



DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING MODEL IN ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TO REALIZE INCLUSIVE LEARNING AT LES ASIFA TUTORING INSTITUTION

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ABSTRAK

Fokus model pengajaran adaptif sejauh ini masih didominasi oleh lingkungan sekolah formal, sedangkan analisis empiris mengenai penerapannya di lembaga bimbingan belajar non-formal masih sangat terbatas. Masalah tersebut memicu pentingnya rekonstruksi tata kelola pedagogis luar sekolah guna merespons keberagaman karakteristik anak secara adil. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengeksplorasi implementasi model pembelajaran diferensiasi dalam mata pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam untuk mewujudkan inklusivitas belajar siswa. Langkah-langkah penelitian dijalankan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui desain fenomenologi yang terstruktur. Prosedur pengumpulan data aktual dihimpun secara mendalam dari lima tutor dan tiga puluh lima siswa di Lembaga Bimbingan Belajar Les Asifa melalui teknik observasi lapangan, wawancara, serta dokumentasi tertulis, yang selanjutnya dianalisis menggunakan metode tematik. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi diferensiasi berhasil dioperasikan melalui pengklasifikasian kelas yang fleksibel berdasarkan kesiapan belajar siswa, meliputi kelas intervensi kelompok kecil, kelas intensif, hingga kelas unggulan. Sinergi ini terbukti efektif meningkatkan partisipasi emosional, motivasi intrinsik, serta rasa percaya diri anak tanpa adanya diskriminasi sosial. Simpulan utama menegaskan bahwa model pengajaran ini sukses merealisasikan ekosistem inklusif melalui modifikasi substansif pada aspek isi, proses, dan produk yang adaptif terhadap kebutuhan individu. Praktisi bimbingan belajar direkomendasikan menyusun draf modul ajar berbasis pemetaan kemampuan awal murid secara berkala demi menjamin keberlanjutan mutu proses edukasi kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: *Pembelajaran Diferensiasi; Pendidikan Inklusif; Pendidikan Non-Formal*

ABSTRACT

The focus of adaptive teaching models has so far been dominated by formal school environments, while empirical analysis of their implementation in non-formal tutoring institutions remains very limited. This issue highlights the importance of reconstructing out-of-school pedagogical governance to equitably address the diversity of children's characteristics. This study aims to explore the implementation of a differentiated learning model in Islamic Religious Education (IS) to achieve inclusive student learning. The research steps were carried out using a descriptive qualitative approach through a structured phenomenological design. The actual data collection procedure was collected in-depth from five tutors and thirty-five students at the Les Asifa Tutoring Institute through field observations, interviews, and written documentation, which were then analyzed using thematic methods. The research findings indicate that the differentiation strategy successfully operated through flexible class classification based on student learning readiness, including small-group intervention classes, intensive classes, and advanced classes. This synergy proved effective in increasing emotional participation, intrinsic motivation, and self-confidence in children without any social



discrimination. The main conclusion confirms that this teaching model successfully realized an inclusive ecosystem through substantive modifications to the content, process, and product aspects that were adaptive to individual needs. Tutoring practitioners are recommended to draft teaching modules based on mapping students' initial abilities on a regular basis to ensure the continued quality of contemporary educational processes.

Keywords: *Differentiated Learning; Inclusive Education; Non-Formal Education*

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-first-century education is characterized by the increasing complexity of student characteristics, demanding a profound transformation in classroom instructional approaches. Modern learners can no longer be viewed as homogeneous individuals; instead, they possess highly diverse cognitive abilities, socio-cultural backgrounds, varied learning styles, and distinct emotional needs. Conventional instructional frameworks that apply uniform teaching methods tend to neglect this individual uniqueness, thereby creating significant disparities in academic outcomes across different learner groups. To address these challenges, modern educational paradigms emphasize adaptive, flexible, and student-centered learning strategies that ensure meaningful and optimal learning experiences for every individual. Differentiated instruction has emerged as an essential pedagogical approach designed to systematically adjust learning content, instructional processes, and educational products according to students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles (Shareefa, 2022; Toromade et al., 2024). Furthermore, the global drive toward inclusive education reinforces the principle that every learner possesses an equal right to quality educational services that accommodate their unique developmental trajectories. By combining differentiated instruction with inclusive principles, educational environments can foster an equitable ecosystem where critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving skills are cultivated effectively for all learners (Akintayo et al., 2024; Musasa, 2024; Singha et al., 2025)

