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EFL Teachers' Voices in Differentiated Instruction

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Abstract: All children in Indonesia have an equal right to education at their level, and the curriculum acknowledges the diversity of Indonesian classrooms. Teachers must consequently incorporate this into the design of their lesson plans. In order to give students alternative possibilities for obtaining information, differentiated instruction involves rearranging classroom instruction and learning methodologies. Teachers may be familiar with the idea of varied education, but they frequently struggle to incorporate difference in terms of content, method, and output in their classrooms. In the framework of differentiated education, this thesis investigates the points of view and experiences of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers. The purpose of this study is to hear these teachers' voices as they discuss the opportunities and difficulties that varied education methodologies in various classroom contexts bring. The study highlights the perspectives of EFL teachers on how differentiated instruction should be implemented. The results show how different educational approaches, assessment methods, and classroom management strategies are used by teachers to meet the various learning demands of their students. The study reveals the struggles and obstacles faced by EFL teachers as they attempt to strike a balance between the demands of a standard curriculum and the particular needs of each of their students. It also underlines how important professional development is in giving teachers the abilities and information required for successfully implementing differentiated instruction. The study's conclusion emphasizes the importance of administrative policies, administrative support systems, and teamwork in determining the overall success of courses for differentiated instruction.

Keywords: Differentiated instruction, Challenges, EFL classroom, Professional development.

1. Introduction

Differentiated instruction has drawn a lot of attention in the field of English language education as a way to meet the varied needs and skills of EFL students. Although the advantages of diversified instruction are well known, there is a serious worry that EFL teachers' opinions and voices are frequently ignored when these tactics are put into practice. The difficulties that EFL teachers encounter while trying to express their opinions, worries, and inventive thoughts within the context of differentiated instruction should be identified. Teachers who had positive attitudes and believed in the benefits of DI were more likely to implement it effectively in their classrooms. (Tomlinson, 2011).

Teachers need to provide students with a challenging investigation in Authentic Learning Experience (Laur, 2013). They should merely be the one who facilitates the process of learning and not be the centre of learning. Nowadays, students face complex problems and challenges that need to be resolved and they are expected to play a central role in classroom learning activities. According to Gardner (2007), people are capable of having

linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence. EFL teachers can use several exercises and resources that draw on these various intelligences to help students interact with the language in ways that play to their strengths.

Teachers must be able to stimulate their students' motivation and interests. Students then cultivate them into creativity. In the era of technology, students need to be proficient in the "4Cs": Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking, and Creativity (Andrew, 2013). Students can get ready for college, the workplace, and other aspects of life by learning these four abilities. Students get the opportunity to see their education from a global perspective.

The lack of freedom and flexibility given to EFL teachers in the design and implementation of differentiated instruction stands out as a major problem. Teachers frequently struggle to adapt their teaching strategies to the particular needs of their students because of restrictive curricula, standardized tests, and administrative requirements. This restriction prevents them from using their professional expertise and creativity, which prevents the full potential of differentiated instruction from being realized.

Differentiated instruction aims to engage students by tailoring instruction to their learning styles and needs. Neglecting teachers' voices can result in standardized approaches that do not effectively engage students or address their diverse learning preferences, potentially leading to reduced motivation and achievement. Teachers are experts in their field and can offer valuable insights into effective instructional practices. When their voices are overlooked, opportunities for professional growth and collaboration may be missed, hindering the development of effective differentiated instruction practices within schools and districts. (Throne, 2016).

As educators, we must acknowledge that every student is special in their way. Each student deserves the chance to learn in a way that works for them. Teachers sometimes struggle to come up with more engaging ways to attract students into the classroom, especially when teaching English as a foreign language. The students will lose interest if the task is too simple. Giving students an assignment that is too challenging, on the other hand, might be annoying. Worksheets, exercises, and other conventional teaching techniques might grow old for students quickly. (Throne, 2016). Therefore, by applying differentiated instruction, students could not only maximize their potential but also learn to instil the character values of diversity and respecting others. In this section, provide an adequate background of the study and add the current research to show the gap in the research.

More students are lately enrolled in general education classrooms as a result of the demand for equal chances in the classroom. Teachers must therefore devise strategies to meet all students' learning needs. Regarding differentiated teaching, teachers have a variety of misconceptions. Differentiated instruction is not individualized instruction, chaotic instruction, homogeneous grouping, or tailored instruction, according to Tomlinson (2011).

