Differentiated Learning Process in the Independent Curriculum for the Subject of Islamic Religious Education

Nurmalia[1*], Rizka Harfiani[2], Hasrian Rudi Setiawan[3]
[1]Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, nurmaliayusufmalik@gmail.com
[2]Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, rizkaharfiani@umsu.ac.id
[3]Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, hasrianrudi@umsu.ac.id

[*]Corresponding Author: nurmaliayusufmalik@gmail.com

Abstract: This research aims to understand the process of designing instructional materials, implementing differentiated teaching strategies, and assessment in Islamic Religious Education. The study falls under the category of qualitative field research, focusing on investigating and describing the conditions or phenomena that occur in the field without manipulating variables. In this context, a descriptive approach is used to illustrate the processes of differentiated learning in the subject of Islamic Religious Education. The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year in February 2024. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis involved data collection, reduction, display, and drawing/verifying conclusions. The findings indicate that differentiated learning in the independent curriculum for Islamic Religious Education at SD Negeri 106190 Kota Pari Pantai Cermin has been implemented successfully in accordance with the steps of differentiated learning. Firstly, teachers conducted Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Diagnostic Assessments to determine the readiness for learning as well as the interests, talents, and learning styles of each student. Secondly, teachers designed teaching modules tailored to the initial assessment results. Thirdly, teachers implemented differentiated teaching strategies through content, process, and product differentiation. Fourthly, teachers evaluated and reflected on the learning process. Through this differentiated learning approach, students become more active, creative, and innovative, finding learning more enjoyable. This helps to increase students' interest in learning, particularly in Islamic Religious Education, and assists them in becoming independent learners who appreciate diversity.

Keyword: Differentiated Learning, Independent Curriculum, Islamic Religious Education

INTRODUCTION

National education is expected to ensure equal educational opportunities, improve the standards, relevance, and efficiency of educational management. Efforts to improve educational standards are crucial to enhancing the overall quality of Indonesian individuals, both emotionally, intellectually, and physically, enabling them to compete in addressing global challenges (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, Dan Teknologi Nomor 47 Tahun 2023 Tentang Standar Pengelolaan Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang

Pendidikan Dasar, Dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah, 2023). Efforts to improve educational standards are steps that must be continuously taken to realize the dream of quality and relevant education. In the world of education, the curriculum plays a very important and fundamental role. As the "spirit" of education, the curriculum is regularly evaluated to remain relevant to the developments in time and the advancements in science and technology (Usman et al., 2022). The curriculum plays a central role in the education process, serving as the implementation framework for all educational policies set by school management or the government (Santika et al., 2019).

The concept of "Merdeka Belajar" (Freedom to Learn) advocated by Nadiem Makarim entails freedom in learning. The Merdeka Belajar education program can play a role in enhancing teachers' teaching abilities. The goal of education, which positions teachers as educators and students as learners, can be achieved when learning is perceived as engaging, enjoyable, and meaningful. The concept of Merdeka Belajar encompasses freedom in achieving goals, teaching methods, course materials, and learning evaluation, both for teachers and students (Izza et al., 2020). Merdeka Belajar emphasizes a learning process that inspires students' creativity, utilizing approaches and methods that assist in training higher-order thinking skills. This aligns with Saleh's perspective, who describes Merdeka Belajar as an initiative to explore the potential of both students and teachers in creating innovations that enhance the quality of learning in the classroom (Angga et al., 2022).

