

Differentiated Learning as a Humanistic Approach to Improving the Quality of Education in Indonesian Context

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the application of differentiated learning as a humanistic approach to improving the quality of education in Indonesia. The study was conducted using a systematic literature review using the PRISMA approach of sixteen scientific articles published between 2022 and 2025. Article selection was based on specific inclusion criteria, while methodological quality was assessed using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) instrument. The review results indicate that differentiated learning can strengthen student engagement, foster learning motivation, and improve academic achievement by adapting materials, methods, and evaluation formats to student needs. The humanistic approach, which emphasizes empathy, freedom, and respect for individual potential, has proven to be a key element in the success of this strategy. Teachers, acting as facilitators, contribute significantly to creating an open and inclusive learning climate. Although its implementation still faces obstacles such as limited resources, uneven teacher understanding, and the digital divide, the Independent Curriculum policy provides innovative space for its development. The integration of humanitarian values, technological advancements, and school collaboration is the foundation for sustainable educational transformation. Thus, differentiated learning reflects an educational paradigm that is more adaptive, inclusive, and oriented towards holistic human development.

Keywords: Differentiated learning; Humanistic approach; Educational quality; PRISMA; Indonesia

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of human resources, the foundation of a nation's progress. The primary focus of educational development in Indonesia today is improving the quality of education to produce students who are not only cognitively intelligent

but also possess character, empathy, and the ability to adapt to changing times (Satria et al., 2025). Educational quality is often used as a benchmark for the success of the national education system because it reflects the extent to which educational institutions are able to produce individuals who are competent, competitive, and possess noble personalities (Raharjo 2014). Learning in schools should not only emphasize academic achievement but also emphasize a process that values the uniqueness and diversity of students.

Nationally, the quality of education in Indonesia still shows significant disparities, both between regions and between educational institutions. According to the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results released by the OECD, Indonesia ranked 69th out of 81 countries, with literacy scores of 359 in reading, 366 in mathematics, and 383 in science (OECD, 2023). These scores are below the average for OECD member countries, reflecting the need for improvement in Indonesian students' critical thinking skills and conceptual understanding. Furthermore, a survey from the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2023 showed that approximately 34% of Indonesian students still experience difficulty understanding lessons due to learning methods that are not well-suited to their learning styles. This situation demonstrates that improving the quality of education cannot be achieved solely through curriculum reform, but also through innovative learning approaches that are more humane and tailored to students' needs.

On the island of Bali, known for its strong commitment to education and culture, the challenge of improving education quality remains significant. Based on data from the Bali Provincial Education, Youth, and Sports Office in 2023, the gross enrollment rate (APK) for senior high school students reached 89.4%, while the net enrollment rate (APM) was only 75.6% (Hitasari et al., 2015). This means that some high school-aged students are still not being optimally served. National assessment results indicate that student literacy and numeracy skills in several regencies, such as Buleleng and Karangasem, are still below the provincial average (Sugiarta et al., 2023). Furthermore, new challenges have emerged due to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, which requires teachers to be more creative in adapting learning to student characteristics. Many teachers are still adapting to the shift in learning paradigm from teacher-centered to student-centered, resulting in less than optimal learning effectiveness (Agustini et al., 2024).

National conditions demonstrate that improving the quality of education depends not only on policies or facilities, but also on the learning practices implemented in the classroom (Yanti et al., 2024). Indonesia is reaching a point where traditional, uniform learning approaches are no longer adequate to address the diversity of student characteristics. More adaptive, contextual strategies grounded in humanitarian values are needed so that the learning process can truly develop students' full potential (Pradnyani et al., 2025).

One approach considered capable of addressing this challenge is differentiated learning. This approach positions students as subjects of learning by recognizing their differences in abilities, interests, and learning styles (Wahyudi et al., 2023). Differentiated learning aligns with the view that each individual possesses unique potential that must be optimally facilitated (Santosa et al., 2024). By adapting content, processes, and learning products to students' needs, teachers can create an inclusive learning environment, respect differences, and encourage the growth of intrinsic motivation (Cahyono, 2023). This kind of approach plays a major role in

improving the quality of education because it provides space for students to develop according to their own rhythm and strengths, rather than being forced to follow uniform standards.

