



Differentiated Islamic Religious Education Learning at Sd Negeri 1 Singojuruh, Banyuwangi Regency, East Java

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning in elementary schools plays a crucial role in shaping students' religious and moral character from an early age. One of the strategic subjects in fostering faith values is Asmaul Husna, which introduces the beautiful and meaningful names of Allah SWT. However, classroom learning processes often remain uniform, disregarding differences in students' learning styles, interests, and abilities. To address this issue, the implementation of differentiated learning serves as a relevant solution to create a more inclusive and student-centered learning environment. This study aims to describe the implementation of differentiated learning in teaching Asmaul Husna at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh and to examine its impact on students' motivation and learning outcomes. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings revealed that the teacher implemented differentiation in the aspects of content, process, and product. Visual learners were provided with image-based media and The application of this strategy enhanced students' enthusiasm, self-confidence, and understanding of the meaning of Asmaul Husna. Therefore, differentiated learning has proven effective in creating an enjoyable, adaptive, and student-centered Islamic Religious Education learning environment in elementary schools.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of modern education, the urgency of differentiated learning has emerged as a response to the increasing complexity of student diversity. Each student possesses unique characteristics in terms of abilities, learning styles, interests, and socio-cultural backgrounds. According to Tomlinson et al., (2017), one of the educational approaches that has been widely developed is differentiated learning, a learning model designed to accommodate differences in students' learning styles, interests, and abilities so that each learner can achieve optimal learning outcomes. This approach positions students at the center of the learning process, providing teachers with opportunities to adjust learning materials, processes, and assessments according to individual characteristics. The need for differentiation has become increasingly pressing alongside the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar (Independent Learning) paradigm in Indonesia, which emphasizes student-centered learning. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek, 2021) asserts that teachers are required to design flexible and responsive learning processes that address student diversity. Through a differentiated approach, teachers can provide equitable learning opportunities, not identical ones, so that every student can reach their fullest potential.

Widiastuti et al., (2023) revealed that the implementation of differentiated learning requires adjustments in content, process, and product, which successfully enhance students' engagement and creativity. Teachers employed a variety of media and activities aligned with students' learning styles and interests, making the learning experience more meaningful. However, challenges were still found in time management and the implementation of authentic assessments that align with students' learning profiles. Oktavia Nila Permata (2025) found that the application of *Project-Based Learning* (PjBL)-based differentiated instruction effectively improves students' engagement, collaboration, and comprehension. Through real-world projects and the adjustment of instruction according to students' interests and abilities, learners not only gain a deeper conceptual understanding but also develop 21st-century skills such as critical, creative, and communicative thinking. This approach also aligns with the principles of educational psychology, which emphasize the importance of instructional adaptation to students' cognitive and emotional development. Through differentiation, teachers can address the cognitive and affective learning needs of heterogeneous learners, resulting in more meaningful and effective learning experiences (Santrock, 2010). Moreover, differentiated learning plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive learning environment. Hall et al., (2011) affirm that differentiation aligns with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which ensures that every student, including those with special needs, can access learning according to their abilities and preferences.

In the context of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), the implementation of differentiated learning has become increasingly important to adjust the content, methods, and learning products to students' needs. Research conducted by Ihwanah et al., (2024) demonstrated that this approach effectively enhances

students' discipline, responsibility, and understanding of IRE materials. Furthermore, the study by Alfaiz & Aimah (2025) added that this method helps students comprehend and internalize religious teachings more effectively. Thus, this strategy supports the development of 21st-century skills and promotes a more personalized learning experience.

