

## Misconception in Differentiated Learning Practices: A Study of Indonesian Social Studies Teachers

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### ABSTRACT

*Differentiated learning can foster creativity, independence, and motivation to learn in students. However, misconceptions in understanding and implementing this approach produce negative outcomes. This study analyzes misconceptions in differentiated learning among Indonesian social studies teachers, examining their forms, causes, and impacts. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, utilizing structured and open-ended interviews conducted via Google Forms, with 126 randomly selected social studies teachers across Indonesia. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. Results reveal significant misconceptions among Indonesian social studies teachers. Key findings include an overemphasis on learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) in teaching practices, uniform time allocation despite varying student abilities, and excessive reliance on group learning without considering individual student profiles, including those who prefer independent learning. These misconceptions reveal fundamental misunderstandings about the principles of differentiated instruction, underscoring the need for enhanced teacher training and professional development programs.*

### Keywords:

Misconceptions; Differentiated Instruction; Social Studies Teachers.

### ABSTRAK

*Pembelajaran berdiferensiasi dapat menumbuhkan kreativitas, kemandirian, dan motivasi belajar siswa. Namun, kesalahpahaman dalam memahami dan*

*menerapkan pendekatan ini menghasilkan dampak negatif. Penelitian ini menganalisis kesalahpahaman pembelajaran berdiferensiasi di kalangan guru IPS Indonesia, meneliti bentuk, penyebab, dan dampaknya. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan melalui wawancara terstruktur dan terbuka via Google Forms, melibatkan 126 guru IPS yang dipilih secara acak di seluruh Indonesia. Data dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil menunjukkan kesalahpahaman signifikan di kalangan guru IPS Indonesia. Temuan utama meliputi: penekanan berlebihan pada gaya belajar (auditori, visual, kinestetik) dalam praktik mengajar; alokasi waktu seragam meski kemampuan siswa berbeda; dan ketergantungan berlebihan pada pembelajaran kelompok tanpa mempertimbangkan profil individu siswa, termasuk yang lebih suka belajar mandiri. Kesalahpahaman ini menunjukkan pemahaman dasar yang keliru tentang prinsip pembelajaran berdiferensiasi, menunjukkan perlunya peningkatan pelatihan guru dan program pengembangan profesional.*

**Kata kunci:**

Miskonsepsi; Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi; Guru Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial.

## 1. Introduction

The global transformation of education has prompted various countries to undertake curriculum updates that are more adaptive and responsive to learners' needs. Indonesia, through the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, aims to provide flexibility to educational units in developing learning that aligns with the characteristics of students. A key component in implementing the Independent Curriculum is differentiated learning, which emphasizes adjusting instruction based on the diversity of students' abilities, interests, and learning styles to meet the various needs of students, enhance individual learning experiences, and optimize student achievement (Adisel et al., 2022; Utari et al., 2025).

Differentiated learning refers to a teaching approach that is tailored to the diverse needs, interests, and learning readiness of students (Renzulli et al., 1986; Tomlinson, 2001). This approach is a teacher's response to the needs of diverse learners that includes modifications to content, processes, products, and learning environments (Birnie, 2015; Tomlinson, 2014). Differentiated learning has the potential to improve individual learning experiences and optimize student achievement (Faiz et al., 2022; Sati et al., 2024). However, its understanding and application by teachers still face various challenges.

The first critical issue is the prevalence of misconceptions about differentiated learning among Indonesian social studies teachers. A study found common misconceptions that differentiation means creating individual learning plans for each student or only focusing on low-ability students (Hartawan & Kosasih, 2024). Common misconceptions among social studies teachers include the notion that differentiated learning means creating individual learning plans for each student or only focusing on low-ability students. These misconceptions are particularly problematic because they fundamentally

misrepresent the essence of differentiation, which is the teacher's ability to create multiple paths to learning that allow all students to achieve learning goals in ways that best suit their characteristics.

The second critical issue is the negative impact of these misconceptions on the quality of learning and curriculum implementation. Five Southeast Asian countries revealed that misconceptions about differentiated learning have a significant impact on the quality of implementation of the new curriculum. The study found a positive correlation between teachers' understanding of learning differentiation and improvements in student learning outcomes. When teachers misunderstand and practice differentiated learning incorrectly, students appear more passive, Fatmawati et al. (2023) found that misunderstandings about learning differentiation can lead to teaching practices that contradict the principles of adaptive and responsive learning, thereby hindering the development of student competencies.