Islamic education in Indonesia is an integral part of the national education system. Therefore, the quality of Islamic education plays a crucial role in supporting the overall improvement of education quality nationally (Nurzannah et al., 2019). In the process of Islamic Religious Education learning, teachers create a positive and innovative learning environment so that students can develop themselves as active participants in the learning process, not just as recipients of information. Therefore, it is crucial to take important initial steps to provide the right direction in carrying out the learning process (Harfiani, 2019). The subject of Islamic Religious Education is not only aimed at achieving learning outcomes according to the national curriculum but also at preparing students according to their interests and talents (Tanjung & Harfiani, 2019). Through the implementation of Merdeka Belajar, the hope is that the learning concept applied will provide freedom for every student to explore and learn according to their interests and talents. With the Merdeka Curriculum, it is expected that learning will be critical, of high quality, excellent, practical, expressive, diverse, and progressive (Damayanti et al., 2023). Teachers have a responsibility to understand each student's interests and skills. The ability of teachers to choose teaching models plays a crucial role because the success of the learning process depends on their decisions. One attractive option for a teaching model is Differentiated Instruction, which can deliver material in various ways according to students' needs. In differentiated instruction, teachers don't address each student one by one for understanding the material; instead, students can be grouped into large, small, or independent learning groups (Purba, 2022).

To address and teach students with diverse backgrounds, characters, and developmental levels, teachers need to understand the basic abilities, motivations, academic backgrounds, social, economic backgrounds, and other factors of each student. Student management fundamentally aims to enhance the quality of learning activities, both within and outside the curriculum, with the goal of contributing to the achievement of the school's vision, mission, and objectives, as well as the broader goals of national education. Thus, student management not only involves student data recording but also encompasses various broader aspects that can practically support students' growth and development through the education process at school (Setiawan, 2021).

Absolutely, a teacher's readiness to understand students' characteristics during learning is a key factor in delivering instructional material effectively. It serves as a critical indicator

that influences the success of the teaching-learning process. By comprehending students' individual traits, preferences, and needs, teachers can tailor their teaching approaches to better engage and support their students, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of the learning experience (Setiawan & Abrianto, 2021). Differentiated instruction is a classroom strategy aimed at meeting students' learning needs. This adjustment involves factors such as interests, learning profiles, and students' readiness levels to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Differentiated instruction aligns with the spirit of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum introduced in various educational institutions (Sulistyosari et al., 2022). That aligns well with the findings of research by (Purnawanto, 2023), indicating that the concept of differentiated instruction is a positive and desirable idea, although it poses a creative challenge for teachers. Through this approach, students' potentials can be expanded according to their needs, characteristics, and levels of achievement.

Additionally, differentiated instruction is flexible, as expressed by (Wahyuni, 2022), stating that it is a strategy that allows teachers to meet each student's individual needs by aligning materials, activities, and assessments based on their abilities, interests, and requirements. In this approach, teachers have control over the content, process, products, and learning environment in the classroom, allowing them to adapt instruction effectively to students' learning profiles. Considering the context outlined earlier, researchers are interested in exploring differentiated instruction. Therefore, the objective of this research is to understand the process of designing instructional materials, implementing differentiated learning strategies, and assessing differentiated instruction in Islamic Religious Education.

METHOD

The method employed in this research is qualitative with a descriptive approach. This study constitutes field research and falls under the category of qualitative descriptive research. Descriptive research focuses on investigating and describing the conditions or phenomena occurring in the field without manipulating variables. In the context of this research, the descriptive approach is used to depict the processes of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education. The research was conducted in the second semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, in February 2024. The primary data source came from SD N.106190 in Kota Pari Pantai Cermin, involving both teachers and students, while secondary data were obtained from various documents such as school documents, teacher documents, theoretical studies, and scholarly articles. Data collection techniques utilized included interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis techniques involved data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing/verifying conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Mapping Students' Learning Needs Through Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment

Mapping students' learning needs is done through cognitive diagnostic assessment by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SD N.106190 in Kota Pari. Before commencing instruction, teachers conduct assessments by administering a pretest to measure students' readiness to learn, interests, and learning profiles. The test contains questions relevant to the Tarawih prayer material, and after students complete the test, teachers evaluate whether students have achieved the set competencies. The results are then mapped into three categories: Full Understanding (FU), Partial Understanding (PU), and Not Understanding (NU). Additionally, at the beginning of the semester, teachers also conduct non-cognitive diagnostic assessment to determine students' learning styles. This is done by providing students with a learning style instrument to fill out, which is then corrected and mapped into visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles. The goal of this assessment is for teachers to design teaching modules according to each student's learning style. Through observation, interviews, and

documentation, it can be concluded that the implementation of cognitive and non-cognitive diagnostic assessments in Islamic Religious Education instruction at SD N.106190 in Kota Pari demonstrates accuracy and suitability. Teachers have proactively and systematically implemented these assessments, using relevant questions that meet the learning needs. This is in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum and demonstrates teachers' understanding of the latest education policies.

This is in line with Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through experiences and interactions with the environment (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022). Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment can actively build students' knowledge of Tarawih prayer material through the process of solving problems. This view is supported by the research findings of (Ambarita & Simanullang, 2023) where before differentiated instruction is implemented, teachers can map students' interests, talents, readiness, and profiles. In the Merdeka Curriculum, this is known as diagnostic assessment with the aim of enabling a teacher to correlate material with the processes, products, or content of learning that will result from the learning process. The research results of (Damayanti et al., 2023) based on diagnostic assessment facilitate teachers in designing upcoming learning activities.

Designing Teaching Modules (RPP) Based on the Mapping of Students' Learning Readiness

Observations revealed that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers have developed teaching modules based on the initial mapping results, providing freedom in setting goals, methods, strategies, and learning media that align with students' learning needs. Interviews with teachers also confirmed this, where they referred to the pretest to design instruction that supports Differentiated Learning, considering students' learning readiness and learning styles. Teachers prepared various learning media tailored to students' learning styles, such as lectures, discussions, Q&A sessions, singing, and listening to music for auditory learners; the use of text, images, and maps for visual learners; and role-playing activities and simulations for kinesthetic learners. This approach enhances the effectiveness of learning by catering to the diverse learning styles of students. Documentation of the Teaching Modules (RPP) by PAI teachers at SD N.106190 in Kota Pari demonstrates alignment with the curriculum and effective implementation of differentiated instruction. Teachers have optimized mapping results to design meaningful learning experiences for each student, considering auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles. The steps in designing instruction have aligned with students' needs and learning styles comprehensively.

This aligns with Behaviorism theory, which indicates that teachers use observation results and mapping to understand students' learning styles and provide appropriate stimuli. Learning is a process of behavioral change that occurs due to observable stimuli and responses. (Wibowo, 2020). Stimulus or stimulation refers to anything that is presented or provided by the teacher to the students. The Differentiated Instruction theory is an approach to learning that accommodates the learning needs of all students by providing various choices in terms of learning objectives, strategies and methods, instructional materials, learning activities, and assessment tools (Tomlinson, 2017). Additionally, supported by the findings of research by (Wahyuningsari et al., 2022), which show that students' needs can be seen from several types, namely learning readiness, interests, talents, and learning styles.

Meanwhile, the findings of research by (Faiz et al., 2022) indicate that teaching with consideration for learning interests, readiness, and preferences helps all students achieve learning objectives; enhances students' motivation and learning outcomes; fosters a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, leading to increased enthusiasm for learning; assists students in becoming independent learners and individuals accustomed to and

appreciative of diversity; and increases teacher satisfaction as they feel challenged to develop their teaching abilities, thereby becoming more creative.

Implementation Stage of Differentiated Learning: Content, Process, and Product

Based on observations, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher carefully considers the level of learning readiness, interests, and learning styles of each student in selecting instructional materials or content. This includes the use of books, pictures, videos, and worksheets for students. The teacher continually evaluates the materials and teaching resources used to achieve learning objectives, and implements differentiated learning strategies tailored to students' learning styles, such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. In interviews, the teacher explains that they continuously monitor students' understanding of the material and their assessment results. For auditory learners, the teacher uses lectures, discussions, and audio recordings. For visual learners, the teacher utilizes pictures, videos, and graphics. Meanwhile, for kinesthetic learners, the teacher provides opportunities for physical activities, such as role-playing and demonstrations. The teacher also assigns varied tasks with different levels of difficulty according to students' interests and learning profiles. The teacher's documentation records students' understanding levels through observation during the learning process, such as participation in discussions and enthusiasm in completing tasks. Student assessments, such as tests, quizzes, and assignments, are also collected to evaluate the effectiveness of learning. Based on observation, interviews, and documentation, the differentiated learning strategies applied by the PAI teacher involve selecting learning materials that align with students' interests to enhance their motivation and engagement in learning. The teacher also selects materials that suit students' learning styles to help them learn effectively. By actively monitoring student participation, activity in tasks, and their understanding of the material, the teacher ensures that differentiated learning can provide maximum benefit to each student.

This aligns with cognitive theory, which emphasizes the internal learning process (Naibaho, 2023) of selecting instructional materials that match students' levels of readiness, interests, and learning styles, and evaluating the materials and teaching resources used to achieve learning objectives. This is consistent with motivational theory, which emphasizes factors that drive and direct learning behavior. By providing various teaching methods, teachers can enhance students' motivation to learn and help them learn in the most effective way possible. Supported by the findings of research by (Mahfudz Ms, 2023), differentiated learning provides diverse approaches to understanding new information for all students within the diversity of their classroom community. This approach includes ways to acquire content, process, build, or reason ideas, and develop learning products and assessment measures. The goal of differentiated learning is to enable all students with diverse abilities to learn effectively. The differentiation process is conducted to adapt to the needs, styles, or interests of each student. The results of research by (Hasnawati, 2021) indicate that the process of Islamic Religious Education learning has implemented differentiated learning and assessment as a form of implementing the pattern of independent learning. The positive impact of applying the pattern of independent learning has been evident in enhancing students' creativity. Additionally, Islamic Religious Education learning has become more enjoyable, high-quality, and meaningful. The implementation of independent learning helps students develop critical thinking skills, emotional sensitivity, talents, and high imagination.

Evaluation and Reflection Stage

Based on observations and interviews, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher implements planned and effective teaching strategies to facilitate students' understanding of the Tarawih prayer material. Before commencing instruction, the teacher conducts an initial evaluation with cognitive diagnostic assessment to measure students' readiness and initial

understanding. At the end of the learning process, the teacher conducts formative assessment referring to the set learning objectives. Throughout the learning process, the teacher observes each student's learning progress and provides assistance to those in need. The teacher also varies the final assessment by providing questions of different difficulty levels and diverse formats, such as multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, essay, or problem-solving questions. After the final assessment, the teacher engages in reflection with the students to evaluate the learning that has taken place. This allows the teacher to identify areas that need improvement and make agreements with the students to revisit the material not yet understood. The teacher's documentation indicates that they have prepared student worksheets (LKPD) tailored to the students' abilities and created problem-solving LKPDs that challenge students to apply their knowledge in real-life situations. Overall, the teaching strategies implemented by the PAI teacher have had a positive impact on student learning. By using various assessment methods, observations, and reflections, the PAI teacher can adjust learning to individual student needs and continually improve the overall quality of instruction. Furthermore, the PAI teacher can continue to develop innovative and creative teaching strategies to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

