



Conference Paper

Meeting Diverse Learning Needs: Exploring Effective Sociology Teacher Strategies in Differentiated Learning

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Abstract.

A major challenge for sociology teachers is to teach students the complex sociology subject matter based on their learning needs. The purpose of this study is to explore the strategies used by sociology teachers in applying differentiated learning at the high school level in Makassar City. This research is a qualitative research that uses teachers and students as research informants. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis was done through the stages of data collection, data reduction, and data presentation. Results show that sociology teachers in Makassar City have implemented effective strategies for differentiated learning. These include the use of diverse learning resources other than textbooks, namely audiovisual materials in the form of videos and presentation slides; visual materials in the form of infographics, images, and maps; utilizing relevant articles from blogs and Conference Papers; and initial assessments to identify students' individual needs in the form of guestionnaire filling, diagnostic tests, and pretests. Group formation is flexible based on the student's ability and group members are rotated in each meeting, applying various learning methods and models, such as problem-based learning, and combining it with cooperative learning models. The teachers also provide additional support in the form of having discussions with students, answering their questions, assigning different assignments, and providing additional material. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to developing different learning approaches, especially in sociology subjects.

Keywords: differentiated learning, sociology, strategy

1. Introduction

Sociology subjects play an important role in providing understanding and skills to students in society. Social structure, social interaction, and various dynamics in society are the study of this subject. However, in the learning process, each student has different learning styles, requests, motivations and needs (1) (2). So teachers must have different abilities and strategies to deal with it to accommodate the needs of these different

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students. So that understanding and applying differentiated learning really needs to be mastered by teachers.

The concept of differentiated learning began to be introduced in Indonesia when the independent curriculum began to be implemented both at the elementary and high school levels. The focus of this learning is to adjust the learning process to the abilities and needs of different students. So that students get guidance in accordance with their characteristics in learning and improve their abilities and needs. In the context of implementation in Indonesia, emphasis is placed on the use of various methods, strategies to accommodate the abilities and needs of different students .

In applying differentiated learning, teachers become central in their implementation. They need to understand the individual characteristics of students such as the level of understanding, learning skills, and interest and motivation in learning. From the results of this understanding, the teacher then compiles a lesson plan according to the needs of students. Applying various models, methods and strategies or individual assignments is a step that can be done to facilitate the learning needs of different students.

Various studies have found that the application of differentiated learning has a significant positive impact on student learning outcomes (3)(4)(5). Differentiated learning allows teachers to interact effectively with students, provide appropriate guidance, and provide a sense of engagement and comfort in learning for students. In addition, it also facilitates the adjustment of the material and level of difficulty according to the student's ability. Differentiated learning also develops critical skills, communication, collaboration and creates inclusive learning for learners. Learning is conducive, as well as equipping students with problem-solving skills and ultimately improving overall student learning outcomes.

With these various advantages, the implementation of differentiated learning is not easy. Various challenges are faced by teachers, such as determining the right study group. Determine appropriate teaching materials, as well as effective time management. The lack of resources owned by schools such as classrooms and the limited number of teachers are challenges in implementing differentiated learning (6). With all these challenges, inevitably teachers still have to use this approach because it has become a demand for an independent curriculum which is currently the curriculum used in Indonesia. Therefore, teachers must identify challenges in creative and innovative ways so that differentiated learning can be carried out properly (7)(8)(9)(10).

This challenge is also experienced by sociology teachers in Makassar City, with diverse student characteristics they need to have the ability to map student needs and abilities well to present effective differentiated learning. Much less Makassar City is a



metropolitan city that has many high schools whose students come from different social, cultural and ability backgrounds. This condition will certainly affect the implementation of differentiated learning so that it requires appropriate efforts to create an environment that supports its implementation.

The main key to the success of differentiated learning is teacher readiness (11)(12). Especially in sociology subjects, sociology teachers need to have a good understanding of sociology concepts as well as the ability to blend them with different teaching methods. However, the real condition at the high school level based on the observations of sociology teachers still experiences various obstacles in implementing differentiated learning. Especially now that sociology subjects are included in the category of specialization subjects, so that teacher techniques and skills in presenting interesting and fun differentiated learning are a demand to attract students.

The results of initial interviews and observations on Sociology teachers in Makassar City who have implemented an independent curriculum. The challenges they face in presenting differentiated learning in the classroom are limited textbooks, less varied teaching materials, less technology skills and limited facilities are obstacles for sociology teachers in providing diverse learning experiences and supporting effective student learning need.

