

Implementation of Differentiated Learning to Realizing the Student Well-being in Educational Environment: Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT Traditional educational approaches that use standard instructional methods fail to accommodate the wide range of learning needs, abilities, and interests of the students. This approach can lead academic stress, decreased motivation, and impaired psychological well-being among students. Although the potential benefits of differentiated learning have been recognized, there is a lack of understanding of how this practice specifically contributes to student well-being in educational environment. This literature review examines the relationship between differentiated learning approaches and student well-being in educational environments. This research is a literature review that aims to find scientific and theoretical studies. The literature review was obtained articles which published in the last 5 years, from 2020 to 2025. The author reviewed several journals consisting of international and national journals, with various methods to find out the results of research about the differentiated learning and its effects on student well-being. The analysis reveals significant correlations between differentiated learning approaches and student well-being. It is because differentiated learning can reduce academic stress, improved self-efficacy, and stronger teacher-student relationships. The results showed that differentiated learning not only for academic achievement but as a critical component in creating educational environments that holistically support student well-being and positive development.

Keywords: Differentiated learning; student well-being

173 Introduction

Traditional educational approaches that use standard instructional methods fail to accommodate the wide range of learning needs, abilities, and interests of the students. This approach can lead academic stress, decreased motivation, and impaired psychological well-being among students. The concept of student wellbeing has emerged as a central pillar in contemporary educational discourse, reflecting a paradigm shift from traditional academic-centered approaches to more holistic educational frameworks that prioritize the comprehensive development of learners [1]. In an increasingly diverse educational landscape, where classrooms encompass students with varying abilities, learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and individual needs, the implementation of differentiated learning strategies has become imperative for fostering an inclusive environment that promotes both academic achievement and psychological wellbeing [2].

Differentiated learning, conceptualized as an instructional approach to accommodate individual student differences, represents a fundamental shift from the educational model [3]. This pedagogical framework recognizes that students bring unique strengths, challenges, interests, and learning preferences to the classroom, necessitating flexible and responsive teaching

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practices that can address this diversity effectively [4]. The implementation of such approaches is not merely an educational innovation but a moral imperative that acknowledges every student's right to receive instruction that meets their individual needs and maximizes their potential for success.

This article examines the implementation of differentiated learning as a strategic approach to promoting student wellbeing in educational environments. Through an analysis of theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and practical applications, this study aims to provide insights into how educational practitioners can effectively utilize differentiated instruction to create learning environments that support the holistic development and wellbeing of all students.

174 Literature Review

Definition of Differentiated Learning

Differentiated instruction, as conceptualized by Tomlinson (2001), refers to effective teaching framework that provides students with varied pathways for learning, including different approaches to content acquisition, idea processing, and the creation of instructional materials and assessments. The theoretical foundation rests on the premise that students differ in terms of their academic preparedness, personal interests, and preferred learning styles, necessitating varied instructional approaches to maximize learning outcomes [2].

Multiple Intelligences by Gardner's (1983) provides a crucial theoretical underpinning for differentiated learning. According to Gardner's theory, people have different kinds of intelligence such as language-based, mathematical-logical, visual-spatial, musical, physical-kinesthetic, social, self-reflective, and nature-oriented intelligences. This theory supports the need for diverse instructional strategies to accommodate different learning strengths and preferences [5].

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory further reinforces the importance of differentiated learning. Vygotsky (1978) argued that effective learning occurs when instruction is pitched at a level slightly above the learner's current ability, requiring appropriate scaffolding and support. This theoretical framework emphasizes the need for individualized instruction that meets students where they are and guides them toward their potential [6].

Components of Differentiated Learning

1. **Content Differentiation** Content differentiation requires adapting the learning material presented to students in accordance with their skill levels, motivational factors, and cognitive learning styles. Rock et al. (2008) emphasize that content differentiation requires teachers to identify essential concepts and skills while providing multiple pathways for students to access this information. This may involve using different texts, multimedia resources, or hands-on materials to present the same core concepts.
2. **Process Differentiation** Process differentiation refers to varying how students make sense of and interact with the content. Various strategies for process differentiation, including flexible grouping, learning centers, and tiered activities that allow students to work at appropriate challenge levels while developing the same essential understandings and skills [7].
3. **Product Differentiation** Product differentiation involves providing students with various ways to demonstrate their learning and understanding. Students allowing to choose varied product alternatives, including textual reports, verbal presentations, creative productions, or technical exhibits, facilitates learning demonstration through methods aligned with their personal strengths and inclinations [8].