The challenges are particularly complex in social studies education due to its multidimensional nature. In the context of multidimensional social studies learning, a proper understanding of differentiated learning becomes increasingly crucial (Dixon et al., 2014). The complexity of social studies material, which encompasses aspects of history, geography, economics, and sociology, necessitates a learning approach that can accommodate diverse perspectives and varying levels of student understanding. Social studies teachers often struggle to differentiate learning content without compromising the depth of the material or overlooking the relationships between concepts. This is exacerbated by a lack of understanding of assessment strategies that align with the principles of learning differentiation.

Contributing factors to the persistence of these misconceptions include limited professional development opportunities. Limited access to ongoing professional development contributes to the persistence of misconceptions among teachers. This reveals a gap between the expectations for curriculum implementation and teacher readiness in the field.

The implications of these misconceptions extend beyond individual classrooms to the broader goals of educational reform. The implications of misconceptions about differentiated learning not only affect the learning process but also the achievement of the overall goals of the Independent Curriculum. Systematic efforts to identify and analyze misconceptions of differentiated learning in social studies teachers are a strategic step in supporting the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Thompson, 2025). Misconceptions is a crucial step in developing effective interventions to enhance the understanding and implementation of differentiated learning.

Based on these critical issues and the urgent need for empirical evidence on misconceptions among Indonesian social studies teachers, this study aims to analyze the forms of misconceptions about differentiated learning among Indonesian social studies teachers, examine the factors contributing to these misconceptions, and evaluate their impact on teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Design

Understanding and analyzing social studies teachers' misconceptions about differentiated learning is done through a qualitative approach with a qualitative descriptive method. Data collection

is conducted through closed-ended interviews using the Google Forms application. The study's results, presented in percentages, are then confirmed through in-depth interviews with teachers selected based on their understanding of differentiated learning practices in schools, categorized as good, poor, and bad.

## 2.2 *Research Subjects*

The subjects of this study were social studies teachers in Indonesia, selected randomly. The number of informants was 126 people spread through the community of administrators and members of the Social Studies Subject Teachers' Conference (MGMP) in Indonesia. The results of data collection from the research subjects, in the form of statements about various differentiated learning questions, were presented as percentages (%). The researcher then confirmed these findings through in-depth interviews with 12 randomly selected subjects to obtain more in-depth information based on the answers of the previous research subjects.

## 2.3 *Data Collection*

Data mining was conducted using the Google Form application, which included closed questions with the options "yes", "no", "sometimes", and "never". The results of the Google Form served as the primary basis for compiling a closed-ended interview guide. Closed interviews were conducted through a Google Form that was randomly selected by 12 people, with the provision that each community (MGMP) selected two individuals representing samples: those who understood or had implemented differentiated learning and those who did not understand or had not implemented differentiated learning.

## 2.4 *Data Analysis*

The research data that has been collected is then analyzed using the model (Miles & Huberman, 2020; Miles, 1994). This analysis method is expected to comprehensively describe the forms of misconceptions that occur, the factors that cause them, and the impact of these misconceptions on students.

# 3. **Results and Discussion**

Differentiated learning is a characteristic of independent curriculum practice in Indonesia. However, in practice, several obstacles arise from teachers' misconceptions about learning. This study will analyze the forms of misconceptions in social studies learning practice, the factors that influence their emergence, and the impacts of these misconceptions.

## 3.1 *Forms of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning in the Method Aspect*

Among the misconceptions in differentiated learning, based on Table 1, the aspects of learning strategies are: (1) Teachers place learning style aspects, both visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, in every

learning practice as the primary basis for differentiated learning (80%); (2) Teachers in forming student learning groups are always based on learning styles (visual, auditory and kinesthetic) (74%);

(3) Teachers understand kinesthetic learning styles by actively moving in learning (96%); (4) Teachers in implementing process differentiation are not accompanied by product and content differentiation (68%); (5) Teachers give the same time to each student (95%); (6) Teachers believe that only through technology-based learning media (PC, Laptop, HP, LCD, internet, etc.) can differentiated learning be successful (86%); (7) Teachers do not differentiate student characteristics based on student profiles, such as introverted or extroverted students (76%). There are seven out of ten misconceptions about differentiated learning practices based on the responses of Indonesian social studies teachers.

About the fact that the learning style aspect is dominant, as expressed by most respondents, such as the opinion of YA (38 years old), "I more often use the differentiation of audio, visual and kinesthetic learning styles. However, the grouping of students is no longer always based on their learning style" (DA, 30 years old; AH, 41 years old, Interview, February 23, 2025).