Teachers may also be sceptical of differentiated instruction because they think that if it is used, students will not be sufficiently ready for standardized tests, and students will be assigned unfair workloads to one another, or even won't be able to survive in the real world. According to Tomlinson (2011), differentiated instruction (DI) respects students' limitations while also recognizing their talents. To accommodate every type of assistance children may require, Sousa and Tomlinson (2011) suggest adjusting lessons in three key areas: content, process, and product. Attention to social, emotional, ethical, and academic factors improves instruction in each of these areas.

A substantial educational shift is being brought about by the adoption of tailored instruction in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It is important to understand that, despite its potential advantages, differentiated instruction is not used by all schools and EFL teachers in Indonesia. It is important to recognize that there might be wide variations in the degree of differentiation in EFL classrooms. Differentiated instruction may have been more enthusiastically adopted by some schools and teachers in Indonesia than by others, who may have had less exposure to or comprehension of this pedagogical technique.

As Albert Einstein once said everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid. This saying goes to all learners, especially learners in Indonesia, who have different abilities that need to be accommodated by the teachers. However, even though some schools have not applied differentiated instructions, there is a school in Bandung that has applied "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar". It is SD BPK Penabur Banda. Besides using "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar", the school also

applied another curriculum named "International Baccalaureate" that emphasized the use of differentiated instructions in the teaching and learning process. Hence, this study aims to reveal teachers' voices on the challenges and successes of Differentiated Instructions in EFL Classrooms and attempts to offer an in-depth examination of the difficulties experienced by EFL teachers.

There was a case study conducted by Aldosari (2018) that investigated the challenges of using Differentiated Instruction. The sample included 275 teachers from schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Overall, the results indicate that implementing the differentiated education technique was a medium challenge. The nature of differentiated instruction, challenges related to teachers, and challenges related to study courses were ranked first, followed by challenges related to students, challenges related to the school environment, challenges related to the school environment, challenges related to teachers, and finally challenges related to study courses.

A mixed research study conducted by Stephen Joseph (2013) also outlines the success of Differentiated Instruction (DI) in the classroom. The study showed that Differentiated Instruction (DI) could increase students' motivation in approaching academic tasks, improve study habits and problem-solving skills (Ruswana, 2023; Nisa' et al., 2023; Febrianti et al., 2023)) for students, increase meaning and understanding by making connections to real-life classroom and world situations, group cooperation and collaboration, and build improved relationships between students and teachers. On the other hand, according to a study by Karam Siam (2016), there are some challenges as the study found out: weak administrative support, low parental support, lack of time, and shortages in learning resources.

Based on the previous studies mentioned above, there is still a huge potential in discovering a study on the teachers' voice in Differentiated Instruction, as well as finding out the challenges and successes of using Differentiated Instructions in an EFL classroom. In this study, the researcher investigates both the challenges and successes that EFL teachers face in implementing Differentiated Instruction about Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. Exposing the teachers' voices in this study could help teachers and educators create a learning environment that values and respects individual differences, promoting equity in education and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed in the future.

In the end, this research hopes to provide important insights into the unique dynamics of EFL teaching in Indonesia regarding the implementation of differentiated instruction by defining the issue in this way. This study aims to shed light on the challenges, successes, and opportunities for development in the Indonesian EFL educational environment about differentiated instruction through an analysis of teachers' voices and experiences.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction is one of the teaching models in which teachers deliberately plan for student differences so that all students can learn to their full potential. It is a method of instruction that ensures whether a learner understands what he or she is learning, how he or she is learning, and how he or she exhibits what he or she has learned. (Tomlinson, 2011). Teachers adopt a philosophy of differentiated instruction to meet those unique learners, as well as approaches to differentiate learning processes that are appropriate at different times in different contexts with different learners. (Gregory, 2004). Teachers can modify the learning environment, material, process, and product to the readiness, interests, and learning profiles of their students. Students of the same age have different learning readiness, interests, and learning styles, as well as different experiences and living circumstances (Tomlinson, 2005).

