

## Exploring the Effect of School Leaders' Support on the Use of Differentiated Instructions in Primary Grades

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**<sup>1</sup>\*Syeda Maryium Bukhari**

*M.S Scholar, Department of Education,  
SZABIST, Karachi, Pakistan  
[maryium.amir90@gmail.com](mailto:maryium.amir90@gmail.com)*

### ***Abstract***

#### ***Introduction:***

*Differentiated teaching research focuses on special needs, diversity, and gender. However, School Leaders' support of these practises, notably in South Asia, has received little notice. This study illuminates differentiated instruction myths and emphasises the importance of understanding teachers' and school administrators' attitudes about customising material, procedures, products, and learning environments to unique student needs.*

#### ***Methodology:***

*Semi-structured interviews with primary school teachers, principals, and academic coordinators from two private schools in Karachi, Pakistan, are used in this qualitative study. To determine how school leaders' support affects differentiated instruction in primary grades (Kindergarten to Grade 3). By studying educators' practises and challenges, the study seeks to better understand how school leadership supports various learning needs.*

#### ***Results:***

*Findings reveal common instructional methods such as videos, end-of-unit projects, and presentations. However, a critical gap in understanding differentiated instruction exists among school leaders. The study underscores the urgency for school leaders to enhance their*

*comprehension of differentiated instruction, highlighting the need for further exploration of school leadership's role in meeting diverse learner demands. Future Direction/Implications*

*This study highlights the need for school leaders to receive specialised professional development programmes to better comprehend differentiated instruction. Such training programmes help leaders enable instructors to tailor classroom instruction to individual students. The study emphasises the importance of school leaders in providing teachers with resources, professional development, and strategic guidance. Future study should examine how leadership support affects student learning and teacher professional growth over time.*

**Keywords:** *differentiated instructions, diverse learners, flexible groups, leadership, and professional development.*

## **Introduction**

### **Education System in Pakistan**

The Pakistani education system has several boards and cultures, making change difficult. All aspects of governance, including education, are affected by the 1947 partition. Due to education system inconsistency, Pakistan's government has struggled to educate the populace since independence. Therefore, the government requires aid bringing a measurable quality standard to education, especially in the public sector, regardless of pupils' social, cultural, or economic backgrounds. The country's three educational systems private, communal, and Madrasah—have created a social and cultural imbalance. These three institutions divide the population between high-status, powerful, wealthy, and privileged people and working-class, lower-income, and marginalised people (Ahmed 2017). However, Madrasahs have complicated matters by offering different sects distinct education (Zafar & Ali, 2018). Each Islamic sect has its own curriculum, reflecting its schooling philosophy. Students from different sects may have varied levels of knowledge, and their understanding is limited to religious studies (Zafar, 2022).

About 34% of Pakistan's population upper, upper-lower, lower-middle, middle-middle, and upper-middle classes uses British Cambridge systems like O Levels and IGCSE standards and Federal school systems. Madrasahs, which substitute public education, educate 22% of lower middle and impoverished children from a variety of Islamic sects, including as Sunni, Shia, and others, for free. Despite the Pakistani government's introduction and modification of education policies, reforms, constitutional amendments, five and ten year plans, the divide created by the different structures has proven impossible to overcome. According to the National Education Policy (2009), the institution's goals are hindered by financial and resource shortages. The failure to provide high-quality education has led the government to rely on the private sector, including NGOs, the ADB, and USAID-funded organisations. Thus, the government promotes nationwide public-private partnership programmes. Rentals save the government money as public-private partner schools increase (Chandra,2019).

In contrast, other research identified these systems' countrywide drawbacks. Different curriculums, socio-economic division, uneven distribution of resources and funding, and more are

added to the education system by these three systems, according to Zafar and Ali (2018). Others say private schools have grown rapidly and are improving literacy (Malik, 2022).

In his research, Suhail (2021) noted that unfavourable public school experiences are prompting parents to switch their children to private schools. Poor facilities, low teaching quality, and school locations influence parents to choose private schools, according to his study. He claims that while public-sector teachers earn more, private-sector teachers perform better academically. According to another study by Iqbal (2006), private sector teachers are more knowledgeable about methodology and tactics, and schools provide more resources and materials.

Public schools have less staff and coworkers than private schools. According to the 2009 Pakistani National Education Policy, concentrated school organisation, higher wages, more staff, and better training help remote children thrive. Some upper- and upper-middle-class schools have fewer pupils, a 1:10 teacher-student ratio, and better assessment and textbooks than public schools.

### **Challenges in Pakistan's Education System.**

Memon (2007) found that most private schools lack excellent education due to a lack of professional training and trained teachers. His research suggests a more consistent job training programme or support system for private school teachers. These teachers are mostly 12th-grade (intermediate) or 14th-grade (Bachelor of Arts) graduates, earn minimal salary, and have less job security compared to public schools.

Larger schools have in-house workshops and development. These institutions have regular special education institutes and hire teachers with Cambridge International, Teacher Resource Centre, and B.Ed. training. Teachers with English fluency are preferred above those with community school experience and master's and bachelor's degrees in education. English is the upper class's predominant language, which explains class differences. Due to English proficiency requirements against qualified teachers, institutes lower student education quality.

As public schools use Urdu as their primary language, the language gap between public and private education has grown. Since most training content is in English, public school teachers may not learn how to teach and learn in the national language. Channa (2021) noted the difficulties of training public school teachers with English as a second language to help kids learn.

### **Personal Motivation**

As an experienced teacher with over a decade of experience, my differentiated instruction journey is personal. In primary school, I struggled to memorise lesson topics due to a lack of specialised teaching methods. However, professional training to become a teacher cemented my understanding of the need for individualised instruction. I saw a gap in my foundational years' educational techniques that should have differentiated. My thesis is a voyage to close this gap, not just an academic pursuit. As a practitioner, I am devoted to giving my students the individualised education I needed. This work explores educational practises and my mission to make education more accessible and effective.

### **Professional Dilemma**

Students with different backgrounds, abilities, and learning styles attend school to meet their needs (Cataldo, 2013). Teachers must consider these inequalities while planning and teaching (Cataldo, 2013). Teachers must consider students' topics, readings, discussions, and learning, especially in the classroom (Parks, 2019). A school leader must equip and guide their team of teachers with knowledge, training, and skills (Parks, 2019) so they can modify and plan for students with different needs (Tricarico & Yendol, 2012).

Special needs, reading, writing, classroom diversity, and gender inequity are highlighted in differentiated practise research (Starr, 2019). School leaders support and guide teacher differentiation (Harshbarger, 2019).

Sain (2023) claims Pakistan has many curriculum. Private school curriculum changes may harm national unity. Local professional demands require a student-centered, engaging curriculum, according to this study. Curriculum-only administrators must meet academic and cultural standards. To shift from memorization to student-centered teaching, Sain (2023) advises professional development for teachers, coordinators, and principals.

Various DI methods exist. Especially in Pakistan (Begum & Ambreen, 2021) few research show school management favour diversified instruction over standardised curriculum (Oliveira et al., 2013). Schools should offer diverse instruction for diverse backgrounds and learning abilities (Fenwick, 2012), but the curriculum doesn't (Sain, 2023). However, Oliveria et al. (2013) underlined the need of well-informed school leaders as change agents. Studies suggest school leaders may find it easier to equip and enable teachers to adjust the curriculum to student needs. This research will aid South Asian school administrators, educators, and teacher leaders since public curriculum is more standardised than private (Jabbar 2019).

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore teachers' perception of differentiated instructions at the primary level.
2. To examine school leadership's perception of differentiated instruction and professional development for teachers.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do teachers perceive the concept and practice of differentiated instruction in primary grades?
2. How do school leaders perceive the concept and practice of differentiated instruction in primary grades?
3. How do school leaders perceive the concept and practice of professional development for teachers?

## **Literature Review**

### **What is Differentiated Instruction?**

Differentiated instruction occurs when teachers match students' qualities to instructions and assessments, per Tomlinson (2005). Using the same materials and methods with different

instructional methods. Differentiated instruction uses different methods to teach students than unidirectional teaching. It may involve grouping students by interest and teaching them according to their needs (Geri et al., 2020).

Research definitions of diversified instruction vary. According to Park et al. (2019), differentiated education involves using diverse teaching methods and tailoring lessons to students' capacities. Academic progress and data-driven decision-making are monitored. A teacher's planning and teaching can satisfy students' needs and promote classroom inclusion. Various definitions of differentiated instructions exist. However, all definitions aim to teach pupils to develop their particular talents (Starr, 2019). Naseem et al. (2019) said Pakistan is multi-religious and multi-lingual. Thus, students represent diverse cultural and socioeconomic groups. It broadens classroom abilities and learning methods (Cataldo, 2013). Teachers must consider these differences while creating and delivering classes (Cataldo, 2013).

**Diverse Learners.** Diverse learners are students who belong to different backgrounds. These backgrounds could be racial, ethnic, and cultural or have different linguistics and socioeconomic classes (Tileston, 2010).

*"When we talk about diversity, we are usually talking about cultural and linguistic diversity. But children are also diverse learners in terms of their abilities, interests, background knowledge, and the way they approach learning. All of these contribute to who a child is and how that child will learn." (Tomlinson, 2003)*

Some people think diverse learners is a term for students with a learning disability. Research proves that all students have strengths and weaknesses and unique ways of expressing their learning (Imran, et al., 2023). Deliberations concerning teaching tactics often attempt to classify or categorize diverse groups of learners as talented or gifted students, English learners, or children with special needs. Moreover, people often also refer to diverse learners regarding their various learning styles, such as auditory, tactile, and visual learners. Although these categorizations might help identify some necessary accommodations, they could divert one from the broader perspective that efficacious teaching approaches should incorporate every student rather than just a few recognized groups with distinct capabilities (Mittha, 2021).

The linguistic and cultural diversity of Pakistan is often overlooked. The government struggles to have a single language because Urdu is not the mother tongue of many and English is a third language for the lower-middle and impoverished groups. Schools must improve policy implementation to serve diverse learners, making leaders change agents. School leaders are crucial in helping instructors understand culturally diverse kids. Then help establish an effective educational environment for kids of all ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, not only those with learning challenges.

**Studies Supporting Differentiated Instructions.** Brimijoin (2002, 2005) showed that Differentiated Instruction improves student achievement. Tomlinson claims that only highly qualified teachers create and implement strategic, acceptable, and successful interventions (Chase, 2018). Even though kids bring a range of skills, experiences, and knowledge to school, only trained teachers can create engaging lessons (Tricarico & Yendol-Hoppey, 2012). Park et al. (2019)

discovered that diversifying instruction can improve education as part of a complete approach. It's crucial to pupils' classroom success (Goddard et al., 2015).

Park et al. (2019) found that gifted and talented kids perform best when their training is tailored to their talents. Tomlinson (2003) suggests using diversified teaching as a pedagogical tool rather than a classroom organiser. Teachers adapt everyday lessons to student needs. Student gains more from training tailored to their abilities and level. In his Constructivism Theory, Vygotsky (1986) recommended that teachers scaffold and lead students through moderately challenging but not impossible classroom lessons.

***Research on Student Achievement and Differentiated Instructions.*** In another study, Goddard (2015) demonstrated the importance of introducing differentiated instructions to meet students' needs and supporting learning so that all students can learn in their capacity and raise the learning bar for themselves. Ultimately, the study results showed increased grades and students' self-esteem levels (Goddard et al., 2015). Teachers must think about the different characteristics of students when they plan a lesson (Parks, 2019).

Current studies emphasize that teachers consider students' interests while planning lessons (Oliveira et al., 2013). Based on Tomlinson (2015), when teachers intend to support students' interests, they enhance students' self-esteem and self-competence. Later research findings present that students' learning exceeds when the teacher matches the lesson planning with the student's interests (Goddard et al., 2015) and learning styles (Starr, 2019).

*"The goal of effective instructions seems to be adequate flexibility in a teacher's mode of presentation and in student's options for learning and expressing learning so that an individual can generally find a match for his or her learning profile preference." (Tomlinson & Imbeau et al., 2023, p.131)*

In his study, Brimijoin (2005) concluded that students who received differentiated instructions presented notable improvement in student outcomes as well as in motivational levels toward academics.

### **School Leadership and Its Role in implementing Differentiated Instruction.**

School leaders have traditionally been authoritative individuals who enhance organisations (Byars, 2011). A smooth programme requires them (Starr, 2019). If DI practises need to be continuously incorporated to the system, policymakers must see what school leaders encourage and facilitate (Goddard et al., 2015). School leaders must provide teachers with DI strategy opportunity to implement them (Starr, 2019).

Tomlinson (2015) says a teacher who differentiates education in numerous themes can make a difference. These instructions change material, process, or product according on learner readiness to learn (Tomlinson, 2015). The methods include projects, interest groups, tiered assignments, flexible grouping, learning centres, varying questions, mentorships, anchoring activities, and learning contracts (Goddard et al., 2015). Starr (2019) stated that principals, coordinators, and school administrators must advocate for these to succeed.

