

Differentiated Instruction: Analysis of the Level of Implementation and Factors that Hinders Practice in Esperanza II

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to determine the extent to which various factors hinder the implementation of differentiated instruction and how these factors relate to its level of implementation among elementary teachers in Esperanza District II, Division of Sultan Kudarat.

Methodology: The study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design involving selected public elementary school teachers. Data were gathered using a structured, validated questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used for analysis.

Results: A statistically significant correlation was observed, with a p-value of 0.032. The correlation coefficient (r) of 0.167 indicates a low but meaningful relationship between the hindering factors and the level of differentiated instruction implementation. This implies that as challenges such as a high teacher-student ratio and limited planning time increase, the consistent application of differentiated instruction tends to decrease. While all teachers reported some use of differentiated instruction, its implementation on a daily basis was found to be inconsistent.

Conclusion: Effective implementation of differentiated instruction requires addressing classroom size and time constraints. Training and support systems are also crucial.

Keywords: Differentiated instruction, instructional barriers, teaching practices, inclusive education, educational strategies

INTRODUCTION

Students come with varying backgrounds, abilities, and learning preferences in today's diverse classrooms. Addressing these differences is essential for creating inclusive and effective learning environments. Differentiated instruction, as a pedagogical approach, focuses on tailoring teaching methods, materials, and assessments to meet the unique needs of each learner (Tomlinson, 2015). By implementing this strategy, educators can ensure that students, regardless of their strengths and challenges, engage meaningfully with the content and reach their full potential (Heacox, 2017; Muńoz & Sanchez, 2023; Salendab & Sanchez, 2023).

The increasing diversity in classrooms worldwide reflects a more interconnected and globalized world. Global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, migration crises, and armed conflicts have amplified this diversity. Teachers must navigate this complexity by addressing the heterogeneous needs of students. Effective classroom strategies, such as differentiated instruction, ensure that all learners have equitable opportunities to succeed in an ever-changing educational landscape (Alt & Pozas, 2023). According to Tomlinson (2015), differentiated instruction empowers educators to design lessons considering students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles, fostering a more inclusive and engaging classroom environment.

The Philippine education system faces persistent challenges requiring urgent attention to improve quality. Teachers' competence and capacity are central to this effort (Carvajal, et al., 2025). However, recent assessments paint a concerning picture. The Philippines ranked among the lowest-performing countries in the 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) for reading, mathematics, and science (Montemayor, 2023). Additionally, UNESCO (2022) emphasized the need for targeted interventions to address learning gaps and equip educators with skills to enhance student performance.

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Furthermore, the National Academic Proficiency Test (NAT) results show low proficiency levels, with Grade 6 students scoring an average of 37.43% and Grade 10 students averaging 45.33% (Masigan, 2022). It highlights the need for innovative teaching methods, such as differentiated instruction, which Hattie (2015) suggests can boost student achievement by addressing individual learning differences.

In Esperanza District II, the challenges of ensuring quality education mirror the national issues. Teachers face the daunting task of addressing diverse learner needs while fostering improved academic performance. Differentiated instruction emerges as a potential solution, providing a framework for tailoring teaching practices to students' strengths, interests, and abilities. However, limited training, time constraints, and insufficient resources often hinder its implementation. Tomlinson (2015) noted that successful differentiation requires ongoing professional development to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge. Additionally, Alwis and Tan (2020) emphasized that systemic support, including access to adequate resources, is crucial for effectively implementing differentiated instruction.

Although differentiated instruction has proven effective in mixed-ability classrooms globally (Rock et al., 2015), its application in the Philippine context, particularly in Esperanza District II, remains underexplored. Teachers face significant barriers to fully adopting this approach, highlighting the need to investigate its current implementation and the challenges encountered. Addressing these gaps is critical to fostering an inclusive and responsive educational environment. Heacox (2017) observed that overcoming these barriers requires a holistic approach that includes professional development, appropriate resources, and time for teachers to effectively plan and implement differentiated strategies.

This study aimed to analyze the level of implementation of differentiated instruction in Esperanza District II and identify factors that hinder its practice. By examining these aspects, the research provides insights that can guide educators and policymakers in enhancing teaching strategies, ultimately improving student learning outcomes in the district.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the extent to which various factors hinder the implementation of differentiated instruction and how these factors relate to its level of implementation among elementary teachers in Esperanza District II, Division of Sultan Kudarat.

- Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:
- 1. What is the profile of the respondent?
- 2. To what extent do factors hinder teachers from implementing differentiated instruction?
- 3. What is the level of implementation of differentiated instruction?
- 4. Is there a significant relationship between the factors that hinder differentiated instruction and the level of its implementation?

Hypothesis

Given the stated research problems, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

 H_{o} : There is no significant relationship between the factors that hinder differentiated instruction and the level of its implementation.

 H_{∂} : There is a significant relationship between the factors that hinder differentiated instruction and the level of its implementation.

METHODS

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to assess DI implementation levels and hindering factors among elementary teachers in Esperanza District II.

Population and Sampling

A complete enumeration method was used in selecting the respondents from nine public elementary schools in Esperanza District II, Division of Sultan Kudarat. A total of 103 elementary teachers who were actively teaching during School Year 2024–2025 were included in the study.

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Instrument

An adapted questionnaire based on the instrument developed by Marco (2017) was used to gather data on respondent profiles, frequency of differentiated instruction use, hindering factors, and the level of differentiated instruction implementation. The instrument was reviewed by experts for content validity and pilot-tested to ensure its reliability.

Data Collection

The data were gathered through the use of survey questionnaires distributed to public elementary school teachers in Esperanza District II. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents in their respective schools during school hours to ensure a higher response rate and minimize disruption to their work.

Respondents were given adequate time to complete the survey, with most returning their accomplished questionnaires on the same day. For schools where immediate retrieval was not possible, the researcher returned on an agreed date to collect the completed forms. All collected data were securely compiled and tabulated for analysis with the assistance of a statistician.

Treatment of Data

The study utilized various statistical tools to analyze the data. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the respondents' profiles, while the mean and standard deviation measured the level of implementation of differentiated instruction and the extent of hindering factors. Additionally, the Pearson product-moment correlation was applied to determine the relationship between the hindering factors and the implementation level of differentiated instruction.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Informed consent was secured, and participant anonymity was ensured throughout the data collection and reporting process.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

The table provides a detailed overview of the respondents' profiles, including their age, gender, civil status, years of teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and the extent of their implementation of differentiated instruction in the classroom.

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' PROFILE					
Category	Key Findings				
Age	Majority are seasoned educators aged 40 and above (37%).				
Gender	Teaching force is predominantly female comprising 92% of the population				
Civil Status	Most respondents are married (86%), indicating personal and professional stability				
Teaching Experience	Majority have 11-15 years of experience.				
Educational Attainment	Most hold master's units(37%) or degrees; no one holds a Doctorate.				
Frequency of Using Differentiated Instruction	40% of the respondents indicated that they implement it 1-2 days a week and no respondents selected "Never" suggesting that all participants had some engagement with DI.				

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The respondent profile revealed a predominantly experienced teaching workforce. The majority were female (92%), aged 50 and above (37%), with 11–15 years of experience (29%). Regarding education, 37% had Master's units, 29% had completed a Master's degree, and 34% held a Bachelor's degree. None had doctorate-level qualifications. In terms of DI usage, 40% reported using it occasionally (1–2 times per week), 35% often (3–4

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times), and 25% daily. This suggests moderate but inconsistent application, likely due to workload and contextual challenges.

Factors that Hinder Teachers from Implementing Differentiated Instruction

The table illustrates the factors that hinder teachers from implementing differentiated instruction, focusing on areas such as planning time, administrative support, professional development, content knowledge and skills, teacher-student ratio, instructional efficacy, availability of instructional media, lack of training, and student learning orientation.

Table 2. Factors Teachers Perceive as Barriers to Implementing Differentiated Instruction

Factors	Mean	SD	Description
1. Time	4.50	.56	Very High
2. Administrative support	3.69	.88	High
3. Professional Development	4.18	.77	High
Content knowledge and skills	4.06	.81	High
5. Teacher-student ratios	4.57	.51	Very High
6. Instructional Efficacy	4.15	.70	High
7. Availability of media	4.25	.74	High
8. Lack of training	3.83	.88	High
9. Students learning orientation	3.98	.85	High
Section Mean	4.13	.75	High

As shown in the table, teachers identified teacher-student ratio (mean = 4.57) and lack of planning time (mean = 4.50) as the most significant barriers to implementing differentiated instruction, both rated Very High, indicating strong agreement. Other factors such as media availability, professional development, and instructional efficacy were rated High, suggesting they are concerns but less critical. Administrative support received the lowest rating (mean = 3.69), though still considered High. With an overall mean of 4.13, the results emphasize that logistical challenges, particularly class size and time constraints, are the most pressing issues.

Level of Implementation of Differentiated Instruction

The table below presents the extent to which differentiated instruction is implemented in different areas, such as context/goal, student assessment, instructional practices, classroom routines, and quality curriculum.

Table 3 Summan	of the Level of Implementation of Differentiated Instruction	
Table 5. Summar		

Key Area	Mean and Interpretation	Highest and Lowest Rated Items
Context/ Goal Setting	3.36 - Moderate	Highest: Closing class in focus (3.56) Lowest: Clear goals (3.21)
Student Assessment	3.59 - High	Highest: Class planning/evaluating (3.75); Lowest: Entry/exit talks (3.34)
Instructional Practices & Routines	3.66- High	Highest: Respectful behavior (4.03); Lowest; Celebrate strengths (3.43)
Quality Curriculum	3.57 - High	Highest: Meaningful learning (3.60); Lowest: Focus on Key ideas (3.51)

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In the area of Context/Goal Setting, the highest-rated indicator was "Closed the class with a focus on the goals/meaning of the lesson" with a mean of 3.56, interpreted as High. This shows that teachers are effective in reinforcing learning objectives at the end of instruction, helping students reflect on what they have learned. However, the lowest-rated indicator was "Establish clear learning goals (knowledge, understanding, skills)" with a mean of 3.21, indicating a Moderate level. This suggests that while teachers emphasize goals at the end of lessons, there is a gap in setting and communicating clear goals at the beginning.

