

Humanism Perspective in Differentiated Learning in Elementary Schools: Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Differentiated learning emerges as a strategic response to the diversity of student characteristics in elementary schools, particularly within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia. The humanistic perspective offers a relevant philosophical foundation because it places students at the center of the learning process and recognizes the uniqueness of each learner. This study aims to analyze how the humanistic perspective contributes to the implementation of differentiated learning in elementary schools through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The study employs the SLR method following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines through systematic identification, screening, and synthesis of literature. Literature was searched in databases such as Google Scholar, SINTA, and reputable international journals within the publication range of 2010 to 2025. From 84 identified articles, 16 articles met the inclusion criteria and were further analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the humanistic perspective, especially the theories of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, provides essential philosophical foundations for differentiated learning by emphasizing self-actualization, freedom to learn, empathy, and the recognition of individual differences. The integration of humanistic principles strengthens the three dimensions of differentiation, namely content, process, and product, by ensuring that learning activities respond to students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Furthermore, the implementation of humanistic values in differentiated learning enhances students' learning motivation, engagement, self-confidence, and holistic development. Therefore, the humanistic perspective plays a strategic role as a conceptual basis for designing meaningful, contextual, and learner centered differentiated instruction in elementary schools.

Keywords: Humanism; Differentiated learning; elementary school; Systematic literature review; Student centered learning.

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INTRODUCTION

Elementary school education plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for students' knowledge, character, and thinking skills. In the last decade, Indonesia's educational paradigm has undergone a significant shift with the introduction of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes freedom of learning and student diversity (Azmy & Fanny, 2023). This shift places students at the center of the learning process, requiring teachers to design activities that are responsive to individual differences in learning.

One approach deemed relevant to addressing this need is differentiated learning. This approach is philosophically aligned with the humanist perspective, which places humans as the primary subjects of education.

Differentiated learning is an approach that designs learning experiences based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2017). In practice, differentiation encompasses three main dimensions: content, process, and products tailored to the diversity of learners. Marzoan (2023) emphasized that differentiated learning in elementary schools can accommodate differences in cognitive abilities, learning styles, and sociocultural backgrounds. This approach is crucial because each student has a unique learning style and rhythm. Therefore, differentiated learning is a relevant strategy for realizing inclusive and equitable education.

Philosophically, differentiated learning is closely linked to humanist theory pioneered by Maslow and Rogers. Humanism views humans as individuals with the potential to develop toward self-actualization (Maslow, 1970). Rogers (1969) added that education should provide students with the freedom to learn according to their interests and needs. Within this framework, differentiated learning is a practical manifestation of the principles of humanism because it provides space for each student to develop according to their unique needs. Thus, integrating humanism into differentiated learning provides a strong conceptual foundation for educational practice in elementary schools.

Furthermore, the humanist perspective emphasizes the importance of warm and empathetic relationships between teachers and students. Rogers (1969) stated that effective education requires three teacher qualities: congruence, unconditional acceptance, and empathy. These qualities create a safe psychological climate that allows students to explore knowledge and express themselves freely. Widyawati et al. (2024) found that integrating humanistic theory into differentiated learning in elementary schools creates a more inclusive and enjoyable learning environment. This suggests that the success of differentiated learning depends not only on teaching strategies but also on the quality of the pedagogical relationships that teachers establish.

Furthermore, research findings indicate that differentiated learning based on humanistic values positively impacts student learning motivation. Nugroho and Darmawan (2024) reported that a humanistic perspective in differentiated learning can meet students' psychological needs, thus increasing their motivation to learn. Similar findings were presented by Pramudianti et al. (2023), who stated that differentiated learning in Civics (PPKn) improves student learning outcomes and character. These findings align with Self-Determination Theory, which asserts that intrinsic motivation grows when students feel autonomous, competent, and connected to their learning environment (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, a humanistic approach to differentiated learning can foster sustainable learning motivation.

Despite its great potential, implementing differentiated learning in elementary schools faces several challenges. Marzoan (2023) stated that many teachers do not fully understand the concept and strategies of differentiation, resulting in a tendency toward uniformity in their practices. Furthermore, administrative burdens and time constraints often hinder the design of student-centered learning. Yati et al. (2023) also found that many teachers struggled to accurately map students' learning modalities. This indicates a gap between the ideal concept and actual practice. Consequently, the humanistic principles of differentiated learning have not been fully internalized in elementary school pedagogical practices.

This problem is exacerbated by the dominance of conventional learning paradigms that are still oriented towards cognitive outcomes and uniformity. Reis et al. (2011) warned that a one-size-fits-all approach is no longer adequate for addressing student diversity. Unfortunately, many elementary schools still implement teaching patterns that place the teacher as the primary source of information, resulting in students' passive attitudes. This pattern contradicts the principles of humanism, which emphasizes freedom of learning and active student participation. Therefore, a conceptual framework is needed that integrates humanism with differentiