



Perspective of Inclusion Elementary School Teachers on Differentiated Teaching Modules for Students with Special Needs

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ABSTRACT

The implementation of differentiated teaching modules in learning in inclusive elementary schools can ensure equality for students with special needs. The purpose of this study is to explain the teacher's perspective on the implementation of differentiated teaching modules in inclusive elementary schools for students with special needs. This research method uses a qualitative approach. The data collection technique is in the form of a combination of structured interview methods, participatory observation, and in-depth interviews. Data validation was obtained through triangulation. The data was analyzed using the qualitative data analysis technique of the Spiral model. The result of this study is that 90% of inclusive elementary school teachers responded positively to differentiated teaching modules. From the perspective of teachers, it has been understood that differentiated teaching modules are useful for presenting learning that facilitates all student needs, increases the involvement and motivation of students with special needs, and improves the quality of learning. However, in its implementation, teachers still encounter a number of challenges, both technical and non-technical. The conclusion of this study is that inclusion elementary school teachers view the differentiated teaching module positively despite various challenges in its implementation.



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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education is important for human rights (Cai et al., 2024). Inclusive education has become a top priority in many countries around the world, including Indonesia. Inclusive education is designed to ensure that every child has equal access to high-quality education, regardless of special mental, physical, intellectual, and sensory needs. Inclusive elementary schools are at the forefront of implementing inclusive policies at the basic education level. Inclusive education aims to ensure that every student can be fully engaged, feel accepted, and feel valued just like other students (Tanzi & Hermanto, 2024). In organizing learning, one of the tools needed by teachers is

a teaching module. Teaching modules help teachers plan learning (Salsabilla, Jannah, & Juanda, 2023). According to Putri, Anwar, & Afifah (2024), teaching modules can provide feedback on the learning process, clarify learning objectives, make it easier for students to understand learning, and adjust students' needs and characteristics.

The teaching module that is ideally applied in inclusion elementary schools is a differentiated teaching module. Differentiated teaching modules can create inclusive education (Gheysens, Griful-Freixenet, & Struyven, 2023). In the differentiated teaching module, a pedagogical approach that recognizes the diversity of students in the classroom is listed. Especially for students with special needs, differentiated teaching modules can present equality in the learning process so that students with special needs can participate in getting the same opportunities to learn and succeed as other students. Differentiated teaching modules have the urgency to facilitate the various needs of diverse learners (Ndiung, Jediut, & Nendi, 2023; Subban et al., 2024).

The purpose of using differentiated teaching modules in learning in inclusion elementary schools is to organize learning that is in accordance with all the diversity of student needs (Demirci-Ünal & Öztürk, 2024). According to Shenoy, Shenoy, & Ratnakar (2013), teachers are expected to know the learning styles that their students prefer in school. Students' learning styles, interests, and readiness to achieve better learning outcomes are factors considered when making these adjustments (Herwina, 2021; Wahyuni, 2023). The use of differentiated teaching modules provides an opportunity for each child to be able to 'choose' learning that suits their conditions (Ditasona, 2017).

Apart from the positive results desired through the implementation of the differentiated teaching module, a number of obstacles are experienced by teachers as the grassroots of education implementers. Based on the results of observations and interviews in a number of inclusion elementary schools, both private and public, in Surabaya, the teachers of inclusion elementary schools have had initial knowledge about differentiated teaching modules and their benefits. However, most teachers have not been able to apply it in learning. As for those who have, the implementation is not optimal. Teachers face a number of problems, both in the form of technical and non-technical problems. Teachers' perspectives on differentiated teaching modules play an important role in the success of their implementation. Teachers' perception of learning can create change (Dorfberger & Eyal, 2023). Teachers' perceptions and responses can be a benchmark in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules. In addition, knowing the various challenges faced by teachers in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules is also an important thing.