With these various obstacles, sociology teachers are still guided to present differentiated learning in the classroom, so they need the right strategy to present differentiated learning in accordance with curriculum demands. The purpose of this study was to determine the strategies carried out by sociology teachers at Makassar City High School in implementing differentiated learning. How steps are taken to create inclusive learning that is able to meet the learning needs of individual students to improve understanding of sociology concepts and maximum learning outcomes

2. Methods

A qualitative research approach was used in this study to provide a systematic, factual and curative picture related to the strategies of sociology teachers in Makassar City in implementing differentiated learning. Descriptive research aims to describe research objects that are not yet clear and full of meaning using a systematic, factual, and accurate approach (13)(14). This research was conducted in Makassar City with the object of research of Senior High Schools that apply the Independent Curriculum. Subject research is a sociology teacher who teaches at the school as many as eleven people from different schools, has at least 1 year experience in applying differentiated learning



and has the status of a civil servant. In addition to teachers, students also become information or informants in this study, especially students involved in differentiated learning applied by teachers. Not all students become informants of this research because when the research is carried out, the application of an independent curriculum that accommodates differentiated learning is only carried out in certain classes.

Data collection is carried out by du event, namely observation and interviews, observation is carried out to observe the differentiated learning process applied by teachers when teaching sociology subjects. The results of these observations are used as additional data for interview results. Interviews were conducted on sociology teachers as well as learners involved in differentiated learning. The interview process is carried out during the teacher's free time or when they are not teaching, several times the interview process is carried out outside the school but at the teacher's home or in a public area such as in a café or other hanging out place. This is done by researchers to build report cards with research informants so that the data or information provided is as accurate as possible. In addition, looking at documents owned by teachers such as teaching materials, student products, student worksheets and evaluations used as additional data to strengthen research results.

In an effort to obtain comprehensive data, the triangulation method used in this study is combining observation, interview and documentation techniques. The data obtained is then analyzed through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation and conclusions. Using this method is expected to ensure the reliability and validity of the data obtained.

3. Results and Discussion

The subject of sociology involves students in a lot of memorization and theory so it is considered boring, so differentiated learning is important to implement in this subject. In sociology subjects, students are taught to examine assumptions and stereotypes in society and develop students' analytical and critical thinking skills in understanding social problems. Meanwhile, in the achievement of skills students are expected to have social skills, effective communication skills, able to spell in teams, have tolerance, adaptation and empathy in various social contexts. But theoretical explanations are not sufficient to achieve this competence.

Teachers need to use the right strategies so that the material delivered can be received and internalized by students well (15)(16)(17). So that applying differentiated learning is relevant to be applied to attract students' interest in sociology subjects.



Which in turn will improve their ability to understand social concepts and social reality. Through these diverse learning strategies, students are expected to be able to engage and become central in the learning process so that their skills can develop to face the complexity of community life (18)(19).

The results of this study found that to overcome the obstacles faced by teachers in implementing differentiated learning, they use effective strategies so that this approach can still be applied in accordance with curriculum demands. The strategy carried out by sociology teachers in Makassar City to implement differentiated learning in the learning process is to overcome limited textbooks, teachers try to use diverse learning resources, while to identify the needs and abilities of their students conduct initial assessments, in addition to the implementation of group formation learning is carried out flexibly. In the learning process the syntax is designed according to a problem-based learning model combined with an interesting and fun type of cooperative model, and the latter for students who need them provides additional support.

At the beginning of the implementation of the independent curriculum which demanded to present differentiated learning, sociology teachers in Makassar City admitted that they had little difficulty implementing it in learning. But in various ways they try to learn and develop their abilities. The efforts they make are like participating in training that is designed by the Education Office, both the Makassar City Education Office and nationally. In addition, they also learn independently through YouTube and other social media and learn from their main peers who have participated in the mobilizer teacher program.

The first thing teachers do in applying differentiated learning to sociology subjects is to design learning tools that are in accordance with the differentiated learning approach. They make adjustments to the main learning tools on the learning source used. So far, the dominant source of learning used is textbooks. The results of interviews with teachers and students were informed that the textbooks used by Sociology teachers in Makassar City tended to be the same, namely student books and teacher books published by Erlangga and Yudistira. And in an effort to accommodate the needs of different students, sociology teachers try to present diverse learning resources. But still use textbooks as the main learning resource. Taking into consideration that textbooks provide comprehensive information about the concept of sociology with a clear and systematic structure in accordance with the demands of the sociology curriculum at the high school level (20)(21)(22).

In an effort to present diverse learning resources in addition to textbooks, sociology teachers utilize audiovisual materials. Audiovisual materials that are often used are



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videos and slide presentations. Usually videos are used as a trigger material for students to stimulate their analytical and critical thinking skills, for example by showing concrete videos about culture, conflict, behavior, society that are associated with the student's subject matter. While presentation slides are used by teachers to display development materials that reinforce the essential material in the textbook. Slide presentations are usually in the form of images, infographics, diagrams, or conceptual maps..

