

Reconstruction of Differentiation-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Strategies to Accommodate Cognitive and Social Diversity

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to reconstruct a differentiation-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategy to accommodate the cognitive and social diversity of students. The background of this research is based on the fact that PAI learning practices still tend to be uniform, while classroom conditions show a high level of heterogeneity. The approach used in this study is qualitative with a conceptual study through an analysis of relevant literature from the past five years. The results of the study indicate that differentiated learning can be a strategic solution through the development of three main aspects: content differentiation, process differentiation, and learning products. In addition, the implementation of this strategy is supported by the use of diagnostic assessments, flexible grouping, and adaptive adjustments to learning methods and media. The reconstruction of the PAI learning strategy also emphasizes the importance of integrating Islamic values in every learning process, thus not only improving cognitive learning outcomes but also strengthening the affective and spiritual dimensions of students. The role of the teacher as an adaptive facilitator is a key factor in the successful implementation of differentiated learning. Thus, this study concludes that a differentiation-based learning strategy can create PAI learning that is more inclusive, contextual, and oriented to the needs of students, and contributes to improving the overall quality of learning.

Informasi Artikel

Kata Kunci:

Pembelajaran Diferensiasi, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Keberagaman Peserta Didik

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk merekonstruksi strategi pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) berbasis diferensiasi dalam rangka mengakomodasi keberagaman kognitif dan sosial peserta didik. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada kenyataan bahwa praktik pembelajaran PAI masih cenderung bersifat seragam, sementara kondisi kelas menunjukkan tingkat heterogenitas yang tinggi. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dengan jenis kajian konseptual melalui analisis literatur yang relevan dalam lima tahun terakhir. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran diferensiasi dapat menjadi solusi strategis melalui pengembangan tiga aspek utama, yaitu diferensiasi konten, proses, dan produk pembelajaran. Selain itu, implementasi strategi ini didukung oleh penggunaan asesmen diagnostik, pengelompokan fleksibel, serta penyesuaian metode dan media pembelajaran yang adaptif. Rekonstruksi strategi pembelajaran PAI juga menekankan pentingnya integrasi nilai-nilai keislaman dalam setiap proses pembelajaran, sehingga tidak hanya meningkatkan hasil belajar kognitif, tetapi juga memperkuat dimensi afektif dan spiritual peserta didik. Peran guru sebagai fasilitator adaptif menjadi kunci utama dalam keberhasilan penerapan pembelajaran diferensiasi. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi pembelajaran berbasis diferensiasi mampu menciptakan pembelajaran PAI yang lebih inklusif, kontekstual, dan berorientasi pada kebutuhan peserta didik, serta berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan kualitas pembelajaran secara menyeluruh.

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1. Introduction

The reality of learning in Indonesia shows that most educational processes still follow a uniform pattern, even though the students involved have very diverse characteristics. Data shows that learning approaches that do not consider individual differences contribute to low student engagement and disparities in learning outcomes across various levels of education.(Purwanti et al., 2024). A mismatch between the learning strategies used and students' needs has the potential to cause the learning process to lose meaning, making it difficult to achieve holistic educational goals. Therefore, serious efforts are needed to reconstruct learning strategies that are more adaptive and responsive to student diversity.

Cognitive diversity of students reflects differences in thinking abilities, conceptual understanding, and learning styles. Meanwhile, social diversity encompasses cultural background, family environment, and social interactions, which also influence the learning process.(M. Sutralhis & Novaria, 2023)In this context, learning approaches that ignore these differences have the potential to create gaps in learning outcomes. Research shows that student diversity actually presents an opportunity for teachers to develop more flexible and contextual learning strategies, making the learning process more inclusive and meaningful.(Sodiah, 2024).

One relevant approach to accommodating this diversity is differentiated learning. This approach emphasizes adapting learning strategies based on students' needs, interests, and readiness to learn. In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, differentiation is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects but also encompasses students' affective and social dimensions. This aligns with research findings that differentiated learning can increase student engagement and deepen understanding of religious values in everyday life.(Adzim et al., 2024).