This aligns by (Sugrah, 2019) perspective that constructivism, which emphasizes learning as an active process where students construct their own knowledge through interaction with their environment and experiences. In teaching Tarawih prayer, the PAI teacher can apply this theory by providing opportunities for students to explore and discover the concepts of Tarawih prayer independently. Additionally, cognitive learning theory focuses on how humans process and store information. In the context of teaching Tarawih prayer, the PAI teacher can apply this theory by using teaching strategies that align with students' cognitive developmental stages.Supported by the findings of research by (Bendriyanti et al., 2021), the use of differentiated learning models greatly assists students in effective, creative, and enjoyable learning, thereby increasing students' interest in learning, especially in Islamic Religious Education. From this increased interest, there is an improvement in the quality of student learning from the learning process to learning outcomes. Furthermore, according to the results of the research by Maulidia & Prafitasari, 2023), differentiated learning strategies are efforts that can be made to improve learning outcomes by addressing the heterogeneous cognitive approaches of students. Differentiated learning strategies, imbued with critical thinking skills, are used to balance students' abilities in digesting lessons, managing emotions, communication methods, including the ability to develop the different interests and talents of students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion on the differentiated learning process within the Merdeka Curriculum in the subject of Islamic Education at SD Negeri 106190 Kota Pari Pantai Cermin, it can be concluded that the steps of differentiated learning have been carried out very well in accordance with its principles. Firstly, teachers conduct Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment and Non-Cognitive Diagnostic Assessment to determine the level of readiness and interests, talents, and learning styles of each student. Secondly, teachers design teaching modules tailored to the initial mapping results, ensuring that the learning materials meet the needs and characteristics of the students. Thirdly, teachers implement differentiated learning strategies through three stages: differentiation of content, process, and product, ensuring that each student receives a learning experience tailored to their needs and abilities. Lastly, teachers evaluate and reflect on the learning process, ensuring that the learning process is effective and provides maximum benefits for each student. From the results of this differentiated learning process, student learning becomes more active, creative, innovative, and enjoyable. This can increase students' interest in learning, especially in learning Islamic Education, while also helping students become independent learners and appreciate diversity.

REFERENCES

Ambarita, J., & Simanullang, P. S. (2023). *Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi*. Penerbit Adab.

Angga, A., Suryana, C., Nurwahidah, I., Hernawan, A. H., & Prihantini, P. (2022). Komparasi Implementasi Kurikulum 2013 dan Kurikulum Merdeka di Sekolah Dasar Kabupaten Garut. *Jurnal Basicedu*, *6*(4), 5877–5889. https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i4.3149

Bendriyanti, R. P., Dewi, C., & Nurhasanah, I. (2021). Manajemen Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Belajar Siswa Kelas IX SMPIT Khairunnas. *JP (Jurnal Pendidikan): Teori dan Praktik*, *6*(2), 70–74. https://doi.org/10.26740/jp.v6n2.p70-74

Damayanti, A. D., Jannah, A. N., & Agustin, N. (2023). Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Di SMP Muhammadiyah 19 Sawangan. *PROSIDING SAMASTA*, *0*, Article 0. https://jurnal.umj.ac.id/index.php/SAMASTA/article/view/41-48

Faiz, A., Pratama, A., & Kurniawaty, I. (2022). Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi dalam Program Guru Penggerak pada Modul 2.1. *Jurnal Basicedu*, *6*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.31004/basicedu.v6i2.2504

Harfiani, R. (2019). *Preparation of Learning Implementation Plan Islamic Education for Early Childhood Based on Inclusive Education*. 451–454. https://doi.org/10.2991/iccd-19.2019.118

Hasnawati, H. (2021). *Pola Penerapan merdeka Belajar pada Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam Meningkatkan Daya Kreativitas Peserta Didik di SMAN 4 Wajo Kabupaten Wajo* [Masters, IAIN Parepare]. https://repository.iainpare.ac.id/id/eprint/3315/

Izza, A. Z., Falah, M., & Susilawati, S. (2020). Studi Literatur: Problematika Evaluasi Pembelajaran Dalam Mencapai Tujuan Pendidikan Di Era Merdeka Belajar. *Prosiding Konferensi Ilmiah Pendidikan*, *1*, 10–15.

