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Evaluation Of Differentiated Instruction Using A Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach To Improve Map Literacy Among High School Students In Gunungkidul

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Abstract

Differentiated instruction implemented through the CRT approach is one effort to realize student-centered learning while supporting the development of map literacy. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of student-centered learning that supports the development of map literacy. This study aims to evaluate the implementation of differentiated instruction using the CRT approach, covering aspects of planning, implementation, the gap between standards and instructional practices, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors in fostering map literacy among SAM students in Gunungkidul. This study employed a *mixed-methods* approach with a *sequential explanatory* design and the *Provus Discrepancy* evaluation model. The research was conducted at four public high schools in Gunungkidul, involving teachers, students, and school stakeholders. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, documentation, and questionnaire distribution. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative descriptive methods. The results of the " " study indicate that the planning and implementation of instruction fall into the "good" to "very good" categories. The implementation of differentiated instruction was evident through differentiation in content, process, and products, whereas the application of CRT still requires strengthening, particularly regarding the integration of student culture and culturally responsive assessment. The evaluation revealed a discrepancy between

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ideal standards and actual implementation. The instruction delivered supports the development of map literacy through learning experiences that take into account students' needs, characteristics, and cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Evaluation, Differentiated Instruction, *Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)*, Geography, Provus Discrepancy Model

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century marks a fundamental transformation in the education system, driven by the accelerated development of science, technological advancements, changing social dynamics, and increasing demands for competencies at the global level. The OECD emphasizes that delivering quality education requires an approach capable of accommodating and adaptively responding to the diverse characteristics of students, so that every individual has fair access and opportunities to develop their potential to the fullest (OECD, 2023).

Tomlinson (2014) argues that student diversity is an inherent condition that is always present in every educational ecosystem. On that basis, instructional design must be flexible and responsive so that it can proportionately accommodate the needs and characteristics of each student. In addition to addressing students' academic needs, instruction must also take into account their cultural backgrounds. Gay (2018) explains that instruction must take into account students' social experiences, cultural identities, and the value systems that exist and evolve within them as integral components of the learning process.

Within the framework of *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (CRT), the cultural dimension is understood as an element that influences how students interpret their learning experiences and interact with the educational environment. Therefore, students' daily experiences, cultural values, and social contexts must be taken into account in the learning process. Integrating cultural aspects into instruction can help students connect the subject matter to their lived experiences, thereby making the learning process more meaningful. In addition to supporting conceptual understanding, this approach also contributes to increased learning motivation, self-confidence, the level of students' active participation in learning activities, and the quality of the teacher-student relationship. The CRT framework serves as an effective pedagogical alternative for fostering learning that values diversity and provides equal learning opportunities.

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Prasetya (2015) argues that Geography plays a crucial role in building students' understanding of the relationships between human activities, environmental conditions, resource management, and various regional issues emerging at both the local and global levels. The scope of this study indicates that Geography instruction needs to be developed by linking the concepts being studied to the social, cultural, and environmental contexts familiar to students. Therefore, the implementation of differentiated instruction integrated with CRT is relevant because it can foster meaningful learning experiences, enhance student engagement, and accommodate the diverse characteristics present in classroom learning.

One of the competencies that needs to be developed in geography education is map literacy. Map literacy encompasses not only the ability to read symbols, legends, scales, and directions on a map but also the ability to understand, analyze, and utilize spatial information to explain various geographic phenomena. This ability is a crucial component in the development of spatial thinking, which enables students to understand spatial relationships, patterns of phenomenon distribution, and the interconnections between human activities and the environment. In the context of 21st-century geography education, map literacy has become an increasingly essential skill because it helps students critically process geographic information when making decisions based on spatial data.

Based on preliminary observations conducted in November 2024 at several high schools in Gunungkidul Regency, it was found that teachers have made efforts to implement differentiated instruction in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum; however, the implementation of differentiation still focuses primarily on variations in teaching methods and has not consistently accommodated differences in students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Furthermore, the integration of local culture remains limited to cultural knowledge and is confined to specific subject matter; it has not yet become a planned component of the overall learning process. These findings indicate that the implementation of differentiated instruction and the CRT approach still faces various challenges, necessitating an evaluation. These conditions also have the potential to affect the optimization of geography competency development, including map literacy as a key skill in understanding spatial phenomena. Therefore, an evaluation is needed to determine the extent to which the implemented instruction has been designed and carried out in accordance with the principles of differentiated instruction and the CRT approach in supporting the development of students' map literacy.

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Various previous studies have shown that both differentiated instruction and the CRT approach have a positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. However, there has been no study specifically evaluating the implementation of these two approaches in supporting literacy development at the high school level. Map literacy is an essential competency in geography education that requires learning strategies responsive to students' learning needs and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, an evaluative study is needed to provide insight into the appropriateness of implementing differentiated instruction and the CRT framework in supporting the development of students' map literacy.

This evaluative study was conducted to examine the implementation of differentiated instruction integrated with the CRT framework in the context of geography instruction, including various factors influencing its application in the school setting. In addition to providing information on the conditions of program implementation, this study is also expected to identify various aspects that support or limit the success of its implementation.

It is also hoped that this study will contribute constructive ideas toward enhancing the quality of Geography instruction so that it is more responsive to student diversity and the sociocultural context in which learning takes place. Through the implementation of differentiated instruction integrated with the CRT pedagogical framework, the learning process is not solely focused on the acquisition of academic competencies but also on the formation and strengthening of cultural identity, the development of social skills, and the enhancement of critical thinking skills in understanding various geographic phenomena. Based on the various issues and considerations outlined above, this study was conducted under the title "Evaluation of Differentiated Instruction Using a Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach to Improve Map Literacy Among High School Students in Gunungkidul."

Methodology

This study employed a *mixed-methods* approach with a *sequential explanatory* design and the *Discrepancy Provus* evaluation model. The research was conducted at SMA N 1 Wonosar, SMA N 2 Playen, SMA N 1 Karangmojo, and SMA N 1 Patuk. The study subjects included 4 geography teachers and 400 students from two different schools. Data collection techniques in this study included observation, interviews, documentation, and the distribution of questionnaires to students and teachers. The data analysis used in this study was both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative analysis used descriptive statistics in the form of

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percentages and categorization. Meanwhile, qualitative analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The two types of data were integrated to identify gaps between ideal standards and the actual implementation of differentiated instruction using *the culturally responsive teaching* (CRT) approach.

Results and Discussion

a. Planning Differentiated Instruction Using the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) Approach to Support the Development of Student Literacy

1) Teachers' Readiness in Designing Instruction

At this stage, the researcher evaluated the instructional designs created by the geography teacher—specifically, assessing the teacher's readiness to design instruction prior to implementing it. Aspects of the teacher's readiness in instructional design were examined through indicators of the teacher's prior knowledge in designing instruction and the teacher's ability to create instructional materials, as shown in Table 1

Table 1: Achievement of Aspects of Teachers' Competence in Instructional Design

Indicator	SMA N 1 Wonosari	SMA N 2 Playen	SMA N 1 Karangmojo	SMA N 1 Patuk
Teachers' prior knowledge in designing instruction	**95%**	**77.5%**	**95%**	**75**
Teachers' ability to create instructional materials	**95.7%**	**80**	**84.3%**	**74.3**
Overall average	**96.25%**	**69.75%**	**89.65%**	**74.65%**
Category	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Excellent**	**Good**

Source: Researcher's data analysis, 2026

These findings indicate that teachers are sufficiently prepared to design student-centered learning through the application of the principles of differentiated instruction and CRT. This preparedness serves as a crucial foundation for supporting the development of students' map literacy, as effective lesson planning enables teachers to design learning activities that foster

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students' ability to understand, analyze, and interpret spatial information in accordance with their individual learning needs.

Differences in scores across schools indicate variations in teachers' readiness levels in understanding learning and developing instructional materials.

2) Completeness of Instructional Documents

The implementation of differentiated instruction in the geography subject is guided by Law No. 16 of 2022 on process standards for early childhood, elementary, and secondary education levels, as outlined in the learning and assessment guidebook. Based on an analysis of data on the achievement of differentiated instruction in the Geography subject at high schools located in Gunungkidul, each school falls within the "very good" and "good" criteria. The results regarding the achievement of differentiated instruction aspects are presented in Table 2

Table 2. Completeness of Learning Documents

Dimension	SMA N 1 Wonosari	SMA N 2 Playen	SMA N 1 Karangmojo	SMA N 1 Patuk
Learning Objectives/Achievement Indicators	92.5%	82.5%	92.5%	65%
Learning Steps	87.5%	80%	75%	60%
Learning Assessment	100%	80%	66.7%	66.7%
Average	93.3%	80.3%	78.6%	63.9%
Category	**Excellent**	**Good**	**Good**	**Good**

Source: Researcher's data analysis, 2026

The completeness of instructional materials—including learning objectives, instructional steps, and assessment—indicates that teachers have sufficiently adequate instructional resources to support students' development of map literacy. Systematic planning enables the implementation of instruction that provides students with opportunities to develop their ability to read, analyze, and interpret spatial information in accordance with geography learning objectives.

