

English Teachers' Perspectives on Differentiated Instruction in “Kurikulum Merdeka”: A Case Study in SMA

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Abstract

The change of curriculum from the 2013 curriculum to *Kurikulum Merdeka* requires teachers to be able to adapt to the demands of the curriculum. One of them is Differentiated Instruction which is part of *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This research aims to find out the perspectives that senior high school English teachers in Kabupaten Solok have on Differentiated Instruction, the implementation, and the challenges. This research was a qualitative case study. The data collection was based on questionnaires, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participant observation. Informants who became data sources in this study were selected based on purposive sampling, namely teachers who teach in grade X (Fase E), have more than 10 years of English teaching experience, and willing to become informants. The data obtained was that informants showed their understanding of Differentiated Instruction from the process of self-learning through PMM and peer discussions. However, in terms of planning on the teaching modules prepared, not all informants have clear planning on Differentiated Instruction. Similarly, it was found during classroom observations that not all informants implemented Differentiated Instruction by the required aspects and considerations. In short, the informants have explained their understanding of Differentiated Instruction theoretically. However, this is not the case when it comes to plan the teaching module and implement it in the classroom. In the application of differentiated instruction in lesson preparation and the classroom activity, some informants expressed uncertainty and incomprehension.

Keywords: *kurikulum merdeka*, differentiated instruction, teachers' perspective

INTRODUCTION

All secondary schools (*Sekolah Menengah Atas/SMA*) in Kabupaten Solok have implemented *Kurikulum Merdeka* since the first semester of the academic year 2022/2023 for grade X (*Fase E*). The decision was taken based on an unwritten agreement in MKKS (*Musyawahat Kerja Kepala Sekolah*) SMA in Kabupaten Solok. Although this academic year has been the second year of implementing the 'Kurikulum Merdeka', the teachers are still learning how to implement it. One of the teaching strategies was also a focus on learning in the 'Kurikulum Merdeka', namely Differentiated Instruction. Tomlinson (2014) stated Differentiated Instruction became a popular strategy among teachers since it enabled them to fulfill their students' various needs.

The implementation of Differentiated Instruction was challenging for teachers since it required much planning and preparation (Suprayogi et al., 2018). Teachers found it challenging to handle the various demands of children in the same classroom. Moreover, some of the English teachers' perspectives in SMAs Kabupaten Solok on the implementation of Differentiated Instruction that has been implemented since July 2022 had differences and variations in point of view. From the initial discussion with several English teachers in SMAs Kabupaten Solok, who came from different schools, some of them thought that Differentiated Instruction could not be fully implemented. It was owing to a lack of understanding of how to implement it in the teaching and learning process. The other obstacle was that the teachers needed more time to prepare material that could accommodate students in learning. Other teachers said Differentiated Instruction was difficult to implement in a large class with numerous students.

A study by Gülşen (2018) explained Turkish EFL teachers' thoughts on Differentiated Instruction's benefits and challenges in implementing it. The teachers had been using it at the same school for some time. In addition, Ginja & Chen (2020) have investigated the teachers' opinions and experiences on Differentiated Instruction. It mentioned that creating instruction to the student's needs was significantly more challenging for Ethiopian teachers, who instead taught in a 'one-size-fits-all' way.

Because Differentiated Instruction in 'Kurikulum Merdeka' is a new thing, and all secondary schools (SMAs) in Kabupaten Solok have been implementing it simultaneously since July 2022, it was better to know first about the teachers' perspective as the implementer of the curriculum. It was also necessary to pay attention to its implementation by teachers both in terms of planning and implementation in the classroom. Then, it was also necessary to know the challenges that were faced in its implementation so that the related parties could find out the implementation of Differentiated Instruction and find solutions to the obstacles to its implementation.

Before the more discussion about it, it also needs to look at the curriculum changes and development that have occurred in Indonesia. Setiawan & Suwandi (2022) explained that curriculum development in Indonesia has been frequently changing. The existence of these curriculum changes aims to perfect the previous curriculum. In addition, curriculum changes are also tailored to the needs and development of the times (Puspita & Tirtoni, 2023). It could be classified into two categories: curriculum development before and after independence (Faisal & Martin in Setiawan & Suwandi, 2022). Before independence, it was ruled by Dutch and Japanese colonization. After independence, the curriculum in Indonesia has been changed several times. The primary goal of curriculum development was to increase educational quality rather than simply to provide instructional materials (Prihantoro, 2015). The curriculum focused not only

on the growth of the present but also on the development of the future. That's why there were changes in the curriculum several times, adjusted to the times, to raise educational standards.

The first curriculum after independence was the 1947 curriculum (Rentjana Peladjaran 1947). This curriculum was designed to replace the Dutch educational system and to establish the Indonesian character (Wahyuni, 2016). After that, the Indonesian curriculum was developed into the 1952 curriculum (Rentjana Peladjaran Terurai 1952). This curriculum started to see curriculum development that led to how it would be applied in real life (Komaria in Wahyuni, 2016: 75). The next curriculum was the 1964 Curriculum. It was focused on Pancawardhana. It was used to improve morale, intelligence, emotion, skill, and physical fitnesses (Tilaar in Wahyuni, 2016: 76). The 1968 curriculum was introduced to focus on promoting cognitive aspects and thinking skills among students. A foreign language was introduced in this curriculum (Pajarwati et al., 2021: 30). The purpose of education was to produce Indonesians who implemented the spirit of Pancasila (Wahyuni, 2016). The Management by Objective (MBO) concept influenced the design of the 1975 curriculum (Pajarwati et al., 2021: 30). This curriculum required teachers to be kept busy writing down the outcomes of each learning session. The teaching technique used an active learning system to increase students' communication abilities (Cara Belajar Siswa Aktif—CBSA) in the curriculum 1984 (Iramdan & Manurung, 2019). In this curriculum, students were positioned as the learning subject, by observing something, categorizing, discussing, to reporting (Alhamuddin, 2014). The 1994 curriculum used a meaningful-based approach and a communicative approach, and the learning schedule was modified from semester to quarter (Wahyuni, 2016: 76). The teaching objectives emphasized conceptual understanding and problem-solving skills (Ananda & Hudaidah, 2021).

The 2004 curriculum (KBK) stressed individual and classical student capabilities that were directed toward learning objectives and diversity (Iramdan & Manurung, 2019). The next step in the Indonesian curriculum was the development of the 2006 curriculum (School-Based Curriculum/KTSP). The student-centered approach was used in the 2006 curriculum. In learning, both students' needs and environmental awareness were visible (Pajarwati et al., 2021: 30). The development of the previous curriculum, which emphasized cognitive aspects, led the government to develop the 2013 curriculum. This curriculum placed a greater emphasis on character education with the hopes of generating individuals who were productive, creative, inventive, and of good character (Insani, 2019).

Finally the 'Kurikulum Merdeka' was introduced as the newest curriculum in Indonesia. According to (Setiawan et al., 2022: 17), the goal of presenting 'Kurikulum Merdeka' was to respond to the challenges of society 5.0. The core of 'Kurikulum Merdeka' was freedom of thinking, which allowed students to develop into superior resources. This curriculum incorporated the independence concept and independence for education. It gave Indonesian students the freedom to select the best instructional approach for themselves in the process of teaching and learning (Afida in Madhakomala et al., 2022). 'Kurikulum Merdeka' also had visionary goals: project-oriented learning, as well as flexibility for students in learning (Faiz et al., 2022). Marisa in Solehudin et al. (2022) also mentioned that breakthroughs through the new curriculum improved the quality of education in Indonesia. This was also in following what was conveyed by Ki Hadjar Dewantara that education was dynamic, constantly moving to adapt to the times (Burhanuddin et al, 2021).

Moreover, Priantini et al. (2022) explained that the purpose of 'Kurikulum Merdeka' was to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills. The enhancement of the curriculum was made possible by 'Kurikulum Merdeka'. It was applied gradually and according to student readiness. They added that 'Kurikulum Merdeka' had some advantages. It has been simpler and deeper, more independent, more relevant, and interactive. The previous curriculum emphasized knowledge, while the 'Kurikulum Merdeka' was designed to be more relevant and interactive (Pratycia et al., 2023: 63). Adjustment to the times was a concern in this curriculum. Fun learning activities were expected to make activities more interactive.

One of the fun learning activity strategies used in Kurikulum Merdeka is by conducting Differentiated Instruction. It has been used by teachers before it had a name (Tomlinson, 2014). Smale-Jacobse et al. (2019) state that Differentiated Instruction was a pedagogical-didactical method that provided teachers with a starting point for addressing their students' diverse learning needs. Although Differentiated Instruction has received a lot of attention in research and practice, little was known about the state of the empirical data or its benefits for boosting students' success.

