IMPLEMENTING TEACHING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract
The dynamic development of primary education requires teachers to adopt effective teaching methods. One key factor in improving student learning outcomes is the implementation of appropriate instructional strategies. This study aims to understand and analyze the fundamental principles and core concepts of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) as an approach to enhancing the quality of learning. The research uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature review approach, analyzing 20 relevant studies. TaRL is a learning approach designed to match teaching strategies with students' actual levels of understanding and ability, focusing primarily on foundational literacy and numeracy skills. The application of TaRL in primary schools has proven effective in improving students' academic performance. Based on the reviewed literature, several key factors influence the success of this approach, including differentiated instruction, teacher training, and formative assessment. One significant factor contributing to the success of TaRL implementation is the use of learning media that aligns with students' needs and levels. This literature review concludes that TaRL can serve as a responsive and inclusive teaching strategy, especially in diverse classroom settings, and holds strong potential to support equitable learning outcomes in primary education.

Introduction

The ever-evolving landscape of primary education compels teachers to select and implement effective instructional methods. An effective teaching method is a key factor in improving student learning outcomes. Alongside curriculum changes, technological advancements, and the increasing diversity of students' backgrounds and abilities, educators face the challenge of identifying strategies that address the individual learning needs of every student. In response to these challenges, the government has established educational policies aimed at nurturing each student's potential, in line with the mandate of the 1945 Constitution, Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System.

Teachers, as facilitators of learning, are responsible for designing and managing classroom instruction effectively. Therefore, educators must be capable of understanding students' diverse needs, designing appropriate learning experiences, and executing them in line with well-developed instructional plans. Such practices make the learning process more meaningful and allow teachers to help students develop their potential according to their interests and abilities. This aligns with previous research by Yogica et al. (2020), which emphasizes that the learning approach and strategy implemented plays a significant role in ensuring the success of the teaching and learning process, as they serve as strategic steps in planning and executing instruction. Learning in primary education is a critical investment, as it allows students to develop their abilities based on their talents and interests. Education also plays an important role in enhancing students' personal quality (Cahyani et al., 2020).

However, several challenges often arise when student learning outcomes do not meet the intended educational goals. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt an approach that can effectively boost students' learning motivation. The learning approach used is closely related to the success of the learning process itself, as it serves as a strategic element in instructional design (Susanti et al., 2024). In today's rapidly changing educational context, various new methods and approaches continue to emerge to improve learning effectiveness. One such approach that has gained increasing attention is Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), which emphasizes student ability rather than grade level.

TaRL has been proven effective in enhancing student learning outcomes across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. According to Asyifa et al. (2016), TaRL focuses not only on students' grade levels but also on their individual cognitive abilities. The primary goal of this approach is to improve student learning by addressing variations in literacy and numeracy skills (Rosyidah et al., 2022). TaRL uses instructional methods tailored to students' varying levels of ability during the learning process (Apriliani et al., 2024). It specifically aims to improve foundational literacy and numeracy skills (Listyaningsih et al., 2023). Given the wide range of student competencies across different subjects, it is crucial for teachers to assess students' abilities through various forms of assessment, including diagnostic, cognitive, and non-cognitive assessments (Mangesthi et al., 2023).

The objective of this study is to review a range of literature related to the application of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in education. It aims to understand the basic principles and core concepts underpinning TaRL, as well as to explore its effectiveness in improving learning quality. In addition, this study focuses on the challenges encountered in implementing TaRL across different educational systems and explores potential solutions to overcome these barriers.

This research is significant because it provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers in addressing learning disparities among primary school students. By identifying key factors that influence the successful application of TaRL, this study can serve as a foundation for further research and innovation in inclusive and equitable education. Moreover, the findings may contribute to the development of more responsive teaching models that prioritize student needs, thereby supporting efforts to improve overall learning outcomes in diverse educational settings.

Method

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method using a literature review approach to collect, explore, and analyze information relevant to the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in primary education. The literature review, also referred to as library research, involves the collection and interpretation of data from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journals, academic articles, and conference proceedings, to understand trends, concepts, and implementation outcomes of TaRL-based teaching strategies.