However, a substantial gap persists between these ideal pedagogical standards and the actual operational realities observed in practice. While formal curriculum frameworks increasingly advocate for differentiated instruction and inclusive practices, many educational settings continue to rely on rigid, one-size-fits-all teaching methodologies. This methodological rigidity is particularly evident in specialized subject areas such as Islamic Religious Education, where traditional rote learning and uniform lecture formats often prevail over adaptive instruction. Furthermore, the vast majority of existing empirical studies on differentiated learning have focused almost exclusively on formal primary and secondary school environments, largely ignoring the critical role played by non-formal educational settings. In reality, formal classroom instruction alone is frequently insufficient to meet the diverse academic and spiritual needs of students, leading many families to seek supplementary academic support through tutoring centers. This oversight creates a significant practical and theoretical disconnect, as non-formal educational institutions remain underutilized and underresearched as potential centers for adaptive, student-centered learning innovation (Kim et al., 2024; Kumaravel et al., 2024; Niyomves et al., 2024)

In field settings, the research subject—consisting of the tutors and students engaged in Islamic Religious Education at Les Asifa Tutoring Institution—faces distinct operational challenges when attempting to realize inclusive learning. Based on initial field observations, the research subject frequently encounters difficulties in balancing standardized curricular expectations with the highly varied readiness levels and learning profiles of individual students. Tutors often lack systematic frameworks for effectively differentiating learning content,



instructional processes, and student work products within supplementary learning sessions. Consequently, some students within the research subject display low learning engagement, reduced confidence, and persistent difficulty in mastering complex religious concepts during group activities. The unique flexibility of tutoring institutions—characterized by smaller group sizes, adaptable scheduling, and personalized tutor-student interactions—presents an ideal opportunity to overcome these barriers. However, without a structured approach to differentiated instruction, the research subject at Les Asifa Tutoring Institution risks duplicating the passive learning patterns of traditional classrooms, thereby diminishing the potential benefits of non-formal academic support (Akintayo et al., 2024; Riza & Mujiono, 2025; Subandiyah et al., 2024)

While previous academic literature has extensively documented the advantages of differentiated instruction in mixed-ability formal classrooms and literacy programs, a notable empirical gap remains regarding its integration within religious education in non-formal settings. Existing studies have investigated differentiated learning primarily as a tool for general curriculum adaptation, elementary reading development, or broad inclusive policy implementation in public schools. However, there is a distinct lack of research examining how the three core dimensions of differentiation—content, process, and product—can be simultaneously applied to Islamic Religious Education outside formal school boundaries. Furthermore, few studies have explored how the inherent structural flexibility of tutoring centers can be leveraged to establish genuinely inclusive learning environments for diverse learners. Existing literature rarely addresses how individual assistance, flexible student grouping, and personalized mentoring in non-formal settings interact to enhance both academic achievement and affective learning experiences in religious subjects. Bridging this empirical divide is crucial for expanding the scope of inclusive pedagogy beyond formal school walls (Azis et al., 2025; Komara & Sukandar, 2025; Romlah & Makhzuniyah, 2025)

To address these practical and theoretical limitations, this study introduces an innovative, multi-dimensional framework that evaluates the systematic implementation of differentiated instruction within a non-formal educational setting. The primary novelty of this research lies in its investigation of adaptive instructional practices—specifically content, process, and product differentiation—tailored for Islamic Religious Education at Les Asifa Tutoring Institution. Rather than limiting the analysis to formal classroom structures, this inquiry examines how the research subject utilizes flexible grouping, individual scaffolding, and personalized mentoring to enhance student engagement and academic achievement. By exploring both the technical execution of differentiated strategies and their direct impact on inclusivity, the study offers a fresh perspective on non-formal educational reform. The findings provide valuable theoretical contributions to adaptive learning literature and offer practical guidance for tutors seeking to design equitable, student-centered learning experiences. Ultimately, this research demonstrates how non-formal tutoring institutions can serve as dynamic models for inclusive educational transformation.