Recent research on the implementation of differentiated teaching modules proves that by exploring the individual characteristics of students, teachers can gain a better understanding of how students learn. Additionally, learners can improve their learning by having a better understanding of how they learn in an academic environment (Rannu, Salija, & Sulaiman, 2024). However, the results of the study in Nicolae's (2014) research show that teachers experience various difficulties in accommodating various individual differences of students through the use of differentiated teaching modules. It was further explained that these difficulties were in the form of limited time, large number of students, excessive workload of teachers, lack of resources, lack

of teacher skills, weak classroom management, and low motivation of teachers in designing and implementing differentiated teaching modules (Corley, 2005; Logan, 2011; Nicolae, 2014; Mahlo, 2017; Shareefa et al., 2019).

The purpose of this article is to explain the teacher's perspective as well as analyze a number of challenges experienced by teachers in implementing differentiated teaching modules in inclusion elementary schools. Teachers' perception of differentiated teaching modules is very important. This is because teachers are the main drivers in the differentiated learning process (Wahyuni, 2023). By knowing the challenges faced, teachers can conduct more precise evaluations and planning related to the implementation of differentiated teaching modules. This research also contributes ideas to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the fourth point of "quality education", namely ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach (Creswell, 2015). This research focused on teachers' perspectives on differentiated teaching modules for students with special needs and challenges in implementing these modules in inclusive elementary schools. This study involved 17 teachers from nine inclusive elementary schools, both public and private, in Surabaya. The data collection techniques used were a combination of structured interview methods, participatory observation, and in-depth interviews. Data validation was obtained through triangulation. The aspects studied in this study were as follows.

Table 1. Research Aspects

Topics	Aspects Studied
Teachers' perceptions related to differentiated teaching modules	Teachers' understanding of differentiated teaching modules
	Benefits of the Teaching Module with Difier for Students with Special Needs
	Attitudes and views on the effectiveness of differentiated teaching modules on learning
Teachers' challenges in implementing differentiated teaching modules	Various difficulties experienced by teachers in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules

The data analysis in this study was inductive by considering the real situation in the field. The technique used was the Spiral model data analysis technique (Creswell, 2015). The steps included data collection; data management (data managing); reading and memoing; describing, classifying, and interpreting; Representing and visualizing. These stages were adjusted to the context in the field.

The data that had been collected in the form of transcripts and field notes were then read. Furthermore, the data was categorized into specific themes based on codes. Interpretation was carried out by looking for meanings and relationships from findings in the field. According to Creswell (2015), these stages were a complete unit to obtain data or information accuracy in qualitative research.

RESULTS

This study collected data on teachers' perceptions of differentiated teaching modules in three aspects. These three aspects were related to teachers' understanding, benefits, and effectiveness of differentiated teaching modules, among others. The data obtained in this study was in the form of qualitative data. The data were organized according to the aspects studied and then presented in the form of tables. The findings of the research regarding teachers' perception of differentiated learning modules were as follows.

Table 2. Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Teaching Modules

Aspects	Findings
Teachers' understanding of differentiated teaching modules	Teachers understand differentiated teaching modules as teaching modules that can make it easier for teachers to adjust learning to the needs of students.
Teachers' perceptions regarding the benefits of differentiated teaching modules for students with special needs	Teachers stated that differentiated teaching modules can increase the engagement and learning motivation of students with special needs.
Teachers' attitudes and views on the effectiveness of differentiated teaching modules	Teachers are of the view that differentiated teaching modules can be an effective means to improve the quality of learning for all students, especially for students with special needs; with the condition that there is adequate support for teachers.

Through this study, 90% of teachers who were research respondents expressed a positive response to the differentiated teaching module. The positive response was reflected in the positive comments made by teachers on differentiated teaching modules. Teachers agreed that differentiated teaching modules can facilitate all student needs so that optimal learning outcomes could be achieved. The teacher also acknowledged that differentiated teaching modules can provide equality to all students, especially students with special needs. The teachers who gave a negative response were 4%. These teachers gave a negative response because they felt difficulties in developing differentiated teaching modules. The remaining 6% gave a neutral response.