Previous studies have shown that differentiated learning plays a significant role in enhancing the effectiveness of the learning process through adjustments in content, process, and product according to students' needs. Rahmayani (2023) emphasized that the implementation of differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum can increase student engagement and learning achievement. Ishak et al., (2024) found that the application of differentiated instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum significantly improves learning outcomes. Similarly, Rahmat et al., (2025) confirmed that differentiated learning enhances students' motivation and engagement through grouping strategies based on ability levels and adjustments to learning materials. Consistent with these findings, Aisa et al, (2017) demonstrated that the implementation of differentiated instruction contributed substantially to improving literacy skills among first-grade students, as teachers were able to adapt strategies to each child's learning characteristics. Likewise, Liskawati, Muhammad Faisal (2025) concluded that teachers effectively implemented differentiation in content, process, and product within the Merdeka Curriculum, although challenges remained in terms of time management and limited resources. Meanwhile, Sari (2023) highlighted that although teachers understand the concept of differentiated instruction, its implementation in secondary schools is still constrained by time limitations, inadequate facilities, and insufficient teacher training – thus requiring institutional support to ensure optimal implementation. Overall, the literature indicates that differentiated learning not only improves the quality and outcomes of student learning but also fosters motivation, engagement, character development, and 21st-century skills in alignment with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.

At SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh, teachers face challenges in adapting instruction to students' diverse characteristics, interests, and abilities. The lack of adaptive strategies has resulted in some students being less engaged and not yet achieving their full learning potential. This condition highlights the need to explore the implementation of differentiated learning that can accommodate student diversity and improve the quality of the learning process.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the implementation of differentiated learning at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh, encompassing the stages of planning, implementation, and its impact on student engagement and character development. The results of this research are expected to provide practical contributions for teachers in developing innovative Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning that is adaptive to individual differences among students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was selected because the research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of differentiated learning implementation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) based on real conditions in an elementary school setting.

The qualitative approach was chosen as the primary method in this research since it aims to gain a deep understanding of the processes, experiences, and contextual dynamics surrounding the implementation of differentiated learning at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh. This approach enabled the researchers to explore the perspectives of teachers and students, identify supporting and inhibiting factors, and obtain a holistic comprehension of how the instructional strategy affects students' engagement and character development, dimensions that are difficult to measure quantitatively.

The study was conducted at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh, Banyuwangi Regency, East Java Province. The research site was selected purposively, considering that the school had already implemented the Merdeka Curriculum and was actively developing learning practices oriented toward students' needs and characteristics. The research subjects consisted of 27 second-grade students and one Islamic Religious Education teacher directly involved in the learning process.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out to directly examine the implementation of differentiated learning in the classroom and to observe students' responses during the learning process. In-depth interviews with the teacher and several students were conducted to explore their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding this instructional strategy. Supporting documents such as lesson modules, teaching materials, and students' work samples were also collected as complementary data.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using an interactive model approach. The stages included data reduction by selecting and summarizing key information, data presentation in narrative or tabular form for easier analysis, and conclusion drawing and verification through data source triangulation to ensure the validity and consistency of the research findings.

RESULT

This study aimed to analyze the implementation of differentiated learning in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh, Banyuwangi City, East Java. The focus was on how the teacher applied the principles of differentiation in content, process, and product according to students' characteristics, needs, and abilities.

Based on data collected through interviews, observations, and documentation, the study found that the planning of differentiated learning in the

IRE subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh had begun to be implemented gradually and systematically by the IRE teacher at the school.

In the lesson planning stage, the IRE teacher sought to align the design of learning activities with students' varying abilities, interests, and learning needs. This was accomplished through several key steps, including:

Table 1. Planning of Differentiated Islamic Religious Education (IRE) Learning at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh

No.	Planning Aspect	Research Findings	Supporting Evidence (Interview/Observation/Documentation)
1.	Mapping of Students' Learning Needs	The teacher conducted an initial diagnostic assessment to identify students' abilities, interests, and learning styles. The results were used to form learning groups: Remedial, On-level, and Enrichment.	Based on interviews, the teacher explained that the assessment was carried out through classroom observation and preliminary tests. Documentation showed student ability mapping sheets prepared at the beginning of the semester.
2.	Formulation of Varied Learning Objectives	Learning objectives were structured in stages according to students' ability levels. Although varied, all objectives still referred to the learning outcomes outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum for IRE.	The teacher's module indicated variations in achievement indicators. Observations showed that the teacher presented different objectives for each group according to their level of understanding.
3.	Selection of Learning Strategies and Methods	The teacher selected strategies that enabled process differentiation, such as Think-Pair-Share, group discussions, and projects on Islamic values.	Interviews indicated that the teacher aimed to create active learning. Observations showed that students worked in heterogeneous groups according to their ability levels.
4.	Development of Differentiated	Learning materials were prepared in several versions with varying levels	Documentation of instructional materials showed differences in complexity among worksheets. The teacher also used visual

