



## The Concept of Differentiated Learning in the Qur'an: The Perspective of Ibn Kathir's Interpretation

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to describe the concept of differentiated learning in the Qur'an based on Ibn Kathir's interpretation. The research method used is qualitative with a thematic interpretation approach. Data were collected through literature studies from the book Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Islamic education literature, and academic references related to the concept of differentiated learning. The results of the study show that, according to Ibn Kathir, these three verses together emphasize that ideal education is education that respects differences, understands individual character, and teaches the truth gently and wisely. The concept of differentiated learning from the perspective of Ibn Kathir's interpretation is based on the principle that every human being possesses unique potential that demands a varied learning approach. Consequently, the Qur'anic values explained by Ibn Kathir are highly relevant to the needs of modern education, confirming that the concept of differentiated learning is not new in Islam but is deeply embedded in the teachings of the Qur'an.

**Keyword:** Differentiated Learning, Al-Quran, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Islamic Education

**Abstrak:** Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan konsep belajar berdiferensiasi dalam Al-Qur'an berdasarkan penafsiran Ibnu Katsir. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan pendekatan tafsir maudu'i (tematik). Data dikumpulkan melalui studi pustaka dari kitab Tafsir Ibnu Katsir, literatur pendidikan Islam, serta referensi akademik yang berkaitan dengan konsep pembelajaran berdiferensiasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa menurut Ibnu Katsir, ketiga ayat tersebut bersama-sama menegaskan bahwa pendidikan yang ideal adalah pendidikan yang menghargai perbedaan, memahami karakter individu, dan mengajarkan kebenaran dengan cara yang lembut serta bijaksana. Konsep belajar berdiferensiasi dalam perspektif Tafsir Ibnu Katsir berlandaskan pada prinsip bahwa setiap manusia memiliki potensi unik yang menuntut pendekatan belajar yang bervariasi. Implikasinya, nilai-nilai Qur'ani yang dijelaskan Ibnu Katsir ini sangat relevan dengan kebutuhan pendidikan modern, menegaskan bahwa konsep belajar berdiferensiasi bukanlah hal baru dalam Islam, melainkan telah tertanam kuat dalam ajaran Al-Qur'an.

**Kata kunci :** Belajar Berdiferensiasi, Al-Qur'an, Tafsir Ibnu Katsir, Pendidikan Islam

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## **Introduction**

The increasingly complex developments of the era require the education system to be able to adapt to the heterogeneous characteristics of students (Wardani, 2024). Traditional, uniform, teacher-centered learning models are considered irrelevant because they tend to ignore individual student differences. Each student has a different learning pace, style, and method, so a uniform learning approach cannot optimally accommodate these needs (Rizki & Ningsih, 2024). This condition encourages the emergence of the need for a more flexible, adaptive, and student-oriented learning approach.

In response to these challenges, the concept of differentiated instruction, popularized by Carol Ann Tomlinson, emerged as a strategic alternative in education. This approach emphasizes the importance of adapting content, processes, products, and learning environments to suit the individual characteristics of students (Abdurrohman et al., 2025). Differentiated learning aims to create inclusive and personalized learning experiences so that each student can develop according to their potential and needs. Through this approach, learning is no longer viewed as a process of uniformly delivering material, but rather as a process of facilitating student development individually and contextually (Romdhoni et al., 2023).

The urgency of differentiated learning has grown stronger with the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn) and Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) policies in Indonesia. These policies emphasize the importance of student-centered learning and provide teachers with flexibility in designing learning strategies tailored to their students' needs (Sirait et al., 2024). The Independent Curriculum encourages teachers to develop adaptive, creative, and contextual learning through various pedagogical innovations, one of which is differentiated learning (Qur'ani et al., 2024). This approach is seen as the key to improving the quality of learning while optimally developing students' potential (Basri, 2023).

However, the implementation of differentiated learning in the field still faces various challenges. Many teachers struggle to comprehensively understand the concept of differentiation, design varied learning strategies, and conduct assessments that address students' individual needs (Fathoni, M., & Sobandi, 2020). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, these challenges become even more complex because learning focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also on character development, spirituality, and Islamic values. As a result, Islamic Religious Education instruction often remains uniform and fails to address the diverse abilities and learning needs of students.

