

Building Elementary Students' Motivation through Socio-Emotional Competence in Differentiated Learning

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ABSTRACT

Purpose—Education plays a crucial role in shaping high-quality human resources, with curriculum adaptation essential to meeting the demands of an ever-changing world. One key element is differentiated instruction, which accommodates diverse student learning needs through content, process, and product differentiation. However, its implementation faces challenges, particularly in integrating differentiated instruction with developing students' social-emotional competencies. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating differentiated instruction with social-emotional competencies in enhancing students' learning motivation.

Methodology - This study was conducted at SDN 5 Sumber using a qualitative descriptive approach through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. The participants included the principal, teachers, and fourth-grade students. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Findings - The study found that differentiation was more frequently applied to learning than content and product. Teachers utilized auditory, visual, and kinesthetic strategies, but content differentiation was limited. Social-emotional competencies were developed through group discussions, reflective sessions, and collaborative activities, leading to increased student engagement, independence, and emotional regulation. Evaluations used formative and summative assessments, with observation rubrics for assessing social-emotional competencies.

Contribution - This study contributes to the understanding that integrating differentiated instruction with social-emotional competency development can effectively enhance students' learning motivation. It also highlights the need for improved teacher training and resources to support content and product differentiation.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in developing quality human resources, where the curriculum is vital in determining the direction and quality of learning. An effective curriculum is required to adapt to changing times, students' increasingly diverse needs, and globalization's dynamic demands (Ningrum, 2022). Recognizing the importance of flexibility and relevance in education, the Indonesian government launched the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum), initiated by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, Nadiem Anwar Makarim (Usanto, 2022). This curriculum aims to provide educational institutions and teachers greater autonomy in developing student-centered learning processes. One of the key elements of the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) is the implementation of differentiated instruction—a teaching approach that accommodates diverse student learning needs through the differentiation of content, process, and product (Karim et al., 2025; Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). Thus, the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) is not merely an administrative policy but a paradigm shift toward a more personalized, adaptive, and empowering educational approach for students.

Although the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) and the concept of differentiated learning are systematically outlined in educational policy, their implementation in the field still faces various challenges. Based on observations and interviews at SDN 5 Sumber on March 5, 2024, it was found that the fourth-grade teacher had not fully understood differentiated learning integrated with social-emotional competencies. While differentiated instruction was applied, it was limited only to content aspects. Moreover, some teachers had not implemented differentiated instruction consistently, and engaging teaching methods, particularly in religious education subjects, were not maximized, leading to student disinterest, boredom, lack of discipline, and decreased learning motivation. Further observations and interviews revealed that many teachers struggled to comprehensively map students' learning needs and integrate social-emotional aspects into instruction. This resulted in low student engagement and motivation. These findings are consistent with previous research identifying teachers' limited understanding of integrating differentiated instruction with social-emotional skill development competence (Ramadansyah, 2021; Rocha et al., 2024). For example, the religious education teacher at the school had attempted to use engaging teaching methods, but the outcomes were ineffective in enhancing student involvement and motivation. As a result, many students remained bored, undisciplined in completing tasks, and experienced decreased learning motivation. In light of these issues, a more systematic and integrated approach is needed in implementing differentiated instruction that considers not only academic aspects but also strengthens students' social-emotional development (Triyana, 2022).

To address these challenges, integrating differentiated instruction with developing social-emotional competencies becomes highly relevant. Theoretically, differentiated instruction is rooted in constructivist theory, which emphasizes that students build their understanding through active experiences in supportive learning environments (Maryam, 2021; Wibowo et al., 2025). Within this framework, the teacher is a facilitator, helping students develop learning goals aligned with their needs, interests, and readiness. Meanwhile, Vygotsky's theory of social-emotional development also underscores the importance of social interaction in supporting children's cognitive and emotional growth (Thapa et al., 2022; Triyana, 2022). Social-emotional competencies—which include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Pino et al., 2021; Zuhro et al., 2023)—should be developed in tandem with academic skills. Through such integration, learning is focused on academic outcomes and fosters students to become more resilient, collaborative, and intrinsically motivated learners.

Although differentiated instruction and the development of social-emotional skills have been widely discussed in various studies, the simultaneous integration of both remains underexplored, particularly at the

elementary school level. This research shares similarities with Amalia et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of differentiated learning in accommodating the diverse characteristics of students to improve learning effectiveness. Both acknowledge that students have different learning needs and thus require varied approaches. This study also aligns with the findings of Avandra et al. (2023), who highlighted the importance of social-emotional competence in enhancing learning motivation among elementary school students, showing that social-emotional aspects play a critical role in student engagement. Furthermore, it resonates with the "DI Does Matter!" study, which emphasized the impact of differentiated instruction on academic achievement, school well-being, social inclusion, and student self-concept (Pozas et al., 2021). In addition, the study is aligned with Camacho & Alexander's (2025) research, which utilized a social-constructivist approach to develop students' social-emotional competencies, emphasizing the importance of social interaction in learning. Other relevant research includes Villar et al. (2021), who focused on building social-emotional skills to create a positive learning environment and improve students' conflict resolution abilities, as well as Ahmed et al.'s (2020) findings showing that implementing social-emotional learning significantly enhances student competencies through systematic interventions. Lastly, this study shares concerns with Goldoni et al.'s (2023) research on the importance of early development of social-emotional skills. However, the present study prioritizes integration within classroom practices rather than technological applications. However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the simultaneous integration of differentiated instruction and social-emotional learning in primary education. This research seeks to fill that gap by combining both approaches into a single intervention model.

