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Differentiated Instruction in Fiqh Learning: A Case Study at MI Al Huda Malang, Indonesia

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Abstract. The teacher-centered education system in Indonesia has often overlooked the diverse characteristics of students. In response, the *Merdeka Curriculum* introduces differentiated learning as an approach tailored to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. MI Al Huda Malang is among the institutions implementing this approach in Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) subjects, although its application remains limited due to time constraints and resource availability. This study aims to: (1) analyze the design of differentiated learning in Fiqh subjects at MI Al Huda Malang, and (2) examine its implementation process. This research employs a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct classroom observations, and documentation. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The analysis followed the interactive model, including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that: (1) the design of differentiated learning involves identifying students' learning needs, setting learning objectives, developing varied learning activities, applying formative assessments, and providing choices in evaluation; and (2) the implementation process consists of three main stages, namely preliminary activities, core learning activities, and closing activities. Overall, the study highlights that while differentiated learning has been conceptually integrated into Fiqh instruction, its practical implementation requires further optimization to address existing limitations. These findings contribute to the development of more inclusive and adaptive learning practices within Islamic education contexts.
Keywords. Implementation; Differentiated Learning; Jurisprudence Subjects

INTRODUCTION

Educational practices in Indonesia have long demonstrated a strong tendency toward teacher-centered learning approaches. In this model, teachers serve as the primary source of knowledge, while students are positioned as passive recipients of information. As a result, the learning process often becomes one-directional, characterized by teacher dominance in delivering content and minimal active student participation. This condition contributes to low levels of student engagement and limits the optimal development of learners' individual potential. Moreover, the use of uniform instructional approaches without considering students' diverse characteristics remains a major issue in educational practice. Empirically, each student possesses unique attributes, including cognitive abilities, interests, learning styles, and socio-cultural backgrounds. The mismatch between instructional strategies and individual learning needs may lead to gaps in understanding and ultimately reduce the quality of learning outcomes.

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The government's efforts to address these challenges are reflected in national education policies, particularly Government Regulation Number 57 of 2021 concerning National Education Standards. This regulation emphasizes the importance of developing adaptive and contextual curricula that take into account regional characteristics, institutional conditions, and student diversity. In its implementation, the government introduced the *Merdeka Curriculum* as an enhancement of the 2013 Curriculum. The *Merdeka Curriculum* highlights principles of learning autonomy, flexibility, and recognition of students' diverse potentials.

Within the framework of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, the learning paradigm shifts from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. Students are positioned as the main subjects of the learning process, given opportunities to learn independently, creatively, and in accordance with their needs and interests. Meanwhile, teachers act as facilitators and mentors who support students' learning processes optimally (Kurniawan, Sutopo, & Widyasari, 2025). One relevant approach to implementing this principle is differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is a teaching strategy designed to accommodate student diversity by modifying content, process, product, and learning environment. These modifications are based on three key aspects: students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Readiness refers to students' initial ability to understand new material, interests relate to students' preferences and motivations in learning activities, while learning profiles reflect individual learning styles.

The implementation of differentiated instruction is particularly important in heterogeneous educational settings where students come from diverse backgrounds. This approach provides opportunities for each learner to engage in learning according to their characteristics, thereby enhancing motivation, self-confidence, and active participation in the learning process. Thus, differentiated instruction is not only oriented toward learning outcomes but also toward creating an inclusive and meaningful learning experience (Saprudin & Nurwahidin, 2021).

In the context of Islamic education, particularly in the subject of Fiqh, differentiated instruction holds significant relevance. Fiqh is a branch of Islamic studies that focuses on Islamic law, including both worship (*ibadah*) and social transactions (*muamalah*). At the primary school level, especially in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*, Fiqh education plays a fundamental role in shaping students' religious understanding and practices from an early age. Therefore, the delivery of Fiqh material needs to be comprehensive, contextual, and adaptive to ensure that students can understand and apply it in their daily lives. However, Fiqh instruction at the primary level is still often conducted using conventional approaches that overlook student diversity. This condition may lead to difficulties in understanding Fiqh concepts, which are both abstract and practical in nature. Consequently, there is a need for innovative instructional strategies that can bridge students' learning needs with the complexity of Fiqh materials.