However, the implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) still faces various obstacles, particularly related to teacher readiness in designing adaptive learning strategies. Many learning practices remain conventional and have not fully integrated the principle of differentiation optimally. However, a differentiation strategy requires teachers to be able to map student needs, design a variety of learning methods, and conduct flexible and ongoing evaluation.(Munawir et al., 2025).

The reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies based on differentiation aims not only to improve learning effectiveness but also to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment. From a pedagogical perspective, this approach allows each student to receive learning opportunities tailored to their potential and characteristics. Furthermore, the integration of differentiation strategies into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning also

contributes to improving student well-being (school well-being), which encompasses aspects of comfort, engagement, and meaningfulness of the learning process.

Various previous studies have discussed the implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (ISE), but most have focused on practical application in specific classrooms. These studies have not yet explored the conceptual reconstruction of differentiated learning strategies that integrate students' cognitive and social diversity within a comprehensive learning framework. Therefore, this study offers a novelty in the form of a reconstruction of a differentiation-based Islamic Religious Education (ISE) learning strategy that combines diagnostic assessment, differentiation of content, process, and product, and the integration of Islamic values into inclusive learning.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the research aims to deeply understand the use of digital technology in Islamic Religious Education learning, both in terms of concepts, opportunities, and implementation challenges. Research data was obtained from various written sources such as books, journal articles, research results, and other scientific documents relevant to the study's theme.

Literature was obtained through a search of scientific articles on Google Scholar, SINTA, and various national journals relevant to the topic of differentiated learning and Islamic Religious Education. The literature criteria used included articles published between 2020 and 2026, directly relevant to differentiated learning, and available in full-text form. Literature irrelevant to the research focus was eliminated during the selection stage. The obtained data were then analyzed using content analysis techniques to identify key themes that support the reconstruction of differentiation-based Islamic Religious Education learning strategies

3. Results and Discussion

The results of the literature analysis indicate that the reconstruction of PAI learning strategies based on differentiation can be carried out through five main components, namely: (1) diagnostic assessment as a basis for mapping student learning needs; (2) differentiation of content according to learning readiness; (3) differentiation of processes through variations in learning methods; (4) differentiation of products through diverse forms of assignments and evaluations; and (5) flexible evaluation that adapts to student characteristics. In addition, the results of the study indicate that the success of the implementation of

differentiated learning is greatly influenced by teacher competence, school support, and the use of learning technology.

Table 1: Comprehensive Mapping of the Reconstructed Differentiation-Based PAI Learning Strategy

No	Strategy Component	Operationalization & Implementation Steps	Pedagogical & Spiritual Function	References / Citations
1	Diagnostic Assessment	Administering cognitive and non-cognitive assessments before the instructional cycle begins . Mapping student readiness, learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), interests, and social-environmental backgrounds.	Provides data-driven baselines to replace rigid, uniform learning patterns . Serves as the primary foundation for accurate and flexible student grouping.	Purwanti et al., 2024; Seffi & Perseveranda, 2025; Yasin, 2026.
2	Content Differentiation	Structuring learning materials in a tiered, multi-level framework according to student capability . Providing varied text levels: basic texts/summaries for initial learners and complex thematic materials for advanced learners.	Ensures equitable access to knowledge, allowing students to learn at their own manageable pace . Prevents struggling students from being left behind while keeping high-achievers challenged.	Yuliana & Bashith, 2025; Fauziyah et al., 2025.
3	Process Differentiation	Deploying a variety of student-centered methods such as Case Studies, Problem-Based Learning (PBL), and Project-Based Learning .	Accommodates sensory learning styles and breaks the monotony of conventional lecturing . Empowers the teacher to actively	Sari, 2025; Daulay & Darlis, 2025; Kholipah et al., 2025; Ariani et al., 2024.