This issue demonstrates that differentiated learning in Islamic education cannot simply be understood as a technical pedagogical approach, but also requires a

strong philosophical and theoretical foundation. In the Islamic educational tradition, the principle of learning that takes individual differences into account has long been recognized and reflected in the Qur'an. The Qur'an describes an educational process that occurs in stages, dialogically and contextually, tailored to the learner's circumstances. The prophets' educational methods demonstrate the adaptation of learning approaches based on the learner's level of understanding, psychological condition, and social situation (Saefuddin Rosyid, 2020).

However, studies on differentiated learning have largely relied on Western educational theory and have not integrated it with the Qur'anic interpretations. Previous research has generally focused on the effectiveness of differentiated learning in improving student learning outcomes, motivation, and engagement (Putri & Elizar, 2025); (Wahyuningtyas, 2023). Meanwhile, studies linking the concept of differentiated learning to the perspective of classical Islamic interpretation are still very limited. Yet, Quranic interpretation contains numerous explanations of educational methods, teaching strategies, and development approaches relevant to the concept of differentiation in learning.

One of the classical commentaries that has made a significant contribution to Islamic scholarship is the Tafsir of Ibn Kathir. This interpretation is known as a comprehensive and systematic interpretation of Quranic verses, based on the narrations and understandings of the early scholars. It includes various explanations of the teaching methods of the prophets, the stages of revelation transmission, and educational approaches that take into account the conditions of individuals and society. The pedagogical values contained in Ibn Kathir's Tafsir show strong relevance to the concept of differentiated learning in modern education.

However, studies specifically examining differentiated learning from the perspective of Ibn Kathir's interpretation are still rare. Most research has not explored the theological and philosophical dimensions of differentiated learning in the Qur'an. As a result, the implementation of differentiated learning in Islamic education often lacks a strong conceptual foundation from an Islamic perspective. This situation indicates a research gap that needs to be filled through an integrative study of modern educational theory and classical exegetical literature.

If this situation continues, differentiated learning in Islamic education has the potential to be understood only as a technical pedagogical strategy without a solid conceptual foundation in Islamic teachings. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed that can uncover the concept of differentiated learning in the Qur'an from the perspective of Ibn Kathir's interpretation. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive theoretical basis for the development of Islamic Religious Education learning that is adaptive, contextual, and oriented to the needs of students.

Based on this description, this study focuses on analyzing the concept of differentiated learning from the perspective of Ibn Kathir's interpretation and its relevance to the practice of Islamic Religious Education. This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in integrating modern pedagogical concepts with Islamic educational values, so that differentiated learning is understood not only as a contemporary learning strategy but also as part of a holistic and sustainable Islamic education paradigm.

### **Methods**

The type of research used in this study is qualitative research with a *maudū'ī* (thematic) interpretation approach. Qualitative research was chosen because it aims to understand the meaning, concepts, and educational values contained in the verses of the Qur'an in depth and contextually. The *maudū'ī* interpretation approach is used to examine the concept of differentiated learning from a Qur'anic perspective through thematic interpretation of relevant verses.

Terminologically, *tafsir maudū'ī* is a method of interpreting the Qur'an that is carried out by collecting verses of the Qur'an that have a certain theme in common, then analyzing them comprehensively and systematically to obtain a complete understanding of the theme. According to Abdul Hayy al-Farmawi, *tafsir maudū'ī* is a method that studies the Al-Qur'an based on a certain theme by collecting all related verses, arranging them according to the chronology of the verses, and then analyzing them thoroughly to find integral concepts in the Al-Qur'an. Meanwhile, Nasrudin Baidan explained that *tafsir maudū'ī* aims to present the Al-Qur'an's view as a whole on an issue through systematic thematic analysis, thereby producing a comprehensive and contextual understanding.

The operational steps of this research refer to the *maudū'ī* interpretation procedure as put forward by al-Farmawi and Baidan, namely:

1. Determine the research theme, namely the concept of differentiated learning from the perspective of the Qur'an.
2. Identifying and collecting verses of the Qur'an related to the theme, using keywords such as: differences in human abilities, educational methods of the prophets, teaching approaches, wisdom in preaching, and learning principles according to individual conditions.
3. Classify verses based on sub-themes that are relevant to aspects of differentiated learning, such as differences in human potential, diverse teaching methods, and contextual educational approaches.
4. Interpret the verses that have been collected by referring to Ibn Kathir's *Tafsir* as the main source, then analyze their meaning in depth according to the context of the revelation of the verse (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), the *munāsabah* of the verse, as well as the explanations of the ulama.