Magableh & Abdullah (2020: 533) explained that there were four areas to differentiate in the process of teaching and learning, namely, the content, the process, the product, and the learning environment. Those areas should be a concern for the teacher in implementing Differentiated Instruction (DI). The first area to differentiate was the content. The curriculum specified what teachers taught and how students developed knowledge and comprehension. The second area was the process. The process was how students learn and teachers teach the material. The product was the third area to differentiate. The product was the result of students demonstrating what they had learned. Teachers diversified the product here by providing a selection of materials for students to use to demonstrate their understanding. Depending on their preparedness, interests, and learning profiles different students developed various results. The learning environment was the final area in which to differentiate teaching. The learning environment was the classroom setting, which includes classroom rules, classroom operation, and transition, furniture, seating, lighting, and procedures. However, as discussed in the module of Guru Penggerak, there were 3 areas of Differentiated Instruction. These areas were Differentiated Instruction in process, content, and product, while the learning environment was included in the learning preparation section (Kusuma & Luthfah, 2021).

Differentiated Instruction focuses on addressing learning needs of students and how teachers react to those needs (Kusuma & Luthfah, 2021). In responding to these student needs, teachers make sensible decisions based on clearly defined considerations of learning objectives. How teachers responded to their student's learning needs and created an interesting learning environment was also a consideration. All these things require good classroom management in the application of Differentiated Instruction.

According to Tomlinson in Kusuma & Luthfah (2021), three aspects categorized the students' learning needs. The first aspect was learning readiness. Learning readiness was the capacity to learn new material, not the intellectual level of the students. The second aspect was the students' interest. Interest is a mental state that creates a direct reaction to a specific situation or object that was enjoyable and offers self-satisfaction to a particular situation or thing that is enjoyable and provides self-satisfaction. The third aspect was the student's learning profile. The learning profile described how we, as individuals, learned best. Using learning profiles to assess student learning requirements

allowed students to learn naturally and effectively. The learning environment, culture, learning style, and multiple intelligences were all variables in the student's learning profile.

However, every teacher approaches teaching from a unique perspective. Some of them thought that developing positive relationships was essential for avoiding conflict in the classroom. Some of them also believed that teachers' strategies and techniques should be appropriate for the situations and substance of the curriculum. Cross in Zaiturrahmi et al. (2021: 30) defined perspective as a way of approaching or considering something. It cannot be denied that every human being, even teachers, has their viewpoint on something. They had their strategies for carrying out classroom activities.

Teachers felt that because Differentiated Instruction should be prepared ahead of time, each student should have a customized lesson plan. Differentiated Instruction appeared to be hard to apply with so many children each day and just 15 minutes of preparation time every course. Teachers regarded Differentiated Instruction as an unworkable technique because it lacked congruence and instrumentation and was expensive (Janssen et al. in Stollman, 2018: 18). Teachers believed that the normal classroom environment limited appropriate Differentiated Instruction experimentation and implementation. Teachers were supposed to have taught each student a certain curriculum or subject area after each school year. To do this, teachers frequently believed that they had to adhere to the traditional lesson technique to the greatest extent feasible (Stollman, 2018: 19).

Several studies had relevance to this research about English teachers' perspectives on Differentiated Instruction. A study by Gülşen (2018) explained Turkish EFL teachers' thoughts on Differentiated Instruction's benefits and challenges in implementing it. It has been explained that the Turkish EFL teachers in primary and secondary private schools found not only the benefits of Differentiated Instruction but also there were challenges. The teachers had been using it at the same school for more than a year. It is similar to Ginja & Chen's study (2020) on the teachers' opinions and experiences on Differentiated Instruction in Ethiopian higher education. The study found that there were good impacts of using Differentiated Instruction in large classes, but there were also challenges if teachers had no understanding of Differentiated Instruction implementation although they have years of teaching. Different from the studies above, a study on teachers' perspectives on the effect of Differentiated Instruction was conducted by Magableh & Abdullah in 2020 for 6th-grade students in Jordan. It was found that Differentiated Instruction affected students' learning positively. However, there were also a few challenges in the implementation of Differentiated Instruction, such as planning, class size, and knowledge about Differentiated Instruction.