### **Importance of Professional Development**

Professional development improves instructors' comprehension, according to Pallon (2011). Educational leaders must give professional forums and opportunities as needed (Chase, 2018). Maintaining and providing professional assistance helps teachers prepare, implement, and alter differentiated classroom instruction (Harshbarger, 2019). School administrators should prioritise in-house training forums (Cataldo, 2013) and mentoring support programmes (Parks, 2019). Successful people have worked hard to improve (Antley, 2020). Work development and lifelong learning are more important than ever to achieve career objectives and succeed in a competitive and changing workplace. Pallon (2011) claimed that differentiated instruction only works with qualified teachers and that professional development is most important.

This study shows how School Leaders struggle to help instructors differentiate classroom instruction for each student while following a standardised curriculum. The study indicated that teachers' professional development is crucial to providing differentiated education in classrooms.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design and Method**

School leaders must support differentiated instruction in the classroom. A qualitative method can capture these processes as humans make choices and decisions. Thus, primary teachers' data will show how much a school leader's varied teaching decisions affect the classroom and teachers' practises. This data will be collected qualitatively. This exploratory project uses Differentiated Instruction based on constructivism theory, which states that learners learn via direct involvement with the environment and people.

Purposive sampling was used to choose the study population. This study selected 20 Karachi, Pakistan, private school teachers, principals, and academic coordinators who have experienced DI and are enabling primary-level differentiated instruction. Semi-structured interviews with teachers, principals, and academic coordinators collect data (Appendix A). Thematic Analysis was utilised to code themes (report patterns) and evaluate interview data.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Thematic Analysis**

Teachers have several obstacles in educating students for the ever-changing technological age and varied society. Since teachers shape a proficient student population, they must know diverse, interesting, and successful methods for teaching a variety of learners with different capacities. Many themes arose from interviews with school officials and kindergarten to grade 3 instructors. Discussion centred on our research questions. Each study topic was reviewed with school administrators and teachers using supporting questions to achieve the intended goals. Based on relevance to the final analysis, the responses' themes were sorted and incorporated.

### **Perceptions and Existing Practices of School Leaders**

In order to holistically identify the role of school leaders in facilitating differentiated instruction, it was imperative first to get an overview of their perceptions and existing practices in this regard. Establishing suitable policies and training courses, outsourcing teachers for professional development programs, availability of resources, adapting infrastructure of the school, are a few of the elementary steps the educational institutions take to fashion an environment for mentoring and coaching for progress. After deliberating with the participants on this topic, the following themes arose:

### ***Diversified Teaching Styles***

In order to respond to students' variances, curriculum designers' attempt to shape courses and teaching methods that can boost student outcomes. Hall (2002) conferred that differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching and learning that offers multiple options to the students for seizing knowledge and identifying ideas. The differentiated instruction model requires the teachers to be flexible in their teaching and adjust the representation of data to fit learners instead of expecting them to adapt to the curriculum. One participant who was the principal of a private school narrated that:

*"We try to make policies and teaching methods that fit the demands of all students and can fulfill the different requirements of these diverse groups of learners. Sometimes, we are teaching with auditory material; other times, we may prefer reading and writing practices, and often, presentative forms of content like PowerPoint slides are used to facilitate education in our institution. However, yes, it is within the whole group class settings."*

It reflects that schools that exercise differentiated instructions execute many teaching practices with the critical intent of offering education to learning styles of students with the understanding of how they learn. Another school leader expressed her views by sharing that:

*"Our teaching faculty are trained to use various content types in teaching. Teachers have been provided with all the basic resources they may need to teach in different styles. For example, some students learn by seeing, so we have projectors and other representative material for that, whiteboards and other reading-writing material for those who like to learn by reading, and the same goes for others with different needs."*

The school authorities announced that they will provide all the resources instructors need to deliver differentiated teaching. Any learning method requires proper resources, hence the institution must provide teachers' materials. Tomlinson (2001) suggests assigning students to smaller groups based on similar interests and capacity to complete tasks or topics to help teachers prepare formative evaluations. In another study, Goddard et al. (2015) found that smaller groups improve teacher-student engagement. A school leader's belief in smaller groups is insufficient without offering co-teachers, venues, resources, materials, and learning centres. Unlike larger groups, these smaller groups may face labelling or social segregation within the school or community. Harshbarger (2019) addressed this concern, arguing that unskilled teachers cannot control their biases and lack the education to administer these ability groups. Thus, professional development programmes are valued.