As stated by Azizah (2017), a literature review is a research activity aimed at gathering and synthesizing knowledge that supports the research objectives. In this study, the data were obtained from 20 reputable national journal articles and proceedings related to the use of TaRL in primary education. These sources were selected based on their relevance, academic rigor, and contribution to the understanding of student learning outcomes, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

The articles reviewed span from the year 2017 to 2025 and include both journal publications and proceedings. The following table presents a summary of the reviewed literature:

Table 1. Reviewed Articles on TaRL Implementation in Primary Education

No.	Author(s)	Year	Title	Source / Journal Name
1	Handayani et al.	2024	Use of Augmented Reality with TaRL Approach to Improve Math Learning Outcomes	*Renjana Pendidikan Dasar*, Universitas Mataram
2	Apriliani et al.	2024	Effectiveness of TaRL on Math Learning in Grade IV	*INNOVATIVE: Journal of Social Science Research*
3	Aliya et al.	2024	TaRL with Wordwall Media to Improve Learning in Grade II-C	*Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan*
4	Nisa et al.	2024	CTL Model with TaRL for Problem-Solving Skills	*International Journal of Economy, Education, and Entrepreneurship*
5	Yulianto	2021	TaRL with PBL to Improve Numeracy	*PENDIKDAS: Jurnal Pendidikan Sekolah Dasar*
6	Noor Laila Khurniati et al.	2024	PBL Based on TaRL for Mathematical Literacy	*Proximal: Jurnal Penelitian Matematika dan Pendidikan Matematika*
7	Rochaminah et al.	2025	TaRL Implementation in Grade VII SMP	*Aurelia: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia*
8	Syafaah et al.	2024	TaRL and Learning Outcomes in Grade V Bahasa Indonesia	*JIEPP: Jurnal Inovasi, Evaluasi, dan Pengembangan Pembelajaran*
9	Pramesi & Siswanto	2024	TaRL-PjBL Model in Earth Structure Topic	*PeTeKa: Jurnal Penelitian Tindakan Kelas dan Pengembangan Pembelajaran*
10	Musrifatul Indriani	2024	TaRL with PBL to Enhance Student Motivation	*PENDAS: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*
11	Shabrina et al.	2024	Systematic Review: TaRL for Math Learning	*Jurnal MIPA dan Pembelajarannya*
12	Widaningsih et al.	2025	TaRL through Differentiated Learning in IPAS	*Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*
13	Widyawati et al.	2024	Improving Learning Outcomes with TaRL	*Jurnal Pi: Pendidikan Matematika dan Integrasinya*
14	Zakiyah et al.	2024	TaRL in IPAS Grade VI	*Journal of Educational Science and E-Learning*
15	Jayanti & Nuvitalia	2025	TaRL Implementation in Grade III IPAS	*JIPMuktj: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Muhammadiyah Kramat Jati*
16	Nafi et al.	2017	TaRL with "Jurang Board" Media in Grade II Math	*Proceedings of Seminar Nasional PPG UNIKAMA*
17	Angraini et al.	n.d.	TaRL in IPAS Grade IV	*Education Journal: Journal of Education Research and Development*
18	Ainayya et al.	2025	TaRL in Bahasa Indonesia for Grade V	*Esensi Pendidikan Inspiratif*
19	Nailia et al.	2020	TaRL for Reading Literacy in Grade I	*Jurnal BASICEDU*
20	Israwaty et al.	2024	TaRL in IPAS Learning in Grade V	*Proceedings of Seminar Nasional Hasil Penelitian 2024 LP2M Universitas Negeri Makassar*

Results and Discussion

This study employed a literature review approach by systematically searching scientific sources published through platforms such as Mendeley and Google Scholar. The literature search used relevant keywords, including Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), student

characteristics, elementary education, and learning outcomes improvement. A careful selection process was conducted to ensure the relevance of the selected literature to the research focus and objectives.

From the search, 20 relevant scholarly articles were identified, consisting of nationally accredited journals and scientific conference proceedings that discussed previous research on the implementation of the TaRL approach in primary education. These articles were then analyzed to extract patterns, implementation strategies, and outcomes associated with the use of the TaRL method across various learning contexts.