METHOD

This academic study implements a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore the implementation of differentiated learning models in creating an inclusive environment for Islamic Religious Education. The operational fieldwork was physically conducted at the Les Asifa Tutoring Center, strategically situated within West Pekalongan District in Pekalongan City. The investigation was carried out for 3 months during the odd semester and another 3 months during the even semester of the 2026/2027 academic year. The

chosen research subjects consisted of 5 Islamic Religious Education teachers and 35 active students at the tutoring center, all selected to provide deep insights into the educational phenomenon. The primary focus was directed toward capturing the firsthand experiences, perspectives, and instructional interactions of these participants within their natural scholastic setting. By focusing on these specific individuals, the study ensures that the data collected directly reflects the practical realities of managing student diversity without relying on abstract conceptual theories.

Data collection was executed through 3 integrated techniques, which included direct field observations, in-depth interviews, and supporting documentation. The data gathered consisted of primary information from interactions and secondary details regarding the specialized inclusive educational guidelines. For the analytical phase, the accumulated qualitative datasets were examined utilizing thematic analysis techniques to identify clear patterns and interpretive categories. The analysis involved carefully reviewing the raw data from the field observations, transcribing interview responses, and organizing them into distinct structural frameworks. To ensure absolute data validity and reliability, the researcher implemented a comprehensive triangulation process to cross-check statements across different sources and collection methods. The administrative execution of this field project strictly adhered to institutional research ethics by protecting the academic identity of the 5 teachers and 35 students through complete confidentiality. This entire structured process ensured that the methodological approach remained highly accurate, systematic, and fully compliant with qualitative investigation standards.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementation of Differentiated Instruction in Islamic Religious Education at Les Asifa Tutoring Institution

In this study, the implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at Les Asifa Tutoring Center demonstrated a more adaptive, contextual, and student-centered learning pattern. Students who showed faster comprehension were provided with additional challenges to broaden their understanding, while students who required more time received intensive guidance and deeper explanations. Differentiated learning was not merely implemented as a variation of teaching methods, but as a systematic pedagogical approach initiated through the identification of students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

The instructional process was designed through adjustments to three primary components of differentiated learning, namely content, process, and product. The researcher observed that tutors at Les Asifa Tutoring Center implemented differentiated instruction in Islamic Religious Education by modifying learning materials according to students' levels of understanding within small learning groups consisting of four students. Consequently, each student was able to access learning materials based on their individual capacities and academic needs. In the process component, tutors applied various adaptive and engaging instructional strategies, including guided discussions, problem-based learning, and independent exploration activities aimed at enhancing students' participation and conceptual understanding. Furthermore, in the product component, students were provided with opportunities to express their understanding through diverse forms of assignments adjusted to their interests and learning styles, making the learning outcomes more meaningful and contextual within Islamic Religious Education learning activities.



These findings are consistent with Tomlinson's theory of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes flexibility in designing learning experiences based on students' unique learning characteristics. In addition, this study supports recent developments in adaptive learning theory, which highlight the importance of individualized learning approaches in improving educational effectiveness. Within the tutoring institution context, flexible scheduling and relatively small class sizes enabled tutors to implement differentiated learning more intensively compared to formal classroom settings. This finding strengthens the argument that non-formal educational institutions possess significant potential as pedagogical laboratories for developing more personalized and responsive differentiated learning practices.

