

IMPLEMENTATION OF A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT OF ISLAMIC CULTURAL HISTORY AT MADRASAH IBTIDAIYAH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of differentiated learning approaches in class V SKI subjects at MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang. The research employed a qualitative approach with a multisite method, incorporating in-depth interviews, structured observations, and document analysis with participants including madrasah heads, deputy heads of curriculum, teachers, conducteddents. Data analysis involved using thematic analysis, categorization, and cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences in implementation in the two madrasas. The results showed that teachers had implemented differentiation of content, processes, and products. However, the implementation was not fully optimal due to limitations in diagnostic assessments, learning facilities, and the application of differentiation. Differentiation can enhance learning motivation, historical understanding, and active student participation. These findings reinforce the importance of implementing differentiated learning in SKI and show the need to ensure consistent and sustainable implementation.

Keywords

Differentiated Approach, History of Islamic Culture, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.



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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning in various madrasas, especially at the continuing level, is still facing several fundamental problems that affect the quality of student learning outcomes (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Mulyasa, 2018; Zuhri, 2022). Various indicators and field observations show that SKI learning, emphasizing the teacher-centered approach, emphasizes memorization of historical facts, and h. At the same time, many variations in methods mean that students are required to understand the material in a suboptimal manner, both chronologically and analytically. This limited edition causes SKI learning outcomes to be difficult to achieve due to a low understanding of historical concepts, a lack of ability to connect historical values with life practices, and a lack of active student participation in class discussions (Amalia et al., 2023; Zuhri, 2022). These facts are the primary academic concern of the research, namely that the current SKI learning practice has not been comprehensive enough to meet students' learning needs

The practice of learning Islamic Cultural History (SKI) in various Madrasah Ibtidaiyah still faces fundamental problems that are the basis of researchers' anxiety. Several studies indicate that SKI learning has not been managed effectively, as teachers tend to employ a one-way (teacher-centered) approach emphasizing memorization, and often lack facilitation of student diversity (Amalia et al., 2023; Zuhri, 2022). Learning is often carried out without considering variations in learning readiness, learning styles, and students' interests, resulting in many students having difficulty grasping the meaning of Islamic historical events that are presented in a narrative-chronological format (Budiarto & Kurniawati, 2023; Hattie, 2018; Slavin, 2020).

Research findings (Dista et al., 2024) revealed that most PAI and SKI teachers do not conduct diagnostic assessments to map students' learning readiness. As a result, the learning process runs uniformly and is not adaptive to the heterogeneity of students. Similar conditions are also observed in research (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2022), indicating that although teachers understand the importance of material adjustments, classroom learning practices still do not utilize diversity as a basis for differentiating learning strategies and resources. The majority of teachers still rely on a single material and lecture method, leaving students with low ability to behave. In those who are students with high abilities, they do not receive adequate learning challenges.

In addition, the study by (Eturniawan et al., 2022) found that SKI teachers in madrasas tend to be less creative in developing learning activities that actively involve students. As a result, students' motivation towards SKI subjects is relatively low, especially when the material presented is abstract

or requires advanced reading skills in historical texts. This fact suggests that a gap exists between the learning needs of students and the learning strategies employed by teachers.

The diversity of students in madrasas, both in terms of cognitive background, interests, and learning styles, should be the main consideration in designing learning. However, various studies show that this diversity has not been optimally managed in SKI learning practices (Umayrah & Wahyudin, 2024). Teachers tend to treat the class as a homogeneous group, even though students have the ability to understand texts, process information, and express a diverse understanding of history (Arifin, 2020; Kamal, 2021; Wulandari & Setiawan, 2023). This inconsistency has consequences, including a limited understanding of historical concepts, a lack of student involvement in discussions, and a weak ability to relate Islamic historical values to daily life.

The application of differentiation. The application of differentiated learning can improve learning activities and outcomes (Kamal, 2021). Content differentiation through tiered modules in Fiqh materials can increase students' understanding of the concept of worship. A tiered approach helps learners with low and high ability learn according to their needs (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2022). Other research shows the success of process differentiation through flexible grouping in Qur'an Hadith learning. Study groups are created based on the ability to read the Qur'an, and as a result, the reading ability increases significantly (Kurniawan et al., 2022). Another study also emphasized that differentiated learning had a positive impact on the religious character of MI students.