Differentiated instruction (DI) is also a teaching approach that acknowledges the diversity of students' needs and provides customized instruction to address those needs. It involves providing multiple pathways for learning that are based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profile. This literature review aims to explore the key elements of differentiated instruction, including students' readiness, interests, and learning profile, as well as content differentiation, process differentiation, and product differentiation.

Knowing the significance of each element in differentiated instruction could help Indonesian EFL teachers in implementing DI (Differentiated Instruction) in their classrooms. Teachers can adjust the process to fit different learning styles, adapt the content to match students' preparation levels, and offer options for the

final output or assessment so that students can show their understanding in a variety of ways. Teachers are more capable of modifying the learning experience for each student when they are aware of the importance of each element. When selecting on content, procedure, product, and the learning environment, it's possible to take the interests, preferences, and skills of the students into account.

Differentiated instruction entails delivering content that is suitable for students with various levels of preparation. Teachers can differentiate content by giving struggling students more help or scaffolding or by giving more difficult material to more competent students. By offering information in various media, such as text, audio, or video, teachers can differentiate their lessons' material as well. Teachers can guarantee that all students have access to learning that is appropriate for their readiness level and learning profile by differentiating the content.

Effective process differentiation techniques include breaking activities down into various levels of complexity to maximize each student's classroom experience, giving directions at various levels of specificity, varying the pace of work, offering multiple options of expression, and providing students with alternative topics on which to focus. (Tomlinson, 2005). It's important to understand that the process varies depending on the learner's preferred learning style (lecture for auditory learners, centres for tactile learners, small-group and whole-group instruction), as well as the strategies teachers encourage students to employ to promote comprehensive examination of the material taught. Everyone can gain from higher-order thinking, open-ended thinking, discovery, reasoning, and inquiry. (Bailey, 2008).

2.2. Teachers' Voices

Numerous studies on the topic of voice have been conducted in both academic and non-academic contexts. For instance, in organizational management research, "discretionary communication of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions about work-related issues with the intent to improve organizational or unit functioning" (Morrison, 2011) is the typical definition of voice. The concept of voice in non-educational settings often has some key characteristics, such as being an act of verbal expression, a form of discretionary action, and constructive in its content, however, variances do exist (Morrison, 2011).

However, there are many more nuances and variations in the concepts of voice in education. Teachers, who play a crucial role in the educational system, and the inclusion of their opinions in decision-making are frequently seen as both the problem and the solution to issues that are now affecting schools (Gyurko, 2012). According to Conley (1991), the teacher's voice has come to stand for leadership, resistance, control, and knowledge (as well as position and involvement). Voice can stand in for both individual and group action (Gyurko, 2012).

While some academics define teacher voice more broadly as the opinions and ideas expressed by teachers, other researchers are more specific about the fields that are impacted by teacher voice. For instance, Frost (2008) defines teacher voice as "the views, experience, and perspective of teachers on educational policy and practice", while Hargreaves (1996) describes it as "the position teachers hold and the part they play in school structuring and reform."

Gyurko (2012) defined teacher voice as the expression by teachers of knowledge or opinions about their work, shared in school or other public settings, in the discussion of contentious issues that have a broad impact on the process and outcomes of education. There has, according to many researchers, been a shortage of teacher input in policy discussions related to education. According to Ingersoll (2007), teachers have very little actual practical control over the problems they immediately address. Because of perceived shortcomings in teachers' preparation, knowledge, effort, and skill, educational policymakers may withdraw trust and control from them.

Highlighting the significance of teachers' voice for educational planning and decision-making, Lefstein (2014) stated that teachers belong to those parts of society who have the highest and biggest interest in any decisions made since they belong to those who are nearest to educational institutions and as a result, they have critical knowledge and expertise about the issues that are at hand. Similarly, Frost (2008) contends that hearing teachers' narratives and including their classroom experiences in policy-making processes can be beneficial to politicians. Additionally, because they feel more ownership and responsibility for the results when teachers are involved in the policy-making process, they also become better policy implementers.

The advantages of including teacher voices for schools and children are supported by more studies. For instance, Kahlenberg (2015) found a correlation between increased teacher voice in schools and a more cohesive and well-defined school ideology as well as a better overall school climate. In addition, teacher voice has been associated with greater collegiality and increased collaboration among colleagues, enhanced teacher-administrator collaboration, increased commitment to educational improvement and teacher participation, and greater satisfaction with professional development opportunities (Ingersoll, 2007).