5. Analyze and synthesize the results of the interpretation to find educational concepts that are relevant to differentiated learning.
6. Linking classical interpretations with contemporary educational concepts, especially differentiated learning theory, so that the relevance between the values of the Qur'an and modern educational practices is obtained.
7. Drawing thematic conclusions regarding the concept of differentiated learning from the perspective of the Qur'an.

The data sources in this research consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data is in the form of Al-Qur'an al-Karim and Tafsir Ibn Kathir as the main reference in understanding the meaning of the verse. The choice of Tafsir Ibn Kathir was based on his position as a tafsir bil ma'tsur who interprets the Al-Qur'an using the Al-Qur'an, hadith, and the opinions of friends, so that he has strong authority in the classical tafsir tradition. Secondary data includes books, scientific journals, and research results related to Islamic education, differentiated learning theory, and maudū'ī interpretation methodology.

The data analysis technique was conducted through content analysis of the collected verses of the Quran. The analysis was conducted by interpreting the meaning of the verses based on Ibn Kathir's interpretation, then categorizing concepts relevant to differentiated learning. To maintain the validity and objectivity of the interpretation, the researcher used source triangulation by comparing Ibn Kathir's interpretation with other tafsir literature and contemporary educational theory. In addition, researchers also use a contextual hermeneutic approach to avoid subjective bias and ensure that the interpretation of verses remains within the corridor of valid interpretation methodology.

## **Results And Discussion**

### **Results**

#### **Ibn Kathir's Interpretation of the Principles of Differentiated Learning in the Verses of the Qur'an**

The results of the study show that Ibn Kathir's interpretation contains a number of educational principles that are substantially in line with the concept of differentiated learning in modern education. Although the term differentiated learning is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an or in Ibn Kathir's Tafsir, through thematic analysis of educational verses, it was found that the Qur'an has indicated the importance of a learning approach that takes into account differences in individual characteristics.

#### **Study of the Tafsir of Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 13**

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ  
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Artinya: "O mankind, indeed We have created you from a man and a woman. Then, We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. Indeed, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Compliant."

Surah Al-Hujurat, classified as a Madaniyah surah, affirms the principle of human equality in verse 13. While there is debate regarding its location, it was certainly revealed after the Prophet Muhammad's migration (hijrah). This verse responds to a social phenomenon in which one group demeans another based on social status, asserting that human dignity is determined solely by piety.

In Ibnu Katsir's Tafsir, it is explained that diversity of ethnicity, nation and gender is a means of getting to know each other and learning, not a means of demeaning each other. A similar interpretation is reinforced by Tafsir Jalalain which interprets "syu'uban" as the highest level of descent, followed by tribe, tribe, and so on, but all of these levels only lead to one measure of glory, namely piety. Meanwhile, Quraish Shihab in his Tafsir Al-Mishbah emphasized that this verse is a universal principle for all humanity, not just Muslims, by emphasizing the equality of status between men and women and inviting humans to continue to increase their piety. From these various interpretations, it can be concluded that Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 13 invites humans to abandon arrogance based on lineage, wealth, or social status, and turn to the race in piety as the only path to true glory in the sight of Allah.

The essence of the creation of humans in various forms of diversity in this verse is reflected in the keyword *lita'arafu*, a call to get to know each other. According to Az-Zamakhsyari, the meaning of *lita'arafu* refers to recognizing one's identity through the historical traces of one's ancestors (*nasab*), where a person can find his or her identity through the chain of descendants. Quraish Shihab complements this understanding by emphasizing that the process of getting to know each other opens up wider opportunities for mutual benefit. The essence of this understanding is not simply to understand differences, but rather to broaden insight and experience, ultimately increasing devotion to God. The culmination of a relationship built on this foundation is the realization of comprehensive well-being and happiness, both in this world and the hereafter.

Based on a study of various interpretations of Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 13, the author further explores the three key concepts of *lita'arafu*, *akromakum*, and *taqwa*. Various interpretations agree that this verse emphasizes human diversity as a means to establish relationships of mutual understanding. This process of getting to know

each other forms the foundation for social harmony and shared prosperity. The word *akromakum* (the noblest among you) exists as a correction to the culture of demeaning others and measuring glory based on material things or lineage. This concept is inseparable from the meaning of *taqwa*, which places the level of piety as the only parameter of glory before Allah. Thus, it becomes clear that the purpose of human creation as confirmed in Qs. Adz-Dzariyat verse 56:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

Meaning: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except that they may worship Me." (RI, 1995).