Theoretically, differentiated learning is rooted in humanistic and constructivist theories, which emphasize the importance of meaningful learning experiences. Humanistic theory emphasizes that the goal of education is to help students achieve self-actualization (Maslow, 1954). Constructivist theory, on the other hand, asserts that knowledge is constructed through direct experience and individual reflection on the world around them (Akpan & Kennedy, 2020). These two theories combine in the practice of differentiated learning, which views students as autonomous individuals with unique needs that need to be facilitated for optimal academic and emotional growth.

Although the concept of differentiated learning has become widely recognized in the Independent Curriculum policy, its implementation in the field still faces gaps. Most teachers still understand differentiated learning as merely a variation in teaching methods, rather than as an educational philosophy that places humanity at the center of the learning process. Limited training, administrative burdens, and a lack of understanding of diagnostic assessments mean that the implementation of the principle of differentiation has not fully achieved its intended results (Raharjo, 2014; Cahyono, 2023; Yanti et al., 2024; Satria et al., 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2023; Wiarishintia et al., 2024). The earlier studies highlight the need for a deeper understanding of how a humanistic approach to differentiated learning can be truly implemented to improve the quality of education.

This study is important because it highlights the urgency of education that is not solely oriented toward academic outcomes but also toward the development of holistic human potential. Through a deeper understanding of differentiated learning as a humanistic approach, it is hoped that a new awareness will emerge that true educational quality is measured not only by grades but by the extent to which schools are able to accommodate the uniqueness of each student. This paper aims to explain the concept of differentiated learning in the context of Balinese education and examine its role in creating more meaningful, inclusive, and high-quality learning for all students.

METHOD

Design

This study employed a systematic literature review guided by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This approach was chosen to collect and periodically review previous research findings related to differentiated learning for school children in Indonesia. This design facilitated an in-depth analysis of research trends, key findings, and knowledge gaps in the field of differentiated learning.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through a search of scientific articles from databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and ResearchGate using the keywords “differentiated learning,” and “student engagement.” Inclusion criteria were set for articles published between 2015–2025, using English or Indonesian, and focusing on the context of differentiated learning. After the initial identification process, a screening stage was carried out to remove duplicates and irrelevant articles, followed by an eligibility stage to assess the suitability of the article

content to the research objectives. Articles that met the criteria were then included in the inclusion stage for further analysis.

Data Trustworthiness

Data reliability was ensured by implementing transparent PRISMA procedures and assessing article quality using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tool. Each article that passed the inclusion stage was assessed using the eight main JBI criteria, namely: (1) clarity of research objectives; (2) appropriateness of the design to the research objectives; (3) clarity of data collection methods; (4) reliability and validity of research instruments; (5) clarity of analysis and interpretation of results; (6) control of potential bias in the research; (7) linkage between research results and the theoretical context; and (8) clarity of conclusions supported by empirical data. Articles with a score of at least six out of the eight criteria were declared to have adequate methodological quality and were included in the synthesis analysis process. The application of the JBI assessment ensures that the literature used is truly credible, relevant, and able to represent valid scientific evidence in explaining the role of differentiated learning.

