

ENHANCING EARLY LITERACY: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION STRATEGIES FOR GRADE 1 LEARNERS WITH READING DIFFICULTIES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools and analyzed their relationship with teachers' profile variables, implementation challenges, and differences in perceptions between teachers and their immediate supervisors. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were gathered from 63 respondents via a structured questionnaire that covered readiness, interest, learning profile, instructional materials, and assessment practices. Results showed that teachers were generally experienced, predominantly female, and academically qualified, with most having graduate-level education and moderate exposure to training. Differentiated instruction was rated highly effective across all domains, indicating responsive practices to diverse learner needs, while implementation challenges were moderately serious, particularly in instructional materials, classroom management, assessment, and support systems. Statistical findings revealed no significant relationship between effectiveness and most profile variables, except for gender and position in selected areas. No significant difference was found between teachers' and supervisors' perceptions, indicating alignment in their evaluation of instructional effectiveness. The study concludes that differentiated instruction is an effective approach to improving early reading outcomes, despite manageable challenges, and emphasizes the need for continuous professional development, adequate resources, and strong institutional support to enhance implementation and strengthen early literacy programs.

Keywords: - Differentiated Instruction, Reading Difficulties, Early Literacy, Grade 1 Learners, Instructional Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Literacy has long been a cornerstone of educational policy in the Philippines, shaped by historical shifts in pedagogy, language policy, and national priorities. Early reading instruction traditionally followed teacher-centered approaches influenced by colonial legacies. However, the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) marked a significant reform aimed at improving comprehension and cognitive development among young learners (National Early Grade Reading Assessment [EGRA], 2019). Despite these efforts, persistent challenges remain, as many Grade 1 learners continue to struggle with foundational reading skills due to resource disparities, limited early literacy exposure, and inconsistent policy implementation.

Recent evidence highlights the urgency of addressing early literacy gaps, particularly following pandemic-related disruptions. Learning losses in decoding, fluency, and comprehension have been widely documented, with a disproportionate impact on vulnerable learners (UNICEF Philippines, 2021). This situation underscores the limitations of traditional one-size-fits-all instruction and calls for more responsive teaching approaches. Differentiated Instruction (DI) has emerged as a viable strategy, allowing teachers to tailor content, process,

and assessment based on learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Empirical studies indicate that strategies such as small-group instruction, leveled texts, and targeted remediation significantly improve reading outcomes (Potot, 2023).

However, the implementation of DI in Philippine public schools remains inconsistent. Teachers face challenges including insufficient training, lack of diagnostic tools, limited instructional materials, and difficulties in managing diverse classrooms. Furthermore, systemic gaps, such as fragmented professional development and the absence of structured intervention programs, hinder effective implementation (Department of Education, 2022). These concerns align with national priorities outlined in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028 and the Basic Education Development Plan (BEDP) 2022–2030, which emphasize strengthening foundational learning and adopting evidence-based interventions.

This study responds to these challenges by examining the effectiveness of DI strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners. It also supports Sustainable Development Goal 4, which promotes inclusive and equitable quality education. By generating empirical evidence, the study contributes to improving early literacy interventions and advancing learner-centered education in the Philippine context.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among grade 1 learners in public schools as inputs to the early literacy intervention program. Specifically, the following problems were answered:

1. What is the profile of grade 1 Teachers in public schools?
2. What is the level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among grade 1 learners in public schools as perceived by themselves and the immediate supervisors?
3. What is the level of seriousness of the problems encountered in the utilization of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among grade 1 learners in public schools?
4. Is there a significant relationship between the level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among grade 1 learners in public schools and the profile of teachers?
5. Is there a significant difference in the level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among grade 1 learners in public schools as perceived by themselves and the immediate supervisors?
6. Based on the results of the study, what inputs to the early literacy intervention program may be proposed?

Scope and Delimitations

This study evaluated the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in selected public schools. It examined teachers' profiles, instructional practices, and challenges encountered in implementation. Data were limited to perceptions of teachers and their immediate supervisors, excluding direct assessment of learners' reading performance and other grade levels or school types.

Review of Related Literatures

Early literacy development in the Philippines has undergone significant transformation due to policy reforms, particularly the adoption of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), which emphasizes the use of learners' first language to enhance comprehension and cognitive development (Department of Education, 2016; UNESCO, 2022). Research

indicates that learners develop stronger foundational reading skills when instruction begins in a familiar language, improving phonological awareness and engagement. Despite its strong theoretical foundation, implementation challenges, such as a lack of localized instructional materials and limited teacher preparedness, have hindered its full effectiveness (UNICEF Philippines, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated literacy challenges, leading to significant learning losses in early reading skills. Global and local studies confirm that disruptions to schooling negatively affected learners' decoding, fluency, and comprehension, particularly among marginalized groups (World Bank, 2022; UNICEF Philippines, 2021). These findings highlight the need for targeted and responsive instructional approaches rather than traditional one-size-fits-all methods.