Based on the affirmation of this verse, it can be concluded that the essence of human creation on earth is to serve Allah SWT completely. This devotion should radiate deep love and firm piety toward Him, which will ultimately lead humans to the highest degree of glory in the sight of the Creator. Thus, the essence of human existence is not merely to fulfill worldly needs, but to achieve an honorable position through sincere devotion and consistent implementation of religious teachings.

#### **Q.S. An-Nahl ayat 125**

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِهِمْ بِالتِّي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ

هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

Meaning: Call (humans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching and debate them in a better way. Indeed, your Lord is He who knows best who has gone astray from His path, and He (also) knows best who has been guided.

According to the perspective of Ibnu Katsir's interpretation (in Suganda et. al, 2025), surah AnNahl verse 125 contains the command to preach with wisdom and good lessons. Allah Ta'ala ordered the Messenger of Allah sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam to call people to His path with hikmah (a good and wise way). Ibn Jarir said, what is called to humans is the Qur'an, Sunnah, and good lessons, including warnings, reprimands, and events that happened to humans in the past. The Prophet was asked to remind humans of this so that they would be more careful of the retribution (azab) of Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala (Al-Mubarakfuri & Al-Atsari, 2011).

Based on Ibn Kathir's interpretation above, Surah An-Nahl verse 125 discusses three educational methods: wisdom, good guidance, and effective guidance. Although the term "education" was not yet known during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), it was referred to as *da'wah*, which refers to inviting polytheists to embrace Islam and strengthening those who have already converted to Islam. Therefore, any activity that incorporates Islamic

teachings is considered da'wah. The following is a more detailed explanation of these three methods:

## **Discussion**

### **The Concept of Differentiated Learning in Ibn Kathir's Interpretation**

The differentiated learning approach places the diversity of individual students as the main foundation in the educational process (Kirana Wardani & Puguh Darmawan, 2024). This concept doesn't use a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather designs learning experiences tailored to each student's unique characteristics, including their level of learning readiness, personal interests, and learning profile. In practice, teachers act as facilitators, designing variations in content, learning processes, and expected end products, allowing each child to access the curriculum according to their natural abilities and tendencies. The differentiation approach in learning applies the principle of personalization by paying attention to three fundamental aspects of each student: personal interests, individual characteristics, and the level of initial mastery of the material.

The concept of differentiation in contemporary education finds its legitimacy and strong philosophical foundation in the interpretive framework of Ibn Kathir, which emphasizes the principle of diversity as divine decree, the uniqueness of individual potential as part of the design of creation, and the need for varied methodological approaches as the implementation of pedagogical wisdom.

Ibn Kathir's commentary, while not explicitly using the modern terminology of "differentiated learning," provides a very solid theological foundation for this concept through its in-depth interpretation of three verses of the Qur'an. The concept of differentiation in contemporary education finds its legitimacy and strong philosophical foundation within Ibn Kathir's interpretive framework, which emphasizes the principle of diversity as divine decree, the uniqueness of individual potential as part of the design of creation, and the need for varied methodological approaches as the implementation of pedagogical wisdom.

The first pillar in the concept of differentiation according to Ibn Kathir can be traced from his interpretation of QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13. Ibn Kathir emphasized that the creation of humans into nations and tribes is a manifestation of the decree (qadar) and power (sultan) of Allah SWT. This diversity is not a coincidence or a flaw in creation, but rather a divine design that has profound wisdom to enable the process of mutual recognition between humans. In the context of education, this interpretation has revolutionary implications: an education system that standardizes all students with a one-size-fits-all approach has essentially ignored the sunnatullah in the diversity of His creation.

Ideal Islamic education must respond to this diversity by creating an inclusive learning environment, where differences in social, cultural, linguistic, and economic

backgrounds are not seen as obstacles, but rather as richness that can enrich the learning experience of the entire educational community.