Analysis

The analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, which extracts key themes from selected literature based on the research focus. Each article was reviewed to identify patterns, trends, and relationships between digital media use and increased student participation in learning. Findings from various sources were then synthesized to identify the research problem.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Prisma Model

Figure 1 Prisma

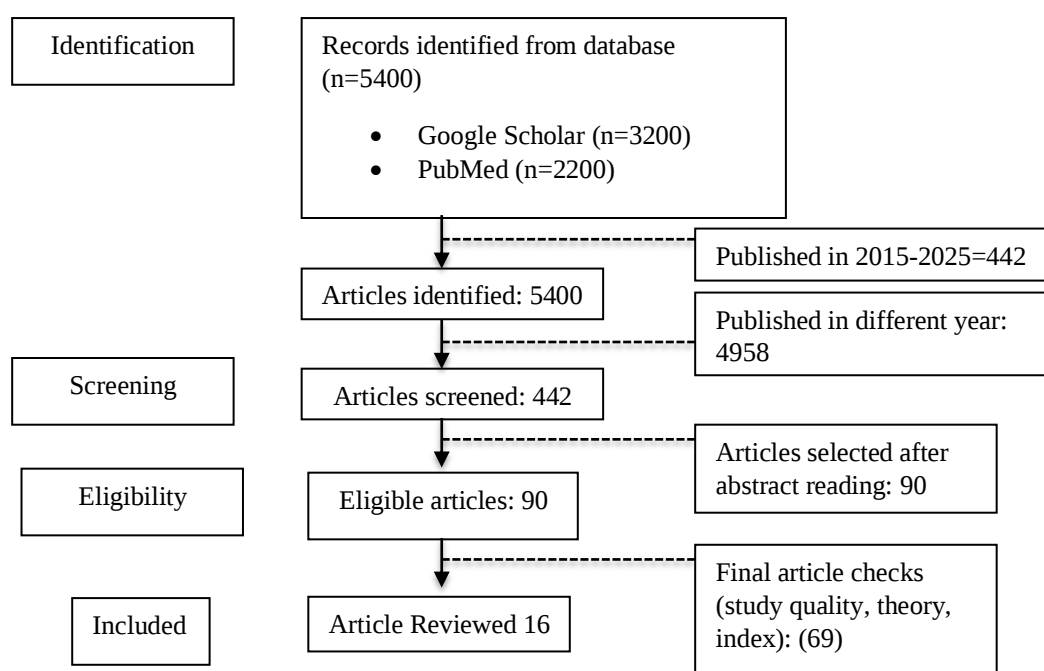


Figure 1 PRISMA illustrates the systematic literature selection process, conducted in accordance with systematic review procedures. In the initial identification phase, 65 articles were obtained from various online databases such as Google Scholar and ScienceDirect. After a screening process to eliminate duplication and assess initial suitability, 69 articles remained, which were then further evaluated at the eligibility stage based on topic relevance, research context, and methodological quality using the JBI criteria. Of these, 16 articles met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed further. This flow shows that many methodologically screened studies consistently highlight the effectiveness of differentiated learning on student learning outcomes, motivation, and critical thinking skills at various levels. This PRISMA diagram confirms the rigorous, transparent, and evidence-based selection process, ensuring that the articles analyzed are truly representative of the role of differentiated learning as a humanistic approach to improving the quality of education.

List Journal

This systematic review involved 16 selected articles that underwent a selection process based on PRISMA criteria and a methodological quality assessment using the JBI Critical Appraisal Tool. Each article included was from a Sinta-indexed national journal with a quality level ranging from Sinta 2 to Sinta 5, indicating that the publications maintain adequate academic standards and scientific validity. The articles used ranged from 2022 to 2025, ensuring the relevance of the findings to current learning conditions and the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. Most studies used a quantitative approach, focusing on variables such as learning outcomes, motivation, critical thinking skills, and the application of differentiated learning strategies at various levels of education. This data served as the basis for a thematic analysis to understand how differentiated learning contributes to improving the quality of education in a humanistic context.

