

DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING STRATEGIES OF DRIVING TEACHERS IN OPTIMIZING STUDENTS' LEARNING INTERESTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Muhibbuddin¹, Yulia Santi², Ety Mukhlesi Yeni³

Universitas Almuslim

muhibbuddin.issal84@gmail.com¹, yuliasanti@umuslim.ac.id²,
etymukhlesiyeni@umuslim.ac.id³

Abstract

The implementation of differentiated learning strategies by the Leading Teacher in elementary schools lies in the diversity of characteristics, abilities, and learning interests of students that cannot be accommodated through a uniform learning approach. Through differentiated learning, the Leading Teacher plays a strategic role in creating student-centered learning so that student learning interests can be optimized sustainably. The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation and impact of differentiated learning by the leading teacher in optimizing student learning interests in the core cluster 03 Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya Regency. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The sample used was determined by purposive sampling consisting of 8 principals and teachers as respondents. Data collection techniques with interview and observation guidelines. Qualitative data validity tests include credibility tests, transferability (transfer value), dependability and confirmability. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative descriptive methods, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusions. The results of this study indicate that the implementation of differentiated learning is carried out through grouping students based on learning abilities and interests, providing diverse activities, and choices in presenting and completing assignments. Teachers provide flexible support and create a learning environment that supports active student engagement. Differentiated learning has a positive impact on increasing student interest in learning. Students demonstrate increased interest in participating in lessons, increased attention during learning, increased awareness of the importance of learning, and optimal knowledge development.
Keywords: *Differentiated Learning, Teacher Educator, Interest in Learning, Elementary School*



© Author(s) 2026

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

Education has an important role in building the progress of a nation. A developed nation can be seen from a superior, creative and competitive generation in a country.¹ A superior generation is created from a quality education and learning process. Teachers are the main key in carrying out the quality learning process. The implementation of the quality learning process involves intensive participation and appreciation of students.² The involvement and participation of students in learning makes learning more meaningful.

Students have their own uniqueness in learning.³ Ki Hajar Dewantara stated that students are fostered and directed to become useful human beings according to their nature. The nature of each student is different and varied. The differences that students have require special attention from teachers. Students with an interest in learning are influenced by several factors. These factors come from within the students and also from outside the students. Factors that come from within students are shown by high motivation and discipline in learning.⁴ While factors that come from outside consist of family factors, school factors, and environmental factors.⁵

Another opinion was also written by Irfan who stated that the learning process is effective and interesting influenced by teacher factors, student factors, facilities and infrastructure factors, and environmental factors.⁶ Students' interest in learning will have a positive impact on the development of students' competencies. Students tend to be more interested in learning with good support from teachers.⁷ The strategies used by teachers in carrying out the learning process are decisive for increasing students' interest in learning.⁸

Interest in learning is a tendency to pay attention to lessons and remember a series of activities that have been learned with pleasure.⁹ Students with a high interest in learning will find it easier to understand learning. This happens because there is a sense of pleasure when learning

¹ Koij Sahbudin Harahap, "Konsep Dasar Pembelajaran," *Journal of Islamic Education El Madani* 1, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.55438/jiee.v1i1.13>.

² Junaedi Ifan, "Proses Pembelajaran Yang Efektif," *Jisamar* 3 no. 2 (2019).

³ Maya Meilia and Murdiana Murdiana, "Pendidik Harus Melek Kompetensi Dalam Menghadapi Pendidikan Abad Ke-21," *Kordinat: Jurnal Komunikasi Antar Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam* 18, no. 2 (October 2019), <https://doi.org/10.15408/kordinat.v18i2.11501>.

⁴ Junaedi Ifan, "Proses Pembelajaran Yang Efektif."

⁵ Adha Dhimas Raditya Rahmajati and Kinkin Kirana Dewi, "Upaya Meningkatkan Minat Belajar Peserta Didik Dalam Pembelajaran IPA Melalui Pendekatan Pembelajaran Contextual Teaching And Learning (CTL) Pada Kelas VII F Di SMP Negeri 11 Surakarta," *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA* 13, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.20961/inkuiri.v13i1.78714>.

⁶ Junaedi Ifan, "Proses Pembelajaran Yang Efektif."