### ***Using 3-Directional teaching***

Most successful teachers can adapt their teaching style to the subject, course, and other factors, according to Paul B. Thornton (2013). Most modern tutors emphasise using audio, video, and writing to teach. Participants discussed the value of these three teaching techniques in current education. A top school leader said:

*"Instead of preferring how you want to teach, learn to recognize how your students prefer to learn... I believe in quality education for all individuals in a differentiated setting or traditional classroom, and the best teachers use reading, writing, and listening pedagogies for schooling."*

According to this school leader teachers should capture their students interest by deciding which part of their course they can teach using which type of material. Since the earlier-mentioned mediums of teaching are the most frequently used models in the educational domain, it might not be surprising to believe that they are practical and optimistic in some way. Another respondent, exclaimed that:

*"Learners are way more different than they look. The easiest way to involve all students in learning without causing any burden to the teachers is by using all three modes of teaching consecutively. I am referring to auditory, written, and visual content."*

Auditory, written, and visual instructional resources may assist engage pupils because they are the most basic modes of learning that varied groups require. The school officials also concluded that since pupils vary widely and have varied cognitive abilities, it may be difficult for teachers to prepare a full lesson plan for each kid. Thus, until a good teaching model is developed, three-dimensional education remains the basic practise. Differentiated instruction loses value if teachers don't prepare lessons to match students' qualities with instructions and assessments (Tomlinson 2005). Tomlinson et al. (2003) suggested that differentiated instruction should be used for teaching, not organising. Teachers adapt everyday lessons to student needs. Student gains more from training tailored to their abilities and level. In his Constructivism Theory, Vygotsky (1986) recommended that teachers scaffold and lead students through moderately challenging but not impossible classroom lessons.

### ***Teachers' Training and Counselling***

Teachers prefer training and counselling, according to their upper management, after negotiating school leaders' differentiated instructing practises. Washington (2019) states that educators are lifelong learners who impact their pupils and communities. School administrators in many schools agree that teachers need training and guidance. Hartwig and Schwabe (2018) also underlined that coaching and educating teachers is crucial to their development and growth in differentiated education. A school official said:

*"Teachers are also learners who learn with their experiences and the types of students they meet throughout their career. It is normal for such experienced teachers to refuse training and counseling sessions to add a new style to their teaching and a new component to their experience."*

The participant stated that some teachers dislike training and feel ashamed to get counselling and training. This view is incorrect. Teachers must study and incorporate new practises

into their pedagogies to offer something innovative and meaningful to their pupils, especially those who need extra attention.

### **Challenges and Concerns Faced by the School Leaders**

Differentiated education has many benefits for kids, but it also has many drawbacks for teachers. Thus, identifying such flaws was crucial to the current study's goal of familiarising readers with the concerns so they might take effective coping techniques to overcome them.

**Increased Workload.** Managing to teach in a diversified context is challenging if a teacher is responsible of a class size of 25 or more students, on her own. If teacher is single handedly teaching primary students in the ratio of 20:1 then teaching becomes stressful and frustrating, owing to the efforts they have to make to accommodate each student in the classroom activities. It ultimately burdens their minds, and they may perceive it as an unruly workload (Nina Parrish, 2019). When asked about the significant challenges they encounter, a participant responded that: *"I feel like I have to spend more time planning and organizing content than executing it. In normal classes, we directly start teaching without spending much time planning things from the beginning, and the method is the same for every student. However, in differentiated instructions, we have to pay extra attention to the learning demands of every student, which require more of our focus and create kind of a burden as it consumes our extra energy."*

In differentiated instruction, teachers have to rationally design schemes that can meet every student's learning demands. In planning a bundle of strategies, the teachers have to expend an extra amount of their energy and time, which is often considered an additional and unnecessary workload by some teachers. Another respondent also highlighted that: *"Differentiated instructions or any other effective teaching method demands teachers' devotion and additional time to give successful consequences."*

Hence, it was found that although differentiated instruction is among the most prolific teaching methods for diverse learners, enacting such approaches could be nerve-wracking for educators.

**Uncertainty about the effectiveness of teaching strategies.** It is clear that teachers spend most of their time developing student engagement tactics. Differentiated teaching teachers and institutions are also looking for new approaches to engage students and deliver great education. However, sometimes a gap exists between a teacher's study model expectations and student outcomes. One participant said:

*"Because primary level students are often unable to reflect their understanding as appropriately as secondary level students, executing novel methods to their teaching is a risky task... It is because the teachers might be dubious whether the students are satisfied with the learning strategy and if the method was fruitful for them. This uncertainty is what causes stress to the tutors."*

The teacher proclaimed that in the primary classes, the students needed help to accurately give feedback about the proficiency of a particular teaching method and its significance for them.