Table 1 Authors and Journal

N	Name & Year	Journal
1	Aulin et al., (2023)	<i>Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research</i>
2	Manalu et al., (2024)	<i>Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan</i>
3	Roslina et al., (2024)	<i>Ideguru: Jurnal Karya Ilmiah Guru</i>
4	Simbolon et al., (2024)	<i>Jurnal Pendidikan Sang Surya</i>
5	Sasmita et al., (2023)	<i>Pedagogy</i>
6	Pasaribu et al., (2025)	<i>Dharmas Education Jurnal</i>
7	Makmun et al., (2023)	<i>Jurnal Ilmiah Profesi Pendidikan</i>
8	Hamidah and Oktaviani, (2023)	<i>Prima Magistra: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan</i>
9	Nahak and Lawa (2023)	<i>Jurnal Rumpun Ilmu Pendidikan</i>
10	Marfuah et al., (2024)	<i>Journal of Education Research</i>
12	Bilantua et al., (2024)	<i>Aksara: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal</i>
13	Cindyana et al., (2022)	<i>Jurnal Pajar (Pendidikan dan Pengajaran)</i>
14	Noviyanti et al., (2023)	<i>Prima Magistra: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan,</i>
15	Laila et al., (2022)	<i>Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan</i>
16	Kusumaningpuri (2024)	<i>Jurnal Didaktika Pendidikan Dasar</i>

Research on differentiated learning has gained increasing attention in various educational institutions in Indonesia over the past three years. The dominance of quantitative research reflects researchers' tendency to measure the direct impact of differentiation on students' learning outcomes and cognitive abilities. Most articles received JBI assessment scores between 6 and 7, indicating good methodological quality and consistent findings in the

field. Furthermore, the diversity of Sinta levels indicates that studies on differentiated learning are conducted not only in higher academic settings but also by educational practitioners in schools and teacher training institutions. These results demonstrate that the implementation of differentiated learning strategies has been recognized as a relevant and effective pedagogical practice for creating a more adaptive learning process oriented toward human values in improving the quality of education.

Research Characteristics

This section describes the characteristics of the 16 studies analyzed, including their approaches, methods, and focus related to differentiated learning. Most of the studies used a quantitative approach, focusing on student learning outcomes, motivation, and critical thinking skills at various levels of education.

Table 2 Research Characteristics

N	Name & Year	Variable	Method	Result
1	Aulin et al., (2023)	- Differentiated Learning Strategies - Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	There is an influence of differentiated learning strategies on learning outcomes
2	Manalu et al., (2024)	- Differentiated Learning - Religious Attitude - Critical Thinking Skills	Quantitative	There is an influence of differentiated learning on students' critical thinking abilities.
3	Roslina et al., (2024)	- Differentiated Learning Strategies - Scientific Literacy	Quantitative	The influence of differentiated learning strategies on scientific literacy in
4	Simbolon et al., (2024)	- Differentiated Learning - Writing Skills	Quantitative	There is a significant influence on the Implementation of Differentiated Learning Using the Project Based Learning Model.
5	Sasmita et al., (2023)	- Differentiated Learning - Motivation - Student Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	The results of learning mathematics in differentiated learning based on RME using interactive media quizwhizzer are better than the results of learning mathematics in expository learning.
6	Pasaribu et al., (2025)	- Differentiated Learning Strategies - Writing Skills	Quantitative	Differentiated learning strategies are effective in improving students' drama text writing skills.
7	Makmun et al., (2023)	- Differentiated Learning - Student Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	There is an influence of differentiated content learning assisted by technology media on student learning outcomes.

8	Hamidah and Oktaviani, (2023)	- Differentiated Learning - Motivation - Student Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	Student learning motivation in differentiated learning can improve student learning outcomes
9	Nahak and Lawa (2023)	- Differentiated Learning - Critical Thinking Skills	Quantitative	There is an influence of differentiated learning in the project-based learning model on students' critical thinking abilities.
10	Marfuah et al., (2024)	- Differentiated Learning - Student Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	There is an influence of differentiated learning on student learning outcomes
12	Bilantua et al., (2024)	- Differentiated Learning - Student Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	Differentiated Learning has a positive effect on improving student learning outcomes.
13	Cindyana et al., (2022)	- Differentiated learning - Reasoning skills	Quantitative	There is an influence of differentiated learning assisted by RME-based geometry teaching materials on students' reasoning abilities.
14	Noviyanti et al., (2023)	- Differentiated learning - Students' computational thinking skills	Quantitative	Elementary school students' computational thinking abilities increased after being given differentiated learning treatment.
15	Laila et al., (2022)	- Differentiated Learning Strategies - Learning Outcomes	Quantitative	There is an effect of treatment of differentiated learning strategies on student learning outcomes SMA Negeri 1 Lahusa for the academic year 2021/2022
16	Kusumaning puri (2024)	Differentiated Learning	Quantitative	The implementation of differentiated learning is optimal and effective