⁷ Aspitari, Berliana Henu Cahyani, and Haniek Farida, "Hubungan Kodrat Alam Dengan Minat Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Spirits* 11, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.30738/spirits.v11i2.12689>.

⁸ Huda Nadya, Hartati, Saidah Tunnoor, and Mahrita. Hubungan Kreatifitas Guru Mengajar Terhadap Minat Belajar Siswa di SD Negeri 1 Durian Bungkok. *Jurnal Pahlawan* 20, no. 2 (2024).

⁹ Aspitari, Cahyani, and Farida, "Hubungan Kodrat Alam Dengan Minat Belajar Siswa."

something. The government pays special attention to the learning process that students like and in accordance with the talents and interests of students.

The fact that students' low interest in learning is a priority for the government in improving the quality of education. Students prefer to play games or tiktok. There are many circulating in the mass media that contain news about the impact of games and tiktok on students such as the impact on vision and the impact of students' behavior. Another impact that is felt is mentality and psychological development that is still unstable for students.¹⁰ This has caused concern from the government and schools and families. In addition, students with different needs are considered in designing fun learning.

Efforts made by the government in responding to the phenomenon of students' learning interests by promoting differentiated learning strategies for students.¹¹ Differentiated learning is learning that accommodates the learning needs of students.¹² Differentiated learning requires teachers to design learning that is fun and acceptable to students according to the character of the students.¹³

Differentiated learning can be done by teachers using several strategies. There are four strategies that teachers can use in implementing differentiated learning.¹⁴ These strategies are content, processes, products, and learning environments. Content differentiation strategies are strategies that refer to what students learn. Content is more understood by the content of the learning material that students learn. Process differentiation strategies refer to how learners understand and interpret what is learned. Process differentiation is more likely to be the process of implementing learning in the classroom. Meanwhile, product differentiation can be seen from the students' work shown to the teacher.¹⁵ Meanwhile, environmental differentiation focuses on what kind of learning environment exists around students.

Differentiated learning is one of the mandatory modules that must be studied by driving teachers. Driving teachers are believed to have the ability to implement differentiated learning in the classroom well. A driving teacher is a learning leader who encourages student development in

¹⁰ Meidawati Suswandari et al., "Analisis Penggunaan Tiktok Terhadap Perilaku Addicted Di Kalangan Usia Sekolah Dasar," *Journal of Educational Learning and Innovation (ELIA)* 2, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.46229/elia.v2i2.449>.

¹¹ Lilis Lisnawati, Septi Kuntari, and Muhammad Agus Hardiansyah, "Peran Guru Dalam Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Untuk Menumbuhkan Minat Belajar Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Sosiologi," *As-Sabiqun* 5, no. 6 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.36088/assabiqun.v5i6.4086>.

¹² Mahfudz MS, "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dan Penerapannya," *SENTRI: Jurnal Riset Ilmiah* 2, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.55681/sentri.v2i2.534>.

¹³ Wiwin Herwina, "Optimalisasi Kebutuhan Murid Dan Hasil Belajar Dengan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi," *Perspektif Ilmu Pendidikan* 35, no. 2 (November 2021), <https://doi.org/10.21009/PIP.352.10>.

¹⁴ Carol Ann Tomlinson, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*, 2nd ed. (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2001).

¹⁵ MS, "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dan Penerapannya."

a holistic, active, and proactive manner.¹⁶ Driving teachers become agents of change for the surrounding environment, especially in strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile among students.¹⁷

Driving Teachers receive special training that must be taken as a requirement in carrying out learning in the independent curriculum.¹⁸ The role of the Driving Teacher in independent learning is divided into five types. First, they become the driving force for their work ecosystem and encourage fellow teachers to follow in their footsteps in transforming learning. Second, they act as agents of change in improving the quality of student leadership. Third, they create a forum or discussion forum for collaboration on learning. Fourth, they must be able to create an engaging, comfortable, and fun learning environment. Fifth, the Driving Teacher is expected to be an example as well as a motivator for both students and other teachers. Driving teachers are also prepared to become educational leaders in the future so that the ideals of Freedom of Learning proclaimed by the government can be well realized.¹⁹

Initial observations carried out by researchers in April 2025 in educational units in the Core Cluster 03 Bandar Baru area, Pidie Jaya Regency still found several problems in the planning and implementation of learning, namely: 1) students' learning needs have not been identified, 2) Teaching Modules have not included differentiated learning, 3) learning objectives have not been determined according to students' abilities, talents and interests, 4) the implementation of teacher learning has not grouped students according to their talents and interests, 5) the provision of Student Worksheets (LKPD) and assignments is still the same for all students, and 6) teacher assessments and evaluations also still use the same questions for all students.