Based on this context, this research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competence in enhancing students' learning motivation. Thus, this study presents a novelty by offering a holistic approach that simultaneously integrates differentiated learning and social-emotional development within one intervention framework to enhance motivation among elementary school students. Unlike previous studies that focused on only one of these aspects—either differentiation or social-emotional competence—this study proposes a combined, holistic strategy that has yet to be widely explored, particularly in elementary education settings. As such, it aims to produce a more adaptive, personalized instructional model supporting academic and social-emotional growth. The practical contribution of this research lies in providing a model and implementation guidelines for teachers to integrate differentiated instruction with social-emotional skill development effectively. Theoretically, it contributes to educational literature by offering an integrative model that responds to the challenges and needs of 21st-century education (Maoulida et al., 2023; Soto et al., 2021; Tuomi, 2022). Consequently, the results of this study are expected to support the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum) in creating more meaningful, flexible, and holistic learning processes that prioritize the overall development of students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative research type with a descriptive approach. According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research is a method based on post-positivist philosophy, used to study natural conditions of objects, where the researcher acts as the key instrument. Data collection is conducted through triangulation, the analysis is inductive, and the results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. This research aims to comprehensively understand the phenomena experienced by subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivation, and actions, within a natural context without human intervention (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). The descriptive approach is used to describe and explain current phenomena in a detailed and in-depth manner.

Research Location and Time

This research was conducted at SDN 5 Sumber, located in Kradenan Subdistrict, Blora Regency, from August to November 2024. This location was chosen due to the issues identified regarding implementing differentiated learning and socio-emotional competencies, which affect students' motivation.

Subjects and Informants

The research subjects comprised the principal, the fourth-grade homeroom teacher, the Islamic Education and Character Development teacher, the Physical Education teacher, and all twelve fourth-grade students. The primary informants in this study included the principal, one fourth-grade teacher, one Islamic Education and Character Development teacher, one Physical Education teacher, and five fourth-grade students. The key informants were selected using purposive sampling, considering that they possess relevant knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in implementing differentiated learning and developing socio-emotional competencies in the classroom. This technique enables the researcher to gather in-depth and relevant information from the most appropriate sources.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study was carried out using three primary methods: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted systematically using a pre-designed observation instrument, targeting three teachers and twelve fourth-grade students to observe the implementation of differentiated learning integrated with socio-emotional competencies and improving learning motivation. In-depth interviews were conducted with the principal, three teachers, and five students to obtain deeper insights into their experiences, strategies, and perceptions of the differentiated learning process and its effect on students' motivation. Meanwhile, documentation was carried out by collecting and analyzing relevant documents such as the school profile, teacher data, and student data related to the implementation of integrative differentiated learning at SDN 5 Sumber. Documentation was obtained through photography or photocopies of important documents supporting the research focus.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes four stages: (1) data collection, through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, or a combination of the three (triangulation); (2) data reduction, which involves filtering and summarizing relevant data according to the research focus; (3) data display, by presenting the data in narrative form and through supporting visualizations; and (4) conclusion drawing/verification, which involves drawing conclusions based on patterns and meanings from continuously analyzed data until saturation is reached.

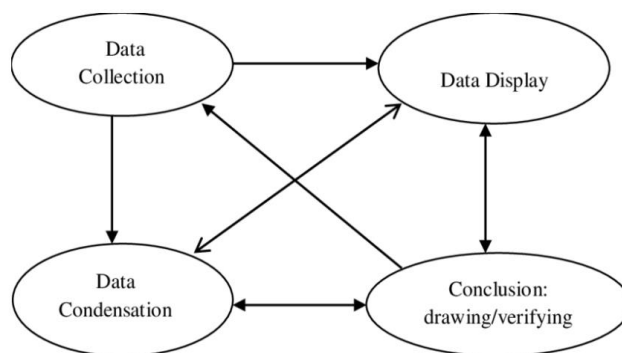


Figure 1. Data Analysis Model of Miles and Huberman
Source: (Miles et al., 2014)

Data Validity

The validity of the data in this study was ensured through triangulation techniques, which involve clarifying and comparing information from various sources and using multiple data collection methods. Source triangulation was done by comparing interview results from informants, such as the three teachers and twelve students at SDN 5 Sumber, to ensure consistent information on implementing differentiated learning integrated with socio-emotional competencies. Meanwhile, method triangulation was used to validate the data

by combining the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. These three techniques complement each other in verifying the truth and accuracy of the data, thereby making the conclusions more reliable and accountable.