One educational institution that has implemented differentiated instruction is *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Al Huda Malang*. This institution has begun applying differentiated instruction in several Islamic education subjects, including Fiqh, across grades I to VI. This implementation represents an effort to improve learning quality by aligning instructional strategies with students' characteristics. Based on preliminary observations, differentiated instruction at MI Al Huda Malang has not yet been fully

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implemented across all subjects. This limitation is due to several challenges, including time constraints and the uneven understanding among teachers regarding the concept and implementation of differentiated instruction. Additionally, there are challenges in utilizing technology-based learning media, such as interactive multimedia and instructional videos, which have not been optimally integrated into the teaching process (Deswita, Hasnawati, & Yumiati, 2024).

Nevertheless, several studies have shown that differentiated instruction has a positive impact on both the learning process and outcomes. Research by Pramudya and Hidayati (2023) indicates that differentiated instruction based on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles can enhance students' understanding of learning materials. Similarly, Fauzia and Ramadan (2023) found that the successful implementation of differentiated instruction is influenced by factors such as a conducive learning environment, continuous assessment, responsive teaching, and effective classroom leadership.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that differentiated instruction is a relevant approach to support the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, particularly in Fiqh learning at the *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* level. However, its implementation in practice still faces various challenges that require further in-depth investigation. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of differentiated instruction in Fiqh learning at MI Al Huda Malang, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of its practices, challenges, and implications for the learning process.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach based on a case study design. Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and tends to emphasize analytical processes (Fiantika et al., 2022). The study was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al Huda Malang, located at Jalan Selat Sunda VIII D9–D20, Lesanpuro, Sawojajar District, Malang City, East Java, Indonesia.

The informants in this study consisted of:

a) Teacher A (Fiqh teacher, Grade 1, 32 years old, 8 years teaching experience)
b) Teacher B (Fiqh teacher, Grade 4, 35 years old, 10 years teaching experience)
c) Principal (45 years old, 20 years experience in education)
d) Vice Principal for Curriculum (40 years old, 15 years experience)

Data collection was conducted over a period of two months with:

a) 4 classroom observations (2 in Grade 1 / Phase A, 2 in Grade 4 / Phase B)
b) 6 in-depth interviews (each informant interviewed 1–2 times)
c) Documentation collected continuously during the research process

The object of research is Phase A (Grade 1) and Phase B (Grade 4). Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation.

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model:

a) Data condensation: selecting, focusing, and simplifying field data
b) Data display: organizing data in matrices and narrative descriptions
c) Conclusion drawing and verification: interpreting patterns and validating findings through triangulation (Suwendra, 2018).

To ensure validity, this study applied credibility, transferability, dependability,

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and confirmability. Triangulation was conducted across sources, techniques, and time (Husnullail & Jailani, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exposure data in this study was obtained through observation, interview, and documentation techniques in MI Al Huda Malang. The main focus includes two aspects, namely:

1. Differentiated learning design, and
2. The process of its implementation in the learning of jurisprudence.

In general, the results showed that differentiated learning has been designed and implemented taking into account the diversity of student characteristics, including learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles.

Learning design is carried out systematically through several main stages:

1. Identify student needs through diagnostic assessment and early observation
2. Adaptive learning goal setting
3. Design of varied learning activities
4. Use of formative assessment
5. Choice in evaluation

The teacher first maps out the characteristics of the student, including learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). This is the basis in determining the appropriate learning strategy.

From classroom observation in Phase A (Grade 1)**:**

The teacher used visual and kinesthetic strategies in teaching *wudu*. Students watched a short video, then directly practiced wudu in groups.

"I usually adapt the way of teaching to the child's learning style. If the child is kinesthetic, I invite him to practice directly." (Teacher A).

The classroom atmosphere was active, with students moving, discussing, and practicing.

In contrast, in Phase B (Grade 4)**:**

The teacher relied more on explanation and uniform media (PowerPoint and textbook).

