# Implementation of Differentiated Learning Approach to Improve Social Skills and Student Learning Outcomes

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# **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the impact of differentiated instruction on students' social skills and academic achievement at SDN 3 Kemawi. The research was motivated by the diverse characteristics of students and the need for responsive teaching approaches to accommodate these differences. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collected through observation, interviews, documentation, as well as pre-tests and post-tests. The research subjects were 3rd and 5th-grade students, representing lower and upper elementary levels. The findings indicate that the implementation of differentiated instruction effectively enhanced students' social skills, as reflected in the increased number of students categorized as "Very Good" and the decreased number in the "Fair" category. Moreover, there was a significant improvement in academic achievement, with the average score in 3rd grade increasing from 81.24 to 86.88, and in 5th grade from 80.84 to 88.00. Factors such as students' basic literacy skills and social environment were found to influence the success of the instructional model. These results suggest that differentiated instruction, supported by the right media, can positively contribute to students' academic and social development.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational settings, classrooms are increasingly characterized by diverse student populations, encompassing a wide range of abilities, learning preferences, cultural backgrounds, and social-emotional needs<sup>1</sup>. This diversity necessitates instructional approaches that are responsive to individual learner differences to promote equitable and effective education for all students. Differentiated Instruction (DI) has emerged as a pedagogical framework aimed at addressing this diversity by tailoring teaching methods, content, and assessment to meet the unique needs of each student<sup>2</sup>.

Social skills and learning outcomes are two crucial aspects in the profile of Pancasila Students. For high-class students, they need the ability to work together and communicate to face group dynamics at the next level, while academic mastery is the foundation for successful learning. Meanwhile, for lower-class students, these two

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Marcela Pozas et al., "DI (Differentiated Instruction) Does Matter! The Effects of DI on Secondary School Students' Well-Being, Social Inclusion and Academic Self-Concept," *Frontiers in Education* 6, no. December (2021): 1–11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Avif Intan Linawati, Dyah Rini Indriyanti, and Saiful Ridlo, "Student Learning Outcomes on Ecology and Biodiversity with the Construcvism Approach Learning Discovery Models," *Journal of Innovative Science Education* 12, no. 2 (2023): 173–179.

things are the foundation of education that must be able to develop simultaneously in order to obtain a superior student profile.

Empirical studies have demonstrated the positive impact of Differentiated Instruction on students' academic achievement. A systematic review and meta-analysis by  $^3$  revealed that the implementation of Differentiated Instruction significantly enhances student learning outcomes, with a large effect size (g = 1.109, p < .01), indicating its efficacy across various educational contexts. Moreover, Differentiated Instruction has been associated with improvements in students' social-emotional development. Research by Alnahdi et  $^4$  found that students' perceptions of their teachers' use of Differentiated Instruction were positively correlated with their sense of school well-being, social inclusion, and academic self-concept.

Based on a pre-research interview with Mrs. Muchi, S. Pd who is the Principal of SDN 3 Kemawi, explained that there is a problem that lacks social skills of students such as students tend to be passive and less adept at managing their emotions. In terms of academic ability since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has also been a decline in the average value of student learning outcomes, However, when differentiated learning is tried to be applied in several learning meetings with active and creative activities, students are able to learn more actively. They are able to interact, cooperate, appreciate, manage their emotions, respect those around them and from the results of the student worksheet assessment there is also a slight improvement.

Based on the description above, it is necessary to conduct research on the Implementation of Differentiated Learning to Improve Social Skills and Learning Outcomes of Students at SDN 3 Kemawi. This study aims to explore the implementation of Differentiated Instruction strategies in the classroom and examine their effects on enhancing students' social competencies and learning outcomes especially in SDN 3 Kemawi. By focusing on these aspects, the research seeks to contribute to the understanding of how differentiated pedagogical approaches can foster both academic success and social development among students.

#### 2. RESEARCH METHODS

#### a. Methods

According to <sup>5</sup> Differentiated instruction is a pedagogical-didactical approach that provides teachers with a starting point for meeting students' diverse learning needs. The findings <sup>6</sup> suggest that inclusive education significantly enhances social skills in children with special needs by fostering communication, collaboration, and empathy<sup>7</sup>. Student learning outcomes were obtained from the analysis of pretest and post-test scores, student activity was obtained from assessments through observation sheets of student activity, student responses were obtained from questionnaires given to students and teacher responses were obtained from questionnaires given to teachers. The research method used is a qualitative method using a descriptive method where the collection and presentation of the results of this study are presented in the form of descriptive words

# b. Instrument

This study was conducted at SDN 3 Kemawi. There are 6 classes at SDN 3 Kemawi, in this study the writer took a sample of 2 classes, namely 1 low class (third grade, 25 students) and 1 high class (fifth grade, 19 students). The data collection technique in this study was carried out using observation techniques on differentiated learning activities at SDN 3 Kemawi carried out by class teachers and students, then data collection also used interview techniques with the 5<sup>th</sup> class and 3<sup>rd</sup> class teachers, in addition to using interviews the writer also used documentation techniques for learning planning, learning documentation and data on student attitude and learning outcome assessments. The data analysis used in this study is data analysis from Miles and Huberman <sup>8</sup> including data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification.

#### c. Procedures

The object of this research is students in grade 3 and grade 5. At the beginning of this research, the writer coordinated with the principal to obtain permission and explain the flow of this research. The writer began by conducting initial interviews with teachers of grade 5 and grade 3, then the writer conducted direct observations in the classroom to get a real condition of the class to be studied. In this initial observation, the writer also conducted a pre-test as initial reference data before conducting this research. After conducting the initial

<sup>5</sup> Annemieke E. Smale-Jacobse et al., "Differentiated Instruction in Secondary Education: A Systematic Review of Research Evidence," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10, no. November (2019).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A. M. Muh. Asriadi et al., "Does Differentiated Instruction Affect Learning Outcome? Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Pedagogical Research* 7, no. 5 (2023): 18–33.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Anggi Umayrah et al., "The Nature of Differentiated Learning in The Perspective of Constructivist Educational Philosophy: A Systematic Literature Review," *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran* 10, no. 2 (2024): 691.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Mariati Purba et al., *Prinsip Pengembangan Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi (Differentiated Instruction), Pusat Kurikulum Dan Pembelajaran Badan Standar, Kurikulum, Dan Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, Dan Teknologi,* 2021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> J. R RACO, Penelitian Kualitatif: Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Jurnal EQUILIBRIUM, vol. 5, 2010.

observation, the writer provides a description of the class conditions and suggestions for actions that can be taken that are in line with the principles of differentiated learning to improve social skills and student learning outcomes.

After all preparations are complete, the class teachers conduct the learning action based on the agreement that has been made previously. During this treatment period, the writer also conducted direct observations to ensure that the steps of differentiated learning are running well. This treatment was carried out in 2 meetings. During this treatment period, the writer and the class teacher conducted a social skills assessment using a previously prepared social assessment rubric. At the 5th meeting, the writer and the class teacher conducted a post-test to obtain data on the results of students' learning outcomes. As a closing, the writer conducted interviews with class 5 and class 3 teachers. The interview at the end of this session will be used by the writer as a reflection and drawing final conclusions from the entire research process that has been carried out.