Differentiated Instruction (DI) has emerged as a key strategy in addressing diverse learning needs in early-grade classrooms. According to Carol Ann Tomlinson (2017), DI involves adapting content, process, and assessment based on learners' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Studies show that DI enhances reading outcomes by providing targeted support through small-group instruction, leveled texts, and scaffolded learning activities (Gonser, 2020). Furthermore, research emphasizes that effective DI relies on continuous formative assessment, allowing teachers to adjust instruction based on learners' progress (Wiliam, 2017).

Diagnostic and formative assessments play a crucial role in addressing reading difficulties. Diagnostic assessments identify specific skill gaps, while formative assessments guide ongoing instructional adjustments (World Bank, 2021). When integrated effectively, these assessments support differentiated instruction by enabling teachers to design targeted interventions for struggling readers. However, studies indicate that teachers often lack sufficient assessment literacy, limiting the effectiveness of DI implementation (Department of Education, 2016).

Instructional materials also significantly influence early literacy outcomes. Leveled texts, decodable readers, and culturally relevant materials support differentiated instruction by matching reading tasks to learners' abilities (Richardson, 2016; Shanahan, 2024). In multilingual contexts such as the Philippines, the availability of mother tongue-based materials is essential for effective reading instruction (UNICEF, 2019). Nonetheless, resource limitations remain a persistent challenge in public schools.

Teacher competence and preparedness are critical factors in the success of DI. Research shows that teachers require strong pedagogical knowledge, assessment skills, and classroom management strategies to effectively implement differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2017; UNESCO, 2018). Continuous professional development, coaching, and collaborative planning are necessary to build teacher capacity and sustain DI practices (Curriculum Resource Pack, 2023).

Intervention programs for struggling readers further highlight the importance of structured and targeted instruction. Evidence from international studies demonstrates that explicit phonics instruction, small-group interventions, and frequent progress monitoring significantly improve reading outcomes (Institute of Education Sciences, 2019). Additionally, family involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing literacy development, particularly in early grades (Reading Rockets, n.d.).

The literature underscores that, when supported by effective assessment, appropriate materials, and strong teacher capacity, differentiated instruction is a powerful approach to addressing reading difficulties. However, systemic challenges such as limited resources, insufficient training, and inconsistent implementation must be addressed to maximize its impact.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three major theoretical foundations: Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction Theory, and the Science of Reading framework. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and guided support. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) explains that learners can perform tasks more effectively when assisted by a knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, as cited in Daniels, 2016). In early literacy, this supports the use of scaffolding strategies, guided reading, and teacher-led interventions to help struggling readers progress.

Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction Theory provides the pedagogical basis for adapting instruction to meet diverse learner needs. It posits that learners vary in readiness, interests, and learning profiles, requiring modifications in content, process, and assessment (Tomlinson, 2017). This theory supports the use of flexible grouping, leveled texts, and individualized learning tasks in reading instruction.

The Science of Reading framework complements these theories by explaining the cognitive processes involved in reading acquisition. It highlights the importance of explicit instruction in phonics, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension (Castles et al., 2018). This framework explains why some learners struggle with reading and underscores the need for systematic and evidence-based instruction.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how differentiated instruction can address reading difficulties. They emphasize that reading challenges are not fixed deficits but can be addressed through targeted, responsive, and evidence-based teaching strategies.

Conceptual Framework

The study is guided by the Input–Process–Output (IPO) model, which explains the relationship among variables in examining the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies. As illustrated in Figure 1, the Input includes teachers' profiles, the level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies, and the seriousness of implementation challenges. These variables provide a baseline for understanding instructional practices and contextual factors influencing early literacy outcomes.

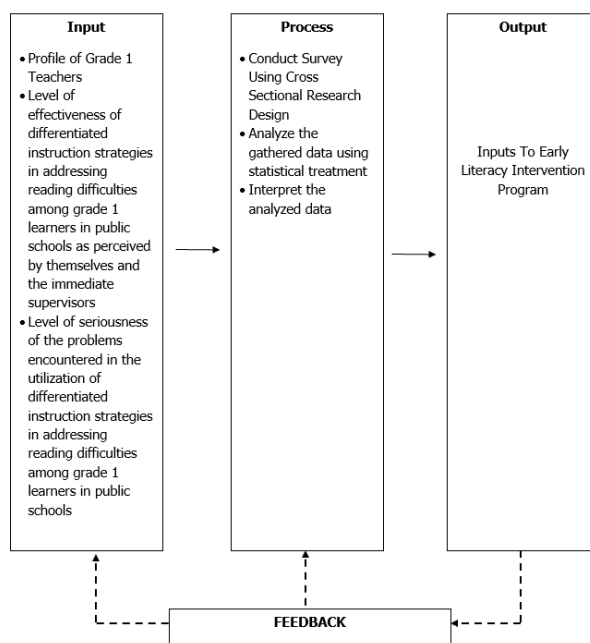


Fig. 1. Paradigm of the Study

The Process component involves data collection through a descriptive-correlational research design using survey instruments administered to teachers and their immediate supervisors. Statistical analysis is applied to determine relationships, differences, and patterns among variables. This stage transforms raw data into meaningful insights that reflect the effectiveness and challenges of differentiated instruction in addressing reading difficulties.