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, it was found that the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teacher at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh had implemented differentiated learning planning in a systematic and well-directed manner. The planning process was carried out in reference to the Merdeka Curriculum while being adapted to the specific characteristics of the students at the school.



As shown in Table 1 and the supporting documentation, the initial stage of planning began with a diagnostic assessment to map students' prior abilities, interests, and learning styles. The results of this mapping served as the foundation for the teacher to form three main learning groups : Remedial, On-level, and Enrichment, each of which employed different strategies and approaches based on students' learning needs.

Furthermore, the IRE teacher developed lesson modules that accommodated these differences through variations in objectives, content, and learning methods. As reflected in Table 1, the teacher adjusted learning objectives in a tiered manner so that all students could achieve the same competencies at varying levels of depth. For instance, in the topic of faith in angels, the Remedial group focused on strengthening basic understanding, while the Enrichment group was guided to analyze the values of faith within social life contexts. The teacher also selected active learning methods such as Think-Pair-Share, group discussions, and project-based learning to ensure that each student had the opportunity to participate according to their potential.

In addition, the planning outlined in Table 1 demonstrates that the IRE teacher prepared adaptive learning materials and assessment instruments. The materials were designed with varying levels of difficulty, while the assessments focused not only on final outcomes but also on students' learning processes and attitudes. The teacher also engaged in regular reflection with colleagues to improve the instructional tools that had been implemented. These findings indicate that the planning of differentiated learning at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh reflects the teacher's effort to apply the principles of student-centered learning and to provide every student with the opportunity to learn according to their abilities and individual needs.

Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE)

The implementation of differentiated learning in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh was carried out through various strategies tailored to students' needs, abilities, and learning styles. Based on observations and interviews, it was found that the IRE teacher applied differentiation in the aspects of content, process, and product, in accordance with the principles promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum. Each learning activity was designed to enable all students to achieve learning objectives through methods

most suited to their individual characteristics. The learning process began with general opening activities for all students, followed by core activities that differed according to the ability levels of each group : Remedial, On-level, and Enrichment (Yulisa Dwi Astuti et al., 2025).



In practice, the teacher utilized various active learning models such as Think-Pair-Share, Project- Based Learning, and reflective learning to enhance student engagement. The Remedial group focused on strengthening basic understanding through visual media and direct guidance from the teacher, while the On-level group was guided to participate in discussions and complete contextual exercises.

Meanwhile, the Enrichment group was assigned to analyze real-life cases or create creative projects that linked Islamic values to daily life. This variation of activities created an inclusive, participatory, and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, while simultaneously encouraging students to understand Islamic teachings more deeply and apply them meaningfully in their everyday experiences (Rohana, 2022).

In addition to managing varied learning activities, the IRE teacher also provided formative feedback and conducted individual reflections with each student to monitor their progress. This approach was proven to enhance students' motivation, self-confidence, and critical thinking skills. Interview results revealed that previously passive students became more active participants, while high-achieving students demonstrated improved analytical and reflective abilities. Thus, the implementation of differentiated learning in the IRE subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh can be considered effective in accommodating students' individual diversity and aligns with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum, which positions learners at the center of the educational process (Azizah & Astutik, 2025).