**Table 1.** Forms of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning in the Method Aspect

No.	Description	Percentage	
		Yes	No
1	The implementation of content differentiation that you do is Integrated with process or product differentiation	96%	4%
2	The content differentiation you implement is done sequentially, starting with content A, then B, and finally C. This means that it is not done simultaneously for all students	77%	23%
3	The differentiated learning that you implement is based more on the differentiation of learning styles (audio, visual and kinesthetic)	80%	20%
4	Every time you implement differentiated learning, group students based on their learning style (audio, visual, or kinesthetic)	74%	26%
5	The application of differentiated learning with kinesthetic-type students is often encouraged to move actively during the learning process	96%	4%
6	The application of process differentiation is not accompanied by product and content differentiation	68%	32%
7	In implementing differentiated learning, you allocate the same amount of time for each person or group to complete the assigned task	95%	5%
8	Differentiated learning will not be successful if it does not utilize technology-based learning media (PC, Laptop, HP, LCD, etc.).	86%	14%

9	The differentiated learning you implement is based on student interests, for example, asking them to create posters, wall magazines, or videos of their observations.	95%	5%
10	Based on the student profile, the differentiated learning you implement does not differentiate between introverted students (e.g., those who prefer to be alone) and extroverted students (e.g., those who enjoy socializing).	76%	24%

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Conceptually, differentiated learning encompasses multiple aspects, not only in terms of learning style (audio, visual, kinesthetic), but also requires consideration of students' interests and profiles, adjustment of teaching speed, and provision of alternative tasks (Goyibova et al., 2025; Nahdhiah & Suciptaningsih, 2024). Some teachers in each group division always lead to learning styles (Lidiawati et al., 2024). Furthermore, teachers do not provide enough time for students who have learning difficulties, especially for ABK (children with special needs) (Adha et al., 2024; Thompson, 2025). At the global level, it is promoted through the slogan "Education for All" (EFA). Differentiated learning is essential for inclusive education (Chipika et al., 2023). In the learning process, some teachers lack data on student conditions, particularly regarding interests and profiles, which impacts the success of implementing differentiated learning.

Differentiated learning has been misunderstood by many Indonesian social studies teachers, leading to its perceived ineffectiveness and a negative impact on learning outcomes. To increase the motivation, creativity, involvement, comfort, participation, and learning outcomes of students, differentiated learning is important (Nahdhiah & Suciptaningsih, 2024). Valuing student participation is a crucial task for all teachers worldwide. Therefore, addressing learning outcomes and improving inclusive education is part of the world agenda. More comprehensive efforts are needed to improve both learning outcomes in skills and attitudes, as stated in the Pancasila Student Profile (3P), in the implementation of the Independent Curriculum (Nurdyansyah et al., 2022).

### 3.2 *Forms of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning in the Teacher Aspect*

Misconceptions of differentiated learning extend not only to the method aspect but also to the teacher aspect (Table 2). The dominance of teachers, principals, and school supervisors is one of the causes of misconceptions about differentiated learning. Teachers need to consider the various needs of students in learning. Teachers are expected not to dominate in determining content, processes, or products (86%). Teachers have not optimally integrated diverse sociocultural backgrounds in differentiated learning (44%). In carrying out their roles, teachers need the support of school supervisors and principals to ensure that differentiated learning can run smoothly and effectively. "The supervisor at my school is quite active in providing constructive evaluations in compiling differentiated modules" (FR, 24 years old, Interview, February 23, 2025). Most school supervisors and principals have effectively carried out their duties regarding the preparation of differentiated learning modules, which are conducted periodically (YA, 38 years old; ST, 40 years old, Interview, February 23, 2025). Teachers need to carry out their role as facilitators in differentiated learning. As

a facilitator, teachers do not dominate the learning process. The support of school principals and supervisors in teachers' roles in differentiated learning is good.