The Output of the study is the development of inputs for an Early Literacy Intervention Program. These include evidence-based recommendations, instructional strategies, and capacity-building initiatives designed to improve reading outcomes among Grade 1 learners. The output is grounded in empirical findings, ensuring relevance and applicability to real classroom contexts.

A feedback mechanism is incorporated into the framework, allowing findings to inform future instructional practices, teacher training programs, and policy improvements. This cyclical process ensures continuous enhancement of differentiated instruction strategies and supports sustainable literacy development. The conceptual framework highlights the importance of aligning teacher competencies, instructional practices, and systemic support to effectively address reading difficulties in early grade learners.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodological procedures employed in examining the level of gender responsiveness of Strategic Intervention Materials (SIM) in Science. It includes the research design, data collection processes, sampling procedures, analytical tools, and ethical considerations to ensure the validity, reliability, and integrity of the study.

Research Design

The study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction (DI) strategies and their relationship with teachers' profile variables. Descriptive research was appropriate as it provided a comprehensive description of teachers'

practices, perceptions, and challenges in implementing DI in Grade 1 classrooms. The correlational aspect allowed the researcher to determine whether significant relationships existed between the effectiveness of DI strategies and selected teacher-related variables such as age, sex, position, educational attainment, and teaching experience.

This design also enabled the comparison of perceptions between teachers and their immediate supervisors regarding the effectiveness of DI strategies. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive-correlational designs are suitable for studies that aim to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables without manipulating them. The design ensured that data were collected in a natural setting, reflecting real classroom practices and providing valid insights into early literacy instruction in public schools.

Research Steps

The research followed a systematic process beginning with securing necessary approvals from school authorities and relevant educational offices. After obtaining permission, the researcher administered a validated questionnaire to Grade 1 teachers and their immediate supervisors. The instrument captured data on teacher profiles, effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies, and challenges encountered in implementation.

Data collection was conducted within a specified timeframe to ensure consistency and reliability. After retrieval of the questionnaires, responses were organized, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis. Data were then analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. Finally, findings were interpreted to generate conclusions and propose inputs for an early literacy intervention program.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The study involved Grade 1 teachers and their immediate supervisors from selected public schools as respondents. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that participants had direct involvement in implementing differentiated instruction strategies in early literacy instruction. This approach allowed the researcher to gather relevant and experience-based data from individuals who are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure three key variables: teacher profile, level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies, and seriousness of problems encountered in implementation. The questionnaire included items related to readiness-based, interest-based, and learning profile differentiation, as well as instructional materials adaptation and assessment practices. It also captured challenges such as teacher preparedness, resource availability, classroom management, and support systems.

Prior to administration, the instrument underwent validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability. Ethical protocols were observed by informing respondents about the purpose of the study and ensuring voluntary participation. The collected data were treated with confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. This method ensured that the data gathered were reliable, valid, and reflective of actual classroom practices.

Data Analysis Methods

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research variables. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the profile of respondents and assess the effectiveness of differentiated instruction

strategies and the severity of implementation challenges. These measures provided a clear overview of the data and facilitated interpretation of general trends.

To examine relationships between variables, inferential statistics were employed. Correlation analysis was used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies and teachers' profile variables. This statistical method is appropriate for identifying the strength and direction of relationships between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, t-tests were used to determine whether there were significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and their immediate supervisors regarding the effectiveness of DI strategies. This analysis helped assess the level of agreement or discrepancy between the two groups. The level of significance was set at 0.05, which is a commonly accepted threshold in educational research.

Data coding and tabulation were conducted systematically to ensure accuracy in analysis. Statistical results were interpreted based on established criteria, allowing the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions. The use of both descriptive and inferential statistics strengthened the validity of the findings and ensured that conclusions were grounded in empirical evidence. These analytical procedures provided a solid basis for identifying key patterns and informing the development of an early literacy intervention program.

Research Hypotheses and Validation

The study tested two null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance: (H_0^1) there is no significant relationship between the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies and teachers' profile variables, and (H_0^2) there is no significant difference between the perceptions of teachers and their immediate supervisors regarding the effectiveness of these strategies.