Challenges Encountered

Although the implementation of differentiated learning in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh demonstrated positive outcomes, several challenges were encountered during the process. One of the main obstacles was the teacher's limited understanding of how to design instructional strategies that accommodate the diverse needs and abilities of students. Some teachers still experienced difficulties in conducting diagnostic assessments and in adjusting instructional materials based on the results of such mappings. In addition, the relatively high student-teacher ratio within each class made it challenging for the teacher to provide optimal individual guidance and feedback. Other challenges included the limited availability of learning facilities and media – particularly those supporting project-based differentiation activities and reflection on Islamic values.

Furthermore, time management posed another difficulty, as the implementation of differentiated learning required more complex preparation and execution compared to conventional instruction. Nevertheless, the IRE teacher continuously strived to adjust strategies to ensure that the learning process remained effective and aligned with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of differentiated learning in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh has been carried out effectively and adaptively according to students' characteristics. The IRE teacher successfully applied the principles of differentiation in the aspects of content, process, and product, enabling each student to experience learning that corresponds to their abilities, interests, and learning styles. This reflects a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, as emphasized in the Merdeka Curriculum, which demands flexibility, autonomy, and contextual relevance in every stage of the learning process.

The evaluation of instructional practices indicated that differentiation strategies made a significant contribution to enhancing students' learning motivation, active participation, and contextual understanding of Islamic values. These findings are consistent with the study by Aminuriyah et al., (2023), which showed that the application of differentiated instruction in IRE classes can improve student engagement while fostering self-confidence in comprehending Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Hasnahwati et al., (2025) demonstrated that differentiated learning in Islamic education not only involves the adjustment of content, process, and product but also emphasizes the integration of technology and the development of students' character as part of the Merdeka Curriculum implementation. These findings support the results of the present study at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh, where an instructional approach that adapts to students' learning styles, interests, and readiness levels was proven to have a positive impact on their motivation and spiritual understanding.

Overall, the implementation of differentiated IRE learning at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh represents a tangible effort to create inclusive, humanistic, and contextually relevant education. This model not only fosters a deeper understanding of religious values but also develops students' critical, collaborative, and reflective thinking skills in alignment with the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (Profile of Pancasila Students). This research provides practical implications for the development of instructional strategies in elementary schools, particularly in enhancing teachers' abilities to design varied and adaptive learning activities.

Nevertheless, this study also identified several key challenges, including limited time for designing differentiated activities, insufficient facilities for project-based learning, and variations in teachers' abilities to consistently interpret the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.

These conditions highlight the need to strengthen teachers' capacity through continuous professional development and collaborative mentoring among teachers across subject areas. Future studies with broader scopes and comparative quantitative approaches are strongly recommended to enrich the understanding of the effectiveness of differentiated learning, particularly within the context of religious education in elementary schools.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of differentiated learning in the Islamic Religious Education (IRE) subject at SD Negeri 1 Singojuruh has been effective and adaptive to students' learning needs. The IRE teacher successfully applied the principles of differentiation in the aspects of content, process, and product, enabling students to experience learning tailored to their individual abilities, interests, and learning styles. The application of this strategy had a positive impact on improving students' motivation, active participation, and contextual understanding of Islamic values, which they were able to apply in their daily lives.

The implications of this research emphasize the importance of developing flexible, humanistic, and student-centered IRE learning models that address individual learning needs in alignment with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum. Differentiated learning serves as a strategic approach to achieving inclusive and learner-centered education while simultaneously strengthening students' religious, collaborative, and critical character—qualities essential for facing 21st-century challenges. Thus, the findings of this study can serve as a valuable reference for teachers and schools in designing instructional strategies that not only focus on cognitive aspects but also foster students' spiritual and social values. The scientific and practical contribution of this research lies in providing an implementable framework for differentiated IRE learning that can serve as a guide for educators in designing adaptive and meaningful learning activities. The strength of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, reflecting the integration between theory and practice in the field. However, this study has several limitations, including the limited number of teacher participants and the availability of learning facilities at the school. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of differentiated IRE learning on students' character development and academic achievement using quantitative or mixed-method approaches, so that the results may be more generalizable and applicable across diverse elementary education contexts.

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