

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEARNING

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Abstract: Differentiated Instruction is a learning strategy used to accommodate the diversity of students' abilities, interests, and learning styles in elementary schools. In the learning process, students have different characteristics, so uniform learning often fails to meet the learning needs of every student. Therefore, a learning approach that can adjust the learning process to students' conditions and potentials is needed. Through differentiated instruction, teachers can modify learning components such as content, process, product, and learning environment according to students' needs. The implementation of this approach allows students to gain more meaningful learning experiences, increase learning motivation, and encourage active participation in the learning process. Thus, differentiated instruction becomes an important effort in creating effective, inclusive, and student-centered learning in elementary schools.

Keywords: Differentiated Instruction, Elementary Education, Student-Centered Learning

INTRODUCTION

Education is an important part of human life because it helps shape the quality of human resources in the future. Through education, people can develop their knowledge, skills, and also attitudes that are needed to deal with changes over time. In Indonesia, elementary school is considered a crucial stage since it becomes the starting point for students in developing their academic, social, and emotional abilities. For that reason, the learning process at this level should be planned properly so students can gain meaningful learning experiences (Gheyssens, Griful-Freixenet, & Struyven, 2023).

In reality, students in elementary school come with different characteristics, whether in terms of learning ability, interests, or learning styles. This situation can be

quite challenging for teachers when managing classroom learning. If the same teaching method is applied to all students, not everyone will be able to follow the lesson well. Some students may find it hard to understand the material, while others who learn faster might feel that the lesson is not challenging enough for them (Ziernwald & Hillmayr, 2022).

This shows that using the same approach for all students is not always effective in meeting their different learning needs. Because of that, teachers need an approach that can adjust to students' characteristics. One approach that can be used is differentiated instruction. This approach focuses on adjusting the learning process based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles, so each student can learn in a way that suits their needs (Goyibova, Muslimov, Sabirova, & Kadirova, 2025).

With differentiated instruction, teachers can make changes in several parts of learning, such as the material being taught, the way the lesson is delivered, and also the types of assignments or products students create. In this way, students are given the chance to learn according to their own abilities and potential. Research also shows that applying differentiated instruction can make students more involved in the learning process and help create a classroom environment that is more inclusive and focused on students (Kharisma, MZ, & Putri, 2024).

Even so, there are still many classrooms where teaching is done in the same way without really considering the differences between students. This means that differentiated instruction is still not fully applied and needs further attention. Therefore, this article aims to discuss how differentiated instruction is implemented in elementary schools and to explain its benefits in supporting a learning process that is more effective and better suited to students' needs.

DISCUSSION

A. Concept of Differentiated Instruction

1. Definition

Differentiated instruction is one of the teaching strategies that focuses on adjusting the learning process based on the different needs and characteristics of students. In one classroom, students usually have different abilities, interests, backgrounds, and also learning styles. Because of these differences, the learning process cannot be the same for all students. If teachers use only one way of teaching, some students may not fully understand the material. At the same time, other students who learn faster may feel that the lesson is too easy for them. That is why teachers need to make the learning process more flexible and adaptable, so every student can learn in a way that fits their own needs and potential.

In this approach, teachers are allowed to adjust several parts of the lesson. This can include the material, the learning activities, and also how students are assessed. Marlina (2020) explains that differentiated instruction means adjusting content, process, product, and even the learning environment based on students' readiness. With this kind of approach, students can learn according to their own ability. Because of that, the learning process can feel more meaningful and also more effective, especially in a classroom where students are quite different from one another.

In today's education, this approach is also closely related to student-centered learning. In this concept, students are not just passive learners, but they are more involved in the learning process. They are given more chances to participate and express their understanding. Utaminingtyas and Kholim (2024) mention that differentiated instruction allows students to take part in learning based on their own characteristics, interests, and learning styles. So, it can be said that differentiated instruction is not only about dealing with differences among students, but also about improving how learning happens in the classroom. By applying this approach, teachers can create a learning

environment that feels more inclusive, give students more meaningful experiences, and help them develop according to their own abilities.

2. Objectives

The main purpose of applying differentiated instruction is to give fair learning opportunities to all students, even though they have different abilities. In reality, not every student can understand the material in the same way. If a teacher only uses one teaching method, some students may find it difficult to keep up with the lesson.

Through differentiated instruction, teachers can adjust learning activities so that all students still have a chance to reach the learning goals that have been set. Rohana et al. (2024) explain that this approach is aimed at helping students develop their potential by adjusting teaching strategies based on their learning needs. With these adjustments, students can understand the material more easily and become more involved in the learning process.

In addition, differentiated instruction also aims to increase students' motivation to learn. When students feel that the lesson matches their abilities and interests, they usually become more enthusiastic in participating. Because of that, applying differentiated instruction not only helps students understand the material better, but also creates a learning experience that feels more meaningful for them.

3. Basic Principles

The first principle is understanding students' characteristics, such as their readiness to learn, their interests, and their learning styles. Each student comes with different abilities and backgrounds, so teachers need to first identify students' initial conditions before starting the lesson. By understanding these differences, teachers can plan learning activities that are more suitable for each student.

