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Research Article

# DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES: AN EXPLANATORY ANALYSIS

Ja O. Timtim

Jose Rizal Memorial State University

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*Corresponding Author:
ja.timtim@deped.gov.ph



## ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the differentiated instruction activities used by teachers in the Division of Ozamiz City during the Academic Year 2024–2025. Specifically, it sought to identify the frequency of use, determine the most and least commonly used strategies, and propose an intervention program based on the findings. Utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the study involved 50 teacher-respondents selected through purposive sampling. Quantitative data were analyzed using weighted means and standard deviations, while qualitative responses were examined through thematic coding. Results revealed that teachers consistently applied differentiated instruction strategies to address diverse learner needs. The most frequently used approaches included individualized learning plans, providing choices in learning tasks, incorporating hands-on learning activities, and using tiered assignments. Meanwhile, strategies such as integrating technology, implementing flexible grouping, and allowing alternative demonstrations of understanding were used less often. In response to these findings, the study proposed the "TECH-READY" intervention program, which aims to enhance teachers' capacity for effective technology integration in support of differentiated instruction. The findings underscore the value of personalized teaching approaches and highlight areas for instructional improvement through targeted professional development

***Keywords:*** *differentiated instruction, individualized learning plans, student engagement, hands-on learning, Ozamiz City*

## Introduction

Classrooms in the second decade of the 21st century comprise a diverse array of learners, both culturally and linguistically (Gregory & Chapman, 2013) as cited Hana (2022). Diversity is prevalent in all classrooms, where unique perspectives and characteristics of students are evident. Educators face significant challenges when teaching diverse student populations. Teachers must be attentive to the optimal learning methods of their students to effectively address the needs of their diverse populations (Gregory & Chapman, 2013) as cited Hana (2022). Educating students with diverse individual differences and varying learning styles is a significant responsibility that teachers must develop and enhance.

Educators must acknowledge the academic differences among learners to facilitate the integration of curriculum content into their lives and adjust instructional complexity, ensuring that all students achieve learning success, thereby rendering the learning experience meaningful and engaging (Subban, 2022). Diverse classrooms and the instruction of varied student populations facilitate the identification of numerous benefits and learning opportunities for both students and educators. The presence of a diverse classroom with varied student backgrounds is a longstanding issue in Philippine education, particularly regarding the challenge of accommodating different learning preferences and styles. In Philippine classrooms, it is noted that many teachers employ traditional instructional methods, wherein a single lesson is tailored to address the needs of all learners. These educators often believe they are implementing differentiation, yet this is not the case.

Differentiated instruction is a pedagogical-didactical approach that provides teachers with a starting point for meeting students' diverse learning needs (Mulana, 2020). Policy-makers and researchers urge teachers to embrace diversity and to adapt their instruction to the diverse learning needs of students in their classrooms (Schleicher, 2023; Unesco, 2024). Differentiation is a philosophy of teaching rooted in deep respect for students, acknowledgment of their differences, and the drive to help all students thrive. Such ideas imply that teachers proactively modify curricula, teaching methods, resources, learning activities, or requirements for student products to better meet students' learning needs. When teachers deliberately plan such adaptations to facilitate students' learning and execute these adaptations during their lessons, we call it differentiated instruction.

Although the concept of differentiated instruction is quite well-known, teachers find it difficult to grasp how differentiated instruction should be implemented in their classrooms (Van Casteren et al., 2022). A recent study found that teachers across different countries infrequently adapt their instruction to student characteristics (Schleicher, 2023). Struggling students may work on too difficult tasks or, conversely, high ability students may practice skills they have already mastered. Clearly, more information about effective practices is needed. A recent review and meta-analysis of differentiated instruction practices in primary education shows that differentiated instruction has some potential for improving student outcomes, when implemented well (Deunk et al., 2022).

Similarly, limited research has been conducted on how differentiated instruction is effectively implemented in large and diverse public school classrooms. Educators in these settings often encounter various instructional challenges, including constrained resources, high student-teacher ratios, and minimal opportunities for ongoing professional growth (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2020). Studies show that a significant percentage of public school teachers encounter difficulty in applying differentiated strategies due to minimal access to training and relevant instructional materials (Hall, Vue, Strangman, & Meyer, 2021). In contrast, private schools tend to have greater flexibility and support systems that enable the use of more personalized teaching methods. This contrast underscores the importance of further exploring how differentiated instruction can be meaningfully adopted in resource-constrained classroom environments to ensure that all learners, particularly those with special needs, experience equitable and responsive instruction.