Based on the key elements in Differentiated Instruction that primarily focus on strategies and principles for implementing DI effectively, Tomlinson (2009) provides insight that informs the readers of the identification of success indicators based on the principles and practices she advocates. Here are some indicators of success in implementing DI in the classroom, influenced by Tomlinson's work (2009):

a. Success in Differentiated Instruction (DI) can be indicated by the presence of a variety of instructional approaches tailored to meet students' diverse needs, including tiered assignments, flexible grouping, and differentiated materials.

b. Specific learning standards and objectives should be aligned with Differentiated Instruction (DI). Success can be determined by how well DI practices address the objectives and standards of the curriculum.

c. An obvious improvement in student involvement, participation, and excitement for learning is an indicator that can measure success.

d. Differentiated assessment methods that are in line with instructional activities should be part of effective Differentiated Instruction (DI). Success can be shown in the employment of various assessment techniques that are matched to the readiness, interests, and learning profiles of each student.

e. Success can be determined by how closely teachers track each student's development, using formative assessments and other techniques to modify instruction as necessary.

f. Collaboration and continual professional development among teachers are frequently required for successful DI implementation. Increased teacher cooperation and a dedication to ongoing improvement in DI procedures are signs of success.

When implementing Differentiated Instruction in the classroom, teachers and school administrators should adapt these indicators to align with their specific goals and circumstances. It's important to take into account that success indicators might differ depending on the particular setting, grade level, subject matter, and student population.

2.3. Professional Development

As stated by Tomlinson (2011) collaboration and continual professional development among teachers are frequently required for successful Differentiated Instruction (DI) implementation. Professional development is crucial because DI is a complicated instructional strategy that demands teachers to get a thorough understanding of its theories and practices. Understanding the complexities of DI, such as determining students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles, is aided by professional development for teachers. The traditional teaching practices of teachers frequently change as a result of DI. It calls for teachers to adopt a more customized and student-centred approach. Teachers can accomplish this transition with the support of professional development.

Collaborative possibilities for professional development between educators are frequently effective. Teachers' comprehension and application of DI can be improved by exchanging best practices and experiences with colleagues. Professional development in Differentiated Instruction (DI) takes various forms, aiming to provide educators with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to implement DI effectively in their classrooms. Based on Tomlinson (2011), there are common types of professional development approaches and activities for better insight into implementing Differentiated Instruction, such as workshops and seminars; in-service training; webinars; collaborative learning communities, peer observation and feedback; coaching and mentoring; and conferences.

These types of professional development in Differentiated Instruction can be implemented individually or in combination to meet the unique needs and goals of teachers and schools. Effective professional

development helps teachers build the capacity to implement DI practices that benefit diverse student populations.

3.   Methodology

Case studies are implemented to gain descriptive data and analysis of events in certain groups, situations or organizations (Yin, 2011). A case study approach is a type of research design where a particular person, group, or phenomenon is thoroughly investigated and analyzed. Research in the social sciences, including psychology, sociology, and education, frequently employs this methodology. The researcher often collects data using several techniques when using a case study approach, including interviews, observations, and document analysis (Yin, 2011).

An important advantage of a case study approach is that it enables a thorough understanding of a specific case or phenomenon. Researchers can obtain insights into the case's complexity and peculiarities and create a more nuanced picture of the underlying issues by acquiring extensive and detailed data.

The approach of the case study also has the advantage of providing a framework for the creation of ideas or hypotheses. Researchers can find patterns, themes, and links in the data by carefully analyzing it, which may not be possible with other research approaches. These findings can then be applied to create ideas or hypotheses that can be put to the test through additional studies (Merriam, 2009).

This current research aimed to examine the voices of EFL teachers on the successes and challenges in Differentiated Instruction which was aligned with "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar". Considering that not all schools had implemented differentiated instruction, the researcher decided to investigate the challenges and successes in implementing differentiated instruction in SD BPK Penabur Banda and to examine how significant Professional Development or training can help EFL teachers in implementing Differentiated Instruction. As a result, the researcher considered that using a case study approach to this research would be acceptable and useful for gaining descriptive data and analysis of EFL teachers' voices in differentiated instruction.

