

Teacher's Role in Implementing Learning with a Joyful Differentiated Approach in the Classroom

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Abstract

A differentiated approach is a learning strategy that adapts content, process, product, and environment to learners' readiness, interests, and styles with the teacher as the key facilitator. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of teachers in joyful differentiated learning through proven effective strategies by conducting a systematic review. This research uses the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method, totaling 10 Scopus reputable articles with relevant topics published in 2021-2025. This research shows that teachers have an important role in the success of fun differentiated learning, where learning adapts to the characteristics of students and creates learning diversity based on content, process, product, and a pleasant learning environment such as using interactive media and varied learning models by adjusting students' learning styles. So that learning in the classroom runs actively and fun. This research contributes significantly to deepening the understanding of the role of teachers in fun differentiated learning, as well as enriching the literature in learning development.

Keywords: full day school, learning management, academic achievement, elementary school.

Abstrak

Pendekatan diferensiasi adalah strategi pembelajaran yang menyesuaikan konten, proses, produk, dan lingkungan dengan kesiapan, minat, dan gaya belajar peserta didik, dengan guru sebagai fasilitator utama. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis peran guru dalam pembelajaran berbeda yang menyenangkan melalui strategi yang terbukti efektif dengan melakukan tinjauan sistematis. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR), dengan total 10 artikel terkemuka di Scopus yang relevan dengan topik ini, diterbitkan pada tahun 2021-2025. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa guru memiliki peran penting dalam kesuksesan pembelajaran diferensiasi yang menyenangkan, di mana pembelajaran disesuaikan dengan karakteristik siswa dan menciptakan keragaman pembelajaran berdasarkan konten, proses, produk, serta lingkungan belajar yang menyenangkan seperti penggunaan media interaktif dan model pembelajaran yang bervariasi dengan menyesuaikan gaya belajar siswa. Sehingga pembelajaran di kelas berjalan aktif dan menyenangkan. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam mendalami pemahaman tentang peran guru dalam pembelajaran diferensiasi yang menyenangkan, serta memperkaya literatur dalam pengembangan pembelajaran.

Kata kunci: peran guru, pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, pembelajaran menyenangkan

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INTRODUCTION

Primary school education is an important education because it is the foundation for higher levels. The Independent Curriculum is the curriculum currently used, the independent curriculum liberates teachers and students in the implementation of learning. This is also guided by (Permendikbudristek No.12, 2024) that an independent curriculum is a learning method that allows teachers and learners to have the freedom to adapt the curriculum to school circumstances. To liberate and facilitate learners, a variety of learning approaches are needed to meet the needs of learners in order to create fun and liberating learning in the classroom. However, as research states that teachers still carry out generalized learning without paying attention to differences in learner abilities, learning styles, and learner interests (Aziz, 2025). Whereas today's teachers are not the center of learning, but oriented to the characteristics of students, so an approach that is in accordance with the characteristics of students is needed. The right learning is with a differentiated approach. Differentiated approach is a learning approach that provides diverse treatment based on the characteristics of learners in learning (Tomlinson, 2014).

Ideally, the differentiated approach is implemented by emphasizing the role of the teacher in facilitating students based on the analysis of students' needs (Faiz et al., 2022). If learning has adjusted the needs of students, it will create fun learning so that students are not bored and easily understand learning according to their learning style (Pratiwi & Andriani, 2021). Because in the Merdeka Curriculum guide, teachers are encouraged to create a positive environment by respecting diversity in order to create meaningful learning that is joyful for students (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Joyful learning is a fun learning process, where teachers and students feel happiness and enthusiasm, creating active engagement in learning (Wicaksono, 2020; Jeet & Pant, 2023). This approach is expected to be an answer to the heterogeneity of the characteristics of students in the classroom, because in reality, fun differentiated learning can increase students' learning motivation. (Yasa, 2024). Based on the above research, it can be used as a theoretical basis for the implementation of the expected differentiated learning.