**Table 2.** Forms of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning in the Teacher Aspect

No.	Description	Percentage	
		Yes	No
1	Differentiated learning is implemented in all aspects (content, process, and product) that are determined and prepared by the teacher, principal, or school supervisor.	86%	14%
2	The differentiated learning that you implement is accompanied by complete competencies related to the nature of diversity and the potential of students, including their sociocultural background	93%	7%
3	The learning that you implement does not include/integrate sociocultural background because you consider it not to be part of the diversity elements in differentiated learning	44%	56%
4	The differentiated learning that you implement only requires grouping based on ability level without considering the various needs of students	25%	75%

Source: Processed Data (2025)

The role of teachers, facilitated by school supervisors and principals in differentiated learning, especially in the preparation of student-centered teaching modules, including integrating their sociocultural backgrounds, is vital. Neglecting this role has the potential to further distance Indonesian social studies educators from the concept of differentiated learning. Various studies have shown that school supervisors have not been optimal in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, resulting in misconceptions in education. The role of school supervisors, as outlined in Perdirjen GTK Number 4831/B/HK.03.01/2023, is no longer limited to supervisory functions but also involves mentoring school principals, teachers, and all members of the education unit to enhance the quality of learning. Optimizing this role has the potential to affect teachers' ability to implement differentiated learning.

### *3.3 Forms of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning in the Assessment Aspect*

The manifestation of misconceptions about differentiated learning in the assessment aspect (Table 3) reveals that a small number of social studies teachers have not differentiated the material for students with different abilities (26%). Although the number is small, it has the potential to grow if there is no effort to align perceptions regarding this matter. Teachers tend to use the same instruments and rubrics for all students (58%) despite recognizing that students have differences, particularly in their understanding of the material. Teachers always start meetings with an initial assessment (60%). Differentiating the level of difficulty of the material for each student based on the results of the initial test is one of the important things for social studies teachers to do so that learning objectives can be achieved. The results of interviews with teachers stated;

"My way of differentiating is by giving a trigger question at the beginning and giving a problem. There, you will see a group of students who are just starting to learn, as well as those who have already learned. Then, I create a group and adjust the LKPD based on the assessment results. If the group already knows, then they will be given LKPD with a different level of analysis than the other groups"(RY, 38 years old, interview, February 23, 2024).

**Table 3.** Forms of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning in the Assessment Aspect

No.	Description	Percentage	
		Yes	No
1	The implementation of differentiated learning from the One perspective of learning readiness is assessed at the beginning of the semester	83%	17%
2	A differentiated assessment also follows the differentiated learning that you implement	88%	12%
3	The differentiated learning you implement consistently incorporates cognitive assessment through written or oral tests	65%	35%
4	Differentiated learning assessment can be applied more flexibly according to the needs and diversity of students	98%	12%
5	Based on the readiness of the students, you differentiate the material for each student or group in the differentiated learning you implement, using the results of the initial assessment as a guide	74%	26%
6	An initial assessment to determine student interests can be is carried out once at the beginning of the school year, as student interests remain relatively stable over a specific period	52%	48%
7	Process and product assessment in differentiated learning tends to use the same instruments and rubrics for all students	58%	42%
8	An initial cognitive assessment is always administered at the start of each meeting (e.g., Meeting 1, Meeting 2, Meeting 3, etc.), even when advanced material is covered	60%	40%

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Differentiated learning is an effort to provide instruction that takes into account the learning readiness, learning profile, and learning interests of students, thereby optimizing learning outcomes (Tomlinson & Jarvis, 2009). Differentiated learning begins with identifying the learning readiness, interests, and profiles of students, enabling teachers to tailor the presentation of content, processes, and products to meet the needs of each student. (Alstete et al., 2021; Tomlinson & Moon, 2013). Differentiated learning is interpreted as recognizing that each student is unique and has distinct characteristics, so teachers should not provide the same treatment in meeting their learning (Bi et al.,

2023), including in terms of assessment. These differences necessitate that learning be tailored to the individual circumstances of the students. Some teachers experience obstacles in the form of a lack of time and difficulty in managing large classes, but they must still differentiate the learning styles of each student (Azizah et al., 2023; Bi et al., 2023).

Differentiated learning to differentiate the ability levels of participants, as research shows (White, 2019) In English lessons. She utilized differentiated learning to accommodate the various reading abilities of students. Her study examined the impact of tiered instruction on the English reading comprehension of secondary school students in Thailand. Three aspects of differentiated learning were conducted, namely content (reading texts), process (how students understand reading texts), and product (post-reading tasks). She also grouped the students into three categories: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. The division was based on their self-assessed background knowledge about the topic of each lesson.

Assessments made by teachers can at least accommodate the differences of each student. Standardizing the types of assessments for different students has an impact on student learning outcomes. To minimize misconceptions about differentiated learning related to assessment aspects, social studies teachers should consider the type of assessment for each individual or group of participants, aiming to improve learning outcomes (Goyibova et al., 2025; Lidiawati et al., 2024). One of the important assessments in differentiated learning is diagnostic assessment, which serves as an initial step in understanding students' levels of understanding (Ginting et al., 2024; Makrufi & Syahrir, 2024). The initial assessment is a step for differentiated learning. Through the initial cognitive assessment, students' academic abilities are identified, allowing teachers to differentiate instruction in terms of material depth (Lidiawati et al., 2024).