The research was conducted in SD BPK Penabur Banda. It is one of the schools in Bandung that applies both the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum and "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar". The school was chosen based on its reputation and the possibility for students of various backgrounds. The school was also selected because it has implemented "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar" and the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum that emphasises on the use of Differentiated Instructions to accommodate the needs of learners with different types of learning.

The participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique and interviewed. A purposive sampling strategy was used to choose the participants to guarantee that the research effectively captured the viewpoints and experiences most pertinent to the study's objectives. In qualitative research, the planned and considered process of selecting participants is known as "purposeful sampling," also referred to as "judgmental" or "selective" sampling. Purposive sampling, as opposed to random sampling, which aims for representativeness, concentrates on finding people or groups with particular, useful, or in-depth expertise about the research issue.

The purposive sampling technique in this research setting entailed careful consideration of particular criteria and qualities that were in line with the study's goals. Potential participants with extensive experience, knowledge, or firsthand understanding of the area of inquiry were identified by the researcher. This strategy made sure that the participants were thoughtfully selected, not just a random sample of the public, to offer insightful and valuable answers to the research questions. Purposive sampling gave researchers the ability to choose individuals who could offer context, nuance, and a range of viewpoints, thus improving the overall depth and quality of the data gathered. The research sought to acquire a thorough understanding of the subject by purposefully choosing participants who could provide useful information.

The researcher used a questionnaire and semi-structured interview to obtain the data for this study. The questionnaire and the interview questions utilized in this study were adapted from instruments created by Santangelo & Tomlinson (2009). It reflects Tomlinson's DI model (Santangelo & Tomlinson, 2009), and the instrument was deemed quite dependable after seeking expert opinions and consulting relevant literature. The instrument's initial contents were not altered by the adoption process; rather, some demographic data was contextualized.

In a semi-structured interview, the respondents are allowed to respond to open-ended questions that have been planned (Bryman, 2001). This enables teachers to share and elaborate in-depth information regarding the difficulties and achievements of utilizing differentiated instruction (DI) in the classroom as participants. During the interview, they can also demonstrate and discuss their understanding of differentiated instruction. The result from the interview section can also be used to examine how significant Professional Development or training is for EFL teachers in implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI).

The researcher scheduled interviews based on the dates and hours that were convenient for each participant after receiving their electronic consent. 25 to 45 minutes were allotted for the interviews. The confidentiality agreement indicated in the consent form that each participant completed was reiterated at the beginning of these interviews, along with a reminder that the session would be audio recorded and transcribed. 17 primary school teachers participated in this study. The sample size accounts for 100% of the teacher educators in the corresponding school. There were some criteria for selecting participants as a sample:

a. The teachers as the participants were using Differentiated Instruction (DI) in their teaching-learning activities as emphasized in "Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar"
b. The teachers came from various subjects, such as English, Science, Math, and Language Art were willing to participate.

To ensure that participants communicated openly and truthfully during the study, the researcher maintained the confidentiality of all data. The researcher was attentive to and concerned about the participants' rights. The researcher gave each participant a consent document before they consented to participate in the study, outlining the specifics of confidentiality, protection from danger, and voluntary involvement.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 The Perspectives in Differentiated Instruction (DI)

The demographic section will inform about the length of the teaching experience, the grade that the teacher is teaching, and the subject area that they are currently in. This section was analyzed by creating visual representations to present the results in a clear and easily understandable format.
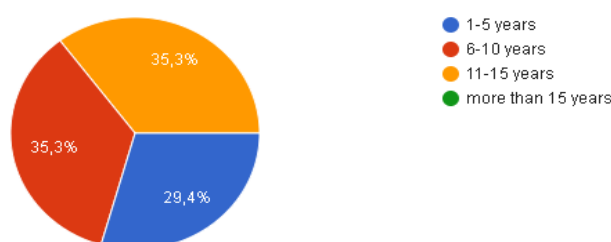

Fig. 1 - The length of teaching experience

Based on the pie chart above, it can be seen that 70,6% of the teachers have 6-15 years of teaching experience, meanwhile, 29,4% of the teachers have 1-5 years of teaching experience. All of the teachers as the participants in this study have experienced the use of Differentiated Instructions (DI) in their classroom activities. The teachers as the research participants teach in the Primary Level from Grades 1-6 as the subject teachers and homeroom teachers. Those teachers also applied Differentiated Instruction (DI) in the classroom, so that they could share their voices in implementing DI, not only the successes but also the challenges in implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI).