Thus, the teacher must be careful with their choices and decisions when administering any new teaching style. A participant outlined that:

*"Teaching students with different mindsets is not easy... Sometimes, the teaching method that we believe effective for students might prove unproductive for some of them, and for this reason, planning new strategies is a challenging task most of the time."*

School leaders revealed that the most efficient teaching styles could often fail to meet learners' understanding. They also professed that such teaching requires ownership and commitment from the teachers to implement and then revisit to reflect its effectiveness for the strategy to match students' competence and whether the new tactic tends to upsurge learners' cognitive development. Hence, it is one of the fundamental challenges educators often encounter in their teaching careers.

***Teachers' Competencies and Understanding.*** Aside from the fact that teachers teaching in a diversified context can bring productive student learning outcomes, we must recognize that teachers may need help practicing differentiated instruction. The reasons could be many, ranging from incapacity to handle a variety of students to their competencies and differing levels of understanding. The school leaders cited various factors when asked about the major barriers they encounter while preparing teachers for differentiated instruction. In this regard, one of the respondents specified:

*"Guiding some teachers can be challenging, too. It often happens that the teachers remain unsuccessful in implementing effective teaching methods. The reasons are many, which include some teachers' little teaching experience or their incapability of designing lesson plans that suit the requirements of students. It is not because they are incompetent. It is just that they cannot properly identify what the students actually demand."*

Primary-level students are hard to handle due to their developing age and rapidly achieving milestones, in particular, calling for extra attention from the adult. The school leader adequately indicated the condition of some teachers with differing competencies. Hence, they require further training to successfully incorporate differentiated instruction in their lesson planning design and teaching practices. It was also perceived that less teaching experience could be attributable to teachers' need for more knowledge of these diversified teaching styles, making it difficult for them to accomplish the objectives of differentiated instructions. Therefore, the difference in teachers' competencies and teaching styles could be a challenging factor that mandates the school leaders to dedicate more time to their training and professional development.

### **Role of Teachers' Professional Development in Implementing Differentiated Instructions:**

Professional development alludes to multiple facets of a teacher's vocation. Professional development is all about continuing to learn and improve as an educator during one's career. There will always be methods to advance and enhance one's teaching abilities. There is always something fresh to learn and skills to master (Teachmint, 2021). During the discussions, the school leaders were asked to discuss the role of teachers' professional development in implementing differentiated instructions in the classrooms. The school leaders responded with many advantages that professional development brought to the educational context and for teachers' progression.

**More Knowledge and Insight into the Field.** Alstad and March (2021) state that professional development is essential for improving teaching skills and field knowledge. The teacher should constantly be ready to address student questions. To answer students' questions, teachers must be knowledgeable and skilled. Professional development programmes help teachers become subject matter experts (Incompass Education, 2017). A maths teacher can utilise various ways and strategies to solve a problem if he knows the answer. Let's say teachers know their subjects and the latest teaching trends. Providing their knowledge in diverse and efficient methods can assist them. They can tailor material, tasks, and, in most cases, learning objects to the child. One commenter stated:

*"If I talk about myself, so I can proudly say that I, as a teacher, have the capability to confidently apply new styles to my teaching. Huge thanks to the professional development that my organization has provided me, allowing me to get insight into my profession and identify the areas where I was lacking as a teacher and what measures I should undertake to overcome those deficits."*

This statement emphasises the need of professional development for teachers. Teachers can strategically construct and use exams to help students meet learning outcomes by knowing about the profession and its innovations. Trainings help school administrators lead their workforce more successfully. However, studying a vocation always leads to valuable knowledge and mastery. Further, another participant concluded:

*"We must encourage our teachers to pursue professional development... It is the best we can do for them by letting them recognize what role they are expected to perform as an educational leader and what their profession demands."*

The success of an institution depends on well-trained teachers. School leaders always encourage staff to seek professional development, which helps them succeed and improves student comprehension. Professional development can help tutors learn and improve their teaching.

