



HINDERING AND FACILITATING FACTORS IN USING TIERED INSTRUCTION IN TEACHING MATHEMATICS: BASIS FOR IN-SERVICE TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study found that teachers viewed tiered instruction as a form of differentiated instruction that involves grouping learners based on ability, readiness, and interest. In practice, teachers used pre-assessment, flexible grouping, varied activities anchored on common learning objectives, adjusted task complexity, collaborative learning, and continuous monitoring and classroom management. However, teachers encountered challenges such as time constraints in planning and preparation, difficulty in designing tiered activities, limited instructional resources and classroom facilities, classroom management challenges, and fear of learner labeling and discrimination. Despite these challenges, tiered instruction promoted learner engagement, confidence, inclusivity, peer collaboration, and teacher fulfillment. Based on these findings, an In-Service Training (INSET) Program on Strengthening Tiered Instruction in Mathematics is proposed.

Keywords: *Tiered instruction, Mathematics teaching, hindering and facilitating factors, In-Service Training (INSET)*

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INTRODUCTION

The transition from teacher-focused to student-focused instruction has greatly changed classroom practices, highlighting the various levels of readiness, interests, and learning requirements of students (OECD, 2023). Modern educational reforms and policies promoting inclusive education necessitate that teachers implement responsive and fair teaching methods that cater to learner diversity.

As student performance increasingly becomes a metric for assessing instructional success, the cultural and academic variety present in classrooms creates continuous challenges in providing equitable and relevant learning experiences for every student. This method is crucial for guaranteeing that every student experiences significant academic progress throughout the school year. If differentiation is absent, gifted learners might not be adequately stimulated, while students who face difficulties may lack the necessary assistance to reach academic benchmarks (Alzahrani, 2024).

In response to this diversity, differentiated instruction has become an essential approach in classrooms with mixed abilities. Studies show that differentiated teaching strategies enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic success when they correspond to learners' readiness and needs (Estaiteyeh et al., 2023; Prast et al., 2023). Likewise, Po et al. (2025) carried out the Reading Aptitude Tiered Program (RATP) with third-grade students in Cebu City, categorizing learners into three tiers according to their English proficiency. Their results showed significant improvements in five out of six reading areas, underscoring the effectiveness of tiered instruction for fostering literacy and engagement.

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Comedia et al. (2025) further supported the implementation of tiered assignments in multi-grade science classes, demonstrating that differentiated tasks improved conceptual understanding and classroom management.

Even with its advantages, putting tiered instruction into practice entails logistical difficulties. Educators have to balance their instructional responsibilities and the complexity of the curriculum while ensuring every student grasps key skills and concepts. To make differentiation practical, it is advisable to restrict instruction to two or three tiers for each concept—each tailored to suit learners' levels of challenge while changing content, process, or product. This framework helps educators maintain instructional consistency while catering to individual differences.

Recent research continues to affirm the effectiveness of differentiated instruction in Mathematics classrooms. Providing learners with tasks at appropriate levels of challenge enhances motivation, perseverance, and academic achievement. Studies indicate that differentiated and tiered approaches significantly improve mathematical performance and student engagement, particularly in mixed-ability settings (Prast et al., 2023; Alzahrani, 2024). By proactively addressing learner readiness and variability within the regular classroom, differentiated instruction minimizes the need for remedial support and promotes inclusive and equitable learning opportunities.

A public secondary school in the Schools Division of Iloilo City serves both junior and senior high school students, illustrating these difficulties. With around 4,000 students and average class sizes of 50 varied learners, teachers encounter significant challenges in

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addressing the diverse educational requirements. Therefore, educators need to utilize responsive, evidence-based teaching strategies—such as tiered instruction and assessment—to provide meaningful learning experiences for every student.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the research method, research design, participants of the study, sampling design, research instrument, data gathering procedures, data analysis, and trustworthiness of the study. The purpose of this study is to determine the hindering and facilitating factors in using tiered instruction in teaching mathematics from a public secondary school in the Schools Division of Iloilo City during the School Year 2022–2023.

Research Method

The research utilized a qualitative approach, focusing on in-depth interviews to delve into the experiences of participants. This method involves engaging participants in a way that encourages them to articulate their thoughts, understandings, and personal experiences in depth. The main goal is to capture the essence and significance of these experiences within their educational and social environments. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for exploring instructional practices such as tiered instruction, as it facilitates a thorough investigation of subjective viewpoints and contextual realities (Cypress, 2022; Nowell et al., 2022).

Research Design

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This study employed a phenomenological research design to explore and describe teachers' lived experiences in implementing tiered instruction. Phenomenology aims to understand how individuals interpret and make meaning of their experiences while minimizing researcher bias and preconceptions. Recent methodological literature affirms that phenomenology provides a systematic and rigorous approach for examining lived experiences in authentic contexts (Cypress, 2022; Nowell et al., 2022). Contemporary qualitative research further emphasizes its appropriateness in investigating educators' instructional practices and ensuring credibility and trustworthiness in data analysis (Gentles et al., 2022).

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study consisted of eleven (11) junior high school mathematics teachers from a public secondary school in the Schools Division of Iloilo City during the School Year 2022–2023. These teachers were assigned to teach mathematics in Grades 7, 8, 9, and 10. They were purposively selected based on their teaching experience in junior high school mathematics and their involvement in implementing tiered instruction.

Sampling Design

A purposive sampling design was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique where participants are intentionally selected based on their knowledge, experiences, and relevance to the research objectives. This approach ensures that the sample includes participants who can provide rich and meaningful data about the phenomenon being studied (Gentles et al., 2022).

Research Instrument

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The main research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made interview schedule. The interview schedule consisted of three (3) open-ended questions focusing on the purpose of the study, designed to elicit detailed responses regarding teachers' experiences with tiered instruction. With participants' consent, voice and video recording were also used to accurately document the interviews for analysis.

Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure content validity, the interview schedule was subjected to expert validation. The adviser, Dean of the Graduate School, and a panel of jurors with expertise in research, testing, and mathematics education reviewed the questions for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's objectives. Revisions were made based on their feedback. In line with recent methodological recommendations, expert review is considered an effective approach to ensuring validity in qualitative instruments (Cypress, 2022).

Data Gathering Procedures

Permission to conduct the study was first sought from the adviser, Schools Division Superintendent and School Heads. After securing approval, individual participants were invited to voluntarily participate in the study. Prior to the interviews, participants signed informed consent forms acknowledging their willingness to participate and the confidentiality of their responses. Interviews were conducted in locations convenient for participants, ensuring an environment conducive to open communication.

Data Analysis

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The information gathered was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within qualitative data. According to Nowell et al. (2022), thematic analysis provides a flexible yet rigorous framework for analyzing phenomenological data. The process involved familiarization with the data, coding, identifying patterns, developing themes, and interpreting findings in relation to the research questions. Themes were refined until they captured the core of participants' experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to determine the understanding, implementation, hindering factors, and facilitating factors on the use of tiered instruction in teaching mathematics among junior high school mathematics teachers in one of the national high schools of the Schools Division of Iloilo City as a basis for a proposed In-Service Training program.

The research method utilized in the study was descriptive, using in-depth interviews.

The study used phenomenology under a qualitative research design.

The participants of the study were eleven (11) junior high school mathematics teachers in one of the National High Schools of the Schools Division of Iloilo City.

The research instrument utilized in the study was a researcher-made interview schedule. Voice recorder and written documentation were also used for data gathering, depending on the permission of the participants.

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A group of experts reviewed the interview schedule, and all feedback and recommendations regarding the tool's validation were thoughtfully taken into account and integrated before its use.

Approval from the School Head and the individual participants was secured to enable the researcher to carry out the study. The researcher personally engaged with the participants and facilitated the interviews at a time and location that suited them best.

Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed throughout the study. Participants were made aware of the research's purpose, their responses were kept confidential, and their involvement was completely optional.

Using in-depth interviews, the responses of the participants were recorded and documented to accurately capture their experiences and perceptions. The researcher consolidated and organized all the collected data after the series of interviews.

The information gathered was analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were generated based on recurring patterns, similarities, and significant statements from the responses of the participants.

The following are the findings of the study:

The teachers' views of tiered instruction revolve around two main themes: **tiered instruction as a form of differentiated instruction and the grouping of learners by ability, readiness, or interest.**

In terms of implementation, the findings indicate that teachers implement tiered instruction in Mathematics through several structured practices. These include: **use of pre-**

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assessment to determine learners' readiness; grouping learners based on ability, readiness, or interest; designing varied activities anchored on the same learning objectives; adjusting task complexity and level of independence; use of group work and collaborative learning; and continuous monitoring, guidance, and classroom management.