Mahfudz Ms. (2023). Pembelajaran Berdiferesiasi Dan Penerapannya. *SENTRI: Jurnal Riset Ilmiah*, *2*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.55681/sentri.v2i2.534

Maulidia, F. R., & Prafitasari, A. N. (2023). Strategi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Memenuhi Kebutuhan Belajar Peserta Didik. *ScienceEdu*, *6*(1), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.19184/se.v6i1.40019

Naibaho, D. P. (2023). Strategi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Mampu Meningkatkan Pemahaman Belajar Peserta Didik. *Journal of Creative Student Research*, *1*(2), 81–91. https://doi.org/10.55606/jcsrpolitama.v1i2.1150

Nurzannah, N., Ginting, N., & Setiawan, H. R. (2019). Implementation Of Integrated Quality Management In The Islamic Education System. *Proceeding International Seminar of Islamic Studies*, *1*(1), Article 1.

Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, Dan Teknologi Nomor 47 Tahun 2023 Tentang Standar Pengelolaan Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Jenjang Pendidikan Dasar, Dan Jenjang Pendidikan Menengah, Pub. L. No. 47 (2023).

Purba, G. F. (2022). Implementasi Pendekatan Pendidikan Matematika Realistik Indonesia (PMRI) Pada konsep Merdeka Belajar. *Sepren*, *4*(01), 23–33. https://doi.org/10.36655/sepren.v4i01.732

Purnawanto, A. T. (2023). Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi. *JURNAL PEDAGOGY*, *16*(1), Article 1.

Santika, I. G. N., Kartika, I. M., & Wahyuni, N. W. R. (2019). Pendidikan karakter: Studi kasus peranan keluarga terhadap pembentukan karakter anak Ibu Sunah di Tanjung Benoa. *Widya Accarya*, *10*(1).

http://download.garuda.kemdikbud.go.id/article.php?article=1755873&val=18671&title=PENDIDIKA

Setiawan, H. R. (2021). *Manajemen Peserta Didik: Upaya Peningkatan Kualitas Lulusan*. UMSU Press.

Setiawan, H. R., & Abrianto, D. (2021). *Menjadi Pendidik Profesional*. umsu press.

Sugrah, N. (2019). Implementasi teori belajar konstruktivisme dalam pembelajaran sains. *Humanika, Kajian Ilmiah Mata Kuliah Umum*, *19*(2), 121–138.

Sulistyosari, Y., Karwur, H. M., & Sultan, H. (2022). Penerapan Pembelajaran IPS Berdiferensiasi Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Harmony: Jurnal Pembelajaran IPS Dan PKN*, *7*(2), Article 2. https://doi.org/10.15294/harmony.v7i2.62114

Tanjung, E. F., & Harfiani, R. (2019). The Role Of Islamic Religious Education In Overcoming The Negative Influence Of Technology On Students SMK Muhammadiyah. *Proceeding International Seminar of Islamic Studies*, *1*(1), Article 1.

Tomlinson, C. A. (2017). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms*. ASCD.

Usman, U., Lestari, I. D., Alfianisya, A., Octavia, A., Lathifa, I., Nisfiyah, L., Aries, N. A. P., & Oktatira, R. (2022). Pemahaman Salah Satu Guru Di MAN 2 Tangerang Mengenai Sistem Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Pada Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Review Pendidikan Dan Pengajaran (JRPP)*, *5*(1). https://doi.org/10.31004/jrpp.v5i1.4432

Wahyuni, A. S. (2022). Literature Review: Pendekatan Berdiferensiasi Dalam Pembelajaran IPA. *JURNAL PENDIDIKAN MIPA*, *12*(2), 118–126. https://doi.org/10.37630/jpm.v12i2.562

Wahyuningsari, D., Mujiwati, Y., Hilmiyah, L., Kusumawardani, F., & Sari, I. P. (2022). Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Rangka Mewujudkan Merdeka Belajar. *JURNAL JENDELA PENDIDIKAN*, *2*(04), 529–535. https://doi.org/10.57008/jjp.v2i04.301

Wibowo, H. (2020). *Pengantar Teori-Teori Belajar Dan Model-Model Pembelajaran*. Puri Cipta Media.