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Teachers' readiness in designing instruction ranges from good to very good. This readiness is evident in their ability to understand students' prior knowledge, their ability to develop instructional materials, and their ability to prepare these materials before the learning process begins. All four schools demonstrate adequate pedagogical competence in designing instruction in accordance with curriculum requirements and student needs. SMA N 1 Wonosari achieved the highest average in this regard. The high level of teacher readiness indicates that the implementation of differentiated instruction is inseparable from teachers' pedagogical ability to understand student characteristics when designing instruction tailored to students' needs. These findings demonstrate that teachers possess maximum readiness in understanding instructional principles in a sequential and systematic manner.

This aligns with the statement by Setyosari (2020), who explains that instructional design—as a process—begins with mapping student needs and formulating learning objectives, as well as designing a delivery system that is responsive to those needs. Instructional design encompasses the development of diverse learning materials and activities, feasibility testing, and a comprehensive evaluation of learning activities and student progress.

SMA N 1 Karangmojo falls into the "very good" category. This indicates that teachers possess a solid understanding of instructional concepts and the ability to develop instructional materials in accordance with the curriculum. In accordance with Law No. 14 of 2005 on pedagogical competencies, teachers serve as the cornerstone for designing, managing, and evaluating instruction.

SMA N 2 Playen falls into the "good" category. This finding indicates that teachers have a foundation for designing instruction, but improvements are still needed in certain areas. These differences in percentages may be influenced by teaching experience, training, and internal support for teacher competency development.

b. Implementation of Differentiated Instruction Using the CRT Approach to Support High School Literacy Development in Gunungkidul

1) Differentiated Instruction

The implementation of differentiated instruction in the geography subject is guided by Law No. 16 of 2022 on process standards for early childhood, elementary, and secondary education levels, as outlined in the learning and assessment guidebook. Based on an analysis of data on the achievement of differentiated instruction in the Geography subject at the high school level

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in Gunungkidul, each school falls within the "very good" and "good" criteria. The results of the achievement of differentiated instruction aspects are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Achievement of Learning Implementation Aspects

Dimension	Questionnaire	Observation	Category
Introduction	75.5	81.4	Good
Core Activities	77.8	83.8	Good
Conclusion	75.5	81.8	Good
Average	76.3	82.3	Good

Source: Researcher's data analysis, 2026

The implementation of differentiated instruction in the geography course at high schools in Gunungkidul Regency indicates that the principles of differentiated instruction are beginning to be applied in the learning process, although not yet as ideally as expected. These findings suggest that teachers have made efforts to tailor instruction to students' needs through differentiation in content, process, and products. In this regard, teachers demonstrate an understanding of student-centered learning.

Differentiated instruction, which provides students with the opportunity to learn in accordance with their individuality and characteristics, has the potential to support the development of map literacy. Through various learning activities, students gain broader opportunities to develop their ability to read, analyze, and interpret spatial information in accordance with their readiness levels and learning profiles. Thus, the implementation of differentiated instruction not only supports the achievement of learning objectives but also creates conditions that foster the development of students' map literacy

2) The Culturally Responsive Teaching Approach

Teachers' ability to implement the *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (CRT) approach was analyzed based on seven indicators: knowledge of cultural diversity, integration of culture into the curriculum, positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, family and community involvement, use of culturally responsive teaching strategies, culturally responsive evaluation and assessment, and self-reflection and professional development

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No	Indicator	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Knowledge of cultural diversity	75	Good
2	Cultural integration in the curriculum	80	Good
3	Positive Attitude Toward Cultural Diversity	80	Good
4	Family and community involvement	60	Fairly good
5	Use of culturally responsive learning strategies	77.5	Good
6	Culturally responsive evaluation and assessment	72.5	Fairly good
7	Self-reflection and professional development	75	Good
	Total Average	**74.3**	**Good**

Research findings on differentiated instruction and *culturally responsive teaching* (CRT) show a relationship that can facilitate student-centered learning. Differentiated instruction seeks to accommodate differences in students' characteristics, interests, and learning styles, while CRT provides a pedagogical framework that helps teachers understand and utilize students' cultural backgrounds as part of the learning process. Effective implementation of differentiated instruction requires an understanding of students' cultures so that teachers can design learning experiences that align more deeply with students' characteristics.