Defining Student Well-being in Educational Contexts

Student Well-being encompasses the physical, emotional, social, and academic well-being of learners within educational environments. Pollard and Lee (2003) define student Well-being as a multidimensional construct that includes subjective well-being, personal fulfillment, and positive functioning within the school community. This holistic perspective recognizes that academic achievement alone is insufficient for comprehensive educational success [9].

The hierarchy of needs proposed by Maslow (1943) provides an essential foundation for understanding learner well-being within academic contexts. This theoretical approach suggests that basic physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before students successfully engage in learning and self-actualization. Educational environments that prioritize student Well-being recognize the importance of addressing these foundational needs through supportive policies, inclusive practices, and responsive instruction [10]. Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory (2000) identifies three core psychological necessities: self-direction, capability, and social bonds. When these needs are satisfied in educational environments, students experience enhanced motivation, engagement, and well-being. Differentiated learning practices can support these needs by providing choices (autonomy), appropriate challenges (competence), and collaborative opportunities (relatedness) [11].

175 Research Methods

This literature review examines the relationship between differentiated learning approaches and student well-being in educational environments. This research is a literature review that aims to find scientific and theoretical studies. The literature review was obtained articles which published in the last 5 years, from 2020 to 2025. The author reviewed several journals consisting of international and national journals, with various methods to find out the results of research about the differentiated learning and its effects on student well-being.

176 Result and Discussion

The results of research overview about studies on differentiated learning and student wellbeing are in the following table:

Table 19: Information on Instruments Used in Each Reference

No	Author's	Year	Research Title	Research Method	Research Findings
1	Gheysens, E., Con-suegra, E., Engels, N., & Struyven, K.	2020	Good Things Come to Those Who Wait: The Importance of Professional Development in Implemented Differentiated Instruction	Cross-sectional survey study with 423 teachers	Professional development programs focusing on differentiated instruction led to improved implementation of strategies, including reduced anxiety and enhanced student well-being. Teachers indicated more confidence and increased classroom participation.

No	Author's	Year	Research Title	Research Method	Research Findings
2	Nafiah, T., Yulia, T., & Widyastono, H. C.	2024	Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi untuk Mengakomodir Kebutuhan Belajar Murid	Qualitative case study methodology with a total of 27 students	The implementation of differentiated learning is conducted through three stages: planning, implementation, and reflection. The model of differentiated learning can accommodate all student needs, enhance their motivation, and promote student well-being.
3	Hasan, F., & Abdurrahman.	2024	Upaya Mewujudkan Student Well-Being Melalui Kurikulum Merdeka di SMA Nurul Jadid	Qualitative method, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation	The findings indicate that the implementation of the differentiated Learning Curriculum at SMA Nurul Jadid effectively promotes student well-being. This is achieved through collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including teachers and students
4	Nurmayasari, K. V., & Prafitasari, A. N.	2024	Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi untuk Mewujudkan Student's Well Being pada Pembelajaran Biologi di SMA Negeri 1 Bangorejo	Qualitative-descriptive approach with a sample of 32 students from class X.4	The implementation of differentiated learning not only fosters a more enjoyable learning environment but also allows students to express their potential more effectively, leading to a more meaningful educational experience.
5	Sinaga, C. H., Hutagaol, A., Simanjuntak, E., & Panjaitan, S.	2023	Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Melalui Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Materi Analisis Data SMPN 4 Tanjung Morawa	Qualitative descriptive and results were calculated using a Likert scale questionnaire	The study found that differentiated learning significantly enhances student understanding and engagement, making the learning process more enjoyable and effective

No	Author's	Year	Research Title	Research Method	Research Findings
6	Firliandini, W., Waspada, I., Budiwati, N., & Susanto, S.	2023	Peran Guru Dengan Kompetensi Sosial Emosional Dalam Implementasi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Untuk Membangun Student Wellbeing Pada Sekolah Menengah	Qualitative approach utilizing literature review methods	The implementation of differentiated learning, supported by teachers' social emotional competencies, is crucial for achieving student well-being. This approach allows for the accommodation of diverse student needs, fostering positive relationships and emotional management
7	Sutrisno, L. T., Muhtar, T., & Herlambang, Y. T.	2023	Efektivitas pembelajaran berdiferensiasi sebagai sebuah pendekatan untuk kemerdekaan	Qualitative descriptive approach	The findings indicate that a supportive learning environment, where teachers recognize and appreciate student diversity, enhances motivation and academic achievement, ultimately leading to improved student well-being
8	Amimah, Z., Dwijayanti, I., Siswanto, J., & Ismartiningsih	2024	Efektifitas Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Berbantu Multimedia untuk Mewujudkan Class Well-being	Quantitative approach, involving 26 fifth-grade students	The findings suggest that differentiated learning effectively meets the diverse needs of students, promoting their independence and overall well-being
9	Setiyo, A.	2022	Penerapan Pembelajaran Diferensiasi Kolaboratif dengan Melibatkan Orangtua dan Masyarakat Untuk Mewujudkan Student's Well-being di Masa Pandemi	Descriptive qualitative approach conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Mejobo	The findings indicate that collaborative differentiated learning significantly enhances student well-being and academic achievement. Differentiated learning effectively supportive educational environment