The second pillar central to Ibn Kathir's concept of differentiation is his interpretation of Surah Al-Isra' verse 84, particularly the key word "syakilatih." Ibn Kathir, referring to the authority of the interpretation of the Prophet's companion Ibn Abbas, explains that syakilah means the creation, nature, or path of each individual, *ala syaklihi wa thabi'atih wa sabilihi* (Ar-Rifa'i, 1999). This interpretation reveals a profound Islamic educational psychology: every human being is born with a unique potential (fitrah) that is not exactly the same for every individual. This belief, in modern terminology, can be understood as the specific configuration of multiple intelligences, learning styles, interests, and natural talents of each student. The pedagogical implications of this concept are profoundly transformative: Muslim educators are required to act as "potential recognizers" (mu'arrif) who are sensitive and responsive to the uniqueness of each student. The learning process must be flexible; a student with an artistic-spatial mindset needs to be given space to express their religious understanding through fine art or calligraphy, while a student with a linguistic-logical mindset might be more appropriate to express it through writing scientific papers or constructive debates.

The third pillar of a methodological-operational nature can be found in Ibn Kathir's interpretation of QS. An-Nahl, Vers 125. This verse, which commands da'wah with wisdom, *mau'izhah hasanah*, and *jidal billati hiya ahsan*, is interpreted by Ibn Kathir as a highly applicable guide to methodological differentiation (Syakir, 2012). These three methods are not random choices, but must be applied selectively according to the characteristics and readiness of the object of da'wah (in the educational context: students). Hikmah (philosophical-rational wisdom) is aimed at individuals with high intellectual capacity who are critical and analytical in the classroom. This is implemented through the provision of complex, in-depth, and challenging material.

*Mau'izhah hasanah* (heart-touching advice and role models) is intended for the majority of society who are more responsive to an emotional-spiritual approach to learning. This is realized through exemplary stories, moral advice, and the creation of a learning environment full of *qudwah hasanah*. While *Jidal Billati Hiya Ahsan* (debate in the best way) is specifically designed to engage with hard-hitting thinkers and debaters in the context of modern education, it can be implemented through Socratic discussion methods, structured debates, or controversial problem-solving to train critical thinking skills and scientific argumentation.

These three pillars form a coherent and comprehensive conceptual framework. QS. Al-Hujurat: 13 provides a sociological-philosophical foundation for respecting diversity as a divine decree. QS. Al-Isra': 84 provides a psychological foundation for

understanding the unique potential of each individual. And QS. An-Nahl: 125 provides practical methodological guidelines for responding to these two realities in learning practices. The integration of the three within Ibn Kathir's framework of thought gave birth to a holistic vision of Islamic education—one that not only pursues the transfer of knowledge (ta'lim) but also the recognition of potential (ta'arruf) and character development (tarbiyah) that respects the uniqueness of each individual. From this perspective, differentiated learning is not merely a modern pedagogical strategy, but rather an implementation of prophetic wisdom in educating humans, whose diversity has been recognized by the Creator from the beginning. A teacher in this paradigm does not only act as a transmitter of knowledge, but more as a wise murabbi (judge), who is able to apply "wisdom" in diagnosing and responding to the unique needs of each student entrusted to him.

In the context of learning, a method can be understood as a systematic framework used by educators to achieve predetermined learning objectives. Unlike techniques, which are more practical and implementable, methods are procedural in nature, consisting of a series of structured steps. For example, two teachers might use the same method, but their implementation may differ because they use techniques tailored to their individual circumstances.

Referring to al-Syaibani's view, there are several basic principles in determining educational methods. First, every learning approach must be based on Islamic values, considering that education is essentially a form of devotion to Allah. Second, the choice of method needs to consider the characteristics of students and the conditions of their learning environment. Third, an effective method must be able to integrate theory with practice and connect textual understanding with contextual reality. Fourth, the learning process must provide space for students to express their opinions with logical arguments, while remaining within the bounds of politeness and mutual respect between individuals (Al-Syaibani, n.d.).

Educational methods serve as important instruments for achieving learning objectives. These instruments possess two unique functional characteristics: polypragmatic and monopragmatic. A method is considered polypragmatic when it possesses multiple functions across various contexts, such as the ability to simultaneously build and refine student understanding, depending on how the educator utilizes it. In contrast, monopragmatic character emerges when a method is specifically designed for a specific purpose, with consistent, systematic, and thoughtful application tailored to the learner's circumstances. Because the target of the method is humans in all their complexity, educators need to be wise and careful in selecting and implementing it.

Choosing the wrong method can actually hinder the learning process and waste energy and time. The success of a method can only be seen when it truly

enables students to achieve the stated educational goals. From an Islamic educational perspective, an effective method must combine intrinsic and extrinsic values, align with the teaching material, and embody Islamic ideals in learning practices.