Hypothesis testing was conducted using appropriate statistical tools, including correlation analysis and t-tests. The decision to accept or reject the null hypotheses was based on computed p-values compared to the established level of significance. If the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected; otherwise, it was accepted.

This validation process ensured that the conclusions drawn were statistically supported and not based on random variation. It also strengthened the reliability and credibility of the findings, providing a sound basis for recommending instructional improvements and intervention strategies in early literacy education.

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study was limited to selected public schools and relied solely on self-reported data from teachers and their immediate supervisors, which may introduce bias. It did not include direct assessment of learners' reading performance, limiting the ability to measure actual learning outcomes. Additionally, the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts such as private schools or higher grade levels.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by not disclosing personal information. Data were used solely for academic purposes and handled with integrity. These ethical practices align with established research standards and ensure the protection of participants' rights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Grade 1 Teachers in Public Schools

This section presents the profile of the Grade 1 teachers in public schools in terms of age, sex, marital status, position, highest educational attainment, bachelor's degree earned, number

of years in teaching, number of seminars or trainings attended related to differentiated instruction, and average monthly income. These variables were considered to better understand the background and professional characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1: *Profile of Grade 1 Teachers in Public Schools*

<i>n=63</i>			
Profile	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-30 years old	4	6.3
	31-40 years old	18	28.6
	41-50 years old	26	41.3
	51 years old and above	15	23.8
Sex	Male	5	7.9
	Female	58	92.1
Marital Status	Single	12	19.0
	Married	46	73.0
	Separated	2	3.2
	Widowed	3	4.8
Position	Teacher I	6	9.5
	Teacher II	3	4.8
	Teacher III	25	39.7
	Master Teacher	3	4.8
	Head Teacher	19	30.2
	Principal	7	11.1
Highest Educational Attainment	With Doctorate	8	12.7
	With Doctorate Units	9	14.3
	With Master	17	27.0
	With Master's Units	26	41.3
	Bachelors	3	4.8
Bachelor's Degree	Elementary Education	63	100.0
Number of years in Teaching	Less than 5 Years	8	12.7
	5-10 Years	21	33.3
	11-15 Years	8	12.7
	16-20 Years	11	17.5
	21-25 Years	4	6.3
	More than 25 Years	11	17.5
Number of Seminars or Training Attended Related to Differentiated Instruction	Less than 5 Years	14	22.2
	5-10 Years	18	28.6
	11-15 Years	14	22.2
	16-20 Years	7	11.1
	21-25 Years	5	7.9
	More than 25 Years	5	7.9
Average Monthly Income	Less than 50,000	46	73.0
	50,001-70,000	13	20.6
	70,001-90,000	4	6.3

The data reveal that most Grade 1 teachers are within the 41–50 age group, indicating a predominantly experienced workforce capable of implementing differentiated instruction effectively (Tan et al., 2025; Onyishi, 2020). This aligns with findings that teaching experience enhances instructional competence, particularly in addressing diverse reading needs (Ocampo, 2023). In terms of sex, the teaching population is largely female, reflecting global trends in primary education and suggesting strengths in nurturing and learner-centered practices

(Sebastian et al., 2022; OECD, 2022).

Most respondents are married, implying stability and maturity that may positively influence instructional delivery, although research shows that marital status has minimal direct impact on performance (Orim & Egwo, 2020; Erden et al., 2023). Regarding position, the majority hold Teacher III roles, indicating a highly experienced workforce with strong pedagogical skills and leadership support, which are essential for effective differentiated instruction (Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Shareefa, 2023).

In terms of educational attainment, most teachers have pursued graduate studies, enhancing their instructional capabilities and responsiveness to learner diversity (Langelaan et al., 2024). All respondents hold a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, ensuring alignment between specialization and teaching assignment, which supports effective literacy instruction (D'Intino & Wang, 2021). Teaching experience is generally moderate to high, further strengthening their ability to implement differentiated strategies (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019).

Professional development exposure is moderate, suggesting the need for sustained training to improve differentiated instruction practices (Kahmann et al., 2022). Meanwhile, most teachers fall within lower income brackets, which may influence motivation but does not solely determine instructional effectiveness. Overall, these findings highlight a competent teaching workforce that requires continuous support and professional development to enhance early literacy outcomes.

Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools

This section presents the level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools. The effectiveness was assessed across various domains, including readiness-based differentiation, interest-based differentiation, learning profile differentiation, instructional materials adaptation, and assessment practices. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools*

Domain	Mean	Description
A. Readiness-Based Differentiation	4.40	High Effectiveness
B. Interest-Based Differentiation	4.32	High Effectiveness
C. Learning Profile Differentiation	4.34	High Effectiveness
D. Instructional Materials Adaptation	4.31	High Effectiveness
E. Assessment Practices	4.30	High Effectiveness
Overall Mean	4.33	High Effectiveness

Note: Highest frequencies are in boldface

4.51 – 5.00	Very High Effectiveness	1.51 – 2.50	Low Effectiveness
3.51 – 4.50	High Effectiveness	1.00 – 1.50	Very Low Effectiveness
2.51 – 3.50	Moderate Effectiveness		

In Table 2, the results indicate that the overall effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners is high, with a mean of 4.33. This suggests that both teachers and their immediate supervisors consistently view differentiated instruction as an effective approach for improving early literacy outcomes. The findings reflect that instruction is being implemented in ways that respond to diverse learner needs, promoting inclusive and adaptive classroom practices.

Among the domains, readiness-based differentiation obtained the highest mean (4.40), followed by learning profile differentiation (4.34), interest-based differentiation (4.32), instructional materials adaptation (4.31), and assessment practices (4.30), all interpreted as highly effective. The prominence of readiness-based differentiation highlights the importance of assessing learners' abilities as a basis for instruction. This supports the view that tailoring instruction to learners' readiness enhances reading comprehension and minimizes learning gaps (Magableh & Abdullah, 2020).

The consistently high ratings across all domains indicate a holistic implementation of differentiated instruction, integrating multiple dimensions such as readiness, interests, learning profiles, materials, and assessment. Research affirms that differentiated instruction is most effective when applied as a multidimensional approach addressing learner variability (Langelaan et al., 2024). Likewise, studies show that such comprehensive application improves student engagement and academic performance (Achmad et al., 2024).

However, slightly lower ratings in instructional materials adaptation and assessment practices suggest areas for improvement. Strengthening access to appropriate resources and enhancing data-driven assessment practices can further improve instructional effectiveness (Baharudin, 2025). Overall, differentiated instruction remains a viable framework for improving reading outcomes, reinforcing its value in early literacy intervention programs (Potot et al., 2023; Maharatri et al., 2024).

Level of Seriousness of the Problems Encountered in the Utilization of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools

This section presents the level of seriousness of the problems encountered in the utilization of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools. The identified problems were categorized into teacher competence and preparedness, availability and adequacy of instructional materials, classroom management and time allocation, assessment and monitoring practices, and support systems and learning environment. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: *Level of Seriousness of the Problems Encountered in the Utilization of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools*

Domain	Mean	Description
A. Teacher Competence and Preparedness	2.94	Moderate Seriousness
B. Availability and Adequacy of Instructional Materials	3.41	Moderate Seriousness
C. Classroom Management and Time Allocation	3.23	Moderate Seriousness
D. Assessment and Monitoring Practices	3.05	Moderate Seriousness
E. Support Systems and Learning Environment	3.26	Moderate Seriousness
Overall Mean	3.18	Moderate Seriousness

Note: Highest frequencies are in boldface

4.51 – 5.00	Very High Seriousness	1.51 – 2.50	Low Seriousness
3.51 – 4.50	High Seriousness	1.00 – 1.50	Very Low Seriousness
2.51 – 3.50	Moderate Seriousness		

The results indicated in Table 3 that the overall seriousness of problems encountered in implementing differentiated instruction strategies is moderate ($M = 3.18$), suggesting that while challenges exist, they are generally manageable and do not severely hinder instructional practices. However, these issues still affect the consistency and quality of implementation in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners (Langelaan et al., 2024).

Among the domains, availability and adequacy of instructional materials ranked highest ($M = 3.41$), highlighting resource limitations as a primary concern. Access to leveled readers, phonics tools, and instructional guides is essential for effective differentiation, and insufficient materials can constrain teachers' ability to address diverse learning needs (Baharudin, 2025).

Support systems and learning environment ($M = 3.26$) also showed moderate seriousness, indicating that limited administrative support, parental involvement, and community engagement may affect instructional effectiveness (Langelaan et al., 2024).

Classroom management and time allocation ($M = 3.23$) further reflect the complexity of handling diverse learners within limited time, especially when implementing group-based and individualized instruction (Langelaan et al., 2024). Similarly, assessment and monitoring practices ($M = 3.05$) suggest challenges in using diagnostic tools and tracking learner progress, which are critical for data-driven instruction (Baharudin, 2025). Teacher competence and preparedness ($M = 2.94$), while lowest, still indicate the need for continuous professional development to strengthen teachers' expertise in differentiated instruction (Langelaan et al., 2024).

These findings reveal that challenges are interconnected and require comprehensive solutions. Strengthening resource provision, enhancing teacher training, improving assessment systems, and reinforcing institutional support are essential to optimize differentiated instruction. Addressing these areas can reduce implementation barriers and improve reading outcomes among Grade 1 learners.