This research focuses on differentiated learning strategies used by driving teachers on students' learning interests. The research was conducted at the Elementary School of the core group 03 Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya Regency. The focus of the research is the implementation of differentiated learning of driving teachers in optimizing the learning interests of students in the core group 03 Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya Regency. The impact of differentiated learning of driving teachers in optimizing students' learning interests in core group 03 Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya

¹⁶ Aiman Faiz and Faridah Faridah, "Program Guru Penggerak Sebagai Sumber Belajar," *Konstruktivisme : Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 14, no. 1 (January 2022), <https://doi.org/10.35457/konstruk.v14i1.1876>.

¹⁷ Oslen Parulian Sijabat et al., "Mengatur Kualitas Guru Melalui Program Guru Penggerak," *Journal of Educational Learning and Innovation (ELIA)* 2, no. 1 (March 2022), <https://doi.org/10.46229/elia.v2i1.404>.

¹⁸ Moch. Fatkoer Rohman et al., "Evaluasi Program Pendidikan Guru Penggerak Di Kabupaten Lombok Utara NTB," *Jurnal Paedagogy* 10, no. 4 (October 2023), <https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v10i4.9122>.

¹⁹ Rini Nurfadillah and Dea Mustika, "Peran Guru Penggerak Dalam Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 10, no. 1 (June 2024), <https://doi.org/10.29210/1202424205>.

Regency. Based on the description above, the question of this research is how the implementation and impact of differentiated learning of driving teachers in optimizing the learning interests of students in the core group 03 Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya Regency.

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation and impact of differentiated learning of driving teachers in optimizing the learning interests of students in the core group 03 Bandar Baru, Pidie Jaya Regency. This research uses qualitative, which is a research approach aimed at describing and analyzing phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of people individually or in groups.²⁰ This qualitative research is with a case study approach.

The determination of data sources in qualitative research is carried out purposively, which is determined by adjusting to certain research objectives or conditions. Creswell posits that in qualitative research, we identify participants and places with *purposive sampling* that is based on the places and people that best help us understand our central phenomena.²¹ The sample used consisted of school principals and teachers as respondents as many as 8 respondents. Data collection techniques with interview and observation guidelines. Interview guidelines are used as a guide when the interview is conducted, so that it is in accordance with the purpose and objectives to be achieved. The following are shown in tables 1 and 2 of the interview guidelines grid.

²⁰ Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan* (Jakarta: Rajagrafindo Persada, 2013).

²¹ John W. Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih Di Antara Lima Pendekatan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015).

Table 1. Interview Instrument Grid

No	Aspek	Indikator
1	Differentiated learning strategies of driving teachers	1. Differentiated learning planning a. Asesma diagnostics b. Learning plan 1) Konten 2) Process 3) Products 2. Implementation of differentiated learning a. Asesmen sebelumnya b. Learning steps 1) Konten 2) Process 3) Products c. School environment d. Differentiated learning assessments 3. The impact of differentiated learning
2	Students' learning interests	1. Interest in learning 2. Attention in learning 3. Awareness 4. Knowledge

The researcher also observed whether the principles of differentiated learning have been applied in the learning process and observation was carried out through direct observation and recording to obtain a valid and appropriate picture of data.