Additionally, less than 30% of public-school districts provide structured training programs to help teachers implement differentiation effectively (Subban, 2006). Without clear guidelines and ongoing support, differentiated instruction risks becoming an underutilized or inconsistently applied strategy rather than a transformative approach to teaching. Addressing these gaps requires comprehensive, long-term studies that track student performance over multiple years, examine how teachers adapt differentiation in real-world classrooms, and evaluate the effectiveness of institutional policies designed to support differentiated instruction.

Hence, this study was conducted to examine the use of differentiated instruction activities by teachers and their impact on classroom practices. Specifically, it aimed to determine how often differentiated instruction strategies are utilized, identify the most and least frequently used activities, and explore their influence on student engagement and participation across various subjects. Providing evidence-based insights, this study seeks to support teachers and educational administrators in enhancing instructional practices and fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

## Methods

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine the differentiated instruction activities used by teachers in the Division of Ozamiz City during the Academic Year 2024–2025. It began with quantitative data collection through a structured survey identifying the frequency and types of differentiated strategies, followed by a qualitative phase involving interviews and focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into teachers' experiences and challenges. Conducted in a diverse educational environment of public and private schools with varying resources, the study involved 50 randomly selected teachers for the survey and 20 purposively chosen participants for the interviews. The instruments, adapted from Haas (2024) and validated by experts, achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.926, confirming reliability. Data were collected ethically with proper permissions, informed consent, and confidentiality safeguards, analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework. The findings aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of differentiated instruction practices and guide the development of an intervention program to enhance inclusive and effective teaching in Ozamiz City.

## Results and Discussions

Table 1

***Frequency of Teachers' Use of Differentiated Instruction Activities***

| Descriptors | AWV | SD | Description/ Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Using tiered assignments tailored to student abilities | 4.38 | 0.725 | Always |
| 2. Grouping students based on their learning styles | 4.28 | 0.730 | Always |
| 3. Providing choices in learning tasks | 4.42 | 0.673 | Always |
| 4. Implementing flexible grouping for activities | 3.92 | 0.877 | Often |
| 5. Using individualized learning plans | 4.46 | 0.706 | Always |
| 6. Offering varied resources for learning (e.g., texts, videos) | 4.32 | 0.713 | Always |
| 7. Incorporating hands-on learning activities | 4.41 | 0.669 | Always |
| 8. Adjusting the pace of lessons to meet student needs | 4.36 | 0.598 | Always |
| 9. Using interest-based activities | 4.26 | 0.828 | Always |
| 10. Assigning different levels of questions for assessment | 4.30 | 0.814 | Always |
| 11. Allowing alternative ways to demonstrate understanding | 4.18 | 0.774 | Often |
| 12. Providing one-on-one or small group instruction | 4.36 | 0.631 | Always |
| 13. Integrating technology to support individual learning | 4.04 | 0.699 | Often |
| 14. Designing learning stations or centers. | 4.27 | 0.737 | Always |
| 15. Modifying assignments for students with special needs | 4.27 | 0.737 | Always |
| 16. Using peer tutoring or peer-assisted learning | 4.28 | 0.639 | Always |
| 17. Differentiating homework assignments | 4.36 | 0.631 | Always |
| 18. Encouraging collaborative group work | 4.36 | 0.563 | Always |
| 19. Offering open-ended projects | 4.27 | 0.737 | Always |
| 20. Utilizing graphic organizers and visual aids | 4.36 | 0.563 | Always |
| 21. Adapting assessments for individual needs | 4.36 | 0.598 | Always |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22. Using real-world examples relevant to student interests | 4.36 | 0.598 | Always |
| 23. Employing questioning techniques to match ability levels | 4.36 | 0.598 | Always |
| 24. Giving frequent and specific feedback | 4.36 | 0.563 | Always |
| 25. Incorporating games and interactive activities | 4.36 | 0.598 | Always |
| **Total** | **4.31** | **0.679** | **Always** |