There are also other problems that hinder the implementation of differentiated learning, namely problems that come from outside educators, namely the lack or limited training obtained by teachers so that the knowledge or theory obtained by teachers to implement differentiated learning is less than optimal because of the limited knowledge they have (Aufa et al., 2024). This agrees with the research which also states that insufficient training is an obstacle in the implementation of differentiated learning (Istiyati et al., 2024). Ideally, in implementing a program, here is a differentiated approach, teachers should have a deep understanding of the implementation of a differentiated learning approach to create fun learning, where fun learning is learning that makes students comfortable with direct experience to develop their abilities (Shahzad Ashfaq, 2020).

However, the reality is that there is a visible gap between the theory above and the empirical conditions in the field. Various studies convey the problems experienced by teachers in implementing differentiated learning. Problems can come from teachers, schools, or from outside the school, such as the government can also be one of the problems. Such research states that teachers still carry out general learning without paying attention to differences in students' abilities, learning styles, and students' interests (Aziz, 2025), besides other problems, namely the existence of limited resources such as limited time and facilities available at school in implementing differentiated learning (Mukromin et al., 2024). This causes obstacles in learning that come from within teachers and schools to implement differentiated learning. So that there needs to be support from various parties to implement differentiated learning such as government support to conduct training, schools prepare supporting facilities and infrastructure,

teachers who are willing to develop their abilities, and parents who support school activities.

The importance of this research is to provide a strong scientific basis on how teachers can implement differentiated learning effectively and enjoyably. With a systematic synthesis of various studies, the results of this study are expected to provide practical guidelines for elementary school teachers in addressing the diversity of students' learning needs, increasing motivation and engagement in learning, and encouraging the achievement of optimal learning objectives.

One of the problems above is a problem that states the lack of training or lack of understanding of teachers about differentiated learning, this research can be used as a solution in the form of reading materials that can be read by teachers to improve and enrich teachers' knowledge about fun differentiated learning, but also to help teachers in conditioning the class with limited infrastructure at school but differentiated learning can be carried out effectively and fun at school.

Differentiated learning is based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, which helps differentiated learning. He believes that solving problems and creating products in the context of learners' diversity is intelligence, which fits with our understanding of differentiated learning (Melesse & Belay, 2022). Differentiated learning to meet the diversity of learners can also be achieved by process, content, product, and environmental differentiation (Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019), with several differentiation aspects that can be applied in the classroom can make learning fun and meaningful, one of which is environmental differentiation (Yasa, 2024). with several differentiation aspects that can be applied in the classroom can make learning fun and meaningful, one of which is environmental differentiation (Rosiyani et al., 2024), Vacalares (2024) states that there is a positive correlation between mathematics learning outcomes and differentiated learning models. While the implementation of differentiated learning requires a special environment and sufficient resources (Tupiño et al., 2023^a), if learning is implemented based on a differentiated approach and oriented towards fun learning, learning will be effective.

Based on previous research examining the implementation of differentiated learning which is considered quite effective results, but has not examined in depth, so this research fills the empty gap, with the novelty of this research is the combination of differentiated learning with joyful learning in the process of implementing learning, it is necessary to have a source of reading or literature that must be read and understood by teachers to implement it, so that this research can be the right solution to answer these problems in addition to differentiation is also fun. This approach has not been widely used specifically in the context of elementary schools in Indonesia. SLR allows researchers to formulate evidence-based findings from various studies that have been conducted, so that they can become a strong scientific reference for teachers, academics and policy makers. Through this approach, it is expected to find strategic models or principles that can be applied widely and contextually.

The benefits of this article's ideas are very relevant for scientific development in the field of basic education, especially in improving understanding of learning strategies that are fun and customizable. In designing differentiated learning that is appropriate to each classroom context, this article can be a reference for teachers. In addition, this article can help institutions that organize teacher training, teacher training programs, and teacher training programs.

The benefits of the ideas outlined in this article are highly relevant to the development of basic education, particularly in deepening understanding of learning strategies that are enjoyable and adaptable to student diversity. This article also has the potential to serve as a reference for teachers in designing differentiated learning according to the classroom context, while also contributing to teacher training institutions,

elementary education study programs in universities, and policy makers in formulating regulations that support the continuous improvement of educator competence. Thus, the ideas discussed not only have academic value but also have a practical impact on improving the quality of elementary education in Indonesia. Based on this urgency, the purpose of this study is to analyze the role of teachers in implementing enjoyable differentiated learning through a systematic synthesis of proven effective strategies.