The results of interviews with students obtained information that they were more interested in the video material displayed by the teacher. They become easier to understand the material than just by reading textbooks alone. The results of this study are relevant to research findings that state that videos can attract students' attention and make them more happy to follow lessons (23)(24)(25). From the video students can observe, analyze and draw conclusions about social reality that is complex in relation to the material they are studying. So that it also indirectly presents contextual learning.

Sociology teachers in Makassar City consider that the video material they display will indirectly also add and broaden students' horizons about various aspects in the community. In addition, these video-based learning resources and presentations also accommodate students' visual learning styles. Those whose learning style is visual become more motivated and engaged in learning. The results of this study are also relevant to previous research which found that through concept visualization, perspective broadening, increased engagement, development of critical thinking the use of videos in sociology subjects will enrich students' learning experiences, and ultimately will help students understand sociology material better and not just rote memorization (26)(27)

In addition to utilizing audiovisual materials in the use of learning resources, various sociology teachers in Makassar City also use online sources such as articles that have been published both on blogs and articles that have been published in research journals. The most frequently used online sources are articles published on blogs. As for journals, research results are only occasionally used, if indeed the topic discussed has something to do with the research journal article. Usually this Conference Paper is used to strengthen their arguments when presenting their material in group assignments. According to the Sociology teacher, if the learning model used is a project-based learning and the project is in the form of posters, then utilizing Conference Papers is mandatory because in poster assessment, one of the points is the use of research journal articles.

One of the learning resources that is very rarely used by sociology teachers in Makassar City is field research. Of the eleven teachers interviewed, only one sociology teacher had ever conducted field research. According to them, field research is rarely

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used by teachers because of licensing considerations, material suitability and consideration of funds used. Thus, it can be said that sociology teachers in Makassar City have tried to use diverse learning resources in differentiated learning they have utilized textbooks, videos, presentation slides in the form of images, infographics, and diagrams. In addition, it also utilizes online sources such as articles on blogs, as well as Conference Papers. A variety of learning opportunities will increase student understanding and enrich students' insights because they obtain information from various points of view and also accommodate the needs or learning styles of different students.

Conducting an initial assessment is a step that has also been applied by sociology teachers in the implementation of differentiated learning. As the main requirement of differentiated learning, conducting an initial assessment is a step to identify the abilities and needs of learners. Based on the results of interviews conducted with sociology teachers, one of the most difficult indicators of differentiated learning to apply is to conduct an initial assessment. There are various doubts in the implementation of this initial assessment, according to them, the initial assessment carried out at the beginning of the meeting is usually in the form of a diagnostic assessment to find out the extent of students' knowledge of the material to be discussed. However, the design of this diagnostic test has not been able to provide information related to student learning styles. However, if you just know the students' understanding, this initial assessments that are able to provide information related to other characteristics of learners. The form of initial assessment carried out by sociology teachers in the form of questionnaires and diagnostic tests and observations.

The main obstacles in conducting initial assessments other than instrument design are time constraints and the large number of students in the study group. In its implementation, sociology teachers always improve their knowledge related to the implementation of initial assessments through peers or attending training both online and offline. It is important to conduct early assessments in diffused learning because it is the main foundation for teachers to design learning that suits student needs, and prevents teachers from using material that is too easy or difficult for students (28).

Forming flexible groups in the learning process is also one of the steps taken by teachers in implementing differentiated learning. The results of the cloud assessment test become the basis for the formation of groups based on their level of ability. Taking a mixed approach is used to combine students who have different abilities in one group so that they can learn collaboratively and support each other in completing student worksheets shared by the teacher.

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Students who are combined in groups are also always different every time they meet, or the sociology teacher rotates in groups. So that students have the opportunity to interact with the diverse characteristics of their classmates. According to the teacher, by rotating group members regularly, the teacher indirectly provides opportunities for students to work together with different friends. In addition, it combines students with high abilities to become mentors for friends who need additional help. Based on the results of interviews with teachers and students that in the formation of groups teachers usually consider these two things. But it has never done the formation of groups based on student interests. The main reason is that the implementation of diagnostic tests at the beginning of the meeting that has been carried out has not yet reached the mapping of student interest in the topic of the lesson.

Differentiated learning in sociology subjects that has been carried out by sociology teachers in Makassar City is to apply different learning methods and models at each meeting. According to the interview results, the learning models commonly used are problem-based learning models such as inquiry, problem-based learning, project-based learning and discovery learning. And sometimes to increase students' passion in learning they juxtapose also with the cooperative type model.

