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EVALUATING DIFFERENTIATED ENGLISH TEACHING IN AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL

Dedy Ahsan Muttaqin & Lalu Isnaeni Rahman
STIT Al-Aziziyah, West Lombok, Indonesia; Universitas Teknologi Mataram, Indonesia
dediahsan@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research investigates the application of differentiated instruction methods for teaching English language skills at SDN 1 Dasan Geres, an inclusive elementary school in West Lombok, Indonesia. The research investigated how participants comprehended differentiated instruction implementation within inclusive educational environments while teaching literacy and numeracy skills and developing student character. The research framework of this study combined a qualitative descriptive approach with the CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) evaluation model. The research team gathered information through comprehensive interviews with English teachers and by examining documents, including lesson plans and student assignments. Teachers recognized the importance of meeting students' varied needs with a systematic, inclusive educational approach and differentiated teaching methods. Teachers experienced obstacles to effective implementation from limited training programs, insufficient resources, excessive teaching loads, inadequate time availability, and challenges managing oversized classes. The application of differentiated instruction strategies emerged inconsistently across subjects because teachers commonly employed informal assessments to create these methods. Teachers dismantled specific barriers through differentiated instruction, leading to higher student engagement and improved self-esteem and participation. Instruction that centers on each student's unique preparation level and personal interests leads to improved literacy abilities and enhanced positive

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character qualities among students. Research determined that achieving differentiated educational sustainability demands professional development, sufficient instructional resources, and organizational backing for effective teaching strategies in inclusive primary education settings.

Keywords: Differentiated Instruction; Inclusive Education; English Language Teaching; Primary Education; Teacher Development

INTRODUCTION

Modern educational systems view educational inclusivity as a central principle that mandates schools to generate meaningful educational experiences for all students, independent of their mental abilities or physical conditions, and socio-economic or cultural backgrounds. Applying the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia demonstrates this teaching method by providing personalized lessons focusing on each student's requirements. Differentiated instruction demonstrates this fundamental educational principle through its commitment to inclusive teaching methods. The instructional approach guarantees that students access learning materials that align with their individual learning preferences and interests and enables them to interact with educational content through distinct methods. In contrast to differentiation, traditional teaching methods use one instructional approach for all students, which creates multiple learning paths customized to individual student needs in contemporary classrooms.

Differentiated instruction becomes critical when inclusive education combines special needs students with their typical peers in classroom settings. English teachers at SDN 1 Dasan Geres inclusive primary school in West Lombok, work to deliver meaningful lessons and sustain students' interest among a range of student abilities. The national curriculum promotes differentiation as a fundamental principle but encounters substantial hurdles when schools attempt to apply it in practice. Teachers must create individualized student learning experiences by analyzing collected data in diverse classroom environments. Meeting educational expectations proves difficult primarily in schools that do not have adequate resources.

Research studies have shown that students achieve better learning outcomes when educators use differentiated instruction strategies. The research by Basra (2023)

demonstrated that differentiated instruction enhances student engagement and performance by addressing students' readiness levels and learning profiles. Hasfira and Marelda (2021) discovered that students show increased motivation and self-confidence when teaching methods align with their interests and provide opportunities for individualized learning speeds. Research by Manasikana et al. Multiple intelligences tools allowed educators to develop appropriate lesson plans and teaching strategies to meet student needs according to the research by Manasikana et al. The 2022 research conducted by Manasikana and his team showed that educators have the potential to create effective lesson plans together with appropriate teaching techniques that respond to the requirements of their students. The research findings validate theoretical models and empirical evidence that endorse tailored education approaches. Modern educational systems base their operations on inclusive principles that allow schools to establish educational opportunities that serve all students regardless of their cognitive abilities, physical conditions, socio-economic standing, and cultural origins. Through implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, Indonesia strives to provide customized education for every student.

Differentiated instruction is the primary framework that reshapes teaching methods to better support inclusive education. This method provides study materials that align with each student's learning styles and incorporates their interests and preferred interactive approaches. Unlike traditional teaching, which applies uniform methods to all students, differentiation utilizes multiple instructional strategies tailored to meet individual student needs.