METHOD

This study uses the Systematic Literature Review method, Systematic literature review is a critical and systematic analysis of previous research on a particular topic (Riswanto et al., 2023). Where the author finds relevant data from books, journals, or articles that are used as the basis for content or discussion to obtain objective review results from previous studies (Hartono, 2025). The initial step in conducting research is to collect as many journals as possible from previous studies systematically, then filter to find journals that match the topics and titles to be used, then organize the articles or journals that will be used later as guidelines and finally the discussion in journal writing (Prasela et al., 2020).

The data and data sources used are previous literature that has relevant topics to the research, namely the roles of teachers in fun differentiated learning. The data collection technique in the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method is done by identifying articles from trusted scientific databases such as Scopus and ScienceDirect. Relevant keywords were used in the search, such as “teacher's role”, “differentiated learning”, “differentiated approach”, and “joyful learning”.

Articles obtained from various sources were then rigorously screened using predetermined inclusion criteria, including the publication year range to ensure relevance to current developments, topic relevance to the research focus on enjoyable differentiated learning, and availability of full text to ensure the quality of the data analyzed. This selection process was conducted in layers, starting with a review of titles and abstracts to a full assessment of the article content. Articles that successfully met all criteria were then systematically documented for further analysis, so that the results obtained had validity, reliability, and provided a comprehensive overview of differentiated learning practices.

Data analysis was conducted through a process of extracting, coding and synthesizing data from various relevant articles. The data were categorized into key themes such as the role of the teacher, differentiated learning strategies and playful approaches, and then analyzed descriptively to find patterns and important findings. The results of the analysis were used to formulate evidence-based education that can be used as a reference in basic education practice. The process of searching for literature electronically from various Scopus indexed journals, both research implementation in Indonesia and abroad, followed by a selection stage based on the title, abstract, and content of articles relevant to the research topic, which initially from hundreds of articles only produced 10 articles that were relevant to the topic of discussion. After the articles were collected, data extraction or analysis was carried out by recording important information such as research objectives, context, methods, main findings, and recommendations provided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of journal selection, we obtained 10 scopus indexed journals Q1-Q3 which are described as follows

Table 1. Journal Review

Researcher and Year Publish	Research Title	Findings
(Kahmann et al., 2024)	Dutch elementary school teachers' differentiation practices during Science and Technology lessons (Q1)	Teachers adapt the learning environment and process to suit students' needs in order to create an inclusive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. They also give students choices in determining the form of learning products, such as presentations or posters, to encourage creativity and engagement in learning. Learning groups are formed heterogeneously to encourage positive social interaction and mutual assistance among students. Additional guidance is provided as needed to prevent frustration and ensure comfort in learning. Adjustments based on students' interests and preferences also increase motivation and make learning more meaningful.
(Wang et al., 2025)	Can separate special education settings still be perceived as inclusive? A critical examination of finnish primary teachers' attitudes (Q1)	Teachers prioritize the application of differentiated learning by adapting materials and methods to the needs, abilities, and learning speeds of each student. They create an inclusive and stigma-free learning environment so that all students feel accepted, valued, and part of the classroom community. Teachers also prepare students with special needs for full inclusion by ensuring their involvement in school activities and positive social interactions. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of students' social and emotional well-being to build self-confidence and comfort in learning. These efforts aim to create a pleasant learning atmosphere that supports students' holistic development.
(Ardenlid et al., 2025)	A scoping review and thematic analysis of differentiated instruction practices: How teachers foster inclusive classrooms for all students, including gifted students (Q1)	Teachers play a role in setting the same learning goals for all students by adjusting expectations and achievements according to individual abilities, including gifted students. They actively engage in self-reflection and formative and summative assessments to adjust learning strategies and provide constructive feedback. Teachers also provide tasks with varying levels of difficulty, from basic to challenging, to

		ensure that all students can develop and remain motivated. In addition, teachers provide additional support to students who need it and encourage peer support. In creating a classroom atmosphere, teachers emphasize students' strengths and interests, maintain high expectations, and ensure a positive and equitable learning environment for all.
(Gheyssens et al., 2021)	Creating inclusive classrooms in primary and secondary schools: From noticing to differentiated practices (Q1)	Teachers play a role in identifying and understanding the learning needs of each student, including their readiness, interests, and learning profiles, in order to design learning that is appropriate for diversity. They must have the ability to notice and reason in order to recognize and reason the importance of inclusive practices in learning decision-making. Teachers are also responsible for implementing differentiated learning strategies, such as adjusting content, processes, and products, as well as using flexible grouping. In addition, teachers provide feedback and formative assessment to adjust future learning appropriately. In creating a learning environment, teachers ensure an inclusive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere so that all students feel accepted, valued, and motivated to learn.
(Hasanah et al., 2022)	Conceptual Model of Differentiated-Instruction (DI) Based on Teachers' Experiences in Indonesia (Q1)	Teachers play a role in creating a positive, safe, and bullying-free learning environment so that students feel comfortable and confident to actively participate in learning. They develop varied learning strategies by adjusting methods to suit students' needs, interests, and potential. Teachers also encourage active participation, creativity, and decision-making by students in the learning process. As facilitators, teachers assist students in finding learning methods that suit their styles and needs. Additionally, teachers prioritize students' physical and mental well-being while fostering independence, self-confidence, and the traits of a true learner.
(Goyibova et al., 2025a)	Differentiation approach in education: Tailoring instruction for	Teachers play a role in designing student-centered learning by recognizing diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. They use various strategies, methods, and assessments to tailor

	diverse learner needs (Q2)	learning to the individual needs of students. Assessments are conducted continuously to monitor student progress and adjust the learning approach appropriately. Teachers also implement flexible grouping based on readiness, interests, or learning styles to enhance the effectiveness of learning. Additionally, teachers create an inclusive learning environment and continuously develop their professional competencies through reflection and skill enhancement.
(Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023)	Teacher collaboration, inclusive education and differentiated instruction: A matter of exchange, co-construction, or synchronization? (Q2)	Teachers play a role in adapting learning materials, processes, products, and environments to suit students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. They apply various learning strategies such as graded assignments, homogeneous or heterogeneous groups, peer tutoring, flashcards, projects, and portfolios. Teachers also conduct ongoing assessments to monitor student progress and adjust learning to keep it relevant and meaningful. In managing the classroom, teachers create a positive atmosphere, provide clear instructions, and ensure a pleasant and inclusive learning environment. Additionally, teachers collaborate with colleagues to enhance the quality of differentiated instruction.
(Anggoro et al., 2024a)	Differentiated instruction based on multiple intelligences as promising joyful and meaningful learning (Q3)	Teachers play a role in designing differentiated learning based on students' multiple intelligences and learning styles so that individual needs can be optimally met. Teachers modify learning content, processes, and products and create a positive, safe, and enjoyable classroom atmosphere for all students. Learning is carried out through real activities such as experiments and role-playing to increase engagement and meaningful understanding of concepts. Teachers also conduct ongoing assessments to adjust learning strategies and encourage the natural development of students' intelligence. With this approach, teachers can build inclusive and collaborative classrooms that support students' motivation to learn and academic success.
(Tupiño et al., 2023b)	Differentiated Methodological	Teachers play an important role in designing differentiated learning

	Strategies for Inclusive Education in Basic Education: Scoping Review (Q3)	strategies that respond to the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms. They adapt methods, content, and learning approaches through strategies such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, community-based projects, and the use of technology. Teachers also encourage active student participation through dialogic learning and play activities, creating a collaborative and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Additionally, teachers need to build strong relationships with students and facilitate self-regulation to enhance engagement and learning independence. By continuously improving their professional capacity, teachers can effectively implement differentiated strategies to achieve inclusive and high-quality education.
(Hidayat & Patras, 2024)	Education transformation in Indonesia requires the implementation of differentiated learning (Q3)	Teachers act as agents of change in educational transformation by designing differentiated learning that adapts content, processes, and learning products to students' abilities, interests, and needs. They must master strong pedagogy, including the ability to use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments appropriately and variably. Teachers also create a pleasant classroom atmosphere with contextual and enjoyable learning approaches, such as through games and interest-based learning. In this role, teachers are not merely content deliverers but also facilitators, mentors, and learning partners who build positive relationships with students. To support the success of differentiated learning, teachers require ongoing training, collaboration with stakeholders, and support from an inclusive and supportive school ecosystem.