Tabel 2. Pedoman Observasi

No	Aspects observed	Data
1	Differentiated learning activities	Description of learning activities in the classroom with learning principles: 1. Differentiated learning planning 2. Implementation of differentiated learning

Qualitative data validity tests include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability tests. Data analysis was carried out using qualitative descriptive, namely data reduction, data presentation and conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of differentiated learning of driving teachers in optimizing students' learning interests

The implementation of differentiated learning in terms of previous assessments before starting learning, informant KS1: *"Before teaching, I always look at the results of the diagnostic assessments that have been carried out. At the beginning of every topic, I double-check by asking students' understanding so that the strategies I use remain in accordance with their needs."* KS2: *"I check the results of the pre-test and the student's progress record. I also often do Q&A at the beginning of the lesson to ensure their readiness to learn."*

Implementation of content differentiation in the classroom, Teacher 3: *"I provide several choices of materials, such as text and video. Students can choose which one they find easier to understand. For those who need a challenge, I prepare enrichment questions."* while Teacher 4: *"I provide material with different levels of difficulty. Students who need assistance can start from basic materials."*

The learning process is applied. Teacher 3: *"I give you a choice of study activities. Some work in small groups, some are independent. I give them different times according to their ability. Those who have finished quickly can immediately continue to the next task."* Next Teacher 4: *"I organize the group based on learning style and ability. Some learn by reading, some practice directly. I also adjust the duration of the assignment."*

Implementation of product differentiation. Teacher 3: *"At the end of the lesson, students can choose the form of the task. They can make posters, presentations, or short videos, depending on their interests and abilities."* while Teacher 4: *"I give you a choice of tasks. Some make reports, some present results orally. They are free to choose a format that makes them comfortable."*

Regarding the support of the school environment for the implementation of differentiated learning, Teacher 5: *"The school already provides wifi, but devices such as laptops are still limited. We make use of open space and simple media to keep it fun."* Regarding the assessment in differentiated learning carried out, Teacher 5: *"I use rubrics, so that each student's work is assessed according to their respective processes and levels of effort. In addition, there is a reflection at the end of the lesson."* impact on students according to Teacher 5: *"Children are more active and confident. They also have an easier time understanding the material because they learn in a way that suits them."*

Meanwhile, according to teachers, 6 schools support the implementation of this strategy, *"Books and teaching media facilities are still lacking, so we often improvise. But the school supports it in policy and provides space to try new things."* assessment of student learning

outcomes, according to Teacher 6: *"I assess the process and the results in a balanced manner. My rubric is tailored to the type of product they choose."* regarding the impact seen after this implementation Teacher 6: *"Students are more enthusiastic and actively ask questions. They don't get bored quickly because they can learn according to their abilities."*

Based on a comparison of various data sources, it can be concluded that differentiated learning has been implemented by the driving teacher and has a clear direction according to the Independent Curriculum. The understanding and consistency of non-driving teachers still needs to be improved through continuous training and mentoring. The school facility factor is the biggest challenge in optimal implementation. Positive impacts have been seen on students' motivation to learn, although the increase in competitive performance is still gradual. Teacher collaboration is the key to sustainability and equitable implementation in all classrooms.

The Impact of Differentiated Learning of Driving Teachers in Optimizing Students' Learning Interests

Based on the results of interviews about students' interests, students' interest in participating in learning in Mother's class according to Teacher 7: *"After I applied a different strategy for each child, they seemed more interested in participating in learning. Many students who were previously passive are now starting to ask questions and seem more enthusiastic while studying."* while teacher 8: *"Interest increases, especially when I give a selection of activities. They are happier because they can determine how they learn. The class becomes more lively and not monotonous."*

Students' attention during the learning process. Teacher 7: *"Students' attention is quite increased, especially when they are given a choice of learning methods. They focus when the task assigned is according to their interests, such as drawing or discussing."* While teacher 8 : *"If the material is associated with their interests, students' attention will be very high. They rarely interrupt friends and are more focused on completing tasks of their own choosing."* students' awareness in participating in learning according to Teacher 7: *"They begin to realize that learning is their need. For example, some students have started reminding their friends during group study if they see them playing. This shows a sense of responsibility in learning."* Teacher 8: *"Some students begin to show initiative in learning, such as preparing stationery, reading materials before lessons, and doing assignments without being asked. This shows their learning awareness is improving."*

How well students know when participating in differentiated learning. according to Teacher 7: *"Their understanding is much better. The results of the formative test also increased because they could learn according to their respective learning styles. Not only do they know, but they can also explain it again without being asked."* while Teacher 8: *"There is an improvement in*

the ability to understand the material. They can convey ideas more confidently during presentations. Even students who were initially less active can now answer questions well."