### *3.4 Factors Causing Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning*

The factors that cause misconceptions arise at least due to several things, including (1) lack of socialization and training on differentiated learning (69.05%); Several forms of training have been carried out, including through teacher competency development such as holding technical guidance (biotech), socialization, education and training (diktat) for teachers and improving school facilities and infrastructure. Other activities, such as attending workshops, the Teacher Leader program, attending webinars, learning communities at schools and PMM, and independent learning (SP, 53 years old, interview, February 22, 2024) (2) PMM, which is a superior product of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as a place for independent learning for teachers, does not appear to be used optimally (55.56%); Teachers' motivations for utilizing PMM include, among others, to deepen their knowledge of the Independent Curriculum, especially differentiated learning, and how to determine the proper initial assessment, as well as good time management (RY, 38 years old, interview, February 22, 2024) (3) The Learning Community (Kombel) as a place for teachers to learn together has not been optimal in its implementation (53.97). Kombel activities at school are carried out every two weeks. The material is about the results of teacher reflections during classroom learning. Then, the problem is raised and used as a discussion theme in Kombel to find a solution. Among those discussed are differentiated teaching modules (IE, 55 years old, YE, 40 years old,

interview, February 22, 2024); (4) The Principal and School Supervisor, who are tasked with assisting teachers in the practice of differentiated learning, are also not optimal (57.14%).

**Table 4.** Factors Causing Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning

No.	Description	Categories					
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Have you studied and explored the topic of differentiated learning further on your own in the independent curriculum?	82	65.08	43	34.13	1	0.79
2	Do the facilities and infrastructure (e.g., availability of technology) in your school support the implementation of differentiated learning?	72	57.14	52	41.27	2	1.59
3	Have you received adequate socialization or training about the Independent Curriculum, especially regarding differentiated learning?	87	69.05	37	29.37	2	1.59
4	Is the Learning Community (Kombel) in your environment effective in supporting your self-development and improving your skills in implementing differentiated learning?	97	76.98	27	21.43	2	1.59
5	Have you independently studied the concept of differentiated learning in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM)?	70	55.56	53	42.06	3	2.38
6	Are you studying differentiated learning in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) through Kombel?	68	53.97	57	45.24	1	0.79
7	Does the Principal and School Supervisors assist in improving your skills in designing and implementing differentiated learning?	72	57.14	52	41.27	2	1.59

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Note: Category C: Yes/Ever; Category B: Rarely/sometimes; Category C: Never

Several factors contribute to teachers' limited ability to implement differentiated learning, resulting in an increasing level of misconceptions. Socialization and training of differentiated learning

are still lacking (Blegur, 2024). The use of PMM to understand differentiated learning is still low. Learning communities (kombi) as a place for teachers to learn together about differentiated learning have not been optimally utilized (Faridah et al., 2025; Rina & Hasanah, 2024). Support from the Principal and School Supervisors is still less than optimal (Supriyadi et al., 2024; Widyawati, 2021). Several of these factors contribute to the increasingly low understanding of Indonesian social studies teachers regarding differentiated learning, resulting in misconceptions. Misconceptions often occur, especially in identifying students' learning needs, necessitating systematic and structural efforts from the state, in this case, the Ministry of Education and Culture, to overcome this problem. Several factors mentioned can serve as alternative solutions to differentiated learning problems.

*3.5 The Impact of Misconceptions of Differentiated Learning*

Misconceptions about differentiated learning have impacted students, affecting their learning outcomes, skills, and attitudes. Some of the attitudes referred to, as shown in Table 5, include that students' learning motivation remains low (46.83%), the level of student active participation is not optimal (48.41%), and the level of student learning independence still needs improvement (49.21%). Misconceptions about differentiated learning have influenced students' attitudes, particularly in terms of learning motivation, level of student engagement, and autonomy.

The form of student motivation (46.83%) appears to be more enthusiastic, passionate, and independent because the tasks given follow their learning style, abilities, and what they want (interests) (ME, 49 years old; YA, 38 years old; IE, 55 years old; DA, 30 years old, interview, February 2024).