Relationship Between the Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools and the Profile of Teachers

This section presents the level of seriousness of the problems encountered in the utilization of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools. The identified problems were categorized into teacher competence and preparedness, availability and adequacy of instructional materials, classroom management and time allocation, assessment and monitoring practices, and support systems and learning environment. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 4: *Relationship Between the Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools and the Profile of Teachers*

Profile	Level of Effectiveness						Overall Mean
		Readiness-Based Differentiation	Interest-Based Differentiation	Learning Profile Differentiation	Instructional Materials Adaptation	Assessment Practices	
Age	r_s	-0.005	-0.008	0.015	-0.013	-0.015	0.004
	Sig	0.964	0.938	0.887	0.906	0.888	0.965
Sex	r_{pb}	-.292*	-.278*	-.248*	-.308*	-.286*	-.301*
	Sig	0.020	0.028	0.050	0.014	0.023	0.017
Marital status	r_s	-0.126	-0.253	-0.183	-0.166	-0.116	-0.180
	Sig	0.345	0.055	0.169	0.214	0.386	0.177
Position	r_s	0.191	0.131	0.122	0.201	.219*	0.159
	Sig	0.063	0.201	0.239	0.055	0.040	0.109
Highest educational attainment	r_s	0.108	0.051	0.023	0.039	0.023	0.057
	Sig	0.298	0.618	0.827	0.711	0.832	0.570
Number of Teaching years	r_s	0.106	0.049	0.066	0.121	0.118	0.097
	Sig	0.294	0.626	0.517	0.235	0.257	0.318

Number of	r_s	0.114	0.015	0.020	0.091	0.093	0.071
Seminars/Trainings Attended	Sig	0.260	0.881	0.841	0.372	0.372	0.468
Average monthly income	r_s	-0.046	-0.071	-0.047	0.065	0.034	-0.028
	Sig	0.678	0.520	0.670	0.561	0.763	0.792

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

Note: Sex (1=Male, 2=Female)

The results indicated in Table 4 that there is generally no significant relationship between the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies and most teachers' profile variables, as shown by non-significant correlation coefficients and p-values greater than 0.05. This suggests that differentiated instruction can be effectively implemented regardless of age, marital status, educational attainment, teaching experience, training, and income. The findings highlight the adaptability of differentiated instruction as an inclusive approach in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners.

However, gender emerged as a significant factor across all domains, with negative correlations indicating that female teachers tend to demonstrate higher effectiveness in implementing differentiated instruction. This may be attributed to differences in instructional approaches, responsiveness, and classroom interaction, which influence learner engagement and individualized support (Nayman & Altun, 2022). Additionally, position showed a significant relationship only with assessment practices, suggesting that teachers in higher positions may be more effective in utilizing assessment strategies due to greater experience and leadership roles (Tiñas, 2025).

Other variables, such as age, educational attainment, teaching experience, and training, showed no significant relationship with effectiveness. This implies that demographic and professional characteristics alone do not determine how well teachers implement differentiated instruction. Instead, effectiveness appears to depend more on teachers' instructional practices, beliefs, and commitment. Studies support that teacher competence and knowledge in differentiated instruction are more critical factors influencing its successful implementation.

Overall, these findings emphasize that improving differentiated instruction should focus on strengthening teacher competencies, professional development, and instructional support systems rather than demographic characteristics. This reinforces the view that differentiated instruction is a flexible and inclusive strategy that can be effectively applied across diverse teaching contexts.

Difference in the Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools as Perceived by Teachers and their Immediate Supervisors

This section presents the difference in the level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools as perceived by teachers and their immediate supervisors. The comparison focused on the different domains of differentiated instruction strategies to determine whether significant differences existed between the perceptions of the two groups of respondents. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: *Difference in the Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies in Addressing Reading Difficulties Among Grade 1 Learners in Public Schools as Perceived by Teachers and their Immediate Supervisors*

	Teachers	Supervisors	Mann-Whitney U
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Level of Effectiveness of Differentiated Instruction Strategies			Statistic	Sig.
Readiness-Based Differentiation	4.38	4.51	170.00 ^{ns}	0.561
Interest-Based Differentiation	4.31	4.43	179.50 ^{ns}	0.712
Learning Profile Differentiation	4.35	4.31	183.00 ^{ns}	0.770
Instructional Materials Adaptation	4.31	4.29	171.00 ^{ns}	0.570
Assessment Practices	4.28	4.46	159.50 ^{ns}	0.397
Overall Mean	4.33	4.40	181.50 ^{ns}	0.749

^{ns}Not significant

The results reveal in Table 5 that there is no significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies between Grade 1 teachers and their immediate supervisors across all domains, including readiness-based, interest-based, learning profile differentiation, instructional materials adaptation, assessment practices, and overall effectiveness. This is supported by Mann–Whitney U test results, where all p-values exceeded 0.05, indicating a strong alignment in perceptions between the two groups.