Based on the results of interviews with the two teachers, it can be concluded that the application of differentiated learning has a positive influence on students' learning interests. Students' interest in participating in learning increases because they have the opportunity to choose a learning strategy that suits their interests and learning styles. This has an impact on increased attention during learning activities, where students become more focused, actively ask questions, and engage in learning activities given by the teacher.

In addition, students' awareness and knowledge have also undergone significant development. Students begin to show a sense of responsibility for their learning process and understand the importance of learning in daily life. Differentiated learning helps students gain a better understanding of the material and be able to reconvey the knowledge they have gained with more confidence. Thus, differentiated learning is able to increase motivation, independence, and the overall quality of student learning outcomes.

Based on the results of observation of learning activities in the classroom from differentiated learning planning, teachers have prepared a learning plan that is tailored to the needs of students. This can be seen from the design of learning tools that include diagnostic assessments to find out students' initial abilities and learning interests. Teachers have provided various forms of learning resources, such as reading texts, visual worksheets, and assignment cards as part of content differentiation.

In addition, teachers also record the results of assessments in a simple format to group students based on their learning abilities and preferences. This planning shows that teachers have tried to apply the principle of differentiated learning in a directed manner according to the characteristics of students. During the learning activities, teachers seem to apply differentiated strategies to aspects of content, processes, and products. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher reviews the student's learning readiness through a lighter question. In the learning process, students are divided into small groups based on interests and levels of understanding.

Each group gets different activities, such as discussions, self-reading, and simple practices according to different learning styles. Teachers provide intensive guidance to groups that still need support, while groups that understand the material faster are given enrichment tasks. At the end of the lesson, the teacher gives students the opportunity to choose the form of learning results they want to display, for example through presentations, posters, or short reports. All learning activities are interactive, students are seen actively participating, and the classroom atmosphere shows an increase in learning motivation and student confidence.

Discussion

The results of the interview with the Driving Teacher show that differentiated learning is a very important strategy in accommodating the diversity of student characteristics in the classroom. Teachers seek to recognize students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles through daily observation and initial diagnostic assessments. This is in line with Tomlinson's opinion that learning differentiation should be structured based on individual needs to ensure all students can achieve their learning goals optimally.

The teacher also explained that one of the main focuses in differentiation is to adapt the material and activities to the students' interests. For example, teachers give you the choice of learning projects according to their hobbies, such as making digital posters, educational vlogs, or simple experiments. This effort has been proven to increase student participation and enthusiasm in following the learning process.

In addition to adjusting to interests, teachers implement process differentiation through flexible grouping. Students who have faster abilities are given additional challenges, while students who still need assistance receive intensive guidance from teachers and peers.

In the aspect of learning products, teachers give students the freedom to show their learning results in various formats. The teacher said that this choice of product made students more confident and feel appreciated.

Nonetheless, teachers also face challenges, such as time constraints and the need for more detailed planning when implementing differentiation. Teachers recognize the need for collaboration with peers to share good practices and develop effective teaching tools.

Overall, these interviews show that Driving Teachers play an important role in driving changes in learner-centered learning practices. By consistently applying differentiated learning strategies, teachers are able to optimize learning interests and provide a more meaningful learning experience. This is in line with the Merdeka Belajar policy which emphasizes diversity as a strength in learning.

Based on the results of observations made during the learning process, it can be seen that teachers have implemented differentiated learning strategies well. Teachers start learning by mapping students' learning needs through a brief diagnostic assessment. This aims to find out the difference in learning readiness in the classroom. The strategy is in line with Tomlinson's opinion that understanding the learning profile of students is the first step to implement differentiation effectively.