The review of research characteristics in Table 2 shows that differentiated learning consistently demonstrates a positive impact on improving student learning outcomes and developing cognitive abilities. Most studies found that implementing differentiated strategies helps students understand the material more deeply because the learning process is tailored to their abilities and learning styles. Several studies also confirmed that differentiation increases student motivation and engagement in class, especially when combined with project-based learning models or digital technology. The fact that almost all studies are quantitative suggests the need to expand qualitative approaches in the future to understand the dynamics and challenges of implementing differentiation from both teacher and student perspectives. Overall, these findings confirm that differentiated learning is not simply a methodological strategy but also a humanistic approach that encourages adaptive, inclusive, and potential-centered learning for individual students in Bali and in Indonesia in general.

This is a synthesis of 16 articles that underwent the PRISMA selection process and methodological quality assessment using the JBI instrument. Each study was categorized based on key aspects related to the application of differentiated learning to improve educational quality.

Table 3 Key Findings

Aspects	Summary of Study Findings	Number of Studies
Implementation of Differentiated Learning Strategies	Improve student participation and learning outcomes through adjustments to learning content, processes, and products.	12
Humanistic Approach in Learning	Promote a learning environment that is inclusive, empathetic, and respects student diversity.	8
Impact on the Quality of Education	Contribute to improving the quality of education, especially in cognitive aspects and active student participation.	10
The Role of Teachers	The success of differentiation depends on the teacher's ability to conduct learning.	9
Implementation Challenges	Hampered by limited teacher understanding, time, and learning support facilities.	7

Interpretation of Table 3 shows that differentiated learning has a significant impact on improving the quality of student learning processes and outcomes. The majority of studies found that consistently applied differentiation can increase student motivation, participation, and learning independence. Furthermore, the humanistic approach that accompanies its implementation helps strengthen an inclusive classroom climate and addresses students' emotional needs. However, challenges such as limited teacher understanding and a lack of supporting facilities remain obstacles to implementation in several regions, including Bali. Overall, these findings confirm that differentiated learning is not only pedagogically effective but also has philosophical value that aligns with the principles of humanity and educational justice.

Discussion

Research Trends Related to Differentiated Learning

An analysis of sixteen articles that passed the PRISMA selection and JBI assessments shows that the research trend on differentiated learning in Indonesia increased sharply during the 2022–2025 period. Most studies focused on the application of differentiation strategies to improve student learning outcomes, motivation, and critical thinking skills at various levels of education. [Aulin et al., \(2023\)](#) and [Laila et al., \(2022\)](#) found that the systematic application of differentiation strategies significantly improved student learning outcomes. These findings are supported by [Marfuah et al., \(2024\)](#) and [Bilantua et al., \(2024\)](#), who emphasized that differentiation creates more meaningful learning experiences because students are actively involved in the learning process. The consistency of these results demonstrates that the application of differentiation has become a new direction in pedagogical practice in Indonesian schools.

Most articles emphasize students' cognitive aspects. Differentiation implemented through variations in content and learning processes can improve conceptual understanding

and student learning outcomes (Makmun et al., 2023; Hamidah & Oktaviani, 2023). Similar findings were reported by Pasaribu et al., (2025) who examined the effectiveness of differentiation strategies in improving drama writing skills, and Simbolon et al., (2024) who found that a similar approach can strengthen creative writing skills. This pattern demonstrates researchers' tendency to explore the direct influence of differentiation on students' academic achievement. However, there has been little research examining how differentiated learning occurs contextually in the classroom or how teachers adapt this approach to their students' specific characteristics.

Another trend is evident in research linking differentiated learning with improved critical thinking and literacy skills. Implementing project-based differentiation can encourage students to think more reflectively and logically when solving problems (Manalu et al., 2024; Nahak & Lawa, 2023). Roslina et al., (2024) also showed that differentiated learning strategies have a positive impact on scientific literacy, especially when teachers facilitate activities relevant to everyday life. Noviyanti et al., (2023) added that implementing differentiation can improve elementary school students' computational thinking skills through a contextual and individual-needs-based approach. These findings reinforce the view that differentiation is not simply a variation of methods, but an approach that expands students' thinking capacity.

Several studies highlight the affective and motivational dimensions of implementing differentiated learning. Hamidah and Oktaviani (2023) noted that differentiation significantly increases student learning motivation because students feel valued and involved in the learning process. Sasmita et al., (2023) also confirmed that the use of interactive media in differentiated learning, such as QuizWhizzer, can increase interest in learning mathematics. Makmun et al., (2023) reinforces this finding by showing that the combination of content differentiation and technological media support significantly contributes to improved learning outcomes. This trend demonstrates that the effectiveness of differentiation depends not only on the variety of strategies but also on the teacher's ability to create a learning environment that fosters student emotional engagement.

The dominance of quantitative approaches in the sixteen studies indicates that researchers tend to assess the effectiveness of differentiation through measuring learning outcomes and improving academic scores. Nearly all studies used experimental or quasi-experimental designs to demonstrate the effect of differentiation implementation on specific variables. Only Kusumaningpuri (2024) used a qualitative approach to examine the process of implementing differentiation in the classroom and found that the practice was quite optimal, although challenges persisted in planning and assessment. This dominance of quantitative approaches provides strong empirical evidence of the effectiveness of differentiation, but also emphasizes the need for more in-depth research into the process, teacher challenges, and student experiences holistically.

These sixteen studies illustrate a consistent trend toward a more humanistic, participatory, and individual-centered educational paradigm. The findings of reviewed studies of explicitly demonstrate that differentiated learning fosters a learning environment that values student differences (Aulin et al., 2023; Hamidah & Oktaviani, 2023; Manalu et al., 2024). Other research findings, such as those from and showed that this strategy also strengthens the values of justice in the learning process (Laila et al., 2022; Bilantua et al. 2024) . The emerging research trend not only highlights pedagogical effectiveness but also confirms that

differentiated learning has become a concrete manifestation of the application of a humanist approach in efforts to improve the quality of national education..

Influencing Factors of Differentiated Learning

The successful implementation of differentiated learning depends heavily on the readiness and competence of teachers as the primary drivers of the learning process. Studies conducted by [Kusumaningpuri \(2024\)](#) and [Makmun et al., \(2023\)](#) demonstrate that teachers' ability to design adaptive learning is a dominant factor in the success of differentiation. Teachers who are able to conduct diagnostic assessments of students' learning styles and ability levels tend to be more effective in adapting methods, content, and evaluation ([Piscayanti et al., 2024](#)). [Hamidah and Oktaviani \(2023\)](#) confirms that teachers with a high level of reflection in the learning process can more easily adapt teaching strategies to individual students' needs. Therefore, pedagogical competence and teacher empathy for student diversity are key prerequisites for achieving meaningful differentiated learning.

Policy support and the school environment are also factors that determine the success of differentiated learning implementation. [Aulin et al., \(2023\)](#) found that schools with a collaborative culture among teachers were more successful in implementing differentiation than schools with individualistic work structures. The principal's involvement in supporting training and providing planning time also significantly impacts the consistency of classroom implementation. Several studies, such as those conducted by [Bilantua et al., \(2024\)](#) and [Sasmita et al., \(2023\)](#) show that the availability of learning resources, infrastructure support, and the involvement of teacher learning communities can strengthen readiness for implementing differentiated learning at various levels. A school environment that is open to innovation and provides space for professional reflection for teachers is a crucial foundation for the sustainability of this strategy.