Research findings indicate that teachers possess a very good level of understanding and readiness regarding CRT; however, its implementation in the classroom does not yet fully reflect all CRT principles. This situation highlights a gap between conceptual understanding and the actual practice of teaching in the classroom. In this regard, teachers have demonstrated efforts to recognize the cultural diversity of students and integrate cultural elements into instruction; however, some aspects of CRT—such as involving families and the community, utilizing students' cultural experiences as primary learning resources, and implementing culturally responsive assessments—have not yet been fully realized.

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The results of this study suggest that differentiated instruction and CRT are not two separate approaches but rather complementary ones. Differentiation provides a framework for meeting the diverse learning needs of students, while CRT offers a cultural foundation that helps teachers understand diversity more deeply. Strengthening teachers' competencies in applying CRT is a crucial step toward improving the quality of differentiated instruction in the classroom.

In the context of map literacy development, the application of CRT has the potential to make learning more contextual and meaningful. Utilizing the surrounding environment, local culture, and spatial phenomena closely related to students' lives can help students develop the ability to read, analyze, and interpret spatial information more deeply. Efforts to strengthen teachers' competencies in integrating local cultural values into instruction must continue so that learning not only meets students' educational needs but also supports the optimal development of map literacy.

c. Driving Factors, Barriers, and Follow-Up on the Implementation of Differentiated Instruction Using the CRT Approach to Develop Map Literacy Among High School Students in Gunungkidul

Dimensions	Findings
Supporting Factors	Support from stakeholders, teacher human resources, facilities and infrastructure, student readiness, and the availability of supporting teaching materials
Barriers	The diversity of student characteristics, limited internet access, and difficulties in adapting materials and methods
Follow-up	Development of teaching methods and models, refinement of teaching modules, improvement of facilities and infrastructure, strengthening of CRT implementation

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1) Driving Factors

Student motivators, the availability of learning resources, stakeholder support, and facilities and infrastructure serve as supporting factors in the implementation of differentiated instruction using the CRT approach. The success of instructional implementation is determined not only by teacher competence but also by the readiness of a supportive learning environment.

Student readiness is a key factor in differentiated instruction, which places students at the center of the learning process. Tomlinson (2017) defines differentiated instruction as a teacher's response to student diversity in the classroom, based on the principle that all students can learn through approaches tailored to their individual profiles.

Learning resources and support from school stakeholders also play a vital role in the successful implementation of differentiated instruction. This support serves as a necessary resource for developing instruction that is more flexible in meeting students' needs.

2) Barriers

The diversity of student characteristics is one of the factors hindering the implementation of differentiated instruction using the CRT approach. Diversity is the primary foundation for applying differentiation and CRT; in practice, this requires teachers to adapt their instructional strategies. Teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that every student has equal opportunities to learn in the best way possible, in line with their interests and talents (Wulandari, 2022). The diversity of student characteristics poses a major challenge for teachers in designing instruction that can accommodate all students.

The availability of internet access remains a barrier to implementing differentiated instruction. This situation affects access to digital learning resources used to support differentiated learning. Another limiting factor is that teachers still face difficulties in adapting instructional materials and methods to CRT principles. This situation indicates that an understanding of CRT concepts has not yet been fully translated into optimal practical application in the classroom.

3) Follow-Up Plan

The follow-up plan aims to improve the quality of differentiated instruction implementation using the CRT approach. Planned teacher initiatives include developing teaching

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methods and models, refining instructional materials, enhancing facilities and infrastructure, and improving the application of CRT syntax in the classroom.

Teachers recognize the importance of continuous professional development. According to Gay (2018), the implementation of CRT requires a process of reflection and continuous competency development so that teachers can understand and integrate students' cultural diversity into the learning process.

The development of instructional materials and the improvement of learning resources are effective steps in supporting the successful implementation of differentiated instruction.

a. Discrepancy between ideal standards and the actual implementation of differentiated instruction using the *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (CRT) approach to develop map literacy among high school students in Gunungkidul

Component	Achievement	Gap	Category
Design	79%	21%	Good
Installation	85.70%	14.30%	Very Good
Process	76.46%	23.60%	Good
Average	80%	20%	Good

Source: researcher's data analysis, 2026

Based on an evaluation using the Provus discrepancy model, the implementation of differentiated instruction using the Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) approach in high school Geography classes in Gunungkidul generally falls into the "good" category. The average program achievement rate was 80%, with a 20% discrepancy between the ideal standards and actual conditions in the field. These results indicate that most program components have been implemented as planned, although several aspects still require improvement.

The gaps identified in the design phase indicate that teachers are already capable of formulating learning objectives effectively but still face challenges in integrating learning and assessment principles. These findings are supported by the research of Nursa'ban & Mukminan (2023), which explains that instructional planning is one of the key components determining the success of implementing innovation-based geography instruction.