The analysis revealed that the Teaching at the Right Level approach generally contributes positively to improving students' academic performance. Several studies reported increased learning achievements, particularly in subjects such as Mathematics, Indonesian Language, and Science and Social Studies (IPAS). The approach has proven effective in assisting teachers in grouping students based on their actual learning levels rather than age or grade, resulting in more effective and needs-based instruction.

Moreover, the TaRL approach is often integrated with active learning models such as Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), and digital learning tools like Wordwall and Augmented Reality. These combinations further enhance the effectiveness of TaRL by increasing student motivation and engagement in the learning process.

This study underscores the importance of implementing student-centered approaches, especially in primary education settings where learning abilities can vary widely. Strategies like TaRL make learning more inclusive, meaningful, and adaptive to individual student needs. These findings align with national education policies that emphasize differentiated instruction and the early development of literacy and numeracy skills.

Description of TaRL Implementation in Primary Schools

The implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) in primary schools is a pedagogical approach aimed at aligning teaching methods with students' actual understanding and capabilities, primarily focusing on the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. This is consistent with the findings of Ahyar et al. (2022), who explained that the TaRL learning model was designed to address the diverse levels of understanding and skills present in a primary school classroom, which often hinder effective teaching and learning processes.

In a primary school context, this approach emphasizes an initial assessment of students' foundational abilities. Based on the results, students are grouped into learning levels that match their capabilities. After this evaluation, teachers apply more targeted and relevant instructional strategies, enabling students to engage in learning activities aligned with their actual levels of comprehension and skill. As noted by Peto (2022), the TaRL approach involves the use of customized instructional materials, experiential learning activities, and strategies that promote active interaction between students and learning content, as well as peer collaboration. This implementation is expected to enhance students' foundational understanding, reduce disparities in skill levels, and create a more inclusive and meaningful learning experience. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding infrastructure readiness and resource availability across different regions.

Improvement in Student Learning Outcomes

The application of TaRL in the teaching and learning process at the primary level has shown its effectiveness in improving student learning outcomes. The foundation of the TaRL approach

begins with diagnostic testing to identify students' baseline understanding. Based on the results, students are categorized into low, medium, or high ability levels. Those in the lower levels receive more intensive guidance to help them better grasp the content. Furthermore, differentiated assessments are conducted, where summative assessments are adapted to each student's level.

As a result, students are more likely to achieve progress over time, with those at lower levels advancing gradually. Aliya et al. (2024) affirms that the TaRL model allows focused and differentiated assessment, enabling teachers to cater to students' needs more effectively, which ultimately leads to significant improvements in academic outcomes.

According to the reviewed literature, the TaRL approach has been proven to enhance performance particularly in Mathematics. Studies have shown that students previously struggling with basic math concepts and operations showed marked improvement after learning through TaRL. This is due to structured and level-appropriate material delivery, increased guidance, and step-by-step instruction.

This approach also benefits language learning, especially in reading and writing. Students are grouped based on their literacy levels: early readers focus on letter recognition and vocabulary building, while more advanced learners engage in reading comprehension and critical analysis tasks. This allows every student to learn at a comfortable and productive pace.

For Science and Social Studies (IPAS), TaRL helps students master memorization-heavy content through more focused strategies and tailored instruction. Teachers can foster critical thinking and adapt content delivery based on students' understanding. In general, TaRL encourages active participation, especially as students are grouped with peers of similar levels, which reduces feelings of inferiority and promotes confidence.

Research by Banerjee, Duflo, Glennerster, and Kothari (2010) supports the notion that level-based teaching models like TaRL improve student engagement and classroom participation. Working in ability-matched groups fosters collaborative learning, increases motivation, and strengthens comprehension.

Factors Influencing the Success of TaRL Implementation

Based on the analysis of 20 reviewed studies, several key factors influence the success of TaRL implementation in primary schools:

1) Appropriate Use of Learning Media: As demonstrated by Indrayati et al. (2024), integrating media such as Augmented Reality (AR) can enhance mathematics learning outcomes by providing interactive and engaging materials.
2) Diverse Learning Models: Widaningsih et al. (2025) found that differentiated learning strategies integrated into TaRL improved performance in IPAS, allowing students of varying abilities to thrive.
3) Student Engagement in Discussions: Small group learning encourages more comfortable, confident interactions. Studies by Aliya et al. (2024) and Syafaah et al. (2024) show that students actively participate in discussions when grouped by ability, creating inclusive learning environments.
4) Teacher Involvement: Teachers play a critical role as facilitators. Understanding students' backgrounds and needs, designing teaching modules, and providing tailored guidance are essential. Pramesi & Siswanto (2024) observed positive results from TaRL when combined with Project-Based Learning, owing to strong teacher involvement.