Both teachers and supervisors consistently rated the effectiveness of differentiated instruction as high, with only minimal variations in mean scores. For instance, supervisors rated readiness-based differentiation slightly higher, while teachers gave marginally higher ratings for learning profile differentiation. However, these differences were not statistically significant and may be attributed to natural variations in perspective rather than actual disagreement. This consistency suggests that both groups observe similar instructional practices and outcomes in addressing reading difficulties.

The absence of significant differences reflects a shared understanding of differentiated instruction within the school system. This alignment may result from effective communication, consistent instructional monitoring, and shared professional development experiences. Research indicates that alignment among educational stakeholders enhances the successful implementation of instructional strategies by fostering collaboration and minimizing discrepancies in practice (Lang, 2019).

Furthermore, the findings support previous studies showing that perceptions of differentiated instruction remain consistent across groups when similar contextual conditions and training are present (Siam & Al-Natour, 2016). This suggests that both teachers and supervisors recognize the value and effectiveness of differentiated instruction regardless of their roles.

Overall, the results highlight the importance of maintaining collaborative practices and shared understanding in implementing differentiated instruction. Strengthening communication, professional development, and institutional support can further enhance instructional effectiveness and improve reading outcomes among Grade 1 learners.

Proposed Early Literacy Intervention Program

Introduction

The findings of the study revealed that differentiated instruction strategies are highly effective in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners. However, several areas were identified as having a moderate level of seriousness, particularly in teacher competence and preparedness, availability of

instructional materials, classroom management and time allocation, assessment and monitoring practices, and support systems and learning environment. These challenges, although not severe, may limit the full potential of differentiated instruction if left unaddressed.

In response to these findings, a comprehensive Early Literacy Intervention Program is proposed to strengthen instructional practices and address existing gaps. The program is designed to enhance teachers' competencies, provide adequate resources, improve instructional delivery, and foster collaborative support among stakeholders. By targeting both strengths and areas for improvement, the program aims to ensure that all Grade 1 learners, especially those experiencing reading difficulties, receive responsive, inclusive, and effective literacy instruction.

General Objectives

The proposed Early Literacy Intervention Program aims to enhance the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools.

Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Strengthen teachers' competence and preparedness in implementing differentiated instruction strategies;
2. Improve the availability and utilization of appropriate instructional materials for early literacy;
3. Enhance classroom management and optimize time allocation for differentiated reading instruction;
4. Develop and sustain effective assessment and monitoring systems for tracking learners' reading progress;
5. Establish strong support systems and a conducive learning environment for literacy development; and
6. Promote active involvement of parents and community stakeholders in supporting early reading initiatives.

Key Areas	Identified Issues	Program Inputs / Interventions	Expected Outcomes
Teacher Competence and Preparedness	Moderate competence in diagnosing reading difficulties and implementing differentiated instruction	Conduct continuous capacity-building programs on diagnostic assessment, differentiated strategies, and small-group instruction	Improved teacher competence, confidence, and effective implementation of differentiated instruction
Instructional Materials	Insufficient leveled texts, phonics materials, and literacy resources	Develop and provide leveled readers, decodable texts, localized materials, and instructional kits; integrate digital resources	Increased access to appropriate materials; enhanced learner comprehension and engagement
Classroom Management and Time Allocation	Limited time for intervention and difficulty managing diverse learners	Establish structured reading intervention schedules; implement flexible grouping; provide classroom support systems	Improved classroom organization; maximized instructional time for differentiated activities
Assessment and Monitoring Practices	Inconsistent use of diagnostic tools and progress monitoring	Implement standardized reading assessments; establish monitoring systems; conduct data-driven instruction training	More accurate identification of learner needs; improved tracking of reading progress
Support Systems and Learning Environment	Limited coaching, mentoring, and administrative support;	Strengthen mentoring programs; assign literacy coordinators; improve	Enhanced teacher support; more conducive

	inadequate classroom space	classroom learning environments	and inclusive learning environment
Parental and Community Involvement	Moderate parental engagement and limited community partnerships	Conduct parent literacy programs; implement home reading activities; build partnerships with stakeholders	Increased parental involvement; strengthened support for learners beyond school
Learning Environment Enhancement	Lack of flexible and print-rich classroom environments	Establish reading corners, literacy centers, and interactive learning spaces	Increased learner motivation, participation, and reading engagement

The proposed Early Literacy Intervention Program is anchored on key areas identified in the study as having moderate challenges that may affect the effective implementation of differentiated instruction. Each component of the program is designed to directly address these concerns while enhancing the overall quality of reading instruction.

In terms of teacher competence and preparedness, the findings highlighted the need to improve teachers' confidence in diagnosing reading difficulties and implementing differentiated instruction strategies. As a response, the program emphasizes continuous capacity-building through training, workshops, and mentoring. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, they will be better prepared to address diverse learner needs and deliver more effective instruction.