Teachers applied product differentiation through creative projects such as prayer posters, worship videos, and portfolios. This helps students express their understanding of Islamic teachings in a manner that aligns with their respective learning styles (Zahro & Pramesti, 2023). In learning activities, teachers play a very central role because they contribute greatly to the achievement of student learning outcomes. Teachers are not only tasked with planning, implementing, and assessing the learning process. Still, they are also required to master various methods, strategies, and techniques that are important factors for learning success (Furmaisuri et al., 2025). The diversity of students' characters further strengthens the complexity of teachers' duties. The teacher's ability to adapt the learning process to the different characteristics, needs, and interests of students is an aspect that determines the quality of learning (Furmaisuri et al., 2025). In practice, conditions in many elementary schools indicate that teachers often lack initial diagnostic data on their students. The learning strategies applied are often not in accordance with the learning style of the majority of students. In fact, understanding students' learning styles enables teachers to design effective and

diverse learning experiences that support the diversity of students in their classrooms (Umayrah & Wahyudin, 2024).

The application of differentiated learning, especially in the learning of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) at Madrasah Ibidaiah, is still limited; however, several Madrasas have implemented it, including MI Al Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang. However, in the implementation of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning, students still struggle to accept the material taught by the teacher because each student has different characteristics and varying understanding abilities. The application of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah must be implemented according to expectations based on factors or elements that support it, such as motivation or the technology used (Zuhri, 2022). The Differentiated Learning Approach in managing the implementation of differentiated learning at MI Al Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang will gradually implement differentiated learning from 2024 in odd semesters. Therefore, research on differentiated learning is important to be carried out, especially at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, as the variation in students' abilities is noticeable and visible. The analysis of this approach is expected to provide an overview of its effectiveness, implementation strategies, and challenges in improving the quality of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) learning. Islamic cultural history (SKI) learning plays a significant role in shaping students' Islamic identity. The diversity of student characteristics necessitates that teachers employ adaptive strategies, one of which is a differentiated approach. MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang began implementing this strategy to enhance the effectiveness of SKI learning in class V.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a multisite design carried out in two Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, namely MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang, which have implemented differentiated learning in SKI subjects. The selection of the location was carried out purposively based on the criteria of the madrasah's readiness to implement the Independent Curriculum and its willingness to provide access to research. The research informants included the head of the madrasah, the deputy head of curriculum, the SKI teacher, and 164 students of class V. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, structured observations during the SKI learning process, as well as document analysis, such as teaching modules, diagnostic assessments, and sample student learning products. These three techniques are used to get a comprehensive picture of planning,

implementation, and assessment in differentiated learning.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorization, and cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences in implementation across the two madrasas. The validity of the data is tested through source triangulation, triangulation techniques, and credibility checks, utilizing the principles of trustworthiness (credibility, dependability, and confirmability). The entire series of research was carried out in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 school year. This approach allows researchers to produce an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of implementing differentiated learning in the context of SKI learning at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.



Figure 1. Research Methods

Table 1. Research Informant

Informant Initials	Departments				Instances
MB	Principal				MI Al-Adli
O	Deputy Head of Curriculum				MI Al-Adli
EX	Classroom Teacher				MI Al-Adli
T	Principal				MI Munawariyah
H	Deputy Head of Curriculum				MI Munawariyah
EN	Classroom Teacher				MI Munawariyah

This research was conducted at two Madrasah Ibtidaiyahs located in Palembang City, namely MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah. The reason this research is important is that it has

implemented validity triangulation. The study presented work through triangulation, presenting the conditions by examining data from multiple sources, while technology. At the same time, triangulation entails comparing research results obtained through various data collection techniques. This research was conducted in the odd semester of the 2025-2026 academic year.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the study demonstrate that the application of a differentiated learning approach to the subject of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) at MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah is implemented through three main components: differentiation of content, process, and product. Teachers strive to tailor learning to the characteristics of Class V students, particularly in terms of readiness, interests, and learning styles. However, implementation has not been fully optimal because diagnostic assessments have not been carried out systematically, and some strategies are still based on subjective observations.