5) Student Motivation and Interest: Motivation rises when students are actively involved in learning tasks suited to their ability levels. Indriani et al. (2024) reported that Problem-Based Learning models within TaRL contexts significantly boosted motivation, enabling students to engage more deeply with the material.

Challenges and Obstacles in TaRL Implementation in Primary Schools

Several challenges hinder the successful implementation of TaRL in primary education:

1) Time and Resource Constraints: Diverse learning abilities in one classroom require extended instructional time and more resources to address individual student needs. Urfah et al. (2024) noted that the major challenge in TaRL is the wide spectrum of student abilities, necessitating varied instructional approaches and additional support.
2) Limited Teacher Understanding and Training: Many teachers lack adequate training to implement complex and differentiated teaching methods such as TaRL. According to Banerjee et al. (2016), insufficient understanding and preparation among teachers often lead to confusion and difficulty in delivering differentiated instruction.
3) Inadequate Instructional Media and Infrastructure: In many schools, resources like interactive media or technology tools are limited. Coupled with curriculum time constraints and pressure to meet academic standards, this can obstruct effective TaRL application.

While TaRL presents a powerful solution for improving student learning, these barriers must be addressed through collaboration among educators, schools, policymakers, and other stakeholders to ensure meaningful and equitable implementation.

Table 2. Key Success Factors and Challenges in TaRL Implementation

Category	Key Success Factors	Challenges
Teacher Competence	✓ Well-trained and motivated teachers ✓ Understanding of student assessment practices	✓ Lack of training ✓ Resistance to change in teaching style
Assessment Methods	✓ Regular formative assessments ✓ Grouping based on actual learning level	✓ Limited time and resources for continuous assessment
Curriculum Flexibility	✓ Adaptable curriculum to different learning levels	✓ Rigid national curriculum structure
Learning Materials	✓ Contextualized and level-appropriate materials	✓ Scarcity of teaching resources in rural areas
School Management Support	✓ Strong leadership and support from head teachers	✓ Inconsistent commitment across schools
Community and Parental Involvement	✓ Parental awareness of students' learning progress	✓ Low engagement or understanding of TaRL principles
Policy and Funding	✓ Supportive education policies ✓ Sustainable funding	✓ Short-term funding ✓ Lack of national-level integration
Monitoring and Evaluation	✓ Ongoing monitoring systems ✓ Evidence-based feedback loops	✓ Lack of data tracking infrastructure

Table 2 summarizes the essential elements that contribute to the effective implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and the common obstacles encountered in the process. Successful implementation relies heavily on teacher competence, which requires proper training and a willingness to adopt learner-centered methods. Regular and accurate assessments are critical to identify students' actual learning levels, though time and resources can limit their execution. Flexible curricula, appropriate learning materials, and strong support from school

leadership are also key enablers. However, rigid curricula, lack of teaching resources, and limited administrative commitment often hinder progress. Additionally, engaging parents and communities enhances student learning outcomes, but low educational awareness can present challenges. Lastly, supportive education policies, sustainable funding, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation are crucial to ensure the program's long-term success and impact.

Conclusion

The implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), when applied appropriately, fosters more meaningful and inclusive learning experiences and encourages active student participation. The success of TaRL depends on several factors, including teacher competence, the availability of resources, and the proper timing of its application. Overall, TaRL provides significant benefits in improving student learning outcomes at the primary school level.

Future studies are recommended to conduct empirical investigations on the application of TaRL in diverse educational contexts, particularly in rural or under-resourced schools. Additionally, research that involves classroom-based implementation and evaluation will provide deeper insights into the practical challenges and effectiveness of TaRL in improving foundational skills among elementary students.

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