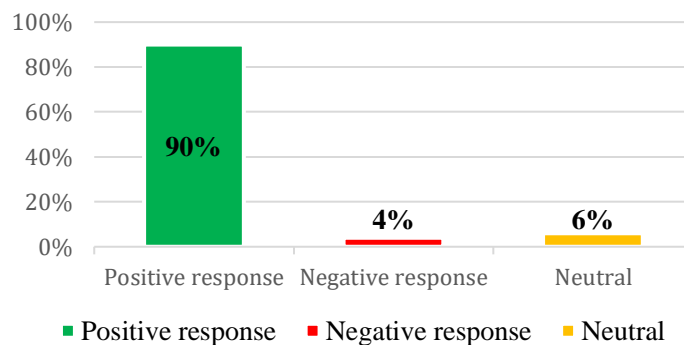


Figure 1. Graph of Teachers' Responses to Differentiated Teaching Modules

This study found several challenges faced by teachers in implementing differentiated teaching modules. Information related to teachers' challenges in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules was grouped into two aspects as follows.

Table 3. Teachers' Challenges in the Implementation of Differentiated Teaching Modules

Aspects	Findings	
	Technical	Non-technical
Various difficulties experienced by teachers in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules	Time constraints	Teacher unpreparedness
	Lack of collaboration between teachers	Difficulties in understanding the diverse needs of students
	Limited resources and learning tools	Classroom management
	National curriculum demands	

DISCUSSION

Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Teaching Modules

Teachers play a central role in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules in inclusive classrooms. Regarding the implementation of differentiated teaching modules in inclusive classroom learning, teachers gave diverse responses. Teachers' perceptions of this module vary. This can be influenced by many factors, ranging from the teacher's educational background to various teachers' experiences during the implementation process. Teachers' perceptions greatly determine the success of the implementation of differentiated learning (Moon, Tomlinson & Callahan, 1995; Stavrou & Koutselini, 2016). Including the implementation of differentiated teaching modules. Teachers understand differentiated teaching modules as a means to facilitate different learning styles, abilities, and needs of students in the classroom. In differentiated learning, teachers are likened to being able to understand and consider various biographical and biological diversity of students (Koutselini, 2010; Stavrou & Koutselini, 2016). Differentiated learning can meet the needs of students by adapting learning methods based on different levels of student skills or knowledge (SHAPE America, 2014; Baumuel & Schmidlein, 2023).

This study shows that differentiated teaching modules can help create a more inclusive learning environment. This teaching module can provide opportunities for children with special needs to learn together with regular students. Teachers can make adjustments by changing the learning environment, learning tools, and learning processes according to the various needs of students in the classroom and guiding individual activities of students (America et al., 2014). With this equality, teachers can support the learning activities of all students, including those with special needs, to achieve their optimal potential. Differentiated learning allows all students studying in the same class to have equal access to learning resources to meet their learning needs, provides many options for how students receive information or subject matter, and adapts to the needs of students (Charity & Maximus, 2020; Fangwi, 2023; Digna, Minsih, & Widyasari, 2023). Thus, differentiated teaching modules can support the implementation of differentiated learning.

Another finding is that teachers recognize that differentiated teaching modules can effectively increase students' involvement in learning and students' ability to participate in learning according to their respective speed and ability. The trick is to modify or adapt instructions, materials, content, student projects, and products and assessments to meet the learning needs of

each student (Suleyman, 2019; Fangwi, 2023; Baumoel & Schmidlein, 2023). This provides an opportunity for teachers to focus on the identity or true abilities of individual students (Baumoel & Schmidlein, 2023). Therefore, differentiated teaching modules should be implemented by first adjusting to the specific needs of students and learning.

In the implementation of differentiated teaching modules, this study finds the fact that teachers need comprehensive support in the form of training, guidance, and teacher professional development activities related to the use of differentiated teaching modules. Better access to a variety of relevant and supportive resources is also needed by teachers. One form of support needed by teachers is support from peers in the form of collaboration. Collaboration between educators is also a determinant in differentiated learning practices in inclusive education (Sannen et al., 2020; Lakkala & Kyrö-Ämmälä, 2021; Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023).

Teachers' Challenges in the Implementation of Differentiated Teaching Modules

Implementing differentiated learning in inclusive primary schools is a complex and challenging task. Although teachers gave a positive response to differentiated teaching modules, on the other hand teachers face several challenges in their implementation. The complexity of the differentiated learning process caused some teachers to feel overwhelmed in designing and managing learning that suits the individual needs of students (Awaru, Ahmad, & Sadriani, 2023). Differentiated learning requires planning and execution that is fairly complicated and time-consuming. Teachers had to learn the material by considering the level of readiness, learning interest, and learning style of students (Khristiani et al., 2021). Teachers should also provide relevant and constructive feedback to each learner based on criteria that suit their abilities. All of this required extra effort from the teacher. Therefore, there is no doubt that in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules, teachers face various challenges. These challenges can be in the form of technical and non-technical challenges.