# 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

# a. Research Results

# 1) Pre-test

The implementation of differentiated instruction considers every element in teaching, including teaching point, teaching context, learning readiness, students' interest, and learning of each student profile. In the initial observation activities<sup>9</sup>, the writer conducted several activities aimed at obtaining basic research data. In the initial interview, the writer learned that teachers at SDN 3 Kemawi had received a workshop on differentiated learning and in the learning, process had begun to adapt it, although it had not been fully integrated. This was due to several obstacles encountered by class teachers, including obstacles in facilities and infrastructure. In addition to interviews, the writer, assisted by class teachers, also conducted a pre-test assessment of students' social skills and knowledge. The following are the results:

Table 1. pre-test result 3<sup>rd</sup> grade social skill

| Categori    | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Cukup       | 6                  | 24%       |
| Baik        | 17                 | 68%       |
| Sangat Baik | 2                  | 8%        |

Based on Table 1, the pre-test results for the social skills of 3rd grade students are as follows; 6 students (24%) were categorized as "Cukup" (Fair), indicating that about a quarter of the students need further improvement in their social skills. 17 students (68%) were classified as "Baik" (Good), showing that the majority of students already have a solid level of social skills. 2 students (8%) fell into the "Sangat Baik" (Very Good) category, reflecting a small group of students who demonstrate excellent social abilities. However, since 24% of students are still in the fair category, targeted social skills development programs may be necessary to help raise their competencies to higher levels.

Table 2. pre-test result 5th grade social skill

| Categori    | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Cukup       | 8                  | 42%       |
| Baik        | 10                 | 53%       |
| Sangat Baik | 1                  | 5%        |

Based on Table 2, the pre-test results for the social skills of 5th grade students are as follows; 8 students (42%) were categorized as "Cukup" (Fair), indicating a significant portion of students who still need improvement in their social skills. 10 students (53%) were classified as "Baik" (Good), showing that over half of the students have developed good social skills. 1 student (5%) was categorized as "Sangat Baik" (Very Good), suggesting that only a very small number of students demonstrated excellent social skills. a relatively high percentage (42%) remain at the fair level. This indicates a need for more focused interventions to strengthen the social competencies of nearly half the class.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Mohammed Siddique Kadwa and Hamza Alshenqeeti, "International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT) The Impact of Students' Proficiency in English on Science Courses in a Foundation Year Program," *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation (IJLLT)* 3, no. 11 (2020): 55–67, www.al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/ijllt.

Table 3. pre -test result 3<sup>rd</sup> student's outcome

| Range of values | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 70 - 80         | 6                  | 24%       |
| 80 - 90         | 19                 | 76%       |
| > 90            | 0                  | 0%        |
| Average Score   | 81,24              |           |

Based on Table 3, the pre-test results for 3rd grade students' academic outcomes are as follows; 6 students (24%) scored within the 70–80 range, suggesting that about a quarter of the students are performing at a basic level and could benefit from additional support. 19 students (76%) scored between 80–90, indicating that the majority of students demonstrated good academic achievement. 0 students (0%) scored above 90, meaning no students reached an excellent performance level. The average score was 81.24, showing that, on average, students are achieving within a good performance range.

Table 4. pre-test result 5<sup>th</sup> student's outcome

| Range of values | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 70 - 80         | 6                  | 32%       |
| 80 - 90         | 13                 | 68%       |
| > 90            | 0                  | 0%        |
| Average Score   | 80,84              |           |

Based on Table 4, the pre-test results for 5th grade students' academic outcomes are as follows; 6 students (32%) scored within the 70–80 range, suggesting that nearly one-third of the students are at a basic proficiency level and may require further support.13 students (68%) scored in the 80–90 range, showing that the majority of students performed well and are close to higher achievement levels. 0 students (0%) scored above 90, indicating that none of the students reached an excellent level of performance at this stage. The average score was 80.84, placing the overall performance just within the lower boundary of the good category.

# 2) Treatment

Based on the findings of researchers at SDN 3 Kemawi through the process of observation, interviews and pre-test results, Mrs. A teacher and Mrs. E teacher of grade 5 and grade 3 of SDN 3 Kemawi prepared a plan or differentiated learning device first before the differentiated learning activities were carried out. The learning devices prepared by Mrs. A and Mrs. E in supporting the implementation of differentiated learning based on the results of the interview include compiling diagnostic assessments, teaching modules, teaching media, assessment devices and teaching materials.