**Effective Time Management.** Teachers experienced in the field can more cautiously and effectively exercise differentiated instructions in their classrooms. Time is usually the most mismanaged factor for most teachers, particularly those new in the field. Professional development has numerous benefits for teachers, among which lies the appropriate directions for effective time management. Juniper (2022) also claimed that professional development trains teachers to establish a timeframe that balances the accomplishment of annual targets with their given time constraints. A school leader inferred:

*"Professional development makes the teacher able to organize and manage their courses efficiently. Time management, or we can say 'effective time management,' is a vital skill that teachers are taught in these courses... It enables them to make a scheme for wrapping up the course as quickly as possible so that more time will be left for extracurricular activities and for experimenting with some more teaching designs."*

Another participant established that:

*"Time management is a trivial yet significant point... We (teachers) cannot spend a lot of time in understanding and planning things. That is why professional development is considered an important factor that trains us to effectively manage time and do the maximum in the given period."*

Since the semesters are generally short, the expanded courses of the primary grades, extracurricular activities, teaching requirements, and differentiated instruction added to the curriculum demand adequate time management to cover the entire course in that limited period. Hence, it is another critical advantage of professional development in enhancing teachers' understanding of the time constraints.

***Appropriate Understanding of Students' Demands.*** A skilled and professionally developed teacher can employ multiple teaching styles, using differentiated instruction to constructively exploit each student's learning potential (Strickland, 2009). Inferably, when experience and proficiency join forces, they contribute to positive and productive outcomes. A participant responded with the given words when asked to shed light on the significance of professional development in the implementation of differentiated instructions:

*"When teachers have attended professional development programs, they become more knowledgeable about the basic needs of students, the amount of focus they have to pay to students' individual learning, and what activities and teaching strategies they could employ to fulfill those requirements."*

Teachers who have received professional training have thoroughly inspected the primary necessities of learners, they have a fair knowledge of child development and developing milestones. Professional development allow them to when and how to integrate this knowledge during their teaching where students might require their help. In most situations, they are familiar with students' distinct issues and demands and are trained to make wise and appropriate choices. Besides, in many other instances, professional development assists the teachers with several aspects such as behaviour challenges, developmental delays, improvement of areas or building on the strengths. One school leader also emphasized that:

*"I believe that the teachers should be planning doable activities for these students (diverse learners) to enhance their engagement and allow them to set their own pace to explore in this context... But to do this, firstly, the teachers must be capable of guiding their students to the right path, which is not possible without professional teaching skills."*

It further validates the concept that professional development is crucial in executing differentiated instruction in the classrooms. For teachers to think beyond showing videos, introducing a project, or giving a hands-on task requires a better understanding of differentiated instruction. Moreover, research on the efficacy of differentiated instructions report that this approach aids multiple sets of learners, ranging from the ones with learning disabilities to those with high capabilities (Cathy Weselby, 2021). Such differentiated practices have been only made possible owing to the consistent efforts of teachers who have served a substantial amount of time seizing their students' interests and allocating the most suited pedagogical approaches to deliver education in this realm. Thus, professional development is the core matter of teachers' appropriate understanding of learners' requirements and provision of knowledge.

***Students' Better Learning Outcomes.*** The current theme is associated with the above one: teachers' appropriate know-how concerning students' demands that leads to better learning outcomes. Per the report presented by the U.S Department of Education, students' learning

outcomes automatically increase by up to 21 percent when the teachers participate in professional development activities (Yoon et al., 2007).

Professional development allows teachers to mold their teaching practices in a way that brings the maximum level of student satisfaction and positive responses. When the teacher is familiar with a cluster of teaching methodologies and how to mold the teaching plan, they know when and how to implement a particular tactic. Furthermore, being familiar with students' probable queries about a problem and the most optimal method to settle them allows teachers to design practical and personalized lessons. During the interview, a teacher repeated a valuable statement quoted by her senior guide:

*"When I stepped into this profession, one of our headmasters told me, 'Believe yourself to be the best teacher when you see your students gaining true knowledge aside from just good grades.'... I feel that I have actually grown a lot as a teacher after receiving professional development, and I have a belief that from all those students whom I have taught to this day, I must have proven to be a good teacher for at least some of them."*

Learners' progress relies upon the teachers' dedication and will to deliver knowledge to their students. The above statement sufficiently demonstrates that teachers have an enormous role in their learners' success. In constancy with one of our participants:

*"When the teacher teach in a way that learner wants, the students will give them the output they want."*

It portrays that professional development is instrumental to educators' prosperity and ascertains the pursuit of pioneering teaching approaches like differentiated instruction. As soon as the learners are exposed to learning using engaging and thought-provoking teaching styles with a lesson modified according to their capabilities, they produce productive consequences. Research has also shown that offering professional development to educators significantly influences students' achievements. Thus, the teachers must pursue professional development to ensure the best learning outcomes for their apprentices and become more proficient and satisfied in several other aspects of their work.