**Table 5.** Impact of Misconceptions on Differentiated Learning

No.	Description	Categories					
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Student learning motivation increases significantly when you implement differentiated learning	59	46.83	63	50.00	4	3.17
2	The level of participation and activity in students learning increases significantly with the implementation of differentiated learning	61	48.41	63	50.00	2	1.59
3	The learning outcomes of students develop according to their potential and diversity, which is what is desired from differentiated learning	70	55.56	54	42.86	2	1.59
4	The results of the differentiated learning you implemented significant development in students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills	70	55.56	54	42.86	2	1.59

5	The development of all potential students, with their unique characteristics and diversity increase through the differentiated learning you implement	68	53.97	56	44.44	2	1.59
6	Students can apply the knowledge and skills obtained from the results of the differentiated learning that you implement	63	50.00	60	47.62	3	2.38
7	Different abilities are a result of the differentiated learning you implement	60	47.62	0	0.00	66	52.38
8	The differentiated learning that you implement can increase students' self-confidence	74	58.73	50	39.68	2	1.59
9	Students can learn independently from the differentiated learning that you implement	62	49.21	61	48.41	3	2.38
10	Collaboration formed during learning enables students to work together	98	77.78	26	20.63	2	1.59

Source: Processed Data (2025)

Note: Category C: Yes/Ever; Category B: Rarely/sometimes; Category C: Never

Conceptually, differentiated learning can enhance students' creativity (Dorisno et al., 2023; Herwina, 2021) and increase the effectiveness of learning. Social studies teachers in learning environments consistently build motivation, creativity, and independence in student learning through various approaches, models, and learning methods designed within teaching modules to achieve optimal learning outcomes (Ali et al., 2022; Faiz et al., 2022; Wardani, 2017). Misconceptions about differentiated learning have an impact on students' motivation, creativity, and independence, which also affect learning outcomes (Goyibova et al., 2025; Wahyudi et al., 2023).

Learning with a new paradigm through differentiated learning, Indonesian social studies teachers need to understand that children of the same age are not all the same in terms of learning, hobbies, personality, and likes and dislikes. Differentiated learning should provide teachers with sufficient space for students to learn independently or in groups, as well as different times for each student to complete structured tasks assigned by the teacher (Holmer, 2014; McAfee & Hoffman, 2021).

This study has identified three key misconceptions in the implementation of differentiated learning, particularly among social studies teachers in Indonesia. First, in terms of instructional methods, teachers tend to focus predominantly on learning styles (Ramdan et al., 2024). However, differentiation also encompasses varying the amount of time provided for each student to complete

assignments, as well as adjusting teaching methods based on student profiles, such as whether they are introverted or extroverted (Prabowo & Ariyanti, 2025). Second, regarding the teacher's role, there is a tendency for teachers to dominate decisions related to content, process, and product (86%), which needs to be reduced. Teachers are encouraged to better integrate students' diverse socio-cultural backgrounds into social studies instruction (44%), ensuring that learning is more inclusive and responsive (Chipika et al., 2023).

Third, in the aspect of assessment, teachers often apply uniform instruments and rubrics for all students (58%). This is problematic given the diverse levels of students' understanding of the material (Fauzia & Ramadan, 2023; Sofiana et al., 2024; Tanriveren et al., 2024), which can be identified through initial assessment (Makrufi & Syahrir, 2024). Therefore, this study not only confirms previous findings that have primarily highlighted misconceptions related to learning styles (Sulistiyosari et al., 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2023) but also reveals two additional contributing aspects: teacher decision-making and evaluation practices. In addition to these three aspects, the study also outlines the factors and impacts of misconceptions in differentiated learning, which distinguishes it from prior research (Haq & Arifin, 2024; Hunaepi & Suharta, 2024).

#### 4. Conclusion

The study reveals that misconceptions persist in the implementation of differentiated learning among social studies teachers in Indonesia. These misconceptions can be identified across three key dimensions: teacher understanding, instructional methods, and evaluation strategies. Several contributing factors underlie these misconceptions, including insufficient socialization and limited access to professional training on differentiated instruction. Additionally, the suboptimal utilization of the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) and learning communities as platforms for reflective teaching practices compounded by a lack of consistent support from school supervisors and principals has further hindered effective implementation.

These misconceptions have significant implications for social studies classroom practices. Notably, student motivation remains relatively low (46.83%), active participation is not yet optimal (48.41%), and student learning independence still requires improvement (49.21%). As a result, this study highlights the urgent need for structured, systematic, and comprehensive professional development programs that aim to enhance the competence of social studies teachers in differentiated learning. Effective training is crucial for enhancing both student outcomes and learning behaviors in the Indonesian educational context.

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