Teachers as the research participants in this study also hold different responsibilities. The EFL teachers in SD BPK Penabur Banda are assigned as Math, Science, Language Arts, Social Science and Visual Art teachers.

Some teachers are also being the homeroom teacher of Grade 1 to Grade 6 besides being the subject teachers. Their voices and perspectives as both homeroom and subject teachers are needed in this study.

When the researcher interviewed how the participants perceived DI (Differentiated Instruction), most of them responded with almost similar answers. When questioned about using DI with students of diverse skill levels, the teachers thought that it was critical for improving student learning. The teachers agreed that differentiated education could assist them in meeting the needs of all learners in their classes, despite their competence level.

The research participants acknowledged during the interview process, the value of using differentiated instruction for classes with mixed skill levels, their perspectives on DI practices, the difficulties in using DI, and the resources required to overcome these difficulties to successfully implement DI. Although all of the teachers stated that adopting differentiated teaching in their courses with various skill levels has advantages, doing it well does require additional effort and planning. Through the inquiries, the researcher was able to gather information about each teacher's voice in Differentiated Instruction on how they perceived Differentiated Instruction (DI). Teacher A stated that,

> "Using Differentiated Instruction allows me to know each student's strengths and weaknesses. I will do the pretest to know their prior knowledge before I start my lesson. By doing so, I could accommodate the needs of each learner and facilitate them to reach their best achievement."

Another teacher stated that Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a good way to help slow learners comprehend the lesson. He stated that,

> "I can modify the process as one of the strategies in implementing Differentiated Instruction. After I map the type of learners and their readiness to follow the lesson, I could group the fast learners into one group, and on the other hand, I could have peer tutoring, in which the advanced learner could help another learner who is still struggling in understanding the lesson".

Teacher C also defines DI (Differentiated Instruction) as a means to develop the student's creativity. She gives the room for each student to choose the final product that they want to create. She mentioned that,

> "After knowing each of my students' interests and their types of learning, I will let my students choose the final product that they want to make. Before knowing Differentiated Instruction (DI), I will always give the same final product that the students have to create as their final assignment. After knowing DI, the students could develop their product based on their interest and strength".

Giving students a choice in how they will acquire the material, according to some teachers, has been advantageous. If students believe they have a voice in how they complete tasks and attempt to learn the material, the teachers have discovered that the students are more motivated to do so. Even tasks like writing essays or drawing pictures are possible for students. Simply put, it depends on the subject to determine which is suitable.

4.1.2   The Challenges and the Successes

The teachers agreed that implementing DI may benefit student learning, but they also recognized that it would be difficult. Many teachers noted that implementing differentiated education can be difficult at times due to managing the classroom, a lack of preparation time, and a shortage of resources. Teachers shared their successful experience in implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI) in the classroom. Teacher, I said,

> My successful experience in using Differentiated Instruction (DI) is when I can use different approaches to my students. I know that they have different abilities and skills. So, when I can map them at the beginning of the class by doing a pre-test, I can create the activities and materials that can keep them engaged during my lesson.

Another teacher shared that he can use different strategies that might bring different results to each of the students. The teacher shared that when he modified the process and assigned different final products, the students with different abilities could be more creative. He stated,

> When I was teaching English to my young learners about Three Little Pigs, I could assign them to see different perspectives from each character in the story. One student could

see from the point of view of the wolf. The other students could comprehend the moral lesson of the story from the perspectives of the wolves. By doing so, I could also assign the different final products to them. One student could design a storybook by drawing and colouring, but the other students could design a book digitally. By differentiating the different final products, I could accommodate my students with various types of learners and different skills.

Hence, teacher L also mentioned that using Differentiated Instruction (DI) could ease his burden in coping with mixed-skills students in the classroom. He shared,

Once I was able to map the students with their various types of learners, I could assign them to different stations or break-out rooms. Those who are fast learners could be in the same group and those who need more help could be grouped into one. By doing so, I could modify the types of materials to be given to each of the different groups. I could also assign the fast learner to help the other friend by peer-tutoring. In that case, I could also spend my other time having a personal approach to checking the ones who are still weak in understanding my lesson.