This study found that teacher readiness in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules was one of the most faced challenges by teachers. One of the reasons was the lack of training. Many teachers have not received adequate training in terms of the implementation of differentiated learning. Mainly training related to students with special needs. In differentiated learning, teachers were required to prepare multimethod, multimedia, and multiresources to create varied learning (Hermansyah, 2023). Teachers also said that the learning resources available in schools were often inadequate to support the implementation of differentiated teaching modules. In order to achieve the success of the implementation of differentiated learning, schools must have sufficient access to various resources and teaching materials (Hermansyah, 2023). Therefore, the unavailability of resources is a serious obstacle in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules.

Another challenge faced by teachers was that teachers struggled to understand the unique needs of each student and design learning accordingly. In differentiated learning, teachers were very likely to encounter obstacles in recognizing the learning styles of students with special needs. The inability of teachers to detect learning styles and other characteristics of students can be a challenge in the implementation of differentiated teaching modules. This was because in

differentiated learning, learning was presented by paying attention to the variation in students' learning styles. In the context of these adjustments, learning style is one of the factors that must be considered (Herwina, 2021; Wahyuni, 2023). Therefore, teachers must know the learning style of students (Shenoy, Shenoy, & Ratnakar, 2013).

In differentiated learning, diversity in the classroom is sought to be explored and facilitated. Managing a classroom with a high level of diversity is a particular challenge that teachers must face. Each student has various needs and diverse levels of ability, so it requires high classroom management skills from teachers. Teachers must be able to ensure that all students receive treatment in accordance with their individual needs. The hope is that superior students can be facilitated, and slow students are not far behind. Differentiated teaching modules can be used to facilitate the various needs of these diverse learners (Ndiung, Jediut, & Nendi, 2023). Differentiated learning can be more effective if there is collaboration between teachers. However, based on the results of the study, this did not happen. The lack of a collaborative culture in schools has been shown to hinder the successful implementation of differentiated learning. The success of the implementation of differentiated teaching modules is one of them determined by teacher collaboration (Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023). Therefore, it is necessary to foster a collaborative culture among teachers in schools. Teachers can collaborate with each other to develop differentiated teaching modules so that they really match the needs of students in the school.

Another obstacle found in this study was related to the demands of the national curriculum. Teachers should strive to meet the needs of all students but without sacrificing the academic standards set forth in the curriculum. This was a big challenge for teachers. Teachers had to constantly strike a balance between meeting curriculum targets and accommodating individual learning needs. Teachers should consider student needs and curriculum requirements in a balanced manner (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2013). By knowing the obstacles in the implementation of the differentiated teaching module, one of the positive impacts is that it can be used as material to evaluate the implementation of differentiated teaching modules in inclusive classrooms so that it can improve the quality of national education. Furthermore, the findings from this study also support the achievement of *the sustainable development goals* (SDGs), namely "quality education" by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.

CONCLUSION

This study obtained the results that as many as 90% of inclusive elementary school teachers responded positively to differentiated teaching modules. Teachers have an initial understanding that differentiated teaching modules can be useful to bring equality in learning by accommodating all student needs. Differentiated teaching modules can increase the engagement and learning motivation of students with special needs and improve the quality of learning. The implementation of differentiated teaching modules exposes teachers to a number of challenges, both technical and non-technical. Technical challenges include limited resources and learning tools and the demands of the national curriculum. Non-technical challenges include limited time that teachers have, teacher unpreparedness, teachers' difficulty in diagnosing the diversity of student needs, classroom management, and lack of collaboration between teachers. The findings of the research can have a

positive impact on national education, namely as a tool to evaluate the implementation of differentiated teaching modules in inclusion classes so that inclusive quality education is achieved in accordance with the *sustainable development goals* (SDGs) agenda.

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