The differentiated learning process at Les Asifa Tutoring Center was conducted systematically yet flexibly, beginning with diagnostic assessments aimed at identifying students' initial abilities, interests, and learning characteristics through placement tests, observations, and brief interviews. The assessment results served as the basis for mapping and categorizing students into three instructional levels, namely intervention classes, intensive classes, and golden classes. Intervention classes were designed for students who required reinforcement of foundational competencies, intensive classes focused on strengthening conceptual understanding through guided exercises, while golden classes facilitated advanced learning development for students with higher academic readiness. Subsequently, tutors developed differentiated lesson plans involving differentiated content, instructional processes, and learning products tailored to each group's learning needs.

During the implementation stage, learning activities were carried out adaptively according to the characteristics of each class group. Formative assessments, such as daily exercises and quizzes, were conducted throughout the learning process, while summative assessments were administered at the end of each instructional unit to evaluate students' learning achievements. The evaluation results were subsequently used as the basis for providing remedial instruction or enrichment activities. Reflection activities were also conducted to refine instructional strategies continuously, ensuring that the differentiated learning process effectively optimized each student's academic development.

The class sequence was determined based on students' initial competencies, beginning with intervention classes, followed by intensive classes, and finally golden classes. The implementation of differentiated learning at Les Asifa Tutoring Center through these class levels reflected a gradual instructional progression. Intervention classes functioned as the initial stage to assist students who still experienced difficulties in understanding fundamental concepts through simplified instruction and intensive guidance. After demonstrating sufficient comprehension, students progressed to intensive classes to strengthen their understanding through more structured and gradual exercises. Subsequently, golden classes served as the advanced stage, where students were encouraged to develop deeper conceptual understanding and express their learning outcomes through various creative forms. This sequential instructional model illustrates that differentiated learning was implemented progressively, beginning from remediation, strengthening comprehension, and ultimately developing students' potential according to their individual learning needs.



Figure 1 Differentiated Learning Implementation by Islamic Religious Education Tutors in the Intervention Class Group

Based on the interview results with an Islamic Religious Education (IRE) tutor at Les Asifa Tutoring Center, it was stated that students who still experienced learning difficulties were placed in remedial classes within small groups, enabling tutors to provide more focused guidance and evaluate students' learning progress more effectively (Statement from an IRE tutor at Les Asifa, initials B. C., 2026). The observation results within the intervention group at the tutoring institution indicated that IRE learning practices reflected differentiated instruction functioning as a remedial effort to address students' gaps in understanding. Within small-group settings, tutors actively identified students' learning difficulties and subsequently adjusted the learning content by simplifying materials or providing additional explanations according to individual needs. In terms of the learning process, interactions occurred intensively through dialogue, question-and-answer activities, and direct scaffolding, allowing students to receive appropriate assistance whenever they encountered learning obstacles. Meanwhile, regarding the product aspect, students were given opportunities to demonstrate their understanding through oral responses and written assignments adjusted to their actual abilities. Analytically, these practices indicate that differentiated learning within tutoring institutions becomes more meaningful because it enables personalized and flexible instructional interventions.



Figure 2 Differentiated Learning Implementation by Islamic Religious Education Tutors in the Intensive Class Group

In the implementation of differentiated learning at Les Asifa Tutoring Center, "we cannot equate the abilities of every student. Some students can understand the material quickly, while others require more intensive assistance. Therefore, tutors apply differentiated learning by adjusting teaching methods, approaches, and learning tasks according to each student's abilities so that all students can participate in the learning process effectively" (Interview with an Islamic Religious Education tutor at Les Asifa, initials B.N., 2026).

Based on the observation results conducted within the intensive kindergarten student group at Les Asifa Tutoring Center, the Islamic Religious Education tutor implemented differentiated learning contextually through direct interaction in small-group settings. The tutor positioned herself among the students and provided different forms of assistance according to each child's individual needs. Students who were already capable of writing independently were encouraged to continue their exercises autonomously, while students who still experienced difficulties received more intensive guidance through repeated explanations and concrete examples. This situation indicates the implementation of differentiation in both the learning process and learning products, where instructional activities were adjusted to students' readiness and abilities. Furthermore, the use of simple worksheets and writing tools represented a form of content differentiation that was appropriate to the developmental characteristics of early childhood learners. These findings are consistent with Carol Ann Tomlinson's theory of differentiated instruction, which emphasizes the importance of adapting instruction based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles.