For the initial diagnostic assessment, it is carried out to identify the abilities of students. This assessment is carried out through the emotional zone board, conducting observations and observing the learning process of students in previous learning. The results of this diagnostic assessment are a mapping of students' learning needs based on interests, learning styles and learning readiness. The next thing to do is to compile a teaching module, the teaching module is compiled for 2 meetings with each meeting lasting 3 lesson hours (3x 40 minutes). The teaching module that was prepared was a differentiated learning module using the problem-based learning method so that both could be combined in differentiated learning activities to achieve quality learning outcomes. The subjects in the teaching module prepared by the two class teachers were the subject of science with learning materials on Light and its properties for class V and material on metamorphosis for class 3.

In addition, the results of observations and interviews with class 3, Mrs. E decided to use differentiated learning media in the form of concrete object media because it was in accordance with the readiness, needs and learning styles of students who could understand learning materials easily through concrete media such as picture media and concrete objects that could exemplify learning materials directly or in real terms. While for class 5, teacher A used learning media using power point and moving images, this was related to the interests of class 5 students who better understood learning media that were more directed towards technology.

For the teaching materials, both teachers used teaching materials from teacher books, student books and books from other references found in the class library or reading corner and the internet. In terms of summative and formative assessment, the formative assessment carried out by the two teachers was by assessing the results of reports and presentations and giving questions to students at the end of the learning process which were divided into three evaluation questions that were adjusted based on the level of low, medium and high learning readiness and assessment of students' social skills using a previously prepared assessment rubric. At the end of the treatment

process, the two classes of research objects carried out a final assessment which was used as a post-test score. Social skills assessment is carried out during the teaching and learning process. The results of this assessment will be compared with the social skills assessment at the beginning of the pre-test whether there is a change or not.

In implementing differentiated learning, the two teachers carried out activities according to the sequence in the teaching module which began with an introduction to open learning with activities such as reading prayers, checking cleanliness, singing the National song, ice breaking, giving starter questions and explaining learning objectives. In the core session, each teacher used teaching media and teaching materials that had been well prepared. The material can be delivered to students smoothly, dividing students into groups according to their learning talents also helps students in following the learning from the teacher.

# 3) Post-Test

After doing the treatment the writer and the class teacher did the post test for knowledge skill and for the social skill the post test was doing during the treatment. Here is the result:

Table 5. post -test result 3<sup>rd</sup> grade social skill

| Categori    | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Cukup       | 3                  | 12%       |
| Baik        | 16                 | 64%       |
| Sangat Baik | 6                  | 24%       |

Based on Table 5, the results of the post-test of social skills of grade 3 students can be explained as follows; A total of 3 students (12%) are in the "Enough" (*Cukup*) category, indicating that a small number of students still need more guidance to improve their social skills. The majority of students, namely 16 students (64%), are in the "Good" (Baik) category. This shows that most students already have quite good social skills, although there is still room for improvement. A total of 6 students (24%) are in the "Very Good" (*Sangat Baik*) category, indicating that almost a quarter of the total students have shown very good social skills.

Table 6. post -test result 5<sup>th</sup> grade social skill

| Table 6. post test result 5 grade social skill |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Categori                                       | Number of | Pecentage |
|  | Students  |           |
| Cukup  | 5         | 26%       |
| Baik   | 9         | 48%       |
| Sangat Baik                                    | 5         | 26%       |

Based on Table 6, the results of the post -test of social skills of grade 5 students can be explained as follows; A total of 5 students (26%) are in the "Enough" (*Cukup*) category, indicating that there are a number of students who still need improvement in social skills. The majority of students, namely 9 students (48%), are in the "Good" (Baik) category, indicating that almost half of the total students have shown adequate social skills. Another 5 students (26%) are in the "Very Good" (*Sangat Baik*) category, indicating that a quarter of students already have very good social skills.