METHOD

The researcher gathered and analyzed data for this study exclusively utilizing qualitative case study research because it brought the data in more detail and broader explanation. It is also considered suitable to provide a clear description of the research. This qualitative case study research assisted in the investigation of the implementation of Differentiated Instruction by utilizing many data sources. The data was gained by giving a questionnaire, conducting in-depth interviews, analyzing the teaching module, and observing the Differentiated Instruction implementation in the classroom. Those

were purposed to properly assess evidence to make decisions and conclusions about a real-world occurrence.

By obtaining information from a variety of different sources, the data in this research was more complete. The presentation was also presented in depth and in a real-life setting. Therefore, a qualitative case study design was applied to explore English teachers' perspectives on Differentiated Instruction implementation in English process of teaching and learning based on 'Kurikulum Merdeka'.

The source of information in this research was collected from several English teachers in SMAs Kabupaten Solok who have been teaching using 'Kurikulum Merdeka'. The informants were selected based on the purpose. According to Wibawa et al. (2019), purposive sampling was a sampling technique of participants and data sources with certain considerations. The informants were the teachers who have been teaching English at SMA Kabupaten Solok with varying durations of service. They were the teachers who taught English by using 'Kurikulum Merdeka'. It meant the teachers who teach in grade X (Fase E) became the informants in this research. Some of them have had the training about 'Kurikulum Merdeka' individually in PMM (Platform Merdeka Mengajar/PMM), online seminar, or the training conducted by the school. This has been done in an effort to understand 'Kurikulum Merdeka'. This research limited the informants only to public schools.

From the questionnaire given, there were 20 teachers who filled it in. However, only 10 teachers taught in grade X (Fase E), and others taught in grades XI and XII. When asked for their willingness to become informants, only 8 people were willing. The 8 teachers came from 5 different schools in Kabupaten Solok.

Table 1. Data of Informants

No.	Informant Codes	School Names	Age	Teaching Experience	Training IKM		
					PMM	Pair Discussion (MGMP/at School)	Online Seminar
1.	DA	SMAN A	46	19 years	√	√	X
2.	YE	SMAN B	53	25 years	√	√	X
3.	FS	SMAN B	51	17 years	√	X	X
4.	RZ	SMAN B	36	13 years	√	√	√
5.	SY	SMAN C	44	19 years	√	√	X
6.	YY	SMAN C	47	15 years	√	X	X
7.	HN	SMAN D	49	25 years	√	√	X
8.	RA	SMAN E	39	15 years	√	X	X

In this research, the data collection was obtained by distributing questionnaires to English teachers of SMAs in Kabupaten Solok. The questionnaire was used to obtain preliminary data on English teachers' perspectives and also the challenges faced in implementing Differentiated Instruction. The data was also obtained from in-depth interviews conducted with 8 selected teachers. The selected teachers were teachers who have more than 10 years' experience of teaching and teach in grade X (Fase E). Further collecting of data was carried out by conducting participant observation and document analysis of the teaching modules used by the 8 teachers. The observation showed the Differentiated Instruction implementation in the classroom and also showed whether it was following the preparation that had been planned in the teaching module.

The data obtained from questionnaires, interviews, observations, and documents, were reduced by choosing the main things that were estimated to be able to provide the right picture. Each data obtained was analyzed, selected, and adjusted to the needs of the research. The data was grouped according to related topics so that it facilitated the researcher in compiling the report. Then, the data was presented in the form of a brief description of the relationships found from each form of data collection technique carried out. Each finding obtained from the instrument was explained in detail. The researcher verified and concluded the data. The preliminary conclusions put forward were still substantial and changed if there was no solid and supporting evidence at the next stage of data collecting. Early judgments were backed by data that was both valid and consistent.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The first finding was in terms of the perspective of English teachers in SMAs Kabupaten Solok on Differentiated Instruction implementation in the 'Kurikulum Merdeka'. Although the curriculum has been implemented since July 2022, not all English teachers understand Differentiated Instruction which is an important part of this curriculum. The information was conducted from the questionnaire and in-depth interviews with the informants.

The data obtained from informants in the form of open-ended questions about their initial knowledge of Differentiated Instruction. The information is as follows.

DA:

Differentiated Instruction is learning that takes place in the classroom with different learning outcomes and the implementation process depends on the individual student. Students learn in groups based on their learning style and ability level.

YE:

Differentiated Instruction is learning that favors differences in learners' characters/abilities/talents. With this learning can facilitate learners according to the differences they have.

FS:

Differentiated Instruction is learning that can adapt to the school situation. DI is implemented by providing learning methods tailored to the circumstances of the students.

RZ:

Differentiated Instruction is a type of student-centered learning in which the learning process focuses on and favors students based on their skills, interests, talents, learning styles, and learning speed.

SY:

Differentiated Instruction is learning based on learners' interests, talents and potentials.

YY:

Differentiated Instruction is student-centered learning. DI is a manifestation of student-centered learning that is developed, imposed, and written out to fulfill students' unique requirements by taking learning preparedness, learning interests, and learning profiles into consideration. DI should be based on satisfying the learning requirements of children and how instructors respond to those needs.

HN:

Differentiated Instruction is an attempt to make the classroom learning process work by satisfying each student's particular needs: aural, visual, and kinesthetic.

RA:

Differentiated Instruction is learning based on students' interests and talents.

Then, in in-depth interviews conducted directly with informants, data were obtained about teachers' perspectives on Differentiated Instruction. Similar questions on the questionnaire were also asked during the interviews to see if their perspectives were similar.

DA:

“Actually, I don't really understand Differentiated Instruction. But, I try to convey it according to discussions with other teachers and friends. What I understand is that Differentiated Instruction is carried out in the classroom where the implementation process depends on the individual students themselves. The students learn in groups according to their learning style or ability level.”

YE:

“Differentiated Instruction is learning that favors differences in students' character or ability or talent.”

FS:

“Differentiated Instruction is learning that is tailored to the school situation. It must consider the background of the students.”

RZ:

“Differentiated Instruction is learning that favors students. The learning process takes into students' abilities, interests, talents, learning styles and learning pace. They learn together with others who has same ability, interest, talent, or learning style.”

SY:

“Differentiated Instruction is organized around students' interests, talents and potential. They learn in groups.”

YY:

“The implementation of Differentiated Instruction is student-centered. Differentiated learning is learning that should favor students. I also read that this learning takes into account students' learning readiness, interests, learning profiles, and aims to meet students' needs.”

HN:

“Differentiated Instruction is an effort in learning that aims to address each student's particular requirements based on their learning style, whether it is audio, visual, or kinesthetic.”

RA:

“Differentiated Instruction is learning based on students' interests and talents.”

The next finding was in terms of teachers' implementation of Differentiated Instruction. The data was conducted from the in-depth interviews, analyzing the teaching module, and observing the teaching process.

The following are the results of interviews with informants about the Differentiated Instruction implementation in the classroom.

DA:

“In class and what I have done, students learn in groups, divided into groups according to their learning style, whether kinesthetic, audio, visual, or it could also be depended on the students' understanding level of the subject matter.”

YE:

“I just facilitate the students depends on their different learning styles. The BK teacher has given me information about their learning styles. I just use it for grouping in the implementation of learning.”

FS:

“I implement DI by providing learning methods that are tailored to the circumstances of the students. That's according to discussions with colleagues. It's just that I personally don't really understand how to implement it.”

RZ:

“I divide students according to their cognitive abilities, or pay attention to their learning styles. For learning styles, we usually get data from the counseling teacher at the beginning. We just use that information. Well, for cognitive, we just give a mini test, similar to a pretest. But not much, just ask questions about the initial abilities of students related to our material.”

SY:

“I divide the study groups according to students' interests and abilities. As far as I understand, that's how it's done.”

YY:

“I implement it by grouping students according to their respective competency levels.”

HN:

“At the moment, it is still classical. I haven't fully used the Differentiated Instruction because I have not grouped students according to their abilities. It just depends on the condition. Not always.”

RA:

“For children who like to listen, I facilitate learning with audio. Those who like physical activities do practice, and there are more audio-visual ones.”

The data from the interview showed the informants' understanding of the Differentiated Instruction implementation in the classroom. However, this was not contained in the teaching module as a teaching preparation. Similarly, in the implementation in the classroom, not all informants showed the implementation of learning using Differentiated Instruction. This is illustrated in the table below.

Table 2. Implementation of Differentiated Instruction in Teaching Module and Classroom Activity

No.	Informant Code	Teaching Module			Classroom Observation		
		DI in Process	DI in Content	DI in Product	DI in Process	DI in Content	DI in Product
1	DA	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	YE	X	X	X	√	X	X
3	FS	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	RZ	√	√	X	√	X	X
5	SY	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	YY	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	HN	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	RA	X	X	X	X	X	X

Differentiated Instruction presented certain difficulties for teachers, both in the preparation and also in the implementation. Below are the data about the challenges faced by teachers in implementing Differentiated Instruction. The data for this point was conducted through interviews and observation, as follow.