Figure 3 Differentiated Learning Implementation by Islamic Religious Education Tutors in the Golden Class Group

The Islamic Religious Education (IRE) tutor in the Golden class stated that through the Golden class program, students were provided with opportunities to develop their potential optimally according to their respective abilities. Students with higher academic capabilities were given broader opportunities to deepen and expand their learning experiences (Interview with the IRE tutor of the Golden class, initials B.N., 2026). Based on the observation results conducted within the Golden group at Les Asifa Tutoring Center, IRE learning demonstrated the implementation of differentiated instruction in a contextual and adaptive manner.

Within a small group consisting of four students, the tutor facilitated diverse learning needs through a personalized instructional approach. In the content aspect, the tutor presented learning materials gradually by adjusting them to each student's level of readiness. In terms of the learning process, instructional interactions were conducted actively through direct guidance, small-group discussions, and intensive assistance whenever students encountered learning difficulties, thereby creating a more flexible and responsive learning atmosphere. Meanwhile, regarding the product aspect, students were given opportunities to demonstrate deeper understanding through various forms of assignments adjusted to their abilities and interests, such as producing videos demonstrating the practical application of worship activities in daily life.

These findings are consistent with differentiated instruction theory, which emphasizes the importance of adapting content, process, and product based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles to create more meaningful and effective learning experiences. Furthermore, this approach is supported by the perspective that non-formal learning



environments, such as tutoring institutions, enable more personalized and flexible instructional practices, thereby enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes.

The overall findings indicate that IRE learning at Les Asifa Tutoring Center has implemented differentiated instruction concretely through the classification of students into intervention, intensive, and golden classes based on students' levels of learning readiness. Each class played interconnected roles, beginning from reinforcing basic understanding in the intervention class, strengthening comprehension in the intensive class, and developing advanced competencies in the Golden class. Tutors were able to adjust learning content, processes, and products according to students' needs within small-group settings, resulting in learning interactions that were more personal, flexible, and meaningful. Thus, these practices demonstrate that differentiated learning in tutoring institutions can be implemented effectively because it is grounded in students' actual needs and provides opportunities for each individual to develop optimally according to their level of ability.

Based on these findings, the mapping of differentiated learning within the tutoring institution indicates that students were grouped into intervention, intensive, and golden classes according to the results of authentic learning readiness identification. This mapping became the basis for IRE tutors in determining appropriate adjustments to learning content, processes, and products according to students' individual needs. Students with limited foundational understanding were placed in intervention classes to receive more intensive guidance, students with moderate abilities were assigned to intensive classes for conceptual reinforcement, while students with high readiness levels entered Golden classes for advanced development. Through this classification system, the learning process became more directed, non-uniform, and capable of accommodating students' diverse abilities, enabling learning objectives to be achieved more effectively and meaningfully.

Therefore, the implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education within tutoring institutions can be understood as an instructional approach that is not only adaptive to students' needs but also capable of improving the overall quality of learning. Consequently, differentiated learning in tutoring institutions possesses significant potential to be further developed as an alternative instructional model that is more responsive, inclusive, and oriented toward optimizing students' individual potential.

Role of Differentiated Instruction in Enhancing Inclusive Learning

One of the significant roles of implementing differentiated learning in tutoring institutions is the higher intensity of interaction between tutors and students. More personalized interactions enable tutors to provide direct and continuous feedback, allowing students to immediately correct mistakes and improve their understanding. This finding aligns with the concept of feedback for learning, which emphasizes the importance of feedback as a tool for improving the quality of learning processes. Through appropriate feedback, students not only become aware of their learning outcomes but also understand the necessary steps required to achieve better academic performance.