FINDINGS

Implementation of Differentiated Learning Integration with Social-Emotional Competencies

This research assesses how well diversified learning combined with social-emotional competences improves fourth-grade students' learning motivation at SDN 5 Sumber. Data were gathered from the classroom teacher, PE teacher, religious education teacher, students, and school administrator using a qualitative method, including observations and interviews. Beginning on August 3, 2024, the research ran observations on August 6, 7, and 20 followed by interviews on September 2–4, with an eye on planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Planning Stage

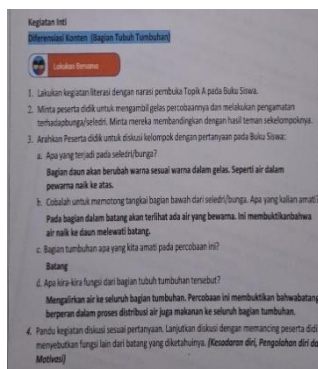
At the planning stage of learning, the fourth-grade teacher at SDN 5 Sumber has implemented a differentiated instruction approach by considering students' learning needs based on their visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles. The planning includes differentiation in terms of content, process, and product. Based on interview results, the teacher stated that in terms of content, various learning resources were utilized—such as educational videos, IPAS textbooks, and online materials—to enable students to gain conceptual understanding from multiple perspectives. Process differentiation was realized through grouping students according to their dominant learning styles. In contrast, product differentiation was reflected in the assignment of presentations tailored to the stages of the learning process that had been completed. The teacher expressed:

In planning lessons, I always consider the diverse needs of my students... I also provide varied assignments, such as presentations with different processes as a form of product differentiation (I/T/02/09/2024).

Documentation of the lesson plans (Figure a) shows that the learning content was delivered through varied approaches, such as narrative texts, practical experiments, and group discussions. However, no explicit indicators were found regarding adaptation to students' cognitive and non-cognitive needs in depth. In addition, the teacher systematically integrated social-emotional competencies into lesson planning. This was done by designing activities focused on developing self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, cooperation, and decision-making. In the interview, the teacher stated:

When designing lesson plans, I always incorporate elements of social-emotional competencies. For example, I design group activities that require student collaboration, role-playing to train empathy, and reflective discussions about emotional regulation (I/T/02/09/2024).

Observation results showed consistency between planning and field implementation, where social-emotional competencies were integrated into the lesson documents and evaluated through a rubric assessment tool prepared by the teacher to measure students' achievements in those social-emotional aspects.



(a)

Rubrik Penilaian Kompetensi Sosial Emosional					
Dimensi	Deskripsi	Skor 1 (Kurang)	Skor 2 (Cukup)	Skor 3 (Baik)	Skor 4 (Sangat Baik)
Kemampuan Diri (Self-awareness)	Mendiskusikan emosi diri sendiri, kelompok, kolektif, dan nasional, serta nilai-nilainya.	Belum menunjukkan emosi diri.	Mulai menunjukkan emosi diri.	Dapat menunjukkan emosi diri.	Sangat menunjukkan emosi diri.
Pengabdian Diri (Self-management)	Mengungkapkan emosi, mengelola dan mengelola diri dengan baik.	Sering merasa kesulitan dan tidak dapat mengelola diri.	Kadang dapat mengelola diri.	Dapat mengelola diri dengan baik.	Sangat menunjukkan kemampuan diri.
Kemampuan Sosial (Social awareness)	Mendiskusikan perasaan orang lain, menunjukkan empati, dan berinteraksi dengan orang lain.	Belum menunjukkan empati.	Mulai menunjukkan empati.	Dapat menunjukkan empati.	Sangat menunjukkan empati.
Keterampilan Berkolaborasi (Collaboration skills)	Mengembangkan kemampuan berkolaborasi, bekerja sama, dan berinteraksi dengan orang lain.	Belum menunjukkan kemampuan berkolaborasi.	Mulai menunjukkan kemampuan berkolaborasi.	Dapat menunjukkan kemampuan berkolaborasi.	Sangat menunjukkan kemampuan berkolaborasi.
Pengambilan Keputusan Berbasis Masalah (Problem-based decision making)	Mengambil keputusan berdasarkan masalah yang dihadapi.	Belum menunjukkan kemampuan pengambilan keputusan.	Mulai menunjukkan kemampuan pengambilan keputusan.	Dapat menunjukkan kemampuan pengambilan keputusan.	Sangat menunjukkan kemampuan pengambilan keputusan.

(b)

Figure 2. Teaching Module Document for Grade IV Teachers

The lesson planning stage for the PE teacher focused on implementing differentiated instruction, particularly in the aspect of *process differentiation*. Based on an interview conducted on September 3, 2024, the PE teacher stated:

I implement process-based differentiated instruction, for example by giving different instructions depending on the students' physical abilities, such as assigning more challenging tasks to those who are more skilled. However, I have not yet implemented content or product differentiation, such as providing different materials or expecting different learning products (I/T/03/09/2024).

This finding is supported by observation and documentation. The PE teacher had conducted a learning needs assessment of the students through diagnostic assessments and direct observations. The student needs analysis document shows that mapping was done based on students' readiness levels, categorized as low, medium, and high. However, no indication of content or product differentiation was being applied (see Figure A).

Furthermore, the PE teaching module (see Figure b) demonstrates process differentiation, with planned activities tailored to students' physical ability levels: from zigzag running and group discussions for students with lower ability, to combined activities such as running, two-foot jumping, and one-foot hurdle jumping (POA) for students with higher ability levels. Nevertheless, the module does not yet reflect content or product differentiation implementation. In addition, the PE teacher has integrated Social Emotional Competencies (SEC) into the lesson planning. In the same interview, the teacher stated:

In lesson planning, I always integrate social emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. I also use assessment methods included in the assessment rubric within the teaching module to measure the achievement of these competencies" (I/T/03/09/2024).

Observations support this claim, where the teacher actively designed activities that foster social-emotional aspects within PE lessons. This is also evidenced by the assessment rubric in the teaching module document (see Figure c), which explicitly lists indicators for assessing students' social-emotional competencies.