Applying problem-based learning is an option used by teachers because it is a familiar model because the previous curriculum emphasized using this model in learning. In its application, the teacher only acts as a facilitator, providing guidance and support to students in implementing problem solving. With this varied learning model accommodates the needs of students and gives students the ability to be independent, think critically and develop their ability to solve problems.

Students are challenged to solve real problems and situations relevant to the sociology subject matter. They work collaboratively to find solutions using the knowledge and social concepts that have been learned. This approach in its implementation connects sociological theory with everyday life which then improves students' ability to solve problems. In the context of differentiated learning in sociology subjects, combining a cooperative model and a problem-based model is a complete combination that provides additional benefits such as mutual support and cooperation to complete a given task. This varied learning model provides opportunities for individuals to learn according to their needs and potential. As well as developing problem-solving, social, analytical and collaboration skills which are skills that are absolutely possessed in the learning outcomes of sociology subjects.

Providing additional support is a strategy that is also applied by sociology teachers in implementing differentiated learning. The results of the study found that additional



support provided by teachers to students who need additional support such as students whose learning outcomes are low or have difficulty in understanding the material (29)(30). Additional forms of support provided are discussing with students related to their shortcomings, providing additional explanations if there is material that is not understood, answering questions or other things that can help students to maximize their achievement in sociology subjects.

In the application of differentiated learning to sociology subjects in Senior High School, teachers provide additional support tailored to the individual needs of learners. This support includes providing individual guidance to students who need additional support, whether they have low learning outcomes or difficulty understanding the material. Teachers take the time to discuss one-on-one with students, provide additional explanations, answer questions, and provide specific guidance according to each student's learning needs.

In its implementation, based on teacher interviews, this additional support requires extra energy because it has to create different tasks tailored to the needs of students. However, in order to achieve the discovery of minimum completeness, the teacher strives to provide this additional support. Another additional support usually given by sociology teachers is to provide additional material such as books or articles, but unfortunately according to them this support has little impact on students. This is due to students' lack of literacy skills. Students are lazy to read the material given by the teacher, this is certainly something that needs attention.

Of the various strategies of sociology teachers in applying differentiated learning that have been applied, the strategy of conducting initial assessments on students is a strategy that has not been implemented properly by sociology teachers. Other strategies in the form of diverse learning resources, applying various methods and models, forming flexible groups and providing additional support to students have been carried out optimally by sociology teachers in Makassar City.

Some of the obstacles faced in implementing differentiated learning in their classes are limited time, large number of students, need extra energy to present different assignments and other technical obstacles which then affect the implementation of differentiated learning optimally in sociology subjects. However, overall the practice of differentiated learning has been applied by sociology teachers in Makassar City. They have made active efforts to create inclusive learning and pay attention to the individual needs of students.

By increasing good support from the school, related agencies and the support of the Subject Teacher Deliberation to continue to innovate, it is optimistic that the realization of



good differentiated learning will be achieved. In the end, the bad stigma that sociology is a boring subject will disappear on its own. In addition, teacher self-awareness to improve their abilities is an important thing that needs to be done. Utilizing technology, increasing collaboration between teachers, and continuously conducting regular reflection and evaluation will create qualified and highly competitive sociology teachers.

4. Conclusion

Differentiated learning in sociology subjects in Senior High Schools in Makassar City has an important role in increasing students' understanding and interest in understanding the material in sociology subjects. Sociology teachers in Makassar City have implemented effective strategies, such as the use of diverse learning resources other than textbooks, namely audiovisual materials, in the form of videos and presentation slides, visual materials in the form of infographics, images, and maps and utilizing relevant articles from blogs and Conference Papers, initial assessments to identify individual student needs in the form of filling out questionnaires, diagnostic tests, and protest. Group formation is flexible by forming groups based on the level of ability and needs of students and always rotating group members in each meeting. Sociology teachers also apply various learning methods and models such as inquiry learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and discovery learning and combine them with cooperative learning models. Provide additional support in the form of inviting students to discuss, answer questions and answer different assignments and source other materials. By using diverse learning resources students can access information according to their needs and preferences, which will certainly increase their involvement in the learning process and strengthen their understanding of sociological concepts. Early assessment helps teachers design learning tools according to student needs, the formation of flexible groups provides opportunities for students to develop and interact thoroughly. The use of problem-based learning models will help students to improve critical thinking skills and problem solving. Additional support will assist students in overcoming barriers to learning sociology and engaging all students inclusively. Massive support from related parties and providing opportunities for student teachers to develop themselves and their knowledge related to integrated learning will maximize their ability to implement inclusive and differentiated learning.



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