

## The Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Islamic Religious Education to Improve Students' Learning Outcomes at SMK Negeri Kabuh

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study was to determine the implementation of differentiated learning and its relationship to student learning outcomes after implementing differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is a learning approach that focuses on the individual student. Each student is unique. Students have different learning styles and interests. There are three learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Teachers play a crucial role in determining the success of the learning process. Before starting the learning process, a diagnostic assessment was conducted to map students' learning styles. Based on the background, the research problem formulation covers three aspects: the relevance of implementing a differentiated learning approach, the implementation of differentiated learning, and its relationship to student learning outcomes. Based on the above, the effectiveness of the learning implementation, the implementation of differentiated learning, and its relationship to student learning outcomes were determined. Where the learning process greatly influences learning outcomes. The characteristics of students influence the way students learn. In this differentiation learning, 3 types are used, namely content differentiation located in the material, process differentiation located in the learning process, and product differentiation which produces a work/product. The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of this study are that class X pharmacy students of SMK Negeri Kabuh are enthusiastic about the differentiation approach because it is packaged in an interesting way and feel facilitated by their learning styles and the uniqueness of each student. Thus, this differentiation learning approach is considered effective because it is proven by the learning evaluation carried out to increase student interest and learning outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *Learning, Differentiation, Learning Outcomes, Students*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is an effort to cultivate one's physical and spiritual potential, guided by the values inherent in a society. Education is unlikely to improve human resources, leading to a more advanced, prosperous, and happy life, according to the concept of a worldview, without development. Education is a crucial aspect of human life, where humans are given the ability to think and develop their potential.

The implementation of the Independent Curriculum in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in secondary schools is a strategic step towards providing relevant and high-quality Islamic Religious Education. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in secondary schools can adopt various approaches, from portfolios to simulations, to evaluate student progress. Furthermore, technology is also utilized to support the learning process, such as the use of interactive media and digital platforms.

With this independent curriculum, teachers and students are required to be more active and creative, developing their potential, and creating learning that is not monotonous. Differentiated learning requires teachers to have the skills to support, facilitate, and adapt their approaches to meet the diverse needs of students in the learning process. Differentiated learning is an alternative learning approach used based on relevant needs.

It is important to understand that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers must make various efforts to develop adoptive, adaptive, creative, and innovative learning. The goal is to ensure that the material presented is understood as expected while still prioritizing divine values that are implemented in students' daily morals, both at school, at home, and in the community.

## **METHOD**

This research employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative approaches are used to study phenomena in natural settings, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument. Data collection was conducted through various complementary techniques, data analysis was inductive, and the research findings focused more on understanding meaning than generalizations.

This research was conducted at SMK Negeri Kabuh with participants from class X of Pharmacy 2. Qualitative research methods have several advantages, one of which is the ability to compile reports systematically, clearly, comprehensively, and in-depth. The researcher chose this approach because the study aims to describe and analyze the process of implementing differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education, which requires specific data that can be obtained through a qualitative approach. Through this method, important data will be collected through observations, interviews, and documentation related to the implementation of differentiated learning at SMK Negeri Kabuh. The purpose of this study is to describe the conditions and situation of the school in implementing differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education. This research is descriptive qualitative, aiming to comprehensively describe and explain an event or phenomenon that is the focus of the study. The descriptive approach is used to present data about a population, situation, or phenomenon systematically and accurately.

Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. In analyzing the data, the researchers used the Miles and Huberman model, which explains that qualitative data analysis is conducted interactively and continuously until the research process is complete. This analysis process includes three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

The technique used to test the validity of the data in this study was triangulation. Triangulation is a technique for testing data validity by utilizing factors other than the data to check or compare it with the data itself.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Implementation of Differentiated Learning**

The implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMK Negeri Kabuh was carried out through several structured stages. At the beginning of the semester, the IRE teacher conducted diagnostic assessments to identify students' learning readiness, interests, and dominant learning styles (visual, auditory, or kinesthetic). The results showed that the majority of students in class X Pharmacy 2 were visual learners, followed by auditory and kinesthetic types.

Based on these profiles, the teacher then designed lesson plans that adjusted the learning content, process, and product according to students' characteristics. For visual learners, the teacher used slides, videos, and illustrated mind maps; for auditory learners, group discussions and verbal presentations were emphasized; while kinesthetic learners were engaged through demonstrations, simulations, and project-based tasks.

During classroom observations, it was evident that differentiated learning encouraged more active participation. For example, when learning about faith in angels, students were grouped according to their learning styles. Visual groups designed posters depicting the roles of angels, auditory groups discussed the meanings of Qur'anic verses, and kinesthetic groups performed short dramatizations about obedience. These varied activities made students more enthusiastic and focused on the lesson.

### **Teacher's Role and Classroom Management**

The IRE teacher played a crucial role as facilitator and motivator. The teacher provided guidance and encouragement, especially to students who initially lacked confidence or were less active in class. For instance, some students who were previously passive became more expressive during group discussions when their preferred learning modes were accommodated.

Effective classroom management also contributed to success. The teacher set clear expectations and maintained discipline while still giving students space for creativity. Through differentiated instruction, students learned to respect each other's differences, collaborate, and express ideas without fear of being judged.

### **Student Responses and Learning Outcomes**

Students' responses toward the differentiated learning model were overwhelmingly positive. Most students stated that learning became more interesting and easier to understand because the materials were presented according to their preferred styles. One student expressed, "I like when we use visuals and presentations; it helps me remember better." Another said, "Group discussions make me more confident to express my opinion."

In terms of learning outcomes, there was a noticeable improvement. Diagnostic results and follow-up assessments showed an increase in students' understanding of Islamic values and moral reflection. Students were able to explain concepts such as honesty, obedience, and sincerity more contextually. The improvement in both cognitive and affective domains indicated that differentiated learning effectively supported holistic education in Islamic Religious Studies.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study align with Tomlinson's theory (2013), which emphasizes that differentiated instruction allows all students to reach the same learning objectives through different pathways suited to their learning profiles. The implementation at SMK Negeri Kabuh demonstrated that such an approach not only enhances academic achievement but also nurtures spiritual and moral development — the essence of Islamic education.

Furthermore, these results confirm that differentiated learning is compatible with the Merdeka Curriculum framework, which promotes flexibility, inclusivity, and student-centered learning. Although the implementation required careful planning and time, the benefits—such as increased engagement, improved outcomes, and positive classroom atmosphere—outweighed the challenges.

### **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at SMK Negeri Kabuh proved to be effective in enhancing students' learning outcomes, motivation, and engagement. By identifying students' learning readiness and dominant learning styles, the teacher successfully designed lessons that were inclusive and meaningful. The differentiated strategies — including visual media, group discussions, and kinesthetic activities — provided students with varied opportunities to comprehend Islamic concepts both intellectually and spiritually.

This study also highlighted that differentiated learning promotes a more student-centered classroom atmosphere, where learners become active participants in constructing their knowledge and values. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum policy, which emphasizes flexibility, personalization, and reflective learning. Although the application of differentiated learning demands more preparation and classroom management skills, the positive impact on students' academic and moral development demonstrates its potential as an innovative model for Islamic Religious Education. It is recommended that future studies explore integration between differentiated instruction and digital learning media to further enhance engagement and accessibility for diverse learners.

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