DA:

“Learning activities like that don't seem to motivate our students here, especially those who are less talented or who are less active in learning. I find it difficult to group students based on ability. So, I group students no longer based on their abilities, but more randomly.”

YE:

“Students still lack motivation, especially in terms of recognizing their own talents and potential.”

FS:

“When checking the exercises, it seems time-consuming. Because the exercises are varied, checking them is quite time-consuming for me.”

RZ:

“Students in the class with an average audio learning style from the data we obtained from the counseling teacher, we planned the activity to listen to the conversation. It turns out that the data does not match reality. It turns out that the average learning style is kinesthetic.”

SY:

“The main challenge is that there are still students who are not motivated to learn in the groups that have been formed.”

YY:

“Actually, I don't fully understand the implementation. I can read or goggling the theory. But for the implementation, it feels like I'm still groping because there is no concrete example of its implementation.”

HN:

“For me, perhaps it's because I personally don't really understand the Differentiated Instruction implementation in the classroom, so it's not optimal. After all, if we divide students into 3 groups with different learning styles and different treatments, I still find it difficult to teach like that.”

RA:

“The challenge for me is the limited time to facilitate students' diverse talents.”

Table 3. Observation Notes

No.	Informant Codes	Observation Notes
1	DA	Because they are in a large group, learning is dominated by students who are eager to learn, while students who are not eager to learn remain relaxed and indifferent to the learning process.
2	YE	Only a few students participated in the activity. There are students who only see the work of their group mates.
3	FS	Because students choose their own groups, learning is less effective because they are more likely to chat not about learning activities.
4	RZ	The plan in the teaching module is not well implemented, the differentiation of content should also be implemented, but only the differentiation of processes can be implemented.

No.	Informant Codes	Observation Notes
5	SY	Some students are active and some are just ignorant in the groups that have been formed.
6	YY	Because the learning is grammar, learning in groups seems less effective because only a few people are working.
7	HN	Learning is still teacher-centered, where the teacher is the main center of information.
8	RA	Not all students participate in learning activities, so the teacher still has to explain the material.

Discussion

Discussing about Differentiated Instruction and the teachers' perspectives on it, this study has obtained data from interviews. Those data showed that the informants' perspective on Differentiated Instruction was a learning strategy that grouped students based on their learning needs, interests, and talents or learning styles. It is related to Tomlinson in Magableh & Abdullah (2020: 534) stated that classroom organization allows students to learn and collaborate in groups. Most teachers focused more on students' learning styles on Differentiated Instruction implementation. What they said about Differentiated Instruction, in theory, was almost what Tomlinson in Kusuma & Luthfah (2021) opinion about 3 aspects were considered in carrying out learning activities using Differentiated Instruction. These aspects were students' learning needs, interests, and learning profiles. However, most of the informants indicated that their focus was more on the students' learning profile. Actually, the two other aspects also needed to be taken into consideration. This, of course, cannot determine whether a teacher understands Differentiated Instruction.

Moreover, it needed to next look at the preparation that teachers planned to implement learning using Differentiated Instruction in kind of teaching modules. The teaching modules analyzed were only in the core learning activities section. Not all the teaching modules prepared by the informants show the lesson planning that considered students' learning readiness, needs, interests, or learning profiles.

From all the informants, only RZ showed the Differentiated Instruction implementation in the area of differentiated processes and content in the teaching module. As Tomlinson in Magableh & Abdullah (2020: 534) explained there are 4 areas in the Differentiated Instruction implementation, namely content, process, product, and learning environment areas. When looking at the teacher's preparation, which could be seen from the teaching module, it seemed that some teachers did not understand how Differentiated Instruction should be carried out. This certainly had an impact on its implementation in the classroom. In previous research conducted by Magableh and Abdullah in 2020, they found that one of the difficulties encountered in the Differentiated Instruction implementation were related to planning. This was also found in this study. Most of the informants have not prepared lesson plans that were by the aspects of Differentiated Instruction.

Further findings were obtained from the results of participant observation. The focus of observation was only on the implementation of core learning activities. The observation focused more on how Differentiated Instruction was implemented in the classroom, whether it was in terms of differentiated process, content, or product as described in the Module of *Guru Penggerak*.