		Integrating digital and multimedia platforms (videos, audio recordings of verses, and interactive visuals).	step into the role of an adaptive facilitator rather than a mere information transmitter.	
4	Product Differentiation	Offering multiple choices for final learning outputs and assignments based on student interest . Allowing students to express understanding through digital presentations, written essays, creative media projects, or personal reflections.	Stimulates student creativity and heavily builds confidence in their personal potential . Facilitates the authentic internalisation and contextual expression of religious values.	Taufiq, 2025; Setiawan, 2025.
5	Flexible Evaluation	Shifting from uniform testing to continuous, adaptive formative and summative assessments . Grading and feedback mechanisms tailored to track individual student growth and learning progress.	Captures a highly accurate, stress-free representation of real student progression . Enables immediate, customized teaching adjustments and personalized interventions .	Munawir et al., 2025; Yuliana & Bashith, 2025.

The Nature of Differentiated Learning in Islamic Religious Education

In learning, differentiation is a pedagogical approach that places students at the center of the learning process, taking into account differences in individual characteristics. In this approach, teachers no longer use uniform learning strategies, but instead adapt methods, materials, and evaluations based on students' learning needs. This is important because each student has a different background, abilities, interests, and

learning styles, so flexible and adaptive strategies are needed to optimally achieve learning objectives.(Yuliana & Bashith, 2025).

Differentiated learning encompasses three main aspects: content, process, and product differentiation. Content differentiation relates to the adjustment of learning materials to students' readiness levels, while process differentiation refers to variations in learning methods or activities used to understand the material. Product differentiation relates to the form of learning outcomes produced by students as a representation of their understanding. These three aspects form the main foundation for designing inclusive and responsive learning to student diversity.(Fauziyah et al., 2025).

In the context of Islamic Religious Education, differentiated learning has strong relevance due to the holistic nature of learning objectives. Islamic Religious Education is not only oriented towards cognitive aspects but also encompasses the affective and spiritual dimensions of students.(Abdul Ghani et al., 2023)Therefore, the learning strategies used must be able to accommodate differences in religious understanding, religious experiences, and moral development in students. Differentiated learning allows teachers to adapt learning approaches to be more contextual and meaningful for each student.(Lestari et al., 2024).

The application of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also aligns with the principle of inclusivity in Islamic education, which values human diversity. From an Islamic perspective, individual differences are a natural law (sunnatullah) that must be managed wisely in the educational process. Therefore, differentiated learning can be a means of implementing the values of justice and equality in education, so that every student receives learning opportunities that align with their potential.(Suwahyu, 2025).

From a practical perspective, differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) can increase student engagement in the learning process. When students are given the opportunity to learn according to their interests and abilities, they tend to be more active and motivated in participating. This results in increased understanding of the material and internalization of religious values in everyday life. Thus, learning is not only informative but also transformational.(Taufiq, 2025).

Differentiated learning is also supported by developments in national education policy, particularly the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning. In its implementation, teachers are required to

conduct diagnostic assessments to understand students' learning profiles before designing instruction. This demonstrates that differentiated learning is not merely a strategy but also part of a new paradigm in a more adaptive and humanistic education system.(Seffi & Perseveranda, 2025). Pedagogically, differentiated learning is firmly grounded in constructivist theory, which views learning as an active process of constructing knowledge. From this perspective, students do not simply passively receive information but actively construct their understanding through meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, differentiation in learning is crucial to providing learning experiences tailored to individual students' needs and abilities.

In addition to constructivism, the differentiation approach also aligns with humanistic theory, which emphasizes the importance of developing individual potential holistically. This theory views students as unique individuals with emotional, social, and spiritual needs that must be addressed in the learning process. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, the humanistic approach is particularly relevant because learning aims not only to increase knowledge but also to shape students' character and personality. Differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education is not merely a technical strategy, but an approach with strong philosophical and pedagogical foundations. This approach enables teachers to create more inclusive, adaptive, and student-centered learning. This is crucial in facing the challenges of modern education, which demands flexibility and innovation in the learning process.