*AWV-Average Weighted Value, SD-Standard Deviation*

The teachers' use of differentiated instruction activities is shown in Table 2. The table reveals that teachers consistently integrate differentiated instruction activities in their classrooms, as reflected by the total average weighted value (AWV) of 4.31, which falls under the "Always" category. Among the various strategies, the most frequently used activities include using individualized learning plans (AWV = 4.46), providing choices in learning tasks (AWV = 4.42), incorporating hands-on learning activities (AWV = 4.41), and using tiered assignments tailored to student abilities (AWV = 4.38). These results indicate that teachers highly prioritize personalized learning approaches that accommodate students' varied needs, preferences, and readiness levels. The emphasis on choice, hands-on engagement, and leveled tasks also suggests a strong commitment to fostering student independence, motivation, and differentiated support within inclusive learning environments.

On the other hand, the least commonly used strategies, though still falling within the "Often" range, reflect areas where teachers may face challenges in full implementation. These include integrating technology to support individual learning (AWV = 4.04), implementing flexible grouping for activities (AWV = 3.92), and allowing alternative ways to demonstrate understanding (AWV = 4.18). These activities, while valuable, may be hindered by factors such as limited access to digital tools, insufficient training, time constraints, or concerns about classroom management. Notably, using interest-based activities (AWV = 4.26), though still interpreted as "Always," ranked among the lowest in that category, suggesting a potential underutilization of student interests in instructional planning.

These results manifest that teacher intentionally select instructional strategies that allow for flexibility and adaptability, making it easier to address the unique learning profiles of their students. Through consistently using individualized learning plans, providing varied task choices, and incorporating interactive methods such as hands-on activities and tiered assignments, teachers demonstrate a strong orientation toward learner-centered teaching. These practices enable students to learn at their own pace, engage in tasks aligned with their interests, and experience success regardless of ability level.

**Theme 1: Most Commonly Used Differentiated Instruction**

Teachers most commonly implemented individualized learning plans, tiered assignments, student choice, and hands-on activities. These strategies let teachers adjust pace, content, and products to learner readiness and preferences, boosting engagement, inclusivity, and mastery—especially in mixed-ability classes. Evidence from participants' accounts and cited studies reinforces that personalization, varied challenge levels, and experiential tasks improve motivation, participation, and performance.

Least practiced were technology integration, flexible grouping, alternative assessments, and sustained interest-based activities. Barriers included limited training, time and resource constraints, large classes and space issues, uneven tech access, and classroom-management complexity. Across themes, the core challenges were professional capacity, logistics (time/materials), and managing simultaneous tasks; the findings point to the need for targeted PD, clearer assessment guidance, adequate resources and infrastructure, and institutional support to make differentiated instruction more consistent and sustainable.

**Conclusions**

Teachers in the Division of Ozamiz City actively apply differentiated instruction strategies to address the diverse learning needs of their students. The most commonly implemented strategies include individualized learning plans, providing choices in learning tasks, and incorporating hands-on activities. These approaches

support a learner-centered environment, allowing students to engage with content at their own pace, based on their readiness, interests, and learning styles. Teachers also utilize grouping techniques and tiered assignments to ensure all learners receive appropriate levels of challenge and support. However, the study also revealed that despite teachers' willingness to implement differentiated instruction, they face several barriers that hinder its full and effective application. Challenges such as lack of professional training, limited access to instructional materials and technology, and the time-consuming nature of planning for diverse activities restrict the broader use of strategies like flexible grouping, technology integration, and alternative assessments. These emphasize the need for sustained institutional support, including targeted professional development, adequate resources, and manageable workloads, to enable teachers to effectively implement differentiated instruction and foster inclusive, high-quality education for all learners.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that school leaders and instructional supervisors continue to strengthen teachers' use of effective strategies such as individualized learning plans, tiered assignments, student choice, and hands-on activities through mentoring, modeling, and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions. To address the low use of technology in differentiated instruction, teachers should receive targeted ICT training, access to digital tools, and continuous mentoring. The Schools Division Office should organize workshops aligned with DepEd Orders No. 42, s. 2017 (PPST) and No. 21, s. 2019, while administrators should allocate planning time, provide teaching aids, and ensure resource availability. Lastly, the proposed program "TECH-READY: Empowering Teachers for Effective Technology Integration in Differentiated Instruction" should be implemented to build teachers' competence, confidence, and creativity in using technology for inclusive and learner-centered teaching.

**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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