Differentiated Instruction is learning that recognizes, integrates, and accommodates all student differences in the classroom to meet all learning needs by referring to considerations of learning readiness, learning interests, learning profiles, and learning environment.²² Learning readiness, learning interests, learning profiles, and learning environments in their application to differentiated learning require strategies in terms of content, processes, and products. Differentiated learning is a form of business in the learning process that pays attention to the needs of students in terms of learning readiness, student learning profile, and their interests and talents.²³

Differentiated learning aims to ensure that students do not feel frustrated or fail in their learning process. Differentiated learning allows teachers to meet the individual learning needs of each student. Teachers adjust subject matter, teaching methods, and learning approaches according to the abilities, interests, and needs of each student. As the philosophy of Kihajar Dewantara states that the purpose of education guides all the natures that exist in children, so that they can achieve the highest safety and happiness both as human beings and as members of society.²⁴

Differentiated learning creates a diverse classroom by providing opportunities to achieve content, process an idea and improve the results of each student, so that students will be able to learn more effectively. Differentiated learning is considered a learning process that has a high probability for students to learn and is tailored to their abilities, preferences, and needs.²⁵ The differentiated learning process does not require students to have the same abilities in all things. This is part of students' independence in learning. Students' independence in learning provides flexibility in expressing themselves according to the uniqueness and talents of interests that students have.

Students with different learning backgrounds require teachers to carry out learning that can embrace these differences so that no student does not get the teacher's attention in learning. The learning process that suits the needs of students can be carried out by mapping students according to the conditions that students have. Teachers need a good understanding in planning differentiated learning.

²² Tomlinson, *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*.

²³ Desy Aprima and Sasmita Sari, "Analisis Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pelajaran Matematika SD," *Cendikia: Media Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 13, no. 1 (September 2022), <https://doi.org/10.35335/cendikia.v13i1.2960>.

²⁴ Meria Ultra Gusteti and Neviyarni Neviyarni, "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Pada Pembelajaran Matematika Di Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Lebesgue: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Matematika, Matematika Dan Statistika* 3, no. 3 (December 2022), <https://doi.org/10.46306/lb.v3i3.180>.

²⁵ H. Evendi, Y. Rosida, and D. Zulfarfan, "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Pembelajaran Matematika Di Kurikulum Merdeka SMPN 4 Kragilan," *AKSIOMA: Jurnal Matematika Dan Pendidikan Matematika* 2, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.58218/aksioma.v2i2.603>.

In the aspect of learning interest, teachers provide opportunities for students to choose learning activities according to their interests. During observation, it was found that there were choices of tasks such as reading thematic stories, making artworks, and role-playing. The variety of activities seems to increase student involvement in participating in learning.

In terms of the learning process, teachers apply flexible grouping based on students' academic abilities. Students who still need help are placed in small groups that receive more intensive assistance. Meanwhile, more advanced students are given additional challenges to deepen the material. Flexible grouping can help each student receive support as needed.

Observations also noted that teachers provided a choice of form of final learning products, such as posters, oral presentations, and video recordings made by students. Students seem more confident in displaying their learning results according to their respective learning styles. Product differentiation can increase creativity and provide space for students to explore their potential.

However, there are several obstacles in the implementation of differentiation. Some students still seem confused in choosing learning activities, and teachers need more time to arrange different learning flows. Teachers need high classroom management competence and careful planning so that differentiated learning runs effectively.

Overall, the results of the observations show that teachers' efforts in implementing differentiated learning have a positive impact on increasing students' interest and learning engagement in the classroom. This strategy is in line with the spirit of Merdeka Belajar which provides space for students to develop according to their respective potentials, so that learning becomes more meaningful and inclusive.

Triangulation analysis was carried out by comparing and confirming data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the validity of the research findings. Based on the triangulation of sources, there is consistency between the teacher's statement, facts in the field, and learning documents. According to Creswell, triangulation is done to broaden perspectives and increase the credibility of data obtained in qualitative research.²⁶

Interview data showed that teachers consciously applied differentiated learning strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of students. This statement is reinforced by observational results that show the application of differentiation in three aspects: content, process, and product. This is in accordance with the concept of differentiation put forward by Tomlinson, that teachers need to adjust learning to students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

²⁶ Creswell, *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih Di Antara Lima Pendekatan*.

In triangulation, it was also found that students' interest in learning increased when they were given the opportunity to choose learning activities and media according to their preferences. This fact is supported by documentation in the form of photos of student activities and students' works that show diverse creativity.

The results of observations related to flexible grouping and providing additional challenges for more advanced students are also in line with the content of the lesson plan and teaching modules shown by the teacher in the documentation. This alignment shows that the strategy applied is not just improvisation in the classroom, but is indeed planned systematically.