The hindering factors on the teachers' effective use of tiered instruction in mathematics classes are the following: **time constraints in planning and preparation; difficulty in designing appropriate tiered activities; limited resources and classroom facilities; classroom management and monitoring challenges, and fear of labeling and learner discrimination.** These factors affect teachers' capacity to consistently implement tiered instruction and highlight the need for adequate training, resources, and administrative support.

Facilitating factors in the use of tiered instruction in mathematics classrooms were evident in the teachers' responses. These include **increased learner engagement and active participation; improved learner confidence and sense of achievement; promotion of an inclusive and equitable learning environment; strengthened peer collaboration and support and teacher fulfillment and professional satisfaction.** These factors highlight how tiered instruction supports meaningful learning experiences while enhancing both student outcomes and teachers' instructional practices

Based on these findings, an In-Service Training (INSET) program (LAC-Based In-Service Training on Strengthening Tiered Instruction in Mathematics) is proposed to enhance

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teachers' competencies in designing and implementing tiered instruction in mathematics, in alignment with DepEd policies and professional standards.

Insights

Based on the findings of the study, several important insights were drawn.

The teachers possess a clear conceptual understanding of tiered instruction as a form of differentiated instruction. They recognize that tiered instruction allows the same mathematical concepts to be delivered to all learners while adjusting the level of task complexity according to students' readiness and abilities.

This indicates that teachers are aware of the principles of inclusivity and equity in instruction.

While teachers understand the concept of tiered instruction, its consistent and systematic implementation remains a challenge. The preparation of differentiated tasks requires additional time, effort, and creativity. This suggests that knowledge alone is not sufficient; structured professional support and collaborative planning are necessary to translate understanding into effective practice.

Although teachers recognize the value of tiered instruction in addressing learner diversity, its implementation is hindered more by systemic constraints than by a lack of willingness. Challenges such as limited time, difficulty in designing differentiated tasks, and insufficient resources indicate the need for stronger institutional support. Overall, tiered instruction is pedagogically sound but requires sustained professional development,

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collaborative planning, and adequate school-level support to ensure effective and sustainable implementation in mathematics classrooms.

The positive experiences of increased learner engagement, improved confidence, and enhanced participation indicate that tiered instruction has strong potential to improve Mathematics learning outcomes. When tasks are aligned with students' readiness levels, learners become more motivated and willing to participate. This reinforces the value of tiered instruction as an inclusive and learner-centered strategy.

The presence of both hindering and facilitating factors suggests that tiered instruction can be sustainable if supported by institutional mechanisms such as the In-Service Training (INSET) program. Collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, and shared instructional resources may address identified challenges and strengthen teacher capacity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

For mathematics teachers, it is recommended that they continue strengthening their knowledge and skills in designing tiered activities through collaborative lesson planning and professional sharing during the In-Service Training (InSeT) Program or within LAC sessions.

Teachers are encouraged to use readiness-based assessment tools to guide grouping and to apply flexible grouping strategies to avoid labeling and discrimination. Continuous reflection on instructional practices may also enhance the effectiveness of tiered instruction.

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For school heads, it is recommended that they institutionalize a structured In-Service Training Program or LAC sessions. Administrative support in terms of time allocation, monitoring, and provision of instructional materials is essential to ensure sustainable implementation. Encouraging peer observation and mentoring may also strengthen teacher confidence and instructional quality.

For the Schools Division Office and DepEd Officials, it is recommended that division-wide trainings or workshops on differentiated and tiered instruction be conducted to support mathematics teachers. Providing instructional guides, resource materials, and model lesson exemplars may further enhance teachers' capacity to implement tiered instruction effectively. Alignment of professional development programs with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) and the MATATAG Agenda should be sustained.

For future researchers, it is recommended that further studies be conducted to examine the impact of tiered instruction on students' academic performance in mathematics using quantitative or mixed-methods designs. Comparative studies across different grade levels or subject areas may also provide broader insights into its effectiveness.

Additionally, research focusing on students' perspectives on tiered instruction may enrich understanding of its classroom impact.

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