"If in the upper class the material is more complex, so it is rather difficult to distinguish for each student." (Teacher B).

Students tended to be more passive, with limited variation in activities.

Table 1 Comparison of Differentiated Learning (Phase A vs Phase B)

Aspect	Phase A (Grade 1)	Phase B (Grade 4)	Evidence
Content	Adjusted to ability levels	Mostly uniform	Observation notes
Process	Visual, kinesthetic, group work	Dominated by explanation	Observation
Product	Drawing, practice, oral	Written tasks dominant	Documentation
Teacher Strategy	Flexible grouping	Whole-class approach	Interview

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Challenge	Time management	Material complexity	Interview

The main difference lies in the level of differentiation implementation. In Phase A, differentiation is implemented holistically (content, process, product). In Phase B, differentiation is partial, focusing mainly on product.

This limitation is influenced by:

1. Complexity of Fiqh Material, phase B includes abstract topics (e.g., muamalah), making differentiation harder.
2. Teacher Cognitive Load, teachers must manage content complexity and class heterogeneity simultaneously.
3. Pedagogical Readiness, "We are not too used to distinguishing the learning process for each student." (Teacher B).
4. Time Constraints, differentiation requires more preparation time.

In its implementation, differentiated learning in the subject of jurisprudence is done through:

1. Content differentiation (material adapted to student ability)
2. Process differentiation (different learning methods)
3. Product differentiation (diverse learning outcomes)

Teachers use a variety of methods such as discussion, practice, and visual media to accommodate student needs. Learning activities take place more flexibly and student-centered.

Research findings show that the implementation of differentiated learning has a positive impact, but also faces several obstacles. Some key findings in the study:

1. Learning becomes more inclusive and adaptive
2. Students are more active and involved
3. Teachers are able to adapt their learning strategies
4. Student learning needs are more accommodated

Supporting factors

1. School and environmental support
2. Teacher competence
3. Availability of infrastructure

While the inhibiting factor

1. Time constraints
2. The complexity of managing heterogeneous classes
3. Limitations of Learning media

Table 2 Findings Matrix (Evidence-Based)

Theme	**Findings**	**Evidence**
Inclusivity	Learning more adaptive	Observation
Engagement	Higher in Phase A	Observation
Teacher Role	More adaptive in Phase A	Interview
Constraints	Time & heterogeneity	Interview
Key Issue	Weak process differentiation in Phase B	Triangulation

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Figure 1 Differentiated learning implementation flow

Descriptively, this study shows that differentiated learning in MI Al Huda Malang has been implemented in a structured manner ranging from planning to evaluation. Teachers play an important role in identifying student needs and translating them into varied learning strategies. Despite some technical constraints, this implementation proved to be able to improve the quality of Fiqh learning, especially in creating an inclusive, adaptive, and student-centered learning environment.

Differentiated learning design in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda Malang

Differentiated learning design in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda Malang was conceived as a response to the need to create inclusive, participatory, and contextual learning (Lupita, L., & Hidajat, F. A, 2022). The teacher no longer acts as the only source of knowledge, but rather as a facilitator who adapts learning to the readiness, interests and learning style of each learner. This strategy is in line with the mandate of The Independent curriculum which places learners as the main subject in the learning process. The design begins with the identification of student needs by conducting diagnostic assessments conducted before the learning process begins (Purnawanto, A. T, 2023). This assessment aims to identify the student's initial ability to certain Fiqh material, for example in the topic of tayamum, wudu, or prayer procedures. From the results of the assessment, teachers can map students based on three main categories: readiness (readiness), interest (interest), and learning profile (learning profile). Thus, learning is not uniform but flexible according to the real conditions of students.

The discussion on differentiated learning design in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda

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Malang highlights an adaptive effort in the world of education, where student diversity is recognized as the main foundation in designing meaningful learning experiences. Differentiated learning is not just a method, but a philosophy that emphasizes the adjustment of learning content, processes, and products to be aligned with the individual needs of students (Trisnani, N., et.al, 2024). In this context, MI Al Huda Malang seeks to implement this approach as a response to the heterogeneity of students in understanding and internalizing the teachings of jurisprudence.