Throughout their careers, professional development helps instructors grow and polish their teaching styles, which has a profound influence on both the teachers and the hundreds of students they work with throughout their careers. Therefore, teachers and administrators should participate in professional development programs to learn to use differentiated instructions and enact them into their teaching actions.

## **Conclusion**

The current study concludes that the innovative approaches for integrating diversity in the classroom have switched from average curricular learning to more comprehensive methods that cover proportionate learning opportunities for every student. Differentiated instructions do not mean designing a welter of teaching strategies and educational materials for the overall class to make them experience a broad range of learning processes. Instead, differentiated Instructions are

adapting, modifying, altering, and adjusting curriculum content and the process to meet students' ability to achieve a desired learning outcome.

Flexible groups assist teachers in planning and delivering lessons catering to the similar needs of the students in smaller group sizes. A well-aware and supportive school leader facilitates teachers in providing individualized learning experiences where teachers fulfill each group's unique needs and capabilities. A school leader's primary function is to provide plentiful resources and technological tools that assist teachers in offering quality education to diverse students. Nevertheless, the crucial guidance of school leaders is imperative for the teachers to facilitate their curriculum through differentiated instructions. Discussions with these school leaders helped identify that our educational leaders are thoughtful about the future of the new generation and are deeply dedicated to making policies and courses that could serve this purpose. Holding interviews with the school leaders also assisted in realizing that the institutions that support differentiated instruction are more committed to their teachers' professional development. The causal factor is the potential of teachers' professional development in designing and executing efficacious learning methodologies and teaching styles that ensure quality education for each diverse learner.

### **Recommendations**

To sum up, educational leaders have been recommended to add on-going professional development to their significant preferences when training and assigning new teachers to their institutions, experienced teachers should be part of such training as well. School leaders should offer a differentiated instruction setting to teachers as well in order to meet their diverse requirements, as teachers can also be diverse learners who demand distinct tactics and styles of training. If we want to develop a competent generation of individuals, the teachers are the most valuable assets who call for profound attention and appropriate directions to guide their students toward the path that leads to success.

Finally, yet importantly, instructors have been advised to articulate their teaching practices so that all learners can experience various curricular exercises that can augment their learning experience and allow them to delve deeper into their respective areas of competence and interest. In light of these considerations, there is a pressing need for further research to understand the role of school leadership in implementing differentiated instruction in elementary grade schools in Pakistan. Further exploring how school leaders can effectively support and facilitate differentiated instruction practices will contribute to the enhancement of the educational landscape. This research is crucial for shaping policies and strategies that foster a conducive learning environment and ensure the development of a competent and diverse generation

### **Questionnaire**

| <b>Objectives</b> | <b>Supporting Questions</b> |
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| <p>1. To explore the perception and practices of School Leaders about differentiated instructions at the primary level.</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do you understand the term differentiated instructions?</li> <li>● What does differentiated instruction mean to you? Name the major strategies that come under it.</li> <li>● Do you feel the curriculum is developmentally appropriate for your student?</li> <li>● Which strategies are you mainly practicing at your school? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the ways teachers maintain/ collect /document each child's learning?</li> <li>○ How do you ensure that the end product is individualized?</li> <li>○ Are the students divided into groups according to their ability or according to their interests?</li> <li>○ Do you expect teachers to alter the lesson plans catering to each student's different learning styles?</li> <li>○ In your opinion, is learning the same or different for each student?</li> <li>○ How well do students learn in the classroom? How do you know?</li> <li>○ What support do you have for the key elements of learning environment like classroom layouts, incorporating various types of furniture to support both individual and group work?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● What support is available to the teacher for managing the classroom behavior?</li> <li>● How do you facilitate your teachers in implementing DI in mainstreaming classroom? (Training, resources etc.,)</li> </ul> |
| <p>2. To highlight the challenges and concerns faced by school leaders in guiding teachers to tailor classroom instructions in order to meet individual's need with reference to the differentiated instructions while implementing standardized curriculum.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What challenges do you face in guiding teachers to seek and value alternative modes of investigation or problem solving, student prior knowledge and learning styles into their planning?</li> </ul>  |
| <p>3. To investigate the role of teachers' professional development in implementing the concept of differentiated instructions against</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How do you facilitate your teachers in implementing the concept of differentiated instructions against standardized curriculum at primary level? (Probes:</li> </ul>  |



|   |   |
|---|---|
| standardized curriculum at primary level. | formal training, professional circles, mentoring/coaching etc.) |
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