The essence of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lies in bridging individual student differences through diverse and contextual learning strategies. By integrating content, process, and product aspects, and supported by constructivist and humanistic foundations, differentiated learning is expected to improve the quality of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning comprehensively, from a cognitive, affective, and spiritual perspective.

Reconstruction of Differentiation-Based Islamic Education Learning Strategy

The differentiation-based reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies is a systematic effort to redesign the learning process to be more adaptive to student diversity. This reconstruction goes beyond technical modifications, but involves a paradigm shift from uniform learning to learning centered on individual student needs. In this context, differentiation becomes an approach capable of addressing the challenges of class heterogeneity through flexible and contextual learning management.(Yuliana &

Bashith, 2025).

The first step in reconstructing a learning strategy is conducting a diagnostic assessment to identify student characteristics, including learning readiness, interests, and learning styles. The results of this assessment form the basis for designing an appropriate differentiation strategy. Without mapping student needs, differentiated learning will not be optimal because it lacks a clear basis for determining appropriate learning strategies.

In terms of content differentiation, reconstructing learning strategies involves structuring material in a tiered manner according to students' ability levels. Teachers can provide a variety of learning resources, such as simple texts for students with basic skills and more complex materials for those with advanced abilities. This way, each student can access material at their own pace without feeling left behind or unchallenged. This strategy has proven effective in consistently improving students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material.

Process differentiation is achieved through the use of varied and flexible learning methods. Teachers can combine various approaches, such as group discussions, project-based learning, and problem-based learning. This variation allows students to learn according to their individual learning styles, whether visual, auditory, or kinesthetic. This makes the learning process more inclusive and able to accommodate diverse learning needs.(Sari, 2025).

In product differentiation, the reconstruction of learning strategies emphasizes the diversity of learning outcomes produced by students. Teachers don't just assign one type of assignment, but provide a choice of products such as presentations, essays, creative projects, or personal reflections. This provides opportunities for students to express their understanding according to their individual abilities and interests. This approach also encourages creativity and increases students' confidence in learning.(Taufiq, 2025).

The reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies based on differentiation must also integrate Islamic values into every aspect of learning. Differentiation serves not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a means to instill values such as justice, tolerance, and respect for differences. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning becomes more contextual because it can connect the material to the diverse realities of students' lives.

The integration of technology and learning media is also a crucial part of reconstructing differentiation strategies. The

use of multimedia in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can help teachers present material in a more varied and engaging way. Digital media allows for the presentation of material in various formats, such as video, audio, and interactive visuals, thus adapting to students' varying learning styles.(Daulay & Darlis, 2025).

The teacher's role in differentiated learning has undergone a significant transformation, from a transmitter of information to an adaptive facilitator. Teachers are required to be able to manage heterogeneous classes by providing guidance tailored to individual students' needs. This includes the ability to design learning, facilitate interactions, and provide constructive feedback. Thus, teachers act as mediators, helping students reach their full potential.

In its implementation, reconstructing a differentiated learning strategy also requires support from the school environment, both in terms of policy and infrastructure. Schools need to provide space for teachers to innovate and provide ongoing training related to differentiated learning. Without such support, the implementation of a differentiated strategy will be difficult to achieve optimally, even if the concept is well understood.

This reconstruction of learning strategies also has implications for changes to the learning evaluation system. Assessments are no longer uniform, but are tailored to student characteristics and abilities. Evaluation is conducted continuously through flexible formative and summative assessments. This allows teachers to obtain a more accurate picture of student learning progress and provide appropriate interventions. Reconstructing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies based on differentiation is a strategic step in creating inclusive, adaptive, and meaningful learning. Through the development of differentiated content, processes, and products, as well as the integration of Islamic values and the role of teachers as facilitators, PAI learning is expected to be able to address the challenges of student diversity more effectively and sustainably.