In terms of content differentiation, MI Al-Adli utilizes a variety of media, including narrative texts, learning videos, and infographics, to accommodate visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles. Meanwhile, MI Munawariyah implemented a tiered module, which was prepared based on the results of the initial readiness assessment. This approach enables students to access the material "The Efforts of the Prophet Muhammad SAW to Foster the Community of Medina" at their respective level of understanding.

In process differentiation, teachers in the two madrassas employ flexible grouping based on students' abilities, and interest-driven interest-driven group discussions, and social simulations, while using MI Munawariyah's alternative learning paths and additional challenges for high-ability students. This strategy increases student engagement, although some teachers admit that comprehensive assessment data have not supported the formation of groups.

In product differentiation, the two madrassas offer a choice of final project forms, including posters, retellings, oral presentations, portfolios, or short videos. This flexibility encourages students to demonstrate a deeper understanding of historical values, such as the unity of the Muhajirin and Ansar, the principle of harmony in the Medina Charter, and the Prophet's strategy in fostering the people of Medina. Teachers reported an increase in students' creativity, courage, and reflective ability in connecting historical values with daily life.

Table 2. Implementation of a Differentiated Approach to SKI Learning
Class V MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang

Aspects	Analysis Results	Implementation at MI Al-Adli	Implementation at MI Munawariyah
Content Differentiation	The material is tailored to the readiness and learning needs of students to ensure equal access to the content, "The Effort for the Community".	Community offers a range of resources, including diverse learning styles.	Using a tiered module approach based on the student's initial ability (readiness).
Process Differentiation	Learning activities are tailored to students' learning styles, readiness levels, and interests through flexible grouping, allowing for individualized instruction.	Providing mind map activities, group discussions, and social simulations according to the characteristics of students.	Providing alternative learning paths and challenges for high-ability students.
Product Differentiation	Students are given a choice of learning output forms to demonstrate understanding authentically and according to their learning style.	Provide product options such as posters, retellings, presentations, or short videos.	Provide flexibility in the form of assignments that cater to students' interests, allowing them to express their historical perspectives.

Historical perspectives and learning strategies in three aspects and learning were implemented by SKI teachers at MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah. This comparison provides an overview of the level of readiness of each madrasah in accommodating the diverse student body.

SKI teachers from both madrasas realize that this material has an important depth of moral and social values, so they feel the need to adjust their delivery method to the characteristics of their students. Teachers provide learning types and visual-auditory kits, as well as texts, to motivate students' motivation levels. Baskets, as students' results of field research the differentiation applied at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al-Adli and Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Munawariyah is as follows: Material Adjustments According to Readiness and Learning Style.

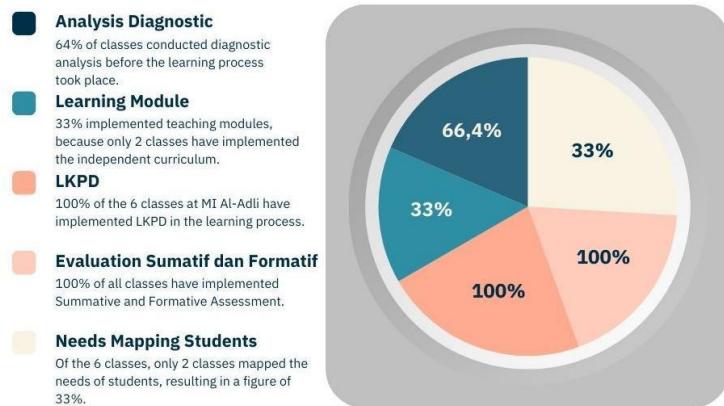


Figure 2. Implementation of Differentiated Approach

Figure 2 illustrates the differentiated learning flow applied in the two madrasas, starting from initial readiness assessment, flexible grouping, selection of learning paths, to various end products. This diagram confirms that the three aspects of differentiation (content, process, product) are interconnected and centered on the needs of each learner.