Based on the gained data from both interviews and questionnaires, it can be seen that most teachers shared almost the same challenges in using Differentiated Instruction (DI). Most of them stated that they needed more time to map students' abilities and plan suitable materials for each level of students. The teachers as the participants of the study also shared the same voices regarding the successes of Differentiated Instruction as stated in the indicators of the successes in Differentiated Instruction (DI) by Tomlinson (2011). They believe that using Differentiated Instruction (DI) can accommodate students' mixed abilities in the classroom, as well as keep them engaged and motivated during the lesson. Whereas, there are also some challenging parts of Differentiated Instruction that most of the teachers in SD BPK Penabur Banda felt in implementing Differentiated Instruction. The challenges and successes are summarized as follows:

Table 1 - A summary of the challenges and successes of DI

The Challenges of Differentiated Instruction	The Successes of Differentiated Instruction
1. Diverse Learning Needs: Addressing the varying abilities, learning styles, and interests of students can be complex and time-consuming.	1. Individualized Learning: Students receive customized instruction that matches their needs and preferences, leading to improved engagement and understanding.
2. Resource Allocation: Providing differentiated materials and activities might require additional resources, such as extra materials or technology.	2. Higher Achievement: Students are more likely to achieve academic success when instruction is tailored to their readiness levels, enhancing their confidence and motivation.
3. Time Management: Planning and delivering diverse lessons can be demanding for educators, potentially leading to time constraints.	3. Improved Classroom Climate: Differentiation promotes a positive classroom environment by valuing and acknowledging each student's unique strengths.
4. Assessment Complexity: Evaluating diverse learning outcomes can be challenging, particularly when traditional assessments might not accurately reflect individual progress.	4. Enhanced Teacher-Student Relationship: Teachers gain a deeper understanding of each student's learning needs, fostering stronger connections and trust.
5. Classroom Management: Addressing various learning activities simultaneously might require effective classroom management strategies.	5. Lifelong Learning: Students develop essential skills like self-directed learning and critical thinking, preparing them for future challenges.
6. Professional Development: Educators may need training and support to implement differentiation effectively.	6. Inclusivity: Differentiation acknowledges and values students' diverse backgrounds and abilities, fostering an inclusive learning environment.

4.2   *Discussion*

Since most of the teachers as the research participants shared their agreement that Differentiated Instructions (DI) is an effective way for them to deal with mixed-abilities students, teachers also need to be trained well to nurture students with multiple skill levels. The level of challenge in differentiating the process, content, or product can vary depending on factors such as teacher experience, student needs, subject matter, and available resources. However, the research participants shared that differentiating the process is the most challenging as it requires planning and managing multiple activities, flexible grouping, and individualized tasks within the same lesson. Teachers need to ensure that each student is engaged in meaningful tasks aligned with their needs, which can demand careful classroom management and a deep understanding of students' strengths and areas for growth. Teachers require training that caters to their needs since, like students, they learn in a variety of ways. The disparities in teacher learning must be taken into account in training exercises, just as they are in student learning. (Chen & Herron, 2014).

Planning and delivering diverse lessons can potentially lead to time constraints. However, there are ways to overcome the third challenge. Teachers might use these ways: prioritize learning objectives and essential content, design efficient lesson plans that incorporate differentiation strategies, and gradually introduce more complex differentiation as students become more comfortable. People learn according to their experiences and needs, thus teachers who recognize the need for differentiation-related professional development are likely to learn more (Knowles, 2005).

Different learning styles are used by adults and children. These learning styles can be classified into auditory, visual, or kinesthetic modalities, according to O'Brien (1989). It's critical to understand one's learning preferences as well as those of the students. Being able to understand the learning styles of each student, eases the teachers to differentiate the product. Hence, differentiating the product allows students to demonstrate their understanding in varied ways. Teachers need to develop a range of assessment tools and methods that effectively evaluate different types of student work. Additionally, ensuring that each student's chosen product accurately reflects their comprehension and application of the content can be complex.