The supportive research findings fail to explain the practical application of differentiation, specifically in elementary rural and public-school English settings. Government policy supports student inclusion and differentiated instruction, but the lack of training resources for schools and educators and insufficient infrastructure support lead to ineffective and inconsistent differentiation implementation. Scholars should explore teacher strategies for differentiated instruction in inclusive classrooms and evaluate elements that enable or restrict these practices.

Educational systems must prioritize inclusivity by developing learning opportunities suitable for every student regardless of their mental ability level, physical state, socio-economic background, or cultural identity. Through student-centered personalized learning, Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes individualized education by customizing educational experiences for each student. Schools need to employ differentiated instruction

to achieve ideal inclusive education because it represents this central principle through its need for new teaching methods. All students obtain suitable learning materials that match their unique learning styles, interests, and preferred ways of engaging with the content. While traditional teaching methods apply uniform instruction for all students, conventional teaching methods offer one-size-fits-all instruction. Differentiation provides multiple learning pathways that address individual student needs through personalized classroom methods.

Research indicates that correctly implementing differentiated instruction results in better student learning outcomes. Basra (2023) found that differentiated instruction addressing student readiness and individual learning profiles improved student engagement and performance. Hasfira and Marelda (2021) discovered that students gain increased motivation and self-confidence when they learn through their interests at their own pace, according to research by Manasikana et al. Manasikana et al. The 2022 research showed that when teachers implement student profiling tools that consider multiple intelligences, they can create appropriate lesson plans and teaching strategies to meet student needs. This study adds to the theoretical and empirical evidence confirming differentiation as effective and adaptable in teaching methods. Studies investigating primary-level teaching methods for inclusive English instruction in comprehensive, holistic classroom settings remain insufficient.

The need for differentiated instruction grows as inclusive education demands students with exceptional needs to learn alongside their typical peers in standard classrooms. At SDN 1 Dasan Geres inclusive primary school in West Lombok, English teachers struggle to build meaningful lessons for students with a range of learning abilities. The national curriculum mandates differentiation, even though applying this principle poses substantial practical challenges during real-world execution. The construction of educational lesson plans depends on analyzing student data to determine learning profiles within large classrooms that include diverse student groups. Educational expectations remain uncertain in resource-deficient schools about whether they can meet their standards.

This study investigates the implementation of differentiated English instruction at SDN 1 Dasan Geres in West Lombok to overcome educational weaknesses. The study investigates English teachers' application of differentiation teaching methods at the school while evaluating their effects on student literacy, numeracy, and character development. The study utilized qualitative methods and the CIPP evaluation model to gather and analyze data by

examining instructional elements and their results. This study examines differentiated education practices within an inclusive primary school environment to enhance knowledge about Indonesian teaching methods. This study aims to guide policymakers, curriculum designers, and teacher trainers in understanding how professional development related to organizational change produces effective and inclusive teaching methods. Our research develops instructional materials for inclusive education by creating well-designed instructional frameworks that treat all learners equally and integrate basic educational principles.

METHODS

This investigation utilized a qualitative descriptive research design to study differentiated instruction practices in an inclusive English classroom. The research study utilized Stufflebeam's CIPP evaluation model, consisting of Context, Input, Process, and Product elements, to establish a comprehensive framework for evaluating educational programs. The researcher used the model as follows: context was to examine teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction; input was to analyze training, resources, and infrastructure; process was to explore classroom instructional strategies; product was to evaluate students' learning outcomes, including literacy and character development. The study utilized this model to investigate how differentiated instruction is comprehended and implemented across multiple phases, including planning and assessment within inclusive education settings.

The research occurred at SDN 1 Dasan Geres, a public elementary school with inclusive education programs in West Lombok, Indonesia. The research site was selected because of its dedication to inclusive education, which allows students with different academic abilities and special educational needs to study together in the same classrooms. English language instruction became the focus because it plays a key role in the national curriculum and provides insights into student abilities and motivational factors.