Discussion

Differentiated Instruction (DI) is a well-known and widely debated pedagogical approach that focuses on meeting the diverse needs of learners. Differentiated learning (DI) is a philosophy of teaching and assessment that supports diversity planning in the classroom (Lavania & Nor, 2020). Increasingly, learners with diverse needs, strengths, backgrounds, and linguistic profiles are being taught alongside their peers in inclusive classrooms. Differentiated learning is also an important teaching approach that adapts the educational experience to suit the diverse needs and learning styles of learners in the classroom (King & Istiyono, 2023). Differentiated learning aims to maximize the learning outcomes of all students in the classroom (Gaitas & Martins, 2017; King & Istiyono, 2023; Heacox, 2019). Dreeevalua proposes thinking of classes as classroom modules that cater to learners' diverse learning profiles (Wray et al., 2022). learningntaccomlearningg learners' approach) approach that provides a starting point for teachers to meet the diverse learning needs of learners (Sanrock, 2019; Sousa & Tomlinson, 2018; Tomlinson et al., 2003). This teaching approach is also triggered by the pedagogical shift brought by academics who place the importance of student differences in imparting knowledge (Kamarulzaman et al., 2017). Differentiated instruction has been defined as an instructional approach that accommodates diverse learning needs with scaffolding (Gregory & diverse learning, 2000) (Gainvolves, 2017). Differ2013 ed learning consisalready ts of a constructive responselearningners know. This means matching the learner's learning approach to pedagogy, curriculum objectives, and the most appropriate opportunity to display the knowledge

gained. Differentiated instruction (DI) is proposed as a key solution, but it appears to be challenging.

The actual implementation of DI by teachers is associated with a complex set of variables, including the teacher's self-efficacy in DI, an understanding of the student's character, and an understanding of 21st-century skills (Sa'pang & Purbojo, 2020). The results of the study show that the two madrasas, MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah, have begun to apply a differentiated learning approach in the learning process of Islamic Cultural History (SKI), especially in the material Efforts of the Prophet Muhammad SAW to Foster the Community of Medina (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2020). This implementation process is evident in the teacher's efforts to adjust teaching materials, learning strategies, and the form of student learning products in accordance with students' readiness, interests, and learning styles.

The implementation of content differentiation at MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah has reflected the fundamental concept that learning resources should be tailored to meet the learning needs of students. MI Al-Adli offers a range of media, including narrative text, videos, and infographics, whereas MI Munawariyah employs tiered modules tailored to initial capabilities. This strategy aligns with the view that differentiation should adjust the level of readiness (*Readiness of students makes learning accessible to students*). These findings are also in line with previous research (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2022) which emphasizes that the graded material helps students understand abstract concepts in PAI subjects. Thus, the content differentiation applied in the two madrassas has provided a strong foundation to ensure that all students have the opportunity to understand the material "The Efforts of the Prophet Muhammad SAW to Foster the Community of Medina", including the values of togetherness and the Charter of Medina.

The variety of media at MI Al-Adli and the use of multi-level modules at MI Munawariyah prove that providing materials according to students' readiness can reduce cognitive burden and increase understanding of abstract historical concepts. This aligns with theory-based readiness, *which posits* that material of equivalent content but varying levels of complexity facilitates learners' access to information more effectively (Halmore al., 2015; Kamarulzaman et al., 2017; Subban, 2006). The results of the study indicate that process differentiation is achieved through flexible grouping, the provision of learning style-based activities, and the offering of challenges to high-ability students. Activities such as *Mind Map*, group discussions, and social simulations have adjusted the way learners process information. This aligns with the theory that different learning processes are necessary to enable learners to process the material according to their individual

preferences (Furqon et al., 2021). Teachers of MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah have successfully provided alternative learning paths without compromising the essence of SKI material. In other words, the differentiation of the process in the two madrassas not only increases student participation but also develops critical thinking skills when they understand the Prophet's strategy in building a harmonious society of Medina. However, this success is still limited because teachers are not fully accustomed to conducting comprehensive initial diagnostic assessments. These conditions support the findings (Dista et al., 2024) that a lack of initial assessment is often a significant obstacle to the implementation of differentiated learning.