Teacher professional development plays a crucial role in successfully implementing Differentiated Instruction. It equips educators with the knowledge, skills, and strategies needed to effectively differentiate their instruction to meet the diverse needs of students. As mentioned by the research participants the opportunities to attend Professional Development which shows them how Differentiated Instruction (DI) is carried out, are rare. Meanwhile, through a consistent, all-encompassing, and thorough strategy that is classroom-focused, professional development seeks to increase teachers' efficacy in boosting student accomplishment (Williford, 2017).

Teachers are helped by professional development because it gives them the chance to help the students enhance their academic abilities. To improve their teaching methods and better fulfil the requirements of their students, teachers need opportunities to learn new information. Professional development sessions provide teachers with a comprehensive understanding of the principles, theories, and research behind Differentiated Instruction. This theoretical foundation helps educators make informed decisions about when, why, and how to differentiate. Professional development exposes teachers to a range of practical strategies for differentiating content, process, and product.

Teacher A expressed that she experienced the best professional development in her previous school. She said that she could see teachers implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI) in the classroom. She stated, "*I had undergone* the IB (International Baccalaureate) training before I joined the school. It helped me much to understand how Differentiated Instruction (DI) would be implemented in the classroom."

According to Brown and Militello (2016), professional development can take many different forms, including workshops, lectures, reflective journals, action research, and group planning sessions. Workshops, seminars, and training sessions offer opportunities for teachers to develop the specific skills required for differentiation. Teachers learn how to adapt instructional materials, create personalized learning paths, and adjust their teaching based on ongoing assessment data. Through professional development, educators often witness demonstrations of Differentiated Instruction in action.

Teacher K also mentioned how beneficial it is for their professional development training to be framed similarly to how they should format their courses. She considered recent professional improvements as more realistic and beneficial. She stated,

>"They have been fantastic and they began this year, before professional development would be going to these meetings and perhaps you already understood stuff about what you were learning and probably you weren't obligated to remain in there for an entire." As a consequence, they have transformed and built a professional development program that resembles individualized learning."

Teachers who teach mixed-ability classes must be motivated to differentiate instruction to meet the requirements of each student. Additionally, teachers had the choice to design their activities. It is thought that encouraging choice gave teachers greater authority and intrinsic motivation, and more teachers actively engaged in the training (Kappler, 2012). People want the freedom to make decisions about their education, including what to learn, how to finish it, and when to convey what they have learned (Koralek, 2007).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions, there are three conclusions in this study. The first conclusion is teachers' voices on the challenges and successes in implementing Differentiated Instructions (DI). Almost all of the teachers as the research participants are familiar with DI. They know how to define DI (Differentiated Instruction) precisely. However, most of them had challenges in truly implementing it during classroom activities. The participants stated that providing timely and specific feedback to students on their progress is challenging.

Furthermore, adapting materials for different ability levels is time-consuming. Being able to understand that both adult and young learners could have a variety of learning styles, could help the teachers as the participants to recognize the needs of learners in a mixed-ability classroom and help them to design the best strategies for differentiated learning. Teachers as the participants will then be able to differentiate the process, the content or even the final product that accommodates students' interests, strengths and learning styles. As a result, students will gain the most because they will learn more by receiving lessons that are more geared toward their specific learning requirements.

The second conclusion relates to the professional development or training that teachers need to map and identify students' readiness, interests and learning styles. Most of the participants agree that having Professional Development or training is significant for them to be able to apply Differentiated Instruction in classroom activities. As mentioned by some of the participants they would like to see how Differentiated Instruction (DI) applies in the classroom. Teachers would also prefer to build a learning community in which they could share ideas and gain some suitable teaching resources or materials that they can use in their lessons. Teachers could also share the goal and objectives as well as the ways to keep the students engaged during the activities by using Differentiated Instruction (DI).

The Professional development aims to strengthen teacher effectiveness in raising student achievement through a consistent, all-encompassing, and thorough classroom-focused technique. Professional development benefits teachers because it enables them to assist other teachers in enhancing the academic performance of their students. Teachers need opportunities to gain new material to enhance their instructional strategies and better meet the needs of their students. Workshops and seminars; in-service training; webinars; collaborative learning communities, peer observation and feedback; coaching and mentoring; and conferences are just a few examples of the various formats that professional development can take.

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