According to UNESCO, inclusive education emphasizes the full participation of all students in learning processes without discrimination. In this context, differentiated learning plays an important role in increasing students' access and participation in educational activities. Inclusive learners who are given equal learning opportunities, respected for their presence, and facilitated according to their needs and abilities tend to develop higher levels of self-confidence. When students' esteem needs are fulfilled, they feel accepted and become more capable of developing their potential optimally. Inclusive education also provides opportunities for

students to learn collaboratively, interact socially, and support one another without experiencing discrimination.

These conditions contribute to improving students' cognitive achievement through critical thinking and problem-solving processes, social development through communication and collaboration skills, and learning ability through enhanced adaptability and independent learning capacities. Therefore, inclusive education does not merely focus on academic achievement but also emphasizes students' social and learning development comprehensively. Consequently, differentiated learning functions not only as an instructional strategy but also as a systemic approach to creating educational equity. Research findings indicate that the implementation of differentiated instruction begins with initial assessments aimed at understanding students' needs, followed by adjustments to learning objectives, teaching methods, and evaluation forms oriented toward individual student development. This process enables students with diverse ability levels to participate in learning activities optimally without experiencing discrimination.



Figure 3 Religious Activities as a Means of Strengthening Students' Social Development

The implementation of congregational prayer learning activities in the Les Asifa tutoring program reflects the application of an inclusive education approach. This activity not only focuses on developing students' practical worship skills but also instills the values of togetherness, discipline, and social interaction among students. Through collaborative learning activities, each student is provided with equal opportunities to learn, participate, and develop self-confidence within a supportive learning environment.

In line with Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory, positive learning experiences and supportive environments can significantly enhance students' self-confidence. Therefore, worship-learning activities within the Les Asifa program demonstrate that inclusive education is capable of simultaneously strengthening students' social, spiritual, and self-confidence aspects. This approach indicates that inclusive education can foster students' social confidence while reinforcing character development and spiritual values through collaborative religious activities.

The role of differentiated instruction in inclusive education has also proven effective in increasing students' social participation, including those with special needs or cognitive barriers. The implementation of differentiation enables teachers to conduct initial mappings of students' learning readiness, allowing instructional interventions to become more targeted, particularly for students experiencing delays in cognitive development. Differentiated instruction helps create a learning environment that values diversity, ensuring that students with special needs do not feel marginalized. Furthermore, differentiated learning contributes to

developing students' self-confidence, motivation, and sense of appreciation as integral parts of an inclusive learning environment.



Figure 4 Students' Personal Appreciation through Inclusive Differentiated Learning

The warm interaction between tutors and students, as reflected through the provision of simple appreciation and encouragement, demonstrates that the learning process does not merely focus on academic achievement but also emphasizes the fulfillment of students' emotional needs. Within differentiated learning practices, individual attention provided by tutors becomes part of adapting the learning environment to be more responsive and appreciative of students, including those with cognitive barriers. This finding is consistent with Carol Ann Tomlinson's perspective, which emphasizes that differentiated instruction involves teachers' efforts to adjust learning experiences so that every student feels included, valued, and actively engaged in the learning process.

Such practices contribute significantly to the creation of non-discriminatory inclusive learning environments, where every student is provided with opportunities to develop according to their potential while experiencing a meaningful sense of belonging within the learning process. "Differentiated learning in Islamic Religious Education does not only focus on academic outcomes, but also on how students feel comfortable, appreciated, and capable of learning according to their individual abilities. This aspect becomes an essential component in realizing inclusive learning at Les Asifa" (Statement from an Islamic Religious Education tutor at Les Asifa, initials N.S., 2026).

Therefore, differentiated learning plays a crucial role in enhancing inclusivity within tutoring institutions. This approach not only contributes to improving learning outcomes but also supports the development of students' self-confidence, motivation, and active participation in learning activities. Consequently, the implementation of differentiated instruction becomes a key factor in establishing inclusive, humanistic, and equitable learning environments within tutoring institutions.