Activities such as mind maps, flexible group discussions, and social simulations offer learners opportunities to process information in a manner that suits their individual learning styles. According to scientific theory, this can be explained through the concept of social constructivism, which emphasizes that meaningful learning is formed when learners actively construct knowledge through experience and interaction (Armstrong, 2010; Hermawan, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978). Some identified instances, including those found among the lack of comprehensive initial diagnostic assessments, indicate that process differentiation is not optimal. Without early identification of students' readiness and interests, teachers often differentiate instruction based on subjective observations. This reinforces previous studies that stated that the lack of diagnostic assessments is a major barrier to the implementation of differentiation.

The application of product differentiation through assignment choices, such as posters, retellings, presentations, or short videos, provides learners with space to demonstrate their understanding in a way that suits their interests and learning styles. This flexibility supports the theory that learning products must be varied for learners to express their learning outcomes authentically. These findings align with research (Zahro & Pramesti, 2023) which indicates that product differentiation can enhance the creativity and religious character of MI students. In the context of historical material, product variations also help students develop a deeper understanding of the Hijrah event, the unity of the Muhajirin and Ansar, and the establishment of the Charter of Medina as the foundation of a multicultural society.

Differentiated learning has been proven to increase student engagement and motivation in both madrasas. Students are more enthusiastic about participating in learning when given choices that suit their abilities and interests. This increase aligns with the notion that differentiated learning can enhance students' sense of agency and engagement (Onyishi & Sefotho, 2020). In addition to the

knowledge aspect, there is an increase in the social attitude aspect of students, especially in terms of cooperation, tolerance, and willingness to share opinions. This is closely related to the values outlined in the SKI material on the development of the Medina community, which emphasizes the importance of unity, solidarity, and peace.

Some of the challenges identified, such as limited facilities, a lack of diagnostic assessment habits, and time constraints, indicate that the implementation of differentiation requires the pedagogical and technical readiness of teachers. This is in accordance with the report (Picasouw et al., 2023), which states that teacher competence is a key factor in the success of differentiation, especially in elementary schools with very diverse, highly entangled characteristics. This challenge is an important basis for improving teacher training, the provision of teaching tools, and more mature learning planning in both madrasas. Thus, the application of differentiated learning can take place more optimally and systematically.

The application of differentiated learning to the mother of all matters, as seen in the efforts of the Prophet Muhammad PBUHPBUH to build the Ild Community of Medina at MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah, demonstrates segmentation, albeit still in its development stage. Differentiation implemented by teachers in content, Processes, and Products has had a positive impact on improving the quality of learning. In the content aspect, teachers adjust the level of depth of material according to students' initial abilities, for example, by providing tiered readings, material summaries for students who need assistance, and more in-depth analysis texts for more advanced students. This strategy enables each student to understand the role of the Prophet Muhammad, PBUH, in gradually guiding the people of Medina, adapting to their cognitive capacity.

It also shows that a differentiated approach to learning in the Islamic Cultural History class V makes a positive contribution to the achievement of students' competencies. Theoretically, these findings support a constructivist foundation and differentiation approach that emphasizes adjusting materials and assignments according to students' varying abilities. The improvement in learning outcomes was most notable in the group of students who had previously shown difficulties. It also shows that implementation depends on teachers' readiness to design and manage tiered learning. Teachers who are not accustomed to it report challenges in time management and assessing differentiation. Continuous training for educators and follow-up research is therefore recommended. It is also recommended that improving teachers' skills in early learning assessment and differentiation, as well as classroom management, should be the focus of further development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the application of differentiated learning in the subject of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) at MI Al-Adli and MI Munawariyah Palembang has had a positive impact on the learning process and student outcomes. Teachers in both madrassas have implemented content, process, and product differentiation in response to the diversity of learning readiness, interests, and learning styles of grade V students. Media variety, flexible grouping, and learning product choices provide students with the space to learn according to their individual needs and potential. However, the implementation of differentiated learning is not fully optimal because teachers still face challenges in aspects such as diagnostic assessment, limited facilities, and managing learning time. This limitation affects the inconsistent application of differentiation to all learning components. The results of this study confirm that differentiated learning is a relevant and effective approach to improve the quality of SKI learning, especially in the context of heterogeneous classrooms at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Therefore, further training, the provision of more varied teaching tools, and the strengthening of initial assessments are needed so that teachers can design tiered learning more systematically and sustainably.

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