However, triangulation also revealed obstacles such as the need for more time and teachers' ability in classroom management. This obstacle is seen in observation and reinforced by the teacher's reflection note document which shows the need to improve pedagogic competence. The challenges of implementing differentiation require ongoing professional training support.

From the overall triangulation data, it can be concluded that the implementation of differentiated learning by Driving Teachers has been proven to contribute positively to increasing students' interest in learning. These findings support the Merdeka Belajar policy that encourages student-centered learning. With consistency between interview data, observations, and documentation, the research results can be declared valid and reliable.

This study identified that the application of differentiated learning has a significant impact on increasing students' interest in learning. This can be seen from the more active involvement of students in the learning process and increased motivation to complete assignments according to their respective preferences. These findings support Tomlinson's assertion that differentiation of learning ensures learners can learn to their best needs and potential.

The use of concrete media in the learning process has also proven to be an important factor in increasing students' interest in learning. Teachers who use teaching aids, learning cards, and digital media are able to create a learning atmosphere that is more interesting and easy for students to understand. The use of concrete media helps students build a deeper and more meaningful understanding of concepts.

Personalization strategies such as choosing learning products and adjusting activities according to students' learning profiles are supportive of the success of differentiation in this study. With personalization, students feel in control of their learning process so they are motivated to participate more actively. Learning that is relevant to students' interests and learning styles will strengthen their intrinsic motivation.

However, this study also reveals challenges in implementation in schools. Teachers face administrative hurdles such as the preparation of more complex teaching tools and the need for continuous assessment. In addition, the limited infrastructure means that teachers must be more

creative in designing learning media. Differentiation demands adequate resource support and strong classroom management skills.

Overall, this study shows that differentiated learning is an effective strategy to optimize students' learning interests, although its implementation still requires strengthening in aspects of technical support and school policies. Therefore, improving teacher competence and providing better resources are needed so that this strategy can be implemented sustainably and evenly in various educational units.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that the implementation of differentiated learning is carried out through the grouping of students based on learning abilities and interests, the provision of diverse activities, and choices in the presentation and completion of assignments. Teachers provide flexible mentoring and create a learning environment that supports active student engagement. This implementation is able to provide space for students to learn according to their rhythm and learning style, although there are still challenges in classroom management and the fulfillment of supporting facilities. Differentiated learning has a positive impact on increasing students' interest in learning. Students show an increase in interest in participating in lessons, attention during learning, awareness of the importance of learning, and more optimal knowledge development. Students become more active, confident, and responsible for their learning process. Thus, differentiated learning makes a real contribution to optimizing student motivation and overall learning outcomes. Advice for driving teachers and other teachers. It is expected to continue to develop creativity in designing varied content, processes, and learning products. Teachers also need to strengthen consistency in implementing differentiated learning so that all students get equal learning opportunities according to their needs. The implication of this research is that teachers need to improve their ability to analyze students' learning needs through diagnostic assessments so that each stage of learning is truly in accordance with the potential and characteristics of students. Differentiated learning is also an approach that can support teachers in creating a more interactive and student-centered classroom atmosphere.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aprima, Desy, and Sasmita Sari. "Analisis Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Pelajaran Matematika SD." *Cendikia : Media Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 13, no. 1 (September 2022). <https://doi.org/10.35335/cendikia.v13i1.2960>.
- Aspitasi, Berliana Henu Cahyani, and Haniek Farida. "Hubungan Kodrat Alam Dengan Minat Belajar Siswa." *Jurnal Spirits* 11, no. 2 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.30738/spirits.v11i2.12689>.