The findings indicate that differentiated instruction is primarily implemented through the adaptation of content, process, and product in learning. (Kahmann et al., 2024; Gheyssens et al., 2021; Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023a; Anggoro et al., 2024b) emphasize that teachers adjust materials, methods, and learning outcomes according to students' needs. The strategies employed vary, including providing choices in learning outcomes, using tiered assignments, peer tutoring, projects, portfolios, as well as hands-on activities such as experiments and role-playing. These strategies are designed to ensure that every student learns according to their learning style, interests, and multiple intelligences. This aligns with the concept of Differentiated Instruction (DI) developed by

Carol Ann Tomlinson, who highlights that differentiation involves adapting content, process, product, and learning environment based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. The studies confirm that teachers not only adapt instructional materials but also provide choices for learning outcomes, conduct formative assessments, and create flexible learning groups to meet individual student needs (Tomlinson, 2014).

In addition, several studies highlight the importance of a safe, inclusive, and positive learning environment. Stress that teachers must create classrooms free from stigma and bullying so that students feel accepted, comfortable, and confident (Wang et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2022; Hidayati & Sujarwati, 2023). A joyful learning atmosphere is viewed as a key factor in supporting active student participation, including through interest-based approaches, games, and contextual strategies that enhance learning motivation (Jeet & Pant, 2023).

Furthermore, the dimension of continuous assessment has become a central focus in several studies. That diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments are used by teachers to monitor student progress and adjust learning strategies (Ardenlid et al., 2025; Goyibova et al., 2025b). Teachers are expected to reflect on their teaching practices and provide additional guidance for students in need. Thus, assessment functions not only as an evaluation tool but also as a foundation for improving instructional strategies (Sitanggang et al., 2022; Eysink & Schildkamp, 2021).

Another prominent aspect is the importance of participation, collaboration, and social relationships in differentiated instruction. Demonstrate that cooperative learning strategies, dialogic learning, community-based projects, and strong teacher–student relationships enhance independence while building a collaborative classroom climate.. (Tupiño et al., 2023a; Wang et al., 2025; Hidayati & Sujarwati, 2023). In this way, students not only develop academically but also gain crucial social and emotional support for learning in inclusive classrooms (Pozas & Letzel-Alt, 2023b; Navarro-Mateu et al., 2021).

Overall, differentiated instruction is realized through the adaptation of content, process, product, and learning environment using strategies such as tiered tasks, peer tutoring, projects, portfolios, experiments, and role-playing tailored to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Teachers play a vital role in fostering a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment to enhance motivation and participation. Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments serve as tools not only for evaluation but also for adjusting instructional strategies and providing additional support. Moreover, participation, collaboration, and positive social relationships fostered through cooperative and dialogic learning, as well as community-based projects, strengthen student independence, create a collaborative classroom climate, and support both academic and emotional development in inclusive settings.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that teachers play a role in implementing enjoyable differentiated learning by adjusting the content, process, product, and learning environment according to students' readiness, interests, and learning styles. Based on a systematic synthesis of various studies, strategies that have been proven effective include collaborative learning, community-based projects, peer mentoring, the use of games, continuous assessment, and adjusting the level of difficulty of tasks to maintain the motivation and engagement of all students, including those with special needs and gifted students. Teachers act not only as conveyors of material, but also as facilitators, mentors, and learning partners who build positive relationships and create an inclusive and stigma-free classroom atmosphere. Thus, it can be concluded that the success of enjoyable differentiated learning is highly dependent on teachers' professional competence, supported by continuous training, appropriate formative assessment, and collaboration with schools and education stakeholders. The implication is that the results

of this study confirm that the quality of basic education is largely determined by teachers' ability to apply differentiation strategies. The recommendation is the need for a sustainable policy in developing teacher competence through training programs, provision of resources, and collaborative forums so that the implementation of differentiated learning can run optimally in elementary schools.

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