ANALISIS KERUJUTAN BELAJAR MURID

A. PEMETAAN KERUJUTAN BELAJAR BERDASARKAN KESIAPAN BELAJAR MURID

PROFIL Siswa	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
<p>Identifikasi</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p>	<p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p>	<p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p>	<p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p> <p>• Berhasil melakukan aktivitas fisik dengan benar</p>

(a)

Student Needs Analysis Document for PE Subject

b. Kegiatan Hari (40 menit)

1. Melakukan kegiatan pembelajaran ini dengan prosedur sebagai berikut:

- Melaksanakan asesmen awal *diagnostik*

Asesmen awal

- Peserta didik masing-masing berbaris 2 barisan
- Ditunjuk dari baris belakang melakukan rangkaian kecondongan serta bertolak-lari dengan teman di belakang. Apabila peserta didik bisa ke 3 area maka keluaran kelompok 1 (Dapat), apabila bisa 2 maka peserta didik masuk ke dalam kelompok 2 (cukup), dan apabila peserta didik bisa 1 masuk ke dalam kelompok 3 (baik).
- Selanjutnya sebagai keharusan paling belakang, dan yang diberikan keharusan kelompok lebih mendominasi ke depan yang dilakukan hari pertama ini.

2. Cara melaksanakan peserta didik sesuai dengan kemampuannya. Dan menggunakan media berupa kartu index, LKPD dan internet.

Diferensiasi Proses

KELOMPOK 1 (LOW) PANDUAN AKTIVITAS PEMBELAJARAN

- Bermain dengan teman, bertahap barisan 1 baris ke belakang
- Berbaris di tempat secara bergantian dengan 3 kali pengulangan
- Berbaris bolak-balik dengan lompatan lompat ke depan secara bergantian
- Berbaris bolak-balik bersebelahan bolak-balik (sagang) melompat. Come secara bergantian
- Diskusikan dalam kelompok masalah atau kesulitan dalam melakukan dan bagaimana cara mengatasinya.
- Pesentasikan hasil diskusi kelompoknya

KELOMPOK 2 (MEDIUM) PANDUAN AKTIVITAS PEMBELAJARAN

- Bermain dengan teman, bertahap barisan 1 baris ke belakang
- Melompat dua kali ke depan secara bergantian dengan 3 kali pengulangan
- Berbaris lompat ke depan dan dilanjutkan dengan melompat dua kali ke depan secara bergantian
- Diskusikan dalam kelompok masalah atau kesulitan dalam melakukan dan bagaimana cara mengatasinya.
- Pesentasikan hasil diskusi kelompoknya

(b)

PE Subject Teaching Module

Tablek Penilaian Kompetensi Sosial Emosional

Dimensi	Ditargeti	Skor 1 (Kurang)	Skor 2 (Cukup)	Skor 3 (Baik)	Skor 4 (Sangat Baik)
Keadaran Diri (Self-awareness)	Mengalami emosi diri sendiri, ketahanan, ketahanan, serta apa yang dirasakan.	Berita mengidentifikasi perasaan diri ketahanan diri	Masih mengalami berbagai emosi dan ketahanan diri	Dapat mengidentifikasi berbagai emosi dan ketahanan diri	Sangat konsisten mengidentifikasi emosi dan ketahanan diri
Pengendalian Diri (Self-management)	Kemampuan mengelola emosi, manajemen dan emosi yang tidak dapat terungkap atau terungkap.	Sering merasa kehabisan dan tidak dapat mengelola emosi	Kadang dapat mengelola emosi yang tidak konsisten	Dapat mengelola emosi dengan baik dalam situasi yang berat	Sangat konsisten mengelola emosi dan dapat dengan baik
Keadaran Sosial (Social awareness)	Mengerti perasaan orang lain, menunjukkan empati dan memahami norma sosial.	Belum menunjukkan empati dan memahami norma sosial	Kadang menunjukkan empati, tetapi tidak konsisten	Sering menunjukkan empati dan memahami norma sosial	Konsisten menunjukkan empati dan memahami norma sosial
Keterampilan Relationship-building skills	Mampu membangun dan memelihara hubungan positif, berkomunikasi secara efektif, dan bekerja sama dengan orang lain.	Belum membangun hubungan positif, berkomunikasi secara efektif, dan bekerja sama dengan orang lain	Kadang dapat membangun hubungan positif, berkomunikasi secara efektif, dan bekerja sama dengan orang lain	Sering mampu membangun hubungan positif dan berkomunikasi dengan orang lain	Selalu membangun hubungan positif dan berkomunikasi dengan orang lain
Pengambilan Keputusan Berbasis Berpikir	Kemampuan membuat keputusan yang etis dan bertanggung jawab serta bertanggung jawab secara kolektif.	Masih kesulitan dalam membuat keputusan yang etis dan bertanggung jawab secara kolektif	Kadang menunjukkan kemampuan dalam membuat keputusan yang etis dan bertanggung jawab secara kolektif	Sering membuat keputusan yang etis dan bertanggung jawab secara kolektif	Sangat konsisten membuat keputusan yang etis dan bertanggung jawab secara kolektif

(c)

PE Teacher's Social Emotional Competency Assessment Rubric

Figure 3. Physical Education Teacher's Teaching Module

In the lesson planning stage, the Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) teacher had not yet conducted a mapping of students' diverse learning needs. As a result, differentiation in content, process, and product had not been fully implemented. This is consistent with the RECD teacher's statement during the interview:

I have not conducted a mapping of students' diverse needs because I still need a deeper understanding of how to

effectively implement differentiation in the classroom (I/T/04/09/2024).