From this description, it can be concluded that Islamic educational methods are various approaches used by Muslim educators to shape the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of students so that Islamic values can be internalized in their personalities. Through appropriate methods, the educational process is not only a transfer of knowledge but also a comprehensive transformation of values.

### **Implications of the Concept of Differentiated Learning in the Qur'an for the Development of Contemporary Islamic Education**

The concept of differentiated learning finds a deep philosophical foundation in the Qur'an, the implications of which for the development of contemporary Islamic education are very significant. The Qur'an implicitly acknowledges the diversity of human potential and tendencies, as reflected in the affirmation that humans were created into nations and tribes so that they might know one another (QS. Al-Hujurat: 13), providing a strong ontological foundation for differentiation. This verse goes beyond simply acknowledging ethnic diversity, but goes deeper, recognizing the differences in background, culture, intellectual capacity, and learning styles inherent in each individual. The implication is that a monolithic Islamic education system that uniforms all students actually contradicts this divine law. Contemporary Islamic education must respond to this by creating an inclusive learning environment that celebrates differences and uses them as a learning resource, for example, through collaborative projects that bring together students with varying interests and abilities.

Furthermore, QS. Al-Isra': 84 states, "Say (Muhammad), 'Every person acts according to his own disposition (shakilatih).'" The word *shakilatih* in this verse is often interpreted as an innate nature, tendency, or personality that is unique to each person. This verse becomes the psychological basis for the differentiation approach, because it recognizes that each student has a different form or mold of potential. The implication is that educators in contemporary Islamic education are required to become facilitators who diagnose each student's *syilah*, not impose a rigid standard of achievement. The learning process should be flexible, allowing the student to explore the material through his or her interests (one who is analytically, artistically, or practically) and demonstrate understanding in a way that best suits him or her.

Finally, Surah An-Nahl: 125, which commands us to call to God's path with "wisdom, good advice, and the best debate," provides operational or methodological guidance for differentiation. This verse teaches that in preaching (which in a broad context means educating), the approach must be different according to the conditions of the object of preaching (the students). Hikmah (wisdom) is aimed at critical and analytical students; *mau'izhah hasanah* (good advice) is suitable for those who are

more receptive through emotional approaches and role models; while *jidat billati hiya ahsan* (good debate) is needed to train higher-order thinking skills for those who have argumentative abilities. The implication is that teachers must master various teaching strategies (such as lectures, discussions, simulations, or case studies) and be able to select and combine them according to the characteristics and readiness of the students in the class.

Thus, these three verses form a solid foundation for the development of differentiated contemporary Islamic education. Qs. Al-Hujurat: 13 serves as a philosophical foundation for appreciating diversity, Qs. Al-Isra': 84 as a psychological foundation for understanding individual uniqueness, and Qs. An-Nahl: 125 as a methodological guideline for implementing varied learning strategies. The integration of these three verses will produce an education system that is not only fair and effective but also in harmony with divine guidance, where every student's potential can grow and develop optimally to serve Allah SWT.

The application of a differentiated approach to Islamic education has a comprehensive positive impact, encompassing academic aspects, motivation, character development, and the creation of a conducive learning environment. This strategy facilitates students' absorption of learning materials according to their individual abilities and learning styles, thus fostering a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Islamic values. Adapting learning methods to individual characteristics facilitates the internalization of Islamic teachings into everyday behavior. For example, in learning about faith and morals, visually inclined students can more easily grasp moral concepts through graphic media or video content than simply listening to verbal explanations.

Another advantage of the differentiated approach is seen in increased student motivation and active participation. Learning experiences tailored to individual needs foster enthusiasm and self-confidence, especially for students who previously struggled to understand religious material. This positive impact is reflected in increased student engagement in the learning process, which naturally contributes to improved academic achievement. (Zumrotun et al., 2024).

The differentiated approach to Islamic education not only enriches cognitive understanding but also actively trains critical thinking skills and independent learning. Islamic education itself, in essence, not only transmits religious knowledge but also fosters reflective and analytical thought patterns in internalizing and practicing Islamic teachings. Through assignments and learning projects that are varied according to interests and abilities, such as simple research on Islamic values in modern life, students are given space to explore the material independently, compare various perspectives, and connect religious teachings with social contexts that are relevant to their lives.

From an educator's perspective, implementing this strategy significantly improves teaching effectiveness. Teachers who implement differentiation become more sensitive facilitators to the diverse needs of their students (Hasan, 2024; Umam & Hasan, 2025). This sensitivity enables them to design learning experiences that accommodate the varying characteristics of individuals within the same classroom, while creating a more inclusive and responsive learning dynamic (Akbar & Gantaran, 2022). The application of the principle of differentiation in Islamic education enables the creation of an adaptive and humane learning process. An educator who is sensitive to the varying abilities and backgrounds of students will be able to design flexible material presentations, adapting teaching methods to the real-world circumstances of each individual. This approach shifts learning patterns from one-way to more interactive and centered on students' authentic needs.

Another positive impact is the creation of an inclusive and harmonious learning environment. Differentiation strategies ensure that every student, whether they possess superior academic abilities or require special assistance, feels valued and receives appropriate support. This classroom climate not only encourages academic achievement but also fosters a spirit of togetherness and collaboration. Islamic values such as tolerance, mutual assistance, and respect for diversity are also embedded naturally in daily interactions, reflecting the concrete practice of Islamic teachings, which are a blessing for the whole world.

The application of differentiation strategies in Islamic education has a profound impact on the character development of students. When material is delivered through methods aligned with each individual's learning style, the internalization of Islamic values becomes more natural and sustainable. For example, in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) learning, hands-on approaches such as simulating ablution or prayer are proven to be more effective in instilling understanding than simply memorizing theory, ultimately fostering more disciplined and conscious worship habits (Azizah et al., 2023).

A paradigm shift from a uniform approach to a differentiated model is inevitable in contemporary Islamic education. Student diversity should be viewed as a richness that enriches the dynamics of learning, not as an obstacle. Its implementation requires the development of a flexible curriculum that allows for adjustments in three aspects: a variety of teaching materials (from simple to complex texts), differentiation of the learning process (through group work, guided discussions, or independent projects), and a variety of learning products (such as written work, presentations, or artistic expression) tailored to each student's level of readiness, interests, and learning profile.

From a broader perspective, the differentiation approach ensures the relevance of Islamic education amidst the challenges of the times. Its flexibility allows Islamic

education to respond to social, cultural, and technological developments without losing its identity. The resulting generation of Muslims will not only possess a deep understanding of religious knowledge but will also be able to adapt to changing times. Thus, differentiation becomes a catalyst for realizing the goals of holistic Islamic education, producing perfect human beings who are not only knowledgeable and moral but also ready to be problem solvers in an ever-changing era.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the study conducted by the researcher regarding the Concept of Differentiated Learning in the Qur'an: The Perspective of Ibn Kathir's Interpretation, which the researcher has conducted, it can be concluded that Ibn Kathir's Interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an related to the principles of learning shows that the Qur'an comprehensively emphasizes the importance of understanding human diversity in the educational process. In verse 13 of the Quran, Al-Hujurat, Allah affirms that differences in people's nations, ethnicities, and character are divine decrees (sunnatullah) that embody the values of mutual understanding and respect. In the context of learning, Ibn Kathir views the diversity of students' potential as inherent and obligatory for educators to accommodate. This is reinforced by verse 84 of the Quran, where Allah explains that every human being acts according to their own path and disposition. This verse establishes the principle that each individual has a different way of thinking, abilities, and learning style.

Verse 125 of the Quran, An-Nahl, provides the methodological principle that the delivery of knowledge must be carried out with wisdom, good intentions, and good intentions, namely an approach tailored to the conditions and readiness of the students. Thus, according to Ibn Kathir, these three verses together emphasize that ideal education respects differences, understands individual character, and teaches the truth gently and wisely.

The concept of differentiated learning from the perspective of Ibn Kathir's interpretation is based on the principle that every human being possesses unique potential that demands a varied learning approach. Ibn Kathir interprets Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13 as affirming that diversity is a means for mutual understanding and cooperation, not for homogenization. This provides a philosophical basis for the learning process to accommodate the diversity of students' backgrounds, abilities, and interests. Furthermore, Surah Al-Isra', verse 84, emphasizes the differences in character (syaqilah) and tendencies in each individual, which determine their thinking style and learning speed. Meanwhile, Surah An-Nahl, verse 125, provides practical guidance in teaching, stating that educators should be able to choose diverse and flexible learning strategies according to the characteristics of their students.

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