Meaning of Learning Achievement in Differentiated Instruction

In the implementation of differentiated learning at Les Asifa Tutoring Center, learning achievement is no longer understood merely as the attainment of final scores, but rather as a gradual developmental process that reflects students' individual progress according to their initial conditions. Based on the research findings, students who initially experienced limitations in understanding the learning materials still demonstrated significant improvement, such as enhanced comprehension of basic concepts and increased confidence in attempting to solve problems. This finding indicates that learning achievement is more appropriately interpreted as a form of individual growth and development.

In the instructional practices implemented at Les Asifa Tutoring Center, learning achievement was also reflected in the intensive interactions between tutors and students, which

were adjusted according to each learner's individual needs. Tutors actively adapted their teaching approaches, ranging from providing repeated explanations to delivering gradual exercises based on students' levels of ability. This process demonstrates that learning success does not occur instantly but develops through structured and directed assistance. These findings are consistent with Lev Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which explains that students can achieve optimal development when they receive appropriate support from more competent individuals. Furthermore, John Hattie's research also emphasizes that the quality of feedback and teacher-student interaction significantly contributes to improving learning outcomes.

Overall, learning achievement within differentiated learning practices at this tutoring institution reflects a broader meaning than merely numerical academic outcomes. Achievement represents a developmental process involving cognitive aspects, attitudes, and students' self-confidence in learning. This perspective aligns with Robert M. Gagné's view that learning outcomes encompass various competencies developed through structured learning processes. Therefore, differentiated learning has proven capable of providing more equitable and student-centered learning experiences while offering opportunities for every individual to achieve their optimal development.



Figure 5 The Meaning of Achievement through Differentiation in Qur'anic Learning

The learning practices implemented at Les Asifa Tutoring Center demonstrate the application of differentiated learning principles in tiered Qur'anic reading activities. This situation reflects variations in students' learning achievements that are not positioned as learning gaps, but rather as indicators of individual development occurring naturally. Each student demonstrated different levels of mastery while remaining within the same instructional framework. This finding indicates that learning achievement is interpreted as a process of competency transformation, in which success is not measured comparatively but based on the progress achieved by each student from their initial condition.

Differentiated instruction plays a significant role in creating learning experiences that are responsive to students' needs. This flexible approach enables tutors to adjust instructional interventions according to each student's learning requirements, ensuring that every learner receives support appropriate to their level of difficulty. Such conditions not only contribute to improving cognitive abilities but also strengthen students' engagement and the meaningfulness of the learning experience. Therefore, learning achievement is not solely oriented toward final outcomes, but also reflects the integration of learning processes, educational experiences, and students' competency development. These findings confirm that differentiated learning is capable of constructing a more inclusive and relevant meaning of achievement within non-formal educational practices such as tutoring institutions.



Discussion

The empirical investigation into Islamic Religious Education at Les Asifa Tutoring Center highlights how differentiated instruction transforms non-formal learning into a student-centered pedagogical laboratory. By conducting diagnostic assessments through placement tests, observation, and interviews, tutors systematically categorized learners into three tiered groups: intervention classes for foundational remediation, intensive classes for conceptual consolidation, and golden classes for advanced competency development. Structuring instruction within small cohorts of 4 students allowed tutors to adapt content, instructional processes, and learning products directly to individual academic readiness. This flexible framework enabled tutors to simplify complex theological concepts for struggling learners while facilitating creative expressions, such as student-produced worship demonstration videos, for advanced cohorts. The organizational structure of non-formal tutoring institutions, characterized by flexible scheduling and low student-to-tutor ratios, proves particularly conducive to executing continuous formative assessments, providing immediate feedback, and adjusting scaffolding dynamically based on real-time student responses (Hobert & Berens, 2023; Steinert et al., 2024; Tetzlaff et al., 2020).