For Student Assessment, the highest score was for "Involved the whole class in sharing, planning, and evaluating" with a mean of 3.75, reflecting a High level of implementation. This demonstrates strong student engagement and collaboration. The lowest-rated indicator was "Talked with students as they entered or exited class" with a mean of 3.34, which is Moderate. This points to a need for more consistent informal interactions that help build rapport and a supportive classroom atmosphere.

In the area of Instructional Practices and Classroom Routines, the highest value was "Demonstrated respectful behavior toward students" with a mean of 4.03, interpreted as High. This highlights a positive classroom climate where students feel respected and valued. Conversely, the lowest-rated indicator was "Acknowledged/celebrated student strengths/successes" with a mean of 3.43, suggesting that teachers may need to place more emphasis on recognizing and celebrating individual achievements.

Lastly, in the Quality Curriculum area, the highest-rated item was "Emphasized thought and meaning versus drill and practice" with a mean of 3.60, indicating a focus on critical thinking and deeper learning. The lowest-rated was "Lesson focused on important ideas, issues, or problems" with a mean of 3.51, which, while still High, suggests a slight need for improvement in making lessons more relevant and connected to real-world applications.

In summary, while teachers consistently perform well in areas such as promoting respectful behavior, engaging students, and emphasizing meaningful learning, areas such as initial goal setting, informal student interactions, celebrating achievements, and connecting lessons to real-life contexts show relatively lower scores and present opportunities for further improvement.

Relationship Between the Factors that Hinder Differentiated Instruction and the Level of its Implementation

The table presents the relationship between the factors hindering the implementation of differentiated instruction and its actual implementation.

Table 4. Relationshi	p Between the	Factors that Hinder	Differentiated	Instruction a	and the Level	of its Im	plementation
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	Ν	Mean	SD	r	p-value	Interpretation
Factors hinder teachers from Implementation of differentiated instruction	110	4.13	.24			
Vs				.167	.032	Significant Correlation
Level of implementation of Differentiated instruction	110	3.58	.68			

As illustrated in table, the results indicate a significant relationship between the factors that hinder the implementation of differentiated instruction and the level of its application, as evidenced by a p-value of .032, which is below the 0.05 significance level. This result shows that the challenges teachers face in implementing differentiated instruction do indeed have a measurable impact on its effectiveness. When these hindering factors are

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present, they influence how well differentiated instruction is applied in the classroom, which emphasizes the importance of addressing these barriers to enhance the effectiveness of differentiated instruction practices.

Further analysis reveals a weak positive correlation of 0.167 between the two variables. According to Field (2013), the Pearson correlation coefficient measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. Although the correlation is weak, the statistical significance indicates that these hindering factors still have an effect on the level of implementation. The result suggests that as these factors increase, they slightly affect how differentiated instruction is applied.

These findings underscore the need for interventions aimed at minimizing these hindrances to improve the quality of differentiated instruction in classrooms. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis (H_o) stating that "there is no significant relationship between the factors that hinder differentiated instruction and the level of its implementation" is rejected. Despite the weak correlation, the statistical significance affirms that these barriers impact the level of differentiated instruction implemented in the classroom. Addressing these challenges can help enhance teachers' ability to implement differentiated instruction more effectively, ensuring that the diverse needs of students are met.

Conclusions

The study concluded that while differentiated instruction is generally practiced in Esperanza District II, its daily and consistent application remains limited due to key challenges. Most teachers are experienced, academically qualified, and committed, yet factors such as large class sizes, limited planning time, and insufficient resources hinder effective implementation. Although high levels of differentiation were noted in instructional practices and assessments, areas like context and goal setting need improvement. Moreover, teacher demographics significantly influence the application of differentiated strategies, and a low but significant correlation was found between hindering factors and implementation level, indicating that even in the presence of challenges, teachers strive to apply differentiated instruction.

Recommendations

To enhance the implementation of differentiated instruction, it is recommended that teachers clearly communicate lesson goals, use time-efficient strategies, celebrate student strengths, and pursue continuous professional development. School administrators should prioritize improving teacher-student ratios, allocate sufficient planning time, and invest in essential teaching resources. Supportive leadership and mentorship must also be strengthened to guide teachers in overcoming classroom-level and systemic barriers, ultimately promoting more inclusive and effective instruction for diverse learners.

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