Table 7. post -test result 3<sup>rd</sup> student's outcome

| Range of values | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 70 - 80         | 6                  | 24%       |
| 80 - 90         | 11                 | 44%       |
| > 90            | 8                  | 32%       |
| Average Score   | 86,88              |           |

Based on Table 7, the post -test results for 3rd grade students' academic outcomes are as follows; 6 students (24%) scored within the 70–80 range, indicating that a portion of the students still needs improvement in their academic performance. 11 students (44%) achieved scores in the 80–90 range, showing that nearly half of the students performed well. 8 students (32%) scored above 90, reflecting that almost one-third of the students demonstrated excellent academic outcomes. The average score of the students was 86.88, which falls within the good category.

Table 8. post -test result 5th grade student's outcome

| Range of values | Number of Students | Pecentage |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------|
| 70 - 80         | 3                  | 16%       |
| 80 - 90         | 7                  | 37%       |
| > 90            | 9                  | 47%       |
| Average Score   | 88                 |           |

Based on Table 8, the post-test results for 5th grade students' academic outcomes are as follows; 3 students (16%) scored within the 70–80 range, indicating a small group of students who may need additional academic support. 7 students (37%) achieved scores in the 80–90 range, showing that over one-third of the students performed well. 9 students (47%) scored above 90, reflecting that nearly half of the students demonstrated excellent academic achievement. The average score of the students was 88, placing the overall performance in the good to excellent category.

After conducting a post-test of knowledge and attitude skills, the writer conducted interviews with each class teacher, the interview data is used as supporting data for the students' post-test. The following is a summary of the interview results:

| Aspect                            | Respondent 1 (3 <sup>rd</sup> grade)                      | Respondent 2 (5 <sup>th</sup> grade)                         |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| •                                 | A philosophy and proactive                                | An approach to meet students'                                |
| Understanding of                  | approach recognizing students'                            | varying needs by adjusting                                   |
| <b>Differentiated Instruction</b> | diverse needs, emphasizing                                | content, process, product, and                               |
|                                   | planning and curriculum adaptation.                       | environment.   |
|                                   | Gradually structured after training                       | Started about 3 years ago after                              |
| Start of Implementation           | and reading; earlier applied                              | attending an innovative                                      |
|                                   | intuitively.  | pedagogy training.   |
|                                   | Content, process, product,                                | Content (text, video, audio),                                |
| Forms of Differentiation          | environment (e.g., flexible seating,                      | process (group/individual                                    |
| Applied                           | multiple assignment formats).                             | work), product (poster, essay,                               |
| •                                 |   | presentation), environment                                   |
|                                   | Diamentia testa informal                                  | (flexible seating).  |
|                                   | Diagnostic tests, informal observations, student interest | Interest surveys, diagnostic tests, observations, one-on-one |
| <b>Identifying Student Needs</b>  | surveys, reviewing past                                   | discussions.   |
|                                   | performance.  | discussions.   |
|                                   | Increased respect, cooperation, and                       | Better collaboration,  |
| Impact on Social                  | reduced frustration; students                             | appreciation for different                                   |
| Interaction                       | naturally help each other.                                | learning styles, improved peer                               |
|                                   |   | support.   |
|                                   | Increased engagement, motivation,                         | Improved understanding,                                      |
| Impact on Learning                | more even concept understanding,                          | higher motivation; gap                                       |
| Outcomes                          | growth from individual starting                           | between fast and slow learners                               |
|                                   | points.   | reduced but not eliminated.                                  |
|                                   | Time-consuming planning, class                            | Longer preparation time,                                     |
|                                   | management complexity, fair and                           | complex management, student                                  |
| Challenges                        | meaningful assessment, student                            | adaptation to choice freedom,                                |
|                                   | ability in writing and reading.                           | diversified assessment tools,                                |
|                                   |   | student background.  |
|                                   | Integrated DI practices in education,                     | Wider DI adoption, better                                    |
| <b>Future Hopes</b>               | strong support through continuous                         | resources, teacher   |
| 1 acare 110 p es                  | training, flexible curriculum and                         | collaboration, empowering all                                |
|                                   | assessments.  | students.  |