From the participant observation, it has known that only YE and RZ implemented Differentiated Instruction in the learning process. Other informants conduct learning as usual. Even if there was a grouping of students, it was not according to the students' learning readiness, interests, talents, and/or learning styles. Meanwhile, the materials provided were not differentiated, which did not indicate differentiate in content. The results of students' learning were also the same as each other, so differentiate in product was not visible.

It could be concluded that there was no connection between the informants' perspective, the teaching module prepared by the informant, and the implementation of Differentiated Instruction in the classroom. Although the interviews conveyed various forms of informants' understanding of Differentiated Instruction, the implementation in the classroom also looked different. Some informants implemented it by the plan that had been compiled in the teaching module, while others implemented it outside the plan that had been compiled in the teaching module.

In addition, although not all areas of Differentiated Instruction, such as Differentiated in process, content, or product, must be implemented in one learning activity, in this study most informants have not implemented one of them in learning activities. Even if there was, the implementation was not maximized and adjusted students' learning readiness, interests, talents, and/or learning styles.

This is also related to previous research conducted by Ginja and Chen in 2020. They said that even though the teacher had decades of teaching experience, if he/she did not understand the concept of Differentiated Instruction thoroughly then he/she will fail to implement it. This was also seen in this study.

Furthermore, this study has also found that there were obstacles or challenges in the implementation of Differentiated Instruction. Based on the interviews and classroom observations, it was concluded that the first challenge was the inadequate understanding of the concrete implementation of Differentiated Instruction by teachers. Teachers certainly needed to plan and prepare before conducting activities using Differentiated Instruction. However, when the concept of Differentiated Instruction was not thoroughly understood, obstacles arose. It could be seen in the teachers' preparation of teaching modules. Although the teaching module that was prepared was considered Differentiated Instruction, the implementation of learning did not go according to the plan. It meant that the planned activities were not synchronized with the implementation in the classroom.

The next obstacle was recognized to come from the data obtained from the counseling teacher. The data did not match the reality of students' learning styles in the classroom, so teachers needed to prepare alternative activities for learning, out of the planning. Class management was also an obstacle. With more than 30 students, Differentiated Instruction was difficult to organize. Moreover, providing content expected to be different between groups required time for preparation and evaluation.

With a large number of students with their low learning motivation, especially in terms of cooperating and collaborating in groups, made student-centered learning activity difficult to implement. Learning activities were more teacher-centered. Even if there was group cooperation, the students preferred to copy assignments from their friends, cheat, and even just talk with their friends.

These obstacles were according to Magableh & Abdullah in 2020 study. They said that there would be obstacles in implementing Differentiated Instruction. These obstacles could be found in preparing lesson plans, the number of students in a class,

and also the understanding that teachers have of Differentiated Instruction. This study also found that students' low motivation in learning English could also be an obstacle in the implementation of Differentiated Instruction.

CONCLUSION

The English teachers of SMA Kabupaten Solok's formed an idea that Differentiated Instruction was the learning in which activities are student-centered in various ways. Students participated in group activities to learn depending on their comprehension, learning style, interest and skill, and previous knowledge. Although English teachers at SMA Kabupaten Solok theoretically understood Differentiated Instruction, they were confused by its execution and implementation in the teaching module or in the classroom and even did not employ it. Moreover, teachers' obstacles took the shape of a lack of understanding about the execution of Differentiated Instruction implementation. Some believe that teachers struggle to prepare topic exercises or activities that could accommodate a wide range of student's skills, interests, talents, and learning styles. This was also connected to teachers' limited time to assist students with these variances. Teachers need more in-depth information about the real action in implementing Differentiated Instruction in the classroom. Teachers can also collaborate with other subject teachers, not just English teachers, to find the right way to implement Differentiated Instruction. Some things that teachers need to consider are not only students' learning styles, but there are other things, such as learning readiness, interests and talents, and students' motivation to learn. Teachers can also choose one of the three areas of Differentiated Instruction offered, whether in process, content, or product.

In this study, of course, there are shortcomings that can be a benchmark for other researchers in starting further research. This study has not examined the implementation of Differentiated Instruction by teachers who have participated in the *Program Guru Penggerak*. Future research also needs to seek information about the implementation of Differentiated Instruction by teachers in *Sekolah Penggerak*.

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