with intellectual disabilities (Resource Availability)

Paired Variables (Educational Opportunities with Practices of Teachers along Resource Availability and …)	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p - value	Result
Cognitive Development	0.148	Weak Positive	0.362	Not Significant
Motor Development	0.015	Very Weak Positive	0.924	Not Significant
Language Development	0.251	Weak Positive	0.118	Not Significant

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

Table 10 shows that the correlations between resource availability and developmental outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities show weak or very weak positive relationships, none of which are statistically significant. For cognitive development, the r-value of 0.148 indicates a weak positive correlation, but the p-value of 0.362 signifies that this relationship is not statistically significant. Motor development shows an even weaker correlation with an r-value of 0.015 and a p-value of 0.924, indicating virtually no relationship. Language development exhibits a slightly stronger, though still weak, correlation ($r = 0.251$) with a p-value of 0.118, which also does not reach statistical significance.

Somehow, such data indicates that resource availability does not have a meaningful impact on cognitive, motor, or language development outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities within the given context. The weak and very weak correlations suggest minimal connection between these variables, and the non-significant p-values imply that any observed relationships are likely due to random variation rather than a consistent pattern. These results suggest that simply providing resources may not be enough to influence developmental progress significantly.

Such empirical findings point to potential limitations in the type, quality, or utilization of resources available to support learners with intellectual disabilities. The lack of significant correlations suggests that resource availability alone may not drive developmental improvements; instead, factors such as how these resources are applied, the effectiveness of teaching practices, and the relevance of the resources to learners' specific needs might be more influential. Enhancing teacher training on resource utilization, ensuring resources are tailored to developmental goals, and integrating them into comprehensive educational strategies could strengthen their impact. Further research could explore whether specific types of resources or instructional methods yield better developmental outcomes, providing a clearer roadmap for effective support.

The practices of special and general educators align primarily in classroom management, especially in the setting up of classroom routines and in showing care. In most other respects, however, their practices diverge with different emphases on the area within and between the special and general educator focus groups. Myers-Daub, R. (2003). Examining teaching practices of teachers in inclusive instructional settings with students with learning disabilities ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

This study implies that a significant link between resource availability and developmental outcomes for the learners with intellectual disabilities did not exist. This concurred with previous studies underlining the multidimensionality of factors that influence the development in this population. Thus, Thompson et al. (2018). While resource availability was no doubt important, it became clear that other factors, such as quality of instruction, individualized support, and family involvement, may have played a more important role. Further research was necessary to identify effective strategies and interventions that could optimize developmental outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities.

5. Conclusion and Recommend Ations

This study underlines the development of inclusive education and indicates gaps in strategic improvements necessary for optimal learning environments for students with intellectual disability. Although students largely receive encouragement and effective strategies in learning, such as one-on-one teaching, group activities, and reinforcement, variability in implementation suggests the need for enhanced consistency. The resource availability, while mostly adequate, reveals critical gaps in terms of assistive technology and adaptive furniture, which would call for targeted investments in specialized resources. Developmental gains across cognitive, motor, and language domains are moderate; thus, refined instructional strategies are required, especially in aspects related to verbal participation, multi-step direction following, and multisensory approaches. While associations of educational settings with teacher practices are strong, lack of strong association of resource availability with developmental outcomes brings to the fore the strategic utilization of resources. Continuous professional development, differentiated instruction, and proper use of resources hold the key toward holistic development among learners with ID.

The study concludes that despite students with intellectual disability usually being in very encouraging learning environments, there was significant variation in practice. Teachers revealed a core commitment to inclusive education using certain effective strategies, such as one-on-one teaching, group work, and positive reinforcement. However, lesson plan accommodations and real-life applications were incomplete, thus showing specific areas for improvements that could be made for maximum learning outcomes.

Resource availability is generally adequate, though irregularly so. There is a resource deficit regarding assistive technology (AT) and adaptive furniture. Deficits in resources along these lines signal a strategic need to invest in specialist resources as necessary for full learner support.

Cognitive, motor, and language development for students with intellectual disabilities is at a moderate level, and this indicates the need for improving instructional strategies. The current practices of the teachers themselves are at a moderate level; for example, differentiated instruction and simplification of tasks form a very strong foundation but need further refinement. Such refinements should be targeted specifically in promoting verbal participation, following multi-step directions, and integrating multisensory approaches and technology-assisted tools.

The correlations between the state of education and the practice of teachers suggest that improvement in the educational setting contributes to effective teaching. In the same vein, a nonsignificant association exists in the developmental outcomes associated with resource availability, indicating quality and use, not mere availability, are crucial in student success. However, despite this gain in inclusive education, practices are variable, resource gaps persist, and developmental gains are modest. Thus, continuous professional development, strategic instructional strategies, and strategic use of resources will be required to build ideal learning environments that afford holistic student development among students with intellectual disability.

5.1 Recommendations

The systems and policies would need to be more inclusive to optimize conditions of learning for students with intellectual disabilities; hence, more emphasis has to be given to teachers' development and investment of more resources through network cooperation. Schools could, for example, support continuous professional development of personnel in evidence-based practice like differentiated instruction, adaptive lesson planning, and how best to use assistive technology effectively. Focus should be fostered in stimulating talk participation, curiosity, and developing further cognition, motoric competence, and linguistic capacity. Special resources, such as adapted furniture and assistive technology, require periodic revision to maintain their functionality and accessibility. It is also important to embed individualized education programs that bridge real-life experiences to structured, practice-oriented exercises to further enhance learning outcomes. Collaboration with the families, community organizations, and other specialists such as speech-language pathologists remain important in the building of inclusive, multisensory approaches. The adoption of holistic frameworks can therefore be enabling environments, hence assuring the full realization of their potential by learners with ID.

Schools are encouraged to provide support for continuous professional development of teachers to enhance experiences and developmental outcomes further. Training should be done in evidence-based practices, including differentiated instruction, adaptive lesson planning, and effective use of assistive technologies. Teachers should be prepared on how to encourage verbal participation, provoke curiosity, and promote cognitive, motor, and linguistic development. Schools should invest more in special resources, including assistive technologies, adaptive furniture, and special learning materials. These also need frequent review regarding keeping them relevant and accessible. Other aspects that can be developed are individualized education programs catering to singular needs. These integrate real-life experiences with clearly structured and practice- oriented exercises. Building a cohesive supportive network in collaboration with families and community organizations requires reaching beyond the school complex. Schools should also be implementing inclusive, multisensory approaches and engaging in collaboration with speech-language pathologists to further develop language development initiatives. Finally, holistic educational frameworks that address cognitive, motor, and language growth all together will create enabling environments for learners of all kinds, ensuring full realization of their potential.

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