The second principle is flexibility in the learning process. In differentiated instruction, teachers do not rely on just one teaching method. Instead, they use a variety of strategies, methods, and learning media. The goal

is to help all students understand the material in ways that fit how they learn best. Wardani and Darmawan (2024) explain that this approach gives teachers more freedom to manage learning in different ways, so students can learn based on their own abilities and characteristics.

The third principle is using ongoing assessment to see students' learning progress. In this approach, assessment is not only done at the end of the lesson, but also during the learning process. With continuous assessment, teachers can monitor students' progress more clearly and understand what they still need. This information can then be used to adjust the teaching strategy so it becomes more effective. In the end, these principles show that differentiated instruction is really about understanding, respecting, and responding to student differences, so every student has a better chance to learn in an optimal way.

B. Forms of Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction can be applied in different ways to adjust the learning process based on students' needs. In general, there are four main types of differentiation in learning: content differentiation, process differentiation, product differentiation, and learning environment differentiation (Diarera & Budiarti, 2024). These four types are connected to each other and can be used together during the learning process.

1. Content Differentiation

Content differentiation is related to adjusting the learning material given to students. Teachers can present the material at different levels of difficulty depending on students' abilities. For example, students with higher ability can be given more in-depth material, while those who are still having difficulties can receive simpler explanations. Besides that, teachers can also use different learning resources such as textbooks, learning videos, or other visual media. Through this kind of adjustment, students have the chance to understand the material based on their level of readiness. This shows that content differentiation is an important step in creating a more inclusive learning process.

2. Process Differentiation

Process differentiation is related to how students learn and understand the learning material. Teachers can use different teaching methods such as group discussions, project-based learning, or problem-based learning. These variations in methods allow students to learn in ways that suit their own learning styles. Indriani and Prabaningtyas (2024) explain that process differentiation can help students understand the material more deeply because they are actively involved in the learning activities. In this way, having different learning processes not only improves students' understanding, but also helps them develop critical thinking skills and teamwork.

3. Product Differentiation

Product differentiation is related to the variety of tasks or outputs that students produce after completing the learning process. Teachers can give students choices in how they show their understanding, such as through written reports, presentations, posters, or other creative projects. Through product differentiation, students have the opportunity to express their understanding based on their own abilities and creativity. It can also help increase students' confidence in showing what they have learned. Because of that, product differentiation becomes one of the effective strategies to improve students' involvement in the learning process.

4. Learning Environment Differentiation

Besides content, process, and product, differentiated instruction also pays attention to the learning environment. Teachers need to create a classroom atmosphere that feels comfortable and supports students' learning activities. Things like classroom seating arrangements, the use of learning media, and positive interaction between teachers and students all help to build a supportive learning environment. A good learning environment makes students feel more comfortable and more motivated to take part in the learning process. Because of that, learning environment differentiation is an important factor that supports the overall success of differentiated instruction.

C. Implementation in Elementary Schools

The implementation of differentiated instruction in elementary schools is very important because students at this level have different learning abilities. Each student learns at a different pace and also has different interests and learning styles, so teachers need to adjust their teaching strategies to make sure all students can understand the material well.

One way to apply differentiated instruction in elementary schools is by adjusting learning based on students' abilities. Teachers can first identify students' initial abilities through diagnostic assessments to see their learning readiness. Based on this information, teachers can then design learning activities that better fit students' needs.

In addition, teachers can also use various teaching methods and learning media to support differentiated instruction. For example, visual materials, learning videos, or educational games can help students understand the lesson more easily. Negari, Sari, and Ulia (2025) explain that using varied teaching methods can increase students' involvement in the learning process.

Giving different types of assignments is also another form of differentiated instruction in elementary schools. Teachers can assign tasks with different levels of difficulty based on students' abilities so that all students can still participate well in the learning process.

D. Benefits of Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction provides several benefits in the learning process. One of the main benefits is that it can increase students' learning motivation. When learning is adjusted to their abilities and interests, students usually feel more interested and more motivated to take part in classroom activities.

In addition, differentiated instruction is also able to accommodate the diversity of students' abilities in the classroom. Every student has different potential, so this approach gives all students the chance to develop according to their own abilities. Rohana et al. (2024) state that this approach can help create a more inclusive learning environment and provide fairer learning opportunities for all students.

Another benefit is the increase in students' participation in learning activities. With different teaching methods, learning activities, and forms of assessment, students become more active in the learning process. In the end, this can also improve their understanding of the material and lead to better overall learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The implementation of differentiated instruction in elementary school learning is an important strategy to accommodate the diversity of students' abilities, interests, and learning styles. Through this approach, teachers can adjust different parts of learning such as content, process, product, and the learning environment, so that each student has the opportunity to learn in a way that matches their needs and potential.

With the application of differentiated instruction, the learning process can run more effectively. It can also increase students' motivation and participation, and help create a more inclusive learning environment that is more focused on students. Therefore, teachers' understanding and application of differentiated instruction are important in improving the overall quality of learning in elementary schools.

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