No	Author's	Year	Research Title	Research Method	Research Findings
10	Fairus, A. N., Anzani, D., & Fitri Atikah, H.	2024	Analisis Urgensi Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi Dalam Menciptakan Lingkungan Belajar Inklusif	Qualitative literature review approach	The study highlights the importance of implementing differentiated learning approaches to achieve better educational outcomes and improve student well-being

The systematic literature review focuses on the effectiveness of differentiated learning approaches in enhancing student well-being across various educational contexts. One significant aspect observed in this literature review is the role of teacher capacity building. Research by Gheyssens et al. (2020) emphasizes that effective professional development programs focused on differentiated instruction can lead to improved implementation quality. This not only enhances the teaching process but also positively impacts student well-being by reducing anxiety and increasing classroom participation. Nafiah et al. (2024) further support this notion by demonstrating how differentiated learning can accommodate various student needs, thereby enhancing motivation and promoting student well-being. Their qualitative case study highlights the systematic stages of planning, implementation, and reflection necessary for effective differentiated learning. These stages ensure that teachers can tailor their approaches to meet the unique requirements of each student, ultimately leading to a more engaging and effective learning experience.

Another notable contribution to the understanding of differentiated learning comes from Husna and Abdurrahman (2024), who argue that collaborative efforts among stakeholders, including teachers and students, are vital for promoting student well-being. This collaborative framework allows for a more inclusive approach to education, where diverse student characteristics are acknowledged and valued. Consequently, the emphasis on collaboration not only enhances academic performance but also nurtures positive relationships within the classroom. In the realm of multimedia-assisted differentiated learning, Amimah et al. (2024) found that integrating technology into the learning process significantly benefits student engagement and understanding. Their quantitative analysis demonstrates that when educators utilize multimedia resources, students are more likely to participate actively in their learning. This approach aligns with the contemporary shift towards technology-enhanced education, making learning more accessible and enjoyable for students.

The findings from Setiyo (2022) indicate that involving parents and community members in the educational process can further enhance student well-being. This collaborative differentiation approach not only supports students academically but also fosters a sense of belonging and community. The study highlights that when students feel supported by both their educators and their families, their overall well-being improves, leading to better educational outcomes. Fairus et al. (2024) highlight that implementing differentiated approaches is essential for creating an inclusive learning environment that caters to the unique needs of each student. As such, the collective evidence from these studies advocates for a paradigm shift in educational practices, emphasizing the necessity of differentiated learning to foster a supportive and effective educational environment conducive to student well-being. This systematic review provides a comprehensive understanding of how differentiated learning can be effectively implemented to achieve better educational outcomes and enhance the overall well-being of students.

The relationship between differentiated learning and student wellbeing is multifaceted and profound. Research indicates that when students experience academic success through ap-

appropriately challenging and accessible instruction, their self-efficacy, motivation, and overall psychological wellbeing improve significantly [12]. Furthermore, differentiated learning environments tend to reduce academic anxiety, promote positive peer relationships, and foster a sense of belonging among diverse learners [13]. This connection between instructional practices and student wellbeing has gained particular relevance in light of growing concerns about student mental health, academic stress, and the need for educational systems to support not only cognitive development but also social-emotional growth [14].

However, the successful implementation of differentiated learning for student wellbeing requires careful consideration of various factors, including teacher preparation, administrative support, resource allocation, and systemic barriers that may impede effective practice [15]. Educational institutions must navigate challenges related to curriculum demands, assessment requirements, and the complexity of managing diverse learning needs within constrained time and resource parameters.

177 Conclusion

The analysis reveals significant correlations between differentiated learning approaches and student well-being. It is because differentiated learning can reduce academic stress, improved self-efficacy, and stronger teacher-student relationships. The results showed that differentiated learning not only for academic achievement but as a critical component in creating educational environments that holistically support student well-being and positive development.

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