Observations and teaching module documents support this finding, showing that the teacher still uses general approaches such as grouping students and assigning presentation tasks, but has not yet specifically designed learning based on individual student needs. Nevertheless, as shown in Figure 4, the teacher has begun integrating social-emotional competencies into learning. This is demonstrated through activities that encourage self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills—assigning students to lead prayers, paying attention to their emotional state, and practicing communication through proper recitation of Qur’anic verses.

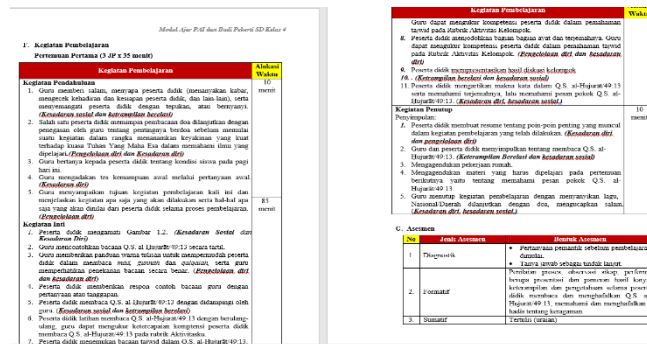


Figure 4. RECD Teacher's Teaching Module

Implementation Stage

Interview and observation results indicate that the implementation of differentiated instruction in Grade IV at SDN 5 Sumber reflects the application of process differentiation tailored to students' learning styles. Auditory learners listened to oral explanations, visual learners observed videos and images, while kinesthetic learners manipulated concrete materials such as roots and plant stems. Although the learning process followed the planned design, content differentiation remained uniform, and the product dimension was limited to lesson plan presentations without significant variation. During the implementation phase, the teacher stated:

For content differentiation, I use various learning resources such as videos, IPAS textbooks, and online materials. For process differentiation, I group students based on their learning styles... I also assign different tasks through presentations as a form of product differentiation (I/T/02/09/2024).

However, observations revealed that the learning outcomes did not reflect product differentiation, as all students presented similar Student Worksheets (SW). Social-emotional competencies were integrated through group discussions, ice-breaking activities, and positive reinforcement. The teacher noted:

Through this method, students learn to recognize and manage their emotions, communicate effectively, and collaborate with classmates. (I/T/02/09/2024).

This was evident in classroom activities where the teacher guided students to identify their learning styles, stay focused, and build social awareness through interaction and group collaboration.

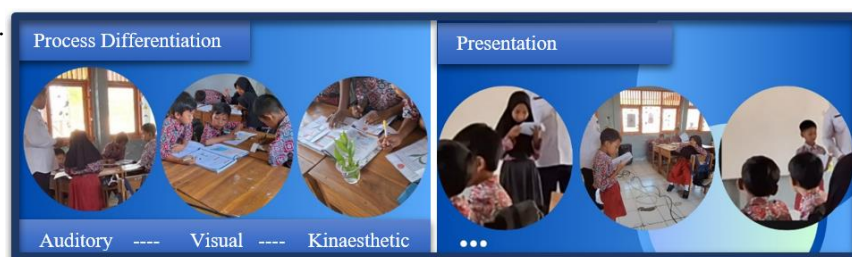


Figure 5. Grade IV Teacher's Learning Documentation

Based on interview and observation results, the Physical Education (PE) teacher stated that they still provide the same material to all students due to limited preparation time and the absence of specific guidelines

to support content differentiation:

I still provide the same material for all students because of limited preparation time and the lack of supporting guidelines for content differentiation. However, I have tried differentiating the learning process based on students' abilities..." (I/T/03/09/2024).

Observations showed that process differentiation had been relatively well implemented through grouping students based on ability levels (low, medium, high), followed by physical activities tailored to those levels, such as shuttle runs, jumping, and jumping over POA (Physical Obstacle Activity) hurdles. However, regarding product differentiation, no variation in learning outcomes was found that matched students' abilities or learning styles. After completing the physical activities, students were not guided to produce specific learning products. On the other hand, the PE teacher had successfully integrated the development of social-emotional competencies into the learning process. This included self-awareness through groupings, self-management during physical activity instructions, and social awareness through group activities that emphasized cooperation and mutual respect:

During group activities, I encourage them to take turns and respect their peers. In this way, they learn when to take their turn and when to wait, which is important for their social awareness." (I/T/03/09/2024).

This was supported by visual documentation that showed students' enthusiasm during an ice-breaking activity led by the teacher, further reinforcing the emotional regulation and collaboration aspects within PE learning.



Figure 6. Documentation of PE and RECD Teachers' Learning Activities

Based on interviews and observations, the Islamic Religious Education and Character teacher at SDN 5 Sumber has not fully implemented content, process, and product differentiation strategies. The teacher stated:

I have not fully implemented differentiation yet, but I always try to find ways to make students more enthusiastic. I choose group discussions because students can learn from one another and share their understanding. Through discussions, they also become more active and engaged in learning." (I/T/09/04/2024).