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During the *implementation* stage, teachers' readiness was rated as "very good." This result indicates that teachers are well-prepared for differentiated instruction and CRT. These findings align with research showing that teachers' competencies and readiness are key factors in the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum and differentiated instruction. Teachers who have a good understanding of student characteristics tend to be better able to apply instructional strategies that meet students' learning needs.

A significant gap was found in the process stage, particularly regarding the implementation of CRT in instruction. This finding suggests that teachers still face challenges in consistently integrating local culture into the learning process. These results are also consistent with Gay (2000), who states that the application of CRT requires teachers' ability to connect students' cultural experiences to instructional content.

The results from the "product" stage show that support from school stakeholders, the quality of teacher resources, facilities and infrastructure, and student readiness are factors that support program implementation; conversely, the diversity of student characteristics, limited internet access, and difficulties in adapting instructional materials to CRT pose challenges. This is also consistent with Nursa'ban & Mukminan (2023), who demonstrated that the success of implementing geography instruction is significantly influenced by school environment support, teacher competence, and the availability of learning resources. Therefore, follow-up actions—such as developing teaching methods, refining instructional modules, improving facilities and infrastructure, and strengthening the implementation of CRT—are crucial steps toward reducing the gaps that still exist.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings obtained from data analysis, this study concluded that instructional planning—which includes teachers' readiness to design lessons and instructional materials—falls into the "good" to "very good" categories. This indicates that teachers already possess strong basic pedagogical competencies in planning instruction that aligns with the requirements of the Merdeka Curriculum and students' needs. Document analysis shows that most components of differentiated instruction have been incorporated into the instructional materials developed by teachers. The results of the document analysis show that most components of differentiated instruction have been incorporated into the instructional materials developed by teachers, thereby potentially supporting the development of students' literacy. The

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implementation of differentiated instruction is evident through differentiation in content, products, and processes, although conventional methods such as lectures, discussions, and presentations are still present. The application of the culturally responsive teaching (CRT) approach is still not optimal. Teachers have demonstrated an understanding of and a positive attitude toward cultural diversity; however, the integration of students' cultural elements as a foundation for learning, the involvement of families and the community, and culturally responsive assessment remain insufficiently developed. In general, the implementation of differentiated instruction and CRT has supported the creation of a learning environment that has the potential to develop students' abilities to read, analyze, and interpret spatial information as part of their map literacy.

The main driving factors include student readiness, support from stakeholders, and the availability of learning resources, facilities, and infrastructure. The main barriers are the diversity of student characteristics, limited internet access, and teachers' difficulties in integrating CRT principles more deeply. Efforts to continuously improve teacher competence through training, teacher mentoring, the development of innovative learning materials, improvements to facilities and infrastructure, and strengthening the implementation of CRT are needed to make geography learning more in-depth and meaningful, inclusive, and responsive to the culture of students in Gunungkidul. The implementation of CRT-based differentiated instruction still requires strengthening so that student-centered learning objectives can be effectively achieved. There is a gap between teachers' conceptual understanding and actual classroom practice. Differentiated instruction and CRT are interrelated; differentiation helps accommodate diverse learning needs, while CRT serves as the foundation for a deep learning culture that enables student-centered learning. The program's achievement rate stands at 80%, with a 20% gap from the ideal standard.

Recomendation

Based on the results of the evaluation, several recommendations can be made to improve the quality of implementing differentiated instruction using the *Culturally Responsive Teaching* (CRT) approach in high school geography classes in Gunungkidul Regency. The following are some of the recommendations:

1) Teachers

Based on the evaluation results, Geography teachers are advised to enhance the integration of the principles of differentiated instruction and the Culturally Responsive Teaching

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(CRT) approach in both lesson planning and delivery. This can be achieved by developing a variety of activities, applying a balanced differentiation of content, process, and products, and utilizing Gunungkidul's local culture as a learning resource relevant to students' lives. This approach can be applied to subjects other than geography.

2) Schools

Schools are advised to provide more optimal support for the implementation of differentiated instruction and the CRT approach by providing learning facilities and infrastructure, improving access to technology in the classroom, and facilitating professional development activities for teachers. This support is necessary to minimize barriers related to limited internet access and to develop culturally responsive instructional materials.

3) MGMP Communities and the Department of Education

MGMP communities and the Department of Education are advised to organize ongoing mentoring and training programs related to the implementation of differentiated instruction and the CRT approach. These activities may include the development of culture-based teaching modules, the creation of culturally responsive assessments, and the sharing of best practices among teachers to continuously improve the quality of program implementation.

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