- Creswell, John W. *Penelitian Kualitatif & Desain Riset: Memilih Di Antara Lima Pendekatan*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015.
- Evendi, H., Y. Rosida, and D. Zularfan. "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Pembelajaran Matematika Di Kurikulum Merdeka SMPN 4 Kragilan." *AKSIOMA: Jurnal Matematika Dan Pendidikan Matematika* 2, no. 2 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.58218/aksioma.v2i2.603>.
- Faiz, Aiman, and Faridah Faridah. "Program Guru Penggerak Sebagai Sumber Belajar." *Konstruktivisme: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 14, no. 1 (January 2022). <https://doi.org/10.35457/konstruk.v14i1.1876>.
- Gusteti, Meria Ultra, and Neviyarni Neviyarni. "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Pada Pembelajaran Matematika Di Kurikulum Merdeka." *Jurnal Lebesgue: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Matematika, Matematika Dan Statistika* 3, no. 3 (December 2022). <https://doi.org/10.46306/lb.v3i3.180>.
- Harahap, Koiy Sahbudin. "Konsep Dasar Pembelajaran." *Journal of Islamic Education El Madani* 1, no. 1 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.55438/jiee.v1i1.13>.
- Herwina, Wiwin. "Optimalisasi Kebutuhan Murid Dan Hasil Belajar Dengan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi." *Perspektif Ilmu Pendidikan* 35, no. 2 (November 2021). <https://doi.org/10.21009/PIP.352.10>.
- Huda, Nadya, Hartati, Saidah Tunnoor, and Mahrita. Hubungan Kreatifitas Guru Mengajar Terhadap Minat Belajar Siswa di SD Negeri 1 Durian Bungkok. *Jurnal Pahlawan* 20, no. 2 (2024).
- Junaedi Ifan. "Proses Pembelajaran Yang Efektif." *Jisamar* Vol. 3 no. 2 (2019).
- Lisnawati, Lilis, Septi Kuntari, and Muhammad Agus Hardiansyah. "Peran Guru Dalam Penerapan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Untuk Menumbuhkan Minat Belajar Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Sosiologi." *As-Sabiqun* 5, no. 6 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.36088/assabiqun.v5i6.4086>.
- Meilia, Maya, and Murdiana Murdiana. "Pendidik Harus Melek Kompetensi Dalam Menghadapi Pendidikan Abad Ke-21." *Kordinat: Jurnal Komunikasi Antar Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam* 18, no. 2 (October 2019). <https://doi.org/10.15408/kordinat.v18i2.11501>.
- MS, Mahfudz. "Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dan Penerapannya." *SENTRI: Jurnal Riset Ilmiah* 2, no. 2 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.55681/sentri.v2i2.534>.
- Nurfadillah, Rini, and Dea Mustika. "Peran Guru Penggerak Dalam Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Di Sekolah Dasar." *Jurnal EDUCATIO: Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia* 10, no. 1 (June 2024). <https://doi.org/10.29210/1202424205>.
- Rahmajati, Adha Dhimas Raditya, and Kinkin Kirana Dewi. "Upaya Meningkatkan Minat Belajar Peserta Didik Dalam Pembelajaran IPA Melalui Pendekatan Pembelajaran Contextual Teaching And Learning (CTL) Pada Kelas VII F Di SMP Negeri 11 Surakarta." *Jurnal Pendidikan IPA* 13, no. 1 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.20961/inkuiri.v13i1.78714>.
- Rohman, Moch. Fatkoer, Sudirman Sudirman, Untung Waluyo, Lalu Sumardi, and Fahrudin Fahrudin. "Evaluasi Program Pendidikan Guru Penggerak Di Kabupaten Lombok Utara NTB." *Jurnal Paedagogy* 10, no. 4 (October 2023). <https://doi.org/10.33394/jp.v10i4.9122>.
- Sijabat, Oslen Parulian, Maria Marta Manao, Asima Rohana Situmorang, Agusmanto Hutauruk, and Simon Panjaitan. "Mengatur Kualitas Guru Melalui Program Guru Penggerak." *Journal of Educational Learning and Innovation (ELIa)* 2, no. 1 (March 2022). <https://doi.org/10.46229/elia.v2i1.404>.

Muhibbuddin, Yulia Santi, Ety Mukhlesi Yeni: Differentiated Learning Strategies of Driving Teachers in Optimizing Students' Learning Interests in Elementary Schools

Suswandari, Meidawati, Kevin William Andri Siahaan, Maharromiyati, I. Made Ratih Rosanawati, Paradika Angganing, and Nabela Wahyu Mega Alfhira. "Analisis Penggunaan Tiktok Terhadap Perilaku Addicted Di Kalangan Usia Sekolah Dasar." *Journal of Educational Learning and Innovation (ELIA)* 2, no. 2 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.46229/elia.v2i2.449>.

Syaodih Sukmadinata, Nana. *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan*. Jakarta: Rajagrafindo Persada, 2013.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann. *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms*. 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 2001.