Implementation of Differentiation Strategies in Accommodating Cognitive and Social Diversity

The implementation of differentiation strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is the operational stage of the differentiation concept, previously designed theoretically. At this stage, teachers actualize learning strategies in real-world classroom practice, taking into account the cognitive and social diversity of students. Learning is no longer carried out uniformly, but rather tailored to students' diverse learning needs. This implementation is crucial because the success of

differentiated learning is largely determined by the teacher's ability to manage the learning process flexibly and contextually.

In concrete practice in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) classes, differentiation strategies can be realized through varied learning activities that allow students to learn according to their abilities and interests. Teachers can develop learning activities such as group discussions, religious case studies, and projects based on Islamic values. This variation provides space for students to actively participate in learning, making the learning process more meaningful and less monotonous. Furthermore, this practice can also increase student engagement in understanding religious material contextually.(Setiawan, 2025).

One important component in implementing differentiated learning is the use of diagnostic assessments. These assessments serve to identify students' initial abilities, learning styles, and needs before learning begins. Through diagnostic assessments, teachers can design more targeted learning strategies, ensuring that each student receives a learning experience tailored to their characteristics. Without these assessments, differentiated learning risks being ineffective because it is not based on accurate data.(Yasin, 2026).

Diagnostic assessments focus not only on cognitive aspects but also encompass non-cognitive dimensions such as students' motivation, interests, and social circumstances. This is crucial because learning success is determined not only by intellectual ability but also by psychological and social factors. By understanding these two aspects, teachers can design more holistic learning that addresses students' learning needs comprehensively.

Differentiation can also be implemented through flexible student grouping. In this strategy, students are not placed in fixed groups but can move according to learning needs. Grouping can be based on ability level, interests, or learning styles. This approach allows for more dynamic social interactions and provides opportunities for students to learn from each other. Furthermore, flexible grouping also helps teachers provide more focused attention to specific student groups.

Adapting learning methods is a crucial aspect of implementing differentiation. Teachers need to utilize a variety of learning approaches, such as problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and project-based learning. This variety of methods allows students to learn according to their individual learning styles, making the learning process more effective and inclusive. Thus, Islamic Religious

Education learning is not only informative but also encourages active student involvement in building their own understanding.(Kholipah et al., 2025).

In addition to methods, the use of varied learning media is also part of implementing a differentiation strategy. Teachers can utilize digital, visual, and audio media to support the learning process. The use of diverse media allows students with different learning styles to still understand the material well. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), learning media can also be used to present material in a more contextual and engaging manner, making it easier for students to internalize religious values in their daily lives.(Ariani et al., 2024).

Implementing differentiation strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is a complex process that requires teacher preparedness in various aspects, from planning to evaluation. Successful implementation depends heavily on teachers' ability to utilize diagnostic assessments, manage flexible grouping, and adapt learning methods and media. When implemented optimally, differentiation strategies can create more inclusive and adaptive learning, effectively accommodating students' cognitive and social diversity

4. Conclusion

Based Reconstructing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies based on differentiation is a strategic step in addressing the challenges of cognitive and social diversity of students in heterogeneous classrooms. This approach emphasizes that learning can no longer be delivered uniformly but must be tailored to the needs, characteristics, and potential of each student. Through differentiation of content, process, and product, PAI learning can become more inclusive and adaptive, and provide space for each student to develop optimally, across cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions.

The implementation of differentiation strategies in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning demonstrates that successful learning depends heavily on teachers' ability to manage classrooms flexibly and data-driven. The use of diagnostic assessments, flexible grouping, and adaptation of learning methods and media are crucial components in accommodating student diversity. Furthermore, the integration of Islamic values into each differentiation process strengthens PAI's function not only as a knowledge transfer tool but also as a means of character development and the internalization of contextual religious values.

The research results show that the reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies based on differentiation can be realized through diagnostic assessment, content differentiation, process differentiation, product differentiation, and flexible evaluation. These five components form an adaptive and inclusive learning framework to accommodate the cognitive and social diversity of students

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