Here, the researcher selected participants using purposive sampling to ensure they had direct experience teaching in inclusive classrooms. The study involved two English teachers, each with 2 to 4 years of teaching experience, teaching with instructing diverse students, including those with special educational needs. Data collection involved three main techniques: semi-structured teacher interviews, non-participant classroom observation sessions, and document examination methods. The study analysed lesson plans, student

assignments, and assessment artifacts, demonstrating instructional planning and learning outcomes. This study's instruments included an interview guide for investigating teachers' conceptual and practical knowledge about differentiated instruction and observation checklists based on CIPP dimensions to evaluate instructional delivery and student engagement. Two education experts examined these instruments before deployment to confirm content validity, verifying that the instruments assessed teachers' conceptual knowledge and practical classroom application of differentiation. The researcher collected the data over two months, from February to March 2025. Six English meetings were observed, each lasting approximately 90 minutes, and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

To maintain credibility and trustworthiness, the data analysis process followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three steps: The analysis included data reduction which involved selecting essential details from transcripts and field notes and thematic coding of this information; data display which required findings to be structured into matrices and narratives for analysis; and conclusion drawing and verification where patterns were recognized conclusions made and results authenticated through re-examination of data sources.

The study's validity was strengthened through triangulation, integrating data from interviews and documents with observational information and applying descriptive and thematic coding methods. The study team confirmed research interpretations by sharing the synthesized findings with participating teachers for member checking to ensure accuracy and relevance. The study maintained ethical research practices throughout its entire duration. All participants received detailed information about the research's purpose and scope before obtaining written informed consent. The study ensured participant anonymity and confidentiality while following the ethical standards established by the affiliated institution.

This methodological approach produced detailed insights into implementing differentiated instruction in inclusive English classrooms alongside the pedagogical, institutional, and practical elements that influence its execution. The study delivered information about inclusive education practices in Indonesian primary schools relevant to teacher development, policy support, and classroom innovation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' Understanding of Differentiated Instruction

This study initially examines how teachers understand the concept of differentiated instruction within inclusive English classrooms. The semi-structured interviews conducted with English teachers at SDN 1 Dasan Geres revealed that participants generally understood the idea of "differentiated instruction". Different interpretations emerged from the teachers, which demonstrated inconsistency and occasional limitations. Teachers commonly explained differentiation as creating simpler tasks for struggling students while offering more complex challenges for students who excel. The restricted understanding of differentiation shows that teachers miss the full scope, including modifying content levels, teaching methods, and learning outcomes according to student readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Research reveals that formal training or professional development in differentiated instruction has not been provided to most teachers. Most teachers learned about differentiation through self-study, casual peer interactions, and workshop sessions not focused on inclusion. Teachers struggled to develop instructional strategies that met diverse learning requirements without structured guidance. The results echo Wahyuni's (2022) and Ibrahim's (2022) assertion that effective differentiation relies heavily on teacher preparedness and clear conceptual understanding. The first research question addresses how teachers understand differentiated instruction through recognition of their level of awareness and significant deficiencies in their theoretical and practical experience.

Classroom Implementation of Differentiated English Instruction

This research examines the application of differentiated instruction within inclusive primary English classrooms. The study found that classroom observations and document analysis showed that despite their presence, the application of differentiation elements was superficial and inconsistent. In vocabulary and reading exercises, teachers sometimes used ability-based grouping, assigning simpler tasks to students with lower proficiency and providing extension exercises to stronger students. Educators usually created student groupings from informal evaluations or their existing knowledge base, not from systematic assessment tools that collect diagnostic or formative data.

The study found that lesson plans mostly lacked specific objectives tailored to students' learning profiles and varied activities that matched these profiles. The study showed few signs of educational differentiation based on student learning styles or interests, which should

form the basis of a responsive educational setting. Differentiation usually came as a response to students encountering difficulties with the material, which was not part of the initial lesson planning.

The evaluation revealed multiple barriers that hindered successful execution. Teachers identified large class sizes, limited instructional periods, and the absence of support staff and diagnostic tools as significant barriers. Some early successful methods to address student diversity included giving students options between oral and written task responses and using peer tutoring across varied groups. The research findings address the second question regarding differentiated instruction practices by showing possibilities and current limitations within the school's inclusive framework.