Another factor influencing the effectiveness of differentiation is the characteristics of the students themselves. Research confirms that students' levels of motivation, interest, and active learning contribute to the optimal implementation of differentiation. Students with high levels of intrinsic motivation tend to adapt more easily to learning approaches that require independence and self-reflection ([Manalu et al., 2024](#); [Roslina et al., 2024](#)). Conversely, students who are passive or have learning difficulties require more intensive support to adapt to this strategy. This shows that the application of differentiation cannot be done uniformly, but needs to consider the psychological and social dynamics of students so that the results are truly in accordance with the principle of inclusivity that is being promoted ([Jayanti et al., 2025](#); [Nimanuho et al., 2025](#)).

The use of technology is also a crucial factor in strengthening the effectiveness of differentiated learning. Digital media such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Google Classroom make it easier for teachers to facilitate learning tailored to individual student needs ([Kartika & Budiarta 2025](#); [Noviyanti et al., 2023](#)). With technology, teachers can vary assignments and assessments without having to explicitly differentiate treatment in the classroom. However, many teachers still struggle to use digital media optimally due to limited technological literacy and school facilities ([Cahyono, 2023](#); [Hitasari et al., 2015](#)). This disparity has resulted in the implementation of digital-based differentiation not being fully implemented across all educational institutions, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure access.

Commitment to humanistic values is a crucial determinant of the success of differentiated learning. Nahak and Lawa (2023) emphasize that differentiation will only be effective if teachers instill the principles of empathy, respect for differences, and openness to the potential of each student. Teachers who view students as unique individuals will more easily create a safe learning environment that supports their emotional development. This finding reinforces the view that successful differentiation is not merely a technical or methodological issue, but also involves an awareness of human values and attitudes developed through the educational process itself. Thus, differentiated learning is not merely an instructional strategy but a reflection of an educational paradigm that humanizes human beings.

Humanistic Approach in Differentiated Learning

The humanistic approach to differentiated learning places students at the center of the educational process, where each individual is considered to have different potential, experiences, and learning needs. This principle is rooted in Carl Rogers' humanistic theory, which emphasizes the importance of personal and empathetic relationships between teachers and students, and Abraham Maslow's theory, which emphasizes the need for self-actualization as the pinnacle of human development. In the context of differentiated learning, teachers act as facilitators, creating a safe, open learning environment that respects individual differences. Implementing differentiation based on a humanistic approach can increase students' intrinsic motivation because they feel valued and have the freedom to choose learning methods that suit them (Hamidah & Oktaviani, 2023).

The humanistic approach not only emphasizes adapting learning strategies to students' cognitive abilities but also considers the emotional and social dimensions that influence the learning process. Manalu et al., (2024) found that teachers who implement differentiated learning with empathy and two-way communication tend to build stronger interpersonal relationships with students, resulting in a more open and collaborative learning environment. Laila et al., (2022) added that differentiation based on humanistic principles helps students develop self-awareness, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to reflect on their own learning experiences. In this way, learning is no longer simply a process of transferring knowledge, but rather a journey of self-discovery that fosters humanistic values such as empathy, self-confidence, and mutual respect.

From a pedagogical perspective, a humanistic approach provides teachers with greater room to adapt learning methods to student characteristics without sacrificing the meaning of learning. Bilantua et al., (2024) show that implementing differentiation based on humanistic values creates a more positive learning climate and fosters a sense of ownership in the learning process. Teachers act not only as guides but also as dialogue partners, assisting students in achieving independent understanding. Thus, differentiated learning is oriented toward holistic achievement, where students develop not only academically but also emotionally, socially, and morally. Values such as empathy, responsibility, and respect for diversity are central to the success of this strategy in the context of modern education.