# b. Discussion

For the analysis of Student social skill, The data for Class 3 and Class 5 shows changes in the distribution of student performance across three categories: "Cukup" (Adequate), "Baik" (Good), and "Sangat Baik" (Very

Good) from Pre-test to Post-test. There is a positive shift, with fewer students remaining at the "Cukup" level and more students achieving the "Sangat Baik" category. The "Baik" category remained relatively stable, suggesting consistent performance for most students. Unlike Class 3, Class 5 experienced a negative shift in performance: More students fell into the "Cukup" category. Fewer students achieved the "Sangat Baik" level after the Post-test. Although the "Baik" category grew slightly, the sharp drop in "Sangat Baik" students suggests that some high performers regressed.

Class 3 demonstrated clear improvement, with more students achieving higher performance categories. Class 5, in contrast, showed a decline, where a significant number of students moved from "Sangat Baik" to lower performance categories. This contrast could suggest differences in the effectiveness of instructional methods, class dynamics, or other external factors impacting learning outcomes.

Analysis for knowledge skill, the average Score for Class 3 increased from 81.24 (Pre-test) to 86.88 (Post-test), indicating a notable academic improvement. After the differentiated instruction (Post-test): The percentage of students scoring above 90 increased from 0% to 32%, showing a clear uplift in high-achieving students. However, the percentage of students in the 80–90 range dropped from 76% to 44%, suggesting that many students who were previously in this category moved up to the >90 group. The number of students in the 70–80 range remained the same (24%), indicating that some students still need additional support.

Average Score for Class 5 improved from 80.84 (Pre-test) to 88 (Post-test), showing an even stronger improvement than Class 3. After instruction 47% of students scored above 90, a significant leap from 0% previously. Students scoring 80–90 dropped to 37%, implying that several students advanced into the highest score bracket. Only 16% of students remained in the 70–80 range, showing an overall positive shift in the achievement distribution.

Both classes demonstrated a strong positive shift toward higher performance brackets. The number of high achievers (>90) increased significantly in both classes after differentiated instruction was applied. The average score improvement (approximately +5.64 points for Class 3 and +7.16 points for Class 5) reflects the effectiveness of differentiated strategies. Class 5 showed slightly greater improvement compared to Class 3 in both the increase of average scores and the percentage of students reaching the highest performance category.

Based on the post interview the writer found, both respondents demonstrate a strong understanding of differentiated instruction, though with slightly different perspectives. Respondent 1 views it as a teaching philosophy requiring proactive planning, while Respondent 2 emphasizes adjusting content, process, product, and environment to meet student needs. Implementation differed slightly, with Respondent 1 applying it intuitively before formal training, and Respondent 2 starting systematically three years ago after a pedagogy workshop.

Challenges mentioned include time-consuming planning, complex classroom management, and the difficulty of assessing diverse student outputs. Both respondents hope for broader adoption of differentiated instruction, more support for teachers, flexible curricula, and a focus on empowering all students. Respondent 1 emphasized the low ability of students in reading and writing and this finding turned out to have an impact on students' knowledge abilities which were difficult to improve. Meanwhile, respondent 2 was concerned with the students' environmental background which greatly influenced the results of students' social abilities. The decline in social values in class 5 occurred because there was a new gaming craze that was spreading quite a bit in the student environment so that many students liked to stay up late to play games.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis of students' social skills and knowledge scores, the writer concludes that the differentiated learning model carried out at SDN 3 Kemawi is able to improve both variables in general, this is evidenced by an increase in the range of attitude scores for both classes and an increase in the average class score. The average knowledge score for class 3 increased from 81.24 to 86.88, for class 5 the average score was 80.84 to 88.00, while for the assessment of social skills the increase can be seen more from sufficient to good.

In this study the writer also found that basic reading and writing skills greatly influence students' general knowledge skills. this is illustrated from the results of class 3 research and the background of students' environments also affects the development of students' social skills as described in class 5 research.

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