At the core activity stage, there is a significant difference between Phase A and Phase B in the application of differentiation strategies. In phase a, teachers actively carry out differentiation in terms of content, processes, and products. The content delivered is tailored to the student's ability level, so they don't feel overwhelmed or too bored. This is in accordance with the theory of Constructivism, which asserts that learning should be designed so that students can build knowledge through relevant and personalized experiences (N. T. Azzahra et al., 2025). Teachers also use a variety of media and methods, such as videos, images, and interactive activities, to meet different learning styles, so that the learning process becomes more interesting and effective.

However, in Phase B, teachers do not seem to fully implement differentiation in terms of content and process. Teachers focus more on the use of diverse learning media for all students without explicitly distinguishing materials and methods according to individual needs. However, teachers still pay attention to the needs of students by preparing diverse media and giving students the opportunity to show understanding through different forms of products. This shows the challenges in implementing complete differentiation, especially in managing heterogeneous classes and optimally accommodating various learning styles.

The main difficulty that teachers face in implementing process differentiation is in managing heterogeneous classes. Teachers find it difficult to provide individualized attention to each student, as well as choose the most effective methods for a variety of different learning styles. This is in line with the theory of multiple intelligences which states that each individual has a different intelligence, so it requires a diverse teaching approach as well (Auralia et al., 2025). Teachers need to have high competence in managing classes and applying the right strategies so that the learning process remains effective and fun.

In the context of assessment, teachers use a formative assessment design that is carried out through observation, discussion, and tasks that are given on an ongoing basis. The feedback provided serves to improve the learning process and adjust teaching strategies. Appropriate and constructive feedback can significantly improve student learning outcomes, especially if it is delivered specifically and relevant to student needs (Rosmiyanti,R., et.al, 2025). Thus, teachers are able to ensure that students understand the concept of jurisprudence in depth and are able to apply it in everyday life. In addition, the closing activity was carried out by inviting students to reflect and provide feedback. This reflection is important because it helps students internalize what has been learned and prepares them for the next learning process. This approach is in accordance with the theory of metacognition which emphasizes the importance of students being able to control and direct their own learning process (Widiana, I. W.,et.al, 2024). Teachers also provide direction and motivation so that students feel confident and motivated to learn

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even better.

The use of multiple choice in the evaluation of learning outcomes becomes an effective strategy to increase student motivation and participation. By offering a variety of assessment formats such as MCQs, essays, or projects, students can demonstrate their abilities in a way that best suits their learning style and interests. This approach also supports the theory of competency-based learning which emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding in various forms (Tuerah, R. M., & Tuerah, J. M, 2023). However, the findings show that in practice, the application of differentiation in terms of content and processes does not proceed optimally in Phase B. Teachers tend to focus more on product differentiation and learning media, while content and processes receive less explicit attention. This condition indicates the need for more intensive training and mentoring so that teachers are able to implement differentiation strategies thoroughly and consistently in all phases of learning.

Within the theoretical framework, the success of differentiated learning depends largely on the teacher's pedagogical competence and institutional support. Teachers who have high competence in designing and managing heterogeneous learning are able to significantly improve student learning outcomes (Erdiana, 2024). Therefore, professional development and continuous training are important factors that schools need to take into account for this strategy to be effective. In addition to the academic aspect, the differentiation approach also contributes to the development of character and tolerance of students towards diversity. By tailoring materials and methods as needed, students not only gain a better understanding of Fiqh material, but also learn to respect differences and develop an inclusive attitude. This is in accordance with the values of character education carried out in Islamic education, such as tolerance, justice, and mutual respect.

In the process of reflection, teachers are encouraged to conduct an ongoing evaluation of the applied differentiated learning practices. This evaluation is important to identify obstacles and find the right solutions so that the strategies used are more effective. This approach is in line with the principle of continuous improvement in Education Management, which emphasizes the importance of evaluation and continuous improvement (Purwowidodo, A., & Zaini, M, 2023). In addition, the support of school principals and the school community also largely determines the successful implementation of differentiated learning. Schools need to provide adequate resources, such as diverse learning media, sufficient planning time, and ongoing training. This support will strengthen the competence of teachers and ensure that differentiation strategies can be implemented consistently and effectively (Adzim et al., 2024).

In general, the findings of this study indicate that although there are challenges in the application of differentiation, especially in managing heterogeneous classes and implementing complete strategies, the efforts that have been made in MI Al Huda Malang show commitment in improving the quality of learning. With the strengthening of teacher competence, the development of Learning media, and continuous evaluation, it is expected that this strategy can provide maximum benefits for the academic and character development of students.

In the context of Islamic education, this approach is also able to strengthen the spiritual aspects and character of students. By adapting materials and learning methods, teachers can relate religious teachings to students ' experiences and needs, so that

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learning becomes more meaningful and relevant in their lives. This is in line with the vision of Islamic values-based education that emphasizes the full human development of spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects. Finally, the successful implementation of differentiated learning relies heavily on the collaboration of all stakeholders, including teachers, principals, parents, and the community. Through solid collaboration and mutual commitment, the learning process can run more effectively and sustainably, and is able to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent but also has character and noble character.

Differentiated learning process in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda

The differentiated learning process in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda Malang describes a systematic effort in accommodating the diverse learning needs of students through the stages of preliminary, core, and closing activities. Preliminary activities conducted by teachers by praying, reading a short letter, memabsen students, as well as providing motivation is an important first step to create a conducive classroom atmosphere and ready to accept learning. This approach is in line with the theory of educational psychology that emphasizes the importance of building a positive classroom climate and supporting the emotional involvement of students as the foundation of Successful Learning (L. Azzahra & Darmiyanti, 2024).

In the core activities, there are significant differences between Phase A and Phase B in the application of learning differentiation, especially in the aspects of content, process, and product. In phase a, teachers consistently carry out differentiation by adjusting learning materials (Content), Learning methods and activities (processes), and the expected form of learning outcomes (products) according to the needs and abilities of students. This shows a comprehensive implementation of the principle of differentiated learning based on Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism, where learning is designed as an active process involving social interaction and adjustment to individual needs (Wibowo, S., Wangid, M. N., & Firdaus, F. M, 2025).

Conversely, in Phase B, teachers have not fully implemented content and process differentiation strategies. Although teachers continue to pay attention to the individual needs of students by providing a variety of Learning media, the application of content and process differentiation has not been optimal. Teachers focus more on product differentiation at the end of the lesson, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate understanding through various forms of assignments. This imperfection indicates a challenge in managing heterogeneous classes and limited understanding or resources of teachers in applying differentiation as a whole (Lindner, K. T.,et.al, 2021).

The difficulty of teachers in applying process differentiation to heterogeneous classes is a fairly common issue in educational practice. This can lead to less than optimal student engagement and fulfillment of different learning needs. The multiple intelligences theory emphasizes that students have Diverse Intelligences and learning styles, so teachers need to develop a variety of teaching strategies to accommodate these differences (Wijaya, S. E.,et.al, 2023). Teachers ' difficulties in implementing process differentiation may be due to lack of training, limited preparation time, or limited support resources. The implementation of effective and differentiated learning requires teachers who have high pedagogical competence and good classroom management skills.

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This is in line with the teacher competency framework proposed by Darling-Hammond et al, which affirms the importance of mastering diverse teaching strategies to meet the needs of all students in heterogeneous classrooms (Darling-Hammond, L, 2020). Therefore, increasing the capacity of teachers through training and mentoring is needed so that the implementation of differentiation can run optimally.

In addition, the use of diverse learning media in Phase B shows the teacher's awareness of the importance of variation in the delivery of material. Varied Media can help accommodate students 'different learning styles, in accordance with the findings of recent research showing that the use of interactive multimedia can improve students' understanding and motivation to learn (Wiguna et al., 2022). However, without a clear differentiation of content and processes, the use of the same media for all students can reduce the effectiveness of learning.

In the closing stage, the teacher invites students to reflect and provide feedback to strengthen their understanding and prepare for the next lesson. This activity is very important in building students ' metacognitive skills, namely their ability to organize and supervise their own learning process. Self-regulated learning theory emphasizes that reflection and feedback are key components that help students develop control over their learning. The feedback provided by the teacher also acts as an essential formative evaluation tool in differentiated learning. Effective feedback can improve learning outcomes by providing specific and relevant information for improvement. Therefore, teachers need to develop the ability to provide constructive feedback and motivate students to continue to develop.

The application of differentiated learning in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda Malang reflects an effort to balance the academic and spiritual needs of students. Approaches that adapt materials and methods to the characteristics of students not only improve understanding of religious materials, but also develop an attitude of tolerance and respect for diversity, which is very important in the context of religious education. However, findings that show inconsistencies in the application of differentiation between Phase A and Phase B indicate the need for continuous evaluation and improvement. Schools need to systematically monitor and evaluate learning practices to identify barriers and develop appropriate solutions. A collaborative approach between teachers, principals, and other stakeholders is critical in this process.

The development of teacher competence in differentiated learning must also be supported by school policies that provide space and time for more in-depth learning planning. Teachers who have the time and support to effectively design learning can significantly improve the quality of learning and student outcomes (Efendi, N., & Sholeh, M. I, 2023). The application of differentiated learning must also consider aspects of the well-being of teachers and students. The high workload of teachers can hinder the implementation of complex learning strategies, while students who feel supported and valued in the learning process will show better motivation and achievement (Salsabilla, I. S., Niswah, S. A., & Jaya, A. I. A, 2024).

In the context of learning jurisprudence, differentiation approach can also help students understand the concepts of religion in more depth and contextually. By adapting materials and methods, teachers can connect religious teachings with students ' experiences and needs, so that learning becomes more meaningful and applicable. It is

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also important to develop a reflective culture among teachers and students. Reflection is not only carried out at the end of the lesson, but also on an ongoing basis to increase self-awareness and the quality of learning. Overall, the differentiated learning process in MI Al Huda Malang shows commitment in delivering education that is responsive to the needs of students. Despite the challenges in implementing content and process differentiation, especially in Phase B, the efforts that have been made provide a solid foundation for further development. With the support of adequate training, resources, and policies, MI Al Huda can improve the effectiveness of differentiated learning as a whole.

In the future, the implementation of differentiated learning needs to be accompanied by classroom action research and continuous evaluation to ensure that the strategies implemented really have a positive impact on the academic and character development of students. Collaboration between teachers and education stakeholders will be the key to success in creating an inclusive and adaptive learning environment (Mulyanti, D, 2024). Thus, differentiated learning in fiqh subjects in MI Al Huda Malang not only increases students ' understanding of religious materials, but also forms an attitude of tolerance, openness, and respect for diversity. This approach is in line with the holistic and humanistic vision of Islamic education, which emphasizes the development of individual potential as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Differentiated learning design in fiqh subjects has paid attention to five main aspects, namely: A) identification of student needs which are to determine student readiness, student interests, and student learning profiles, b) planning learning objectives so that learning can be relevant, effective in accordance with learning objectives, c) designing varied learning activities in teaching modules tailored to student needs consisting of differentiation of content, processes and products. This is reflected in the variety of learning strategies used by teachers, including flexible grouping, selection of various learning media, and adjustment of materials and assessments based on individual student characteristics, d) using formative assessment designs through observation, class discussion and assignments given to students, e) providing options in evaluating student learning by offering several assignment models according to student abilities. Differentiated learning process includes preliminary activities, core activities and closing activities. The learning process is more effective and meaningful when the teacher adapts the method to the needs of the learners. In practice, learning activities involve simulations of worship practices, group discussions, as well as mini-project-based assignments that allow students to understand the teachings of jurisprudence not only conceptually, but also applicatively in everyday life.This study concludes that differentiated learning in Fiqh subjects at MI Al Huda Malang has been conceptually well designed but unevenly implemented across phases. Phase A demonstrates more comprehensive differentiation, while Phase B shows limitations, particularly in process differentiation.

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