The implementation of differentiated instruction in this setting serves as a vital operational driver for inclusive education, ensuring equitable access without marginalization. Tutors facilitated active participation among learners with diverse cognitive capacities, including those with learning delays or special needs, through personalized scaffolding and warm, individual appreciation. Non-discriminatory religious activities, such as congregational prayer sessions, successfully integrated practical worship skills with social development, togetherness, and peer collaboration. By fulfilling students' esteem and emotional needs through direct encouragement and tailored task difficulty, the instructional model fostered high self-efficacy and confidence. This inclusive atmosphere demonstrates that adapting learning environments to student readiness expands participation, mitigates learning anxieties, and cultivates a supportive community where individual differences are respected rather than positioned as academic deficits (Akintayo et al., 2024; Ruesch & Sarvary, 2024).

Within this differentiated framework, learning achievement undergoes a conceptual shift from static numerical outcomes to an ongoing process of individual growth. Tutors operationalized this developmental model through structured assistance within each student's zone of proximal development, guiding learners gradually from initial baseline competencies to higher mastery levels. Progress in Qur'anic reading and daily worship applications was evaluated comparatively against a student's own starting point rather than through competitive peer ranking. Formative quizzes and daily practice exercises provided continuous feedback loops, allowing students who initially struggled with basic concepts to achieve measurable cognitive gains and increased problem-solving confidence over time. Consequently, academic success in this context encompasses cognitive absorption, positive behavioral shifts, and enhanced self-regulation, validating the premise that structured differentiation produces meaningful, long-term educational growth (Deniz, 2025; Manuel & Mempin, 2025; Yusuf & Hidayat, 2026).

The broader educational implications of these findings suggest that non-formal tutoring institutions offer an adaptable blueprint for personalizing religious education in formal school settings. Utilizing small group groupings of 4 students and tiered class structures demonstrates how diagnostic mapping can inform targeted curriculum adjustments, remediating learning gaps before they compound. For educational policymakers and curriculum designers, these results advocate for integrating diagnostic readiness profiling and flexible product choices into



mainstream religious instruction to enhance student engagement. Furthermore, embedding inclusive practices within collaborative religious activities proves that character development and spiritual values are most effectively cultivated when paired with supportive, non-discriminatory social environments that prioritize holistic personal development alongside academic mastery (Megawati & Sulisworo, 2025; Sari et al., 2023; Surbakti et al., 2024)

Despite these positive outcomes, several operational limitations must be considered when interpreting the study's conclusions. The research was conducted within a single non-formal tutoring center operating with small group sizes of 4 students, which presents structural conditions that are difficult to replicate in large, formal public school classrooms with higher student-teacher ratios. Additionally, the qualitative reliance on observational data and tutor interviews limits the ability to quantify long-term knowledge retention or generalize score improvements across broader demographic populations. Future research should apply longitudinal mixed-methods designs across diverse formal and non-formal educational environments to measure the sustained impact of differentiated religious instruction on standardized academic achievement and social-emotional development over multiple academic years.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the differentiated learning model in Islamic Religious Education at Les Asifa Tutoring Center was able to establish a more inclusive learning environment through the adjustment of learning content, processes, and products according to students' characteristics, abilities, and learning needs. The implementation of differentiated instruction was carried out through flexible learning groupings, remedial classes in small groups, and the development of Golden classes as a medium for advancing students' higher-level competencies. The findings indicate that differentiated learning strategies not only increased students' engagement and learning motivation but also created a more adaptive and participatory learning environment that provided equal learning opportunities for all students. Furthermore, the implementation of differentiation in the product aspect allowed students to demonstrate their understanding through various forms of assignments tailored to their interests and individual potentials.

This study contributes to the development of differentiated learning research in Islamic Religious Education, particularly within non-formal educational institutions, which remain relatively underexplored. The findings broaden the understanding that differentiated instruction is not only relevant in formal school settings but is also effectively applicable in tutoring institutions to support inclusive learning practices. The practical implications of this study suggest that Islamic Religious Education teachers need to develop flexible and student-centered instructional strategies based on learners' needs. However, this study still has limitations because it was conducted in only one tutoring institution with a limited number of participants; therefore, the findings cannot yet be generalized broadly. Accordingly, future research is recommended to examine the implementation of differentiated learning in various other non-formal educational institutions with broader participant coverage.

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