The application of a humanistic approach to differentiated learning is a concrete manifestation of education that humanizes human beings. The success of differentiation depends not only on systematic learning planning but also on teachers' sincerity in understanding their students as whole individuals (Kusumaningpuri, 2024; Makmun et al., 2023). By combining methodological flexibility and emotional sensitivity, differentiated

learning can create a balance between academic and humanitarian needs. This approach is a crucial foundation for transforming education in Indonesia toward a more adaptive, equitable system oriented toward the development of full human potential.

Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing Differentiated Learning in Indonesia

The implementation of differentiated learning in Indonesia faces a number of complex challenges, particularly in the context of teacher preparedness and an education system that remains oriented toward uniformity. [Hamidah and Oktaviani \(2023\)](#) show that most teachers still struggle to understand the basic concept of differentiation, particularly in conducting diagnostic assessments and adapting learning based on individual student needs. These challenges are exacerbated by high administrative burdens, limited planning time, and minimal ongoing training. These conditions lead some teachers to implement differentiation only partially or as a formality without understanding its humanistic essence. Thus, the main challenge lies not only in the technical aspects of implementation but also in shifting teaching paradigms, which require teachers to be more reflective and adaptive to student diversity.

Limited facilities and infrastructure are also a major obstacle to the implementation of differentiated learning. Many schools in Indonesia lack adequate digital infrastructure to support the implementation of technology-based differentiation ([Ariani et al. 2024](#); [Noviyanti et al., 2023](#); [Zuhro et al., 2023](#)). Access to learning tools such as laptops, the internet, and digital platforms remains unequal across regions, particularly in non-urban schools ([Wiarishintia et al., 2024](#)). Yet, technology plays a crucial role in helping teachers efficiently adapt learning materials and methods to student needs. Without adequate support, the implementation of differentiation risks becoming unsustainable and its effectiveness difficult to measure. Therefore, providing teachers with digital facilities and literacy is crucial for optimal implementation of this strategy. However, despite these challenges, the reviewed research also points to many positive opportunities for developing differentiated learning in Indonesia. The majority of teachers are highly enthusiastic about more flexible and student-centered learning innovations ([Manalu et al., 2024](#); [Bilantua et al., 2024](#); [Aulin et al., 2023](#)). Teachers' willingness to experiment with new methods, including differentiation, provides the initial capital for shifting toward a more open learning culture. Furthermore, support from national education policy through the Independent Curriculum has created greater space for the implementation of this strategy. With teachers free to adapt lesson plans based on classroom conditions, differentiation now has the structural legitimacy to be implemented systematically. This opportunity can be the starting point for a paradigm shift from control-based learning to learning based on an understanding of individual differences.

The potential for success with differentiated learning also lies in the potential synergy between cultural values, technology, and humanistic education that are developing in Indonesia. The application of differentiation combined with the values of empathy and mutual cooperation can strengthen positive social interactions in the classroom ([Makmun et al., 2023](#)). Integrating a humanistic approach with differentiation strategies has the potential to produce learning that is not only adaptive but also builds mutual respect and social responsibility among students. If supported by sustainable teacher training policies and an evaluation system that focuses on process, not just results, differentiated learning can become a key pillar in transforming Indonesian education toward an inclusive, reflective system that supports the development of full human potential.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of sixteen studies reviewed, it can be concluded that differentiated learning is an effective and relevant approach to improving the quality of education in Indonesia. This strategy has been proven to foster student motivation, engagement, and independence in learning by adapting learning content, processes, and products to individual needs. The implementation of differentiated learning is also in line with the humanistic education paradigm that places students at the center of the learning process, where teachers act as empathetic and reflective facilitators. Although still faced with various challenges such as limited teacher understanding, supporting facilities, and the digital literacy gap, the research results indicate significant opportunities for developing differentiation through support from the Independent Curriculum policy, teacher professional training, and the integration of appropriate technology. By combining humanitarian values, pedagogical flexibility, and learning innovation, differentiated learning has the potential to become a key pillar in realizing an inclusive, adaptive, and equitable Indonesian education system for all students.

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