Differentiated instruction affects student development in literacy, numeracy skills, and character building.

The research's third primary focus examines how differentiated instruction impacts students' literacy, numeracy, and character development abilities. According to teachers, differentiated instruction positively affected student engagement and motivation despite its imperfect execution. Students who faced difficulties with reading or speaking showed increased activity and confidence in English lessons when the tasks aligned with their existing abilities. Educators observed that student ownership and responsibility increased when learners had options to explore their understanding or show their knowledge.

Students showed significant progress in reading fluency and vocabulary building as part of literacy development. The specific design of tasks, together with scaffolding methods like modelling and guided practice, explains these results. The findings demonstrated fewer numeracy improvements because the research primarily concentrated on English language instruction. Despite the primary focus on English language instruction, teachers noticed that students showed enhanced concentration abilities and better problem-solving skills, which indicated transferable effects across different domains.

Character development was another critical outcome observed. Working in mixed-ability groups enabled students in inclusive classes to develop more profound empathy and respect toward individual differences. Teachers' implementation of differentiated instruction led to enhanced collaborative learning practices that created a classroom environment that supported inclusivity and student support. The results of inclusive education practices align with its primary objectives of boosting academic performance and students' social-emotional

growth. Table 1 presents a simplified summary of the key findings aligned with the three research questions.

Table 1. Summary of Findings Based on the CIPP Evaluation and Research Questions

No	Research Focus	Key Findings
1	Teacher Understandin (Context/Input)	Basic awareness, but limited depth; lack of formal training
2	Implementation Practice (Process)	Inconsistent application, mostly ability-based groupin structural barriers
3	Student Outcom (Product)	Increased literacy, classroom engagement, and charact development

The research results presented in Table 1 demonstrate how differentiated instruction is essential for promoting inclusive practices even in resource-constrained environments. The study identifies a requirement for capacity building and institutional support.

Interpretation and Theoretical Alignment

This analysis confirms previous works on the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in accommodating diverse student needs across different demographic groups. The findings of this study on the Basra (2023) and Kusadi (2022) studies suggest that differentiation increases students' emotional development and engagement. This research confirms the 2021 study by Cornivia & Suwanda regarding the insufficient teacher training and unsupportive school culture that enable teachers to elaborate nesting instructional frameworks functionally.

The SDN 1 Dasan Geres case exposes educator problems in rural areas, which is different from prior works dealing with urban schools. This suggests that more resources should focus on funding. These gaps require well-defined contextual frameworks and strategies to systematically address effective differentiation within the classroom.

Implications and Future Research Directions

The resulting analysis provides several uses for the concepts in practice or for formulating further theoretical frameworks. Educators in inclusive classrooms should be prioritised within professional development programmes focused on differentiation. School leadership must provide access to the necessary tools for student evaluation and lesson

preparation. Teacher education programs should incorporate inclusive teaching strategies into their training as part of their framework.

Future research should apply longitudinal methodologies to study the effects of differentiation across different disciplines to assess the existence of similar patterns in mathematics, science, and the arts. Teacher action research, which results from co-design partnerships, has the potential to create models of differentiated instruction appropriate for tailored, specific classroom needs.

CONCLUSION

Applying differentiated instruction for teaching English in SDN 1 Dasan Geres stems from apparent inclusivity and requires a relative improvement in serving the educational needs of diverse students in teaching English. As noted, educators already appreciate differentiation, accept its principles, and are trying to implement them, yet numerous practical difficulties still exist that hinder complete and consistent application of the approach. Findings confirm that partial application of differentiated instruction, especially tailored to diverse learning needs, can significantly improve literacy development and character building, even in students with atypical learning needs. Systemic support at the school level must be strengthened to realize differentiated instruction's potential fully. Comprehensive professional development, developmentally appropriate diagnostic assessments of learners, and flexible curricula targeted at pupils' learning needs are crucial for effective differentiated instruction. More studies examining the enduring effects of differentiated instruction in diverse subjects and learner demographics are necessary to advance our understanding of inclusive education in Indonesia.

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