With regard to the availability and adequacy of instructional materials, the study revealed limitations in accessing leveled readers, phonics tools, and other literacy resources. The program addresses this by promoting the development and provision of appropriate instructional materials, including localized and culturally relevant texts. Access to varied and suitable materials will enable teachers to match instruction with learners' reading levels, thereby improving comprehension and engagement.

The area of classroom management and time allocation also emerged as a moderate concern, particularly in managing multiple reading groups and providing sufficient intervention time. To address this, the program proposes structured reading schedules and flexible grouping strategies that allow teachers to effectively manage diverse learners. These interventions aim to maximize instructional time and ensure that all learners receive adequate support.

In terms of assessment and monitoring practices, the findings suggest that while assessment is being conducted, there are gaps in consistency and data utilization. The program therefore includes the implementation of standardized assessment tools, regular progress monitoring, and training on data-driven instruction. Strengthening assessment practices will enable teachers to make informed decisions and provide targeted interventions based on learners' needs.

The study also identified concerns related to support systems and learning environment, including limited access to coaching, insufficient administrative support, and inadequate classroom spaces. The program addresses these issues by strengthening mentoring systems, designating literacy coordinators, and improving classroom environments to support differentiated instruction. A supportive and well-equipped environment is essential for effective teaching and learning.

Finally, the program recognizes the importance of parental and community involvement in reinforcing reading development. The findings indicated moderate levels of engagement in this area, prompting the inclusion of parent education programs, home-based reading activities, and partnerships with community organizations. Strengthening these collaborations will ensure that learners receive consistent support both in school and at home.

Taken together, the proposed program provides a comprehensive and strategic response to the identified challenges. By addressing key areas such as teacher development, resource provision, instructional practices, assessment, and stakeholder involvement, the program aims to enhance the effectiveness of differentiated instruction and improve reading outcomes among Grade 1 learners.

CONCLUSIONS

From the preceding findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The findings revealed that Grade 1 teachers in public schools are predominantly experienced, female, and academically qualified, with most possessing graduate-level education and moderate exposure to professional training, indicating a competent workforce capable of implementing differentiated instruction strategies in addressing reading difficulties.
2. The study established that differentiated instruction strategies across readiness, interest, learning profile, instructional materials, and assessment practices are highly effective, demonstrating that teachers consistently apply responsive and learner-centered approaches that significantly support the improvement of reading skills among Grade 1 learners.
3. The results confirmed that the problems encountered in utilizing differentiated instruction strategies are moderately serious, indicating that while challenges in teacher preparedness, instructional materials, classroom management, assessment, and support systems exist, they remain manageable and do not substantially impede instructional effectiveness.
4. The findings revealed that there is generally no significant relationship between the effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies and the profile of teachers, suggesting that demographic and professional characteristics do not largely influence the successful implementation of differentiated instruction in addressing reading difficulties.
5. The study showed that there is no significant difference in the perceived level of effectiveness of differentiated instruction strategies between teachers and their immediate supervisors, indicating a strong alignment in perceptions and a shared understanding of instructional practices in early literacy instruction.
6. The findings further imply that despite the presence of moderate challenges, the consistent high effectiveness and aligned perceptions among stakeholders affirm that differentiated instruction remains a viable and sustainable approach in addressing reading difficulties among Grade 1 learners in public schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above-mentioned findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. It is recommended to strengthen continuous professional development programs focusing on differentiated instruction, particularly in early literacy and classroom application, while encouraging teachers to pursue advanced studies and specialized trainings to further enhance their instructional competence and responsiveness to diverse learner needs.
2. It is recommended to sustain and enhance the effective implementation of differentiated instruction by providing regular capacity-building activities, instructional coaching, and access to updated teaching resources that further refine teachers' ability to address readiness, interests, and learning profiles of Grade 1 learners.
3. It is recommended to address the moderately serious challenges through targeted interventions such as structured mentoring programs, improved resource allocation, and time management support, along with strengthening school-based systems that assist teachers in managing classroom demands and instructional responsibilities more effectively.
4. It is recommended to focus on enhancing teachers' competencies and instructional practices through continuous training, collaborative learning communities, and coaching

mechanisms, as effectiveness appears to be more influenced by professional skills and application rather than demographic or profile characteristics.

5. It is recommended to maintain and further strengthen collaboration between teachers and supervisors through regular feedback sessions, joint planning activities, and monitoring systems to sustain alignment in instructional practices and ensure continuous improvement in differentiated instruction strategies.
6. It is recommended to reinforce the sustainability of differentiated instruction by integrating comprehensive support systems, including resource provision, administrative backing, and community involvement, to further minimize existing challenges and enhance the overall effectiveness of early literacy intervention programs.

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