Observations supported this statement, showing students' active participation in group discussions. Although there is no differentiation in materials or methods according to learning needs, the teacher has demonstrated integration of social-emotional competencies through various approaches. The teacher explained:

I want them to feel cared for and excited, so I always greet them, ask how they are, and motivate them at the beginning of the lesson. I also guide students in leading prayers as a way to train gratitude and self-regulation [...] use pictures to develop social awareness and encourage collaboration [...] and invite students to reflect and assign homework to promote independent learning." (I/T/09/04/2024).

Observations showed that the teacher greeted students, provided motivation through icebreakers, guided prayers, and assessed readiness while explaining learning objectives to improve focus and motivation. The teacher used visual media during the core lesson, practiced *tajwid*, and facilitated student presentations. The lesson closed with reflection, homework, and additional icebreakers when students seemed unfocused, reflecting attention to their social-emotional state.

Practically, classroom instructors and physical education (PE) teachers more frequently apply process differentiation, as students' learning styles are more observable and supported through basic strategies like visual, auditory, or kinesthetic exercises. On the other hand, differentiating content and product requires more

complex modifications involving creating additional materials and varied assignments, and thus is not always ideally implemented. Although they do not specifically include content or assessment strategy differentiation, PE instructors sometimes adapt physical exercises based on students' abilities. This is mainly due to limited resources and the lack of feasible guidelines for differentiating topics in activity-based learning. Furthermore, integrating social-emotional skills into teaching is simpler than differentiating content and approaches. Teachers now include group discussions, reflection, and cooperative projects to help students grow in their social and emotional capacities. Therefore, even though content and product differentiation remain challenging, efforts to enhance social-emotional competencies have become a key component of the instructional strategies adopted by teachers.

Evaluation Stage

Formative and summative evaluations were used in the evaluation stage for Grade IV at SDN 5 Sumber, based on findings from observations, interviews, and document analysis. In addition to evaluating social-emotional skills using rubrics that include indicators such as collaboration, emotional regulation, and accountability, the Grade IV teacher assessed learning outcomes through group discussions, written tests, and analysis of student responses in the lesson plans. The two primary methods used to evaluate learning were formative and summative assessments. Using techniques such as group discussions, written tests, and analysis of responses within the lesson plans, formative assessment allowed the instructor to monitor the learning process and provide immediate feedback continuously (Muhammad et al., 2024). According to Annette (2022), summative assessment is used to evaluate students' final performance at the end of the learning session.

At the evaluation stage, the Grade IV teacher conducted assessments of both the process and outcomes of learning through formative and summative evaluations. The teacher stated that the evaluation was carried out to observe both academic achievement and the students' social-emotional development, which would then be used to refine the upcoming lesson plans:

I evaluate learning outcomes through various formative and summative assessments. I observe students' academic achievements as well as their social-emotional development. These evaluation results are then used to improve and refine future lesson implementation plans to align more with the students' needs." (I/T/02/09/2024 – Interview/Teacher/02/09/2024).

Observations indicated that the teacher routinely conducted daily assessments through group discussions, written tests, and student reflections. This is supported by documents in Figures A and B. Furthermore, learning reflection was conducted through class discussions, where students actively responded to teacher questions, such as:

At the end of the learning process, I reflect on the session that has taken place. This is supported by the Grade IV Teacher's Reflection Journal (Figure B).



(a)

IPAS Worksheet Document

No.	Nama Siswa	Kelelahan (1-5)	Penggunaan Diri (1-5)	Keterampilan Sosial (1-5)	Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis (1-5)	Penggunaan Bahasa (1-5)	Uraian Hasil	Keterangan
1	Alvin	3	4	4	3	3	10	Baik
2	Alvin 2	2	3	3	3	3	10	Perlu
3	Alvin 3	4	4	4	4	4	20	Sangat Baik
4	Alvin 4	3	3	4	3	3	10	Baik
5	Alvin 5	3	4	3	3	3	10	Baik
6	Alvin 6	3	3	3	3	3	10	Baik
7	Alvin 7	4	4	4	3	4	10	Sangat Baik
8	Alvin 8	3	3	3	3	3	10	Baik
9	Alvin 9	4	4	4	4	4	17	Baik
10	Alvin 10	3	4	3	4	3	17	Baik
11	Alvin 11	4	3	4	4	4	14	Baik
12	Alvin 12	2	3	2	3	3	14	Kurang

(b)

Social-Emotional Skills Assessment Document of Grade IV Teacher

Tanggal	Deskripsi Pembelajaran	Strategi Diferensiasi yang Digunakan	Observasi Keterampilan Peserta Didik	Kemuda yang Diteliti	Kelebihan dan Penguatan yang Diperoleh	Rencana Perbaikan
6 Agustus 2024	Pembelajaran tentang bagian tumbuhan melalui kegiatan eksperimen dan diskusi kelompok untuk memahami fungsi tubuh tumbuhan.	Observasi, kuis, dan tanya-jawab.	Peserta didik aktif dalam kegiatan diskusi kelompok, mengikuti eksperimen dengan baik. Peserta didik menunjukkan ketertarikan saat guru memberikan gambaran tentang manfaat mempelajari bagian tumbuhan. Mereka terlihat penasaran dan ingin tahu, sehingga ketika diuji mengamati tanaman dalam percobaan. Peserta didik menunjukkan ketertarikan sebelum dan selama diskusi kelompok. Mereka berbagi peran dan saling membantu dalam kegiatan kelompok.	Beliefsaya siswa memahami dengan pembagian tugas berdasarkan kemampuan diri. Siswa menunjukkan ketertarikan dan antusias dalam mengikuti pembelajaran.	Fakta gemuruh oleh mereka, saya akan berdiskusi mengenai kaitan ilmu dengan kehidupan siswa. Dan siswa saya akan, untuk mengaitkan praktik.	

(c)

Grade IV Teacher's Reflection Journal

Figure 7. Grade IV Teacher's Assessment Document

The core components of primary education include the development of children's social-emotional competencies – collaboration, emotional regulation, and responsibility. Student behaviors are assessed using rubrics based on specific criteria, helping to evaluate these abilities. Another practical approach is joint reflection, allowing students to identify their strengths and weaknesses, enhancing character-based learning. Authentic assessment is applied in Physical Education (PE) to measure students' social-emotional competencies and physical abilities. The teacher stated:

I assess students' understanding through practice because it shows how well they apply theory in sports activities (I/T/03/09/2024).

Direct observation is thus used to evaluate students' techniques and fluency in performing sports, enhancing the relevance of activity-based learning. Furthermore, the instructor assessed elements such as self-regulation and collaboration through observation sheets and rubrics. This evaluation ensures a holistic development that balances physical and social components, integrating interpersonal values into sports and supporting students' physical growth.

The figure shows three assessment documents. The left and middle documents are 'Lembar Penilaian Kompetensi Sosial Emosional' (Social-Emotional Competency Assessment Sheet) for individual students. They contain columns for 'No.', 'Nama Siswa', 'Kemampuan Diri', 'Perilaku Sosial', 'Kemampuan Berkolaborasi', 'Kemampuan Berempati', 'Perilaku Bertanggung Jawab', 'Total Skor', and 'Keterangan'. The right document is 'PENILAIAN KELOMPOK' (Group Assessment) with columns for 'No.', 'Nama', 'Ketepatan Jawaban dengan Kunci', 'Ketepatan membaca', 'Ketepatan', 'Jumlah Skor', and 'Nilai'. It includes a table for 'Perolehan Skor' and a 'Kriteria' section.

Figure 8. PE and RECD Teacher's Assessment Document

Through group activities and presentations, the Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) teacher gauges students' knowledge and analyzes social-emotional elements via observation and introspection. Still, it was discovered that the three subjects' assessments had not yet included a range of items fit for their learning styles and degree of expertise. The evaluation results emphasize the need to strengthen product differentiation to enhance learning effectiveness and student engagement. In RECB, assessment based on group activities and presentations supports collaborative learning.

Increase in Students' Learning Motivation

Based on interviews, observations, and documents, there has been an increase in students' learning motivation through differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies in the classrooms of general teachers, Physical Education (PE) teachers, and Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) teachers. In the fourth-grade classroom, 75% of students demonstrated interest in the subject matter and perseverance, while 83% showed independence in learning. The highest result was observed in emotional management, reaching 92%, due to a group work-based approach, positive reinforcement, and reflective discussions. However, some students were still less enthusiastic and relied on teacher assistance, especially when the material was difficult or uninteresting.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation in the Fourth-Grade Classroom

No	Indicator	Students Achieved	%	Students Not Achieved	%
1.	Interest in Material	9	75 %	3	25 %
2.	Perseverance	9	75 %	3	25 %
3.	Independence	10	83 %	2	17 %

4.	Emotional Management	11	92 %	1	8 %
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In Physical Education (PE) learning, students' motivation increased, with 83% demonstrating interest and independence, and 75% showing good perseverance. 92% of students successfully managed their emotions during locomotor movement lessons. The PE teacher implemented process differentiation by grouping students based on skill levels, although the content and product remained uniform. Some lower-ability students required additional support to improve independence and perseverance.

Table 2. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation in PE Learning

No	Indicator	Students Achieved	%	Students Not Achieved	%
1.	Interest in Material	10	83 %	2	17 %
2.	Perseverance	9	75 %	3	25 %
3.	Independence	10	83 %	2	17 %
4.	Emotional Management	11	92 %	1	8 %

In Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) learning, 67% of students exhibited interest and perseverance, while 75% were independent. Students' emotional management showed excellent results, with 92% able to control their emotions during lessons. However, content, process, and product uniformity posed challenges in accommodating diverse learning needs. The teacher utilized group discussions and reflections to develop social-emotional competencies, but more specific differentiation was needed.

Table 3. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation in RECD Learning

No	Indicator	Students Achieved	%	Students Not Achieved	%
1.	Interest in Material	8	67 %	4	33 %
2.	Perseverance	8	67 %	4	33 %
3.	Independence	9	75 %	3	25 %
4.	Emotional Management	11	92 %	1	8 %

Differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies has successfully increased students' learning motivation, but content and product differentiation optimization are necessary for better outcomes. This integrated approach has significantly contributed to students' motivation. In the fourth-grade classroom, 75% of students showed interest and perseverance, 83% were independent learners, and 92% effectively managed their emotions. Similar results were observed in Physical Education (PE) and Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) learning, with consistently high emotional management levels at 92%. Nevertheless, content and product differentiation remain suboptimal, causing some students to struggle to understand the material or continue relying on teacher assistance.

DISCUSSION

Implementing differentiated learning integrated with social-emotional competencies has proven effective in increasing students' learning motivation at SDN 5 Sumber, particularly regarding engagement, independence, and emotional management. Process differentiation, which has been used more effectively than content and product diversification, enables students to learn according to their requirements and learning styles. The study results show that when students are given the chance to learn using various techniques, including kinaesthetic exercises, visual and auditory media, and group projects that promote social contact, they are more involved in the process. This is consistent with the idea of Vygotsky, which highlights the value of social contact in fostering comprehension and desire for learning (Erbil, 2020; Saleem et al., 2021). Furthermore, this technique may boost students' confidence since they feel more appreciated and encouraged in a learning process that suits their requirements, according to Tomlinson's theory of differentiated learning (Mahmud et al., 2024; Walkington & Bernacki, 2020).

Including social-emotional capabilities into the curriculum also helps pupils improve their interpersonal

abilities. Along with group prayers in Religious Education, activities like group talks, reflections, and role-playing in Physical Education (PE) classes have helped students grow in self-awareness, emotional control, and teamwork. A good learning environment and supporting students' psychological well-being depend on developing social-emotional competencies, according to CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020), which finally helps boost learning motivation. However, this research also highlights difficulties applying distinction, especially in terms of content and product attributes. Although process differentiation has been well-executed, learning materials and task forms remain relatively homogeneous, hence not entirely meeting the various learning requirements of students. Creating more customised and adaptable learning resources, including interest-based projects or adaptive learning modules, might help. Moreover, a calculated move in enhancing the efficacy of diversified learning in primary schools might be teacher training on creating and using more thorough differentiation techniques. Particularly at the primary level, these results support other research that underlines how various social-emotional learning approaches could improve student involvement and academic performance (Chang & Hall, 2022; Massaad & Chaker, 2020). Thus, optimizing content and product differentiation is a key first step in ensuring every student can realise their full learning potential.

This study shows that, especially regarding engagement, independence, and emotional management, using varied learning combined with social-emotional competence efficiently increases students' learning motivation. This study further demonstrates its efficacy in real-world use by utilizing observation and interview data, in line with research by Amalia et al. (2023), which emphasizes varied learning as an innovation appropriate to student diversity. Avandra et al. (2023) highlight the need for social-emotional learning to increase learning motivation, in line with the results of this study, which includes social-emotional elements to help develop students' interpersonal skills. Despite the difficulties in more general application, Pozas et al.'s (2021) study supports this conclusion by showing that instructional differentiation improves students' well-being, social inclusion, and academic self-concept. This study supports previous results by offering empirical data on the application of social-emotional competence and differentiated learning at the elementary level, highlighting that although process differentiation has been implemented effectively, content and product differentiation still need optimization to better meet students' specific needs.

These results imply that, especially in engagement, independence, and emotional management, using varied learning combined with social-emotional competencies could represent a successful strategy to increase students' learning motivation. To be more successful, content and product uniqueness must be improved to more closely fit students' particular requirements. These results provide teachers' designers and implementers with new perspectives on stress training and mentorship in developing and executing thorough differentiation techniques. Additionally, schools must provide resources that support the development of flexible teaching materials and more diverse evaluation methods to accommodate different learning styles and competency levels. Therefore, optimizing differentiated learning implementation will not only enhance learning motivation but also contribute to students' academic achievement and psychological well-being as a whole.

Based on the novel findings of this study, integrating differentiated instruction with the development of social-emotional competencies simultaneously has proven effective in addressing the issues identified in this research, namely, low learning motivation, lack of active engagement, and the limited implementation of comprehensive differentiation by teachers. This holistic approach focuses on adapting to students' learning styles through differentiated processes. It strengthens social-emotional aspects such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and collaboration, which were previously not fully integrated into teaching practices at SDN 5 Sumber. These findings offer a concrete solution to teachers' limited understanding in accommodating individual learning needs and social-emotional aspects simultaneously while meeting the demands for an adaptive and meaningful learning model as required by the Merdeka Curriculum (Independent Curriculum).

The scientific impact of this study on future education lies in its contribution to enriching the primary education literature with an integrative model that bridges the gap between academic differentiation and social-emotional development. This research paves the way for developing more comprehensive and

contextual teacher training and curriculum design by presenting empirical evidence that combining these two approaches can significantly enhance student motivation. This learning model can be a reference for policymakers and education practitioners in building a more flexible, responsive, and student-centered learning system suited for 21st-century education.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that implementing differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies effectively enhances the learning motivation of fourth-grade students in elementary school. The research confirms that differentiation in the learning process, particularly through approaches tailored to students' learning styles, can increase engagement, independence, and emotional regulation. These findings affirm that integrating social-emotional competencies, such as cooperation, self-awareness, and emotional management, is crucial in creating a more inclusive learning environment that supports students' psychological development. However, this study also reveals that differentiation in terms of content and product remains suboptimal, as learning materials and assigned tasks tend to be uniform and do not fully accommodate the diverse learning needs of students.

The main challenges in this study include limited resources for developing more flexible learning materials and a lack of teacher training in implementing differentiation strategies more effectively. Additionally, the small sample size, which is limited to a single school, constrains the generalizability of the findings to a broader context. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the sample scope, including different grade levels and schools with varying socioeconomic conditions, to understand better the effectiveness of differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies. Furthermore, the development of technology-based learning models that support differentiated content and product implementation should be explored further to optimize adaptive and individualized learning strategies. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to improving the quality of elementary school education and serve as a foundation for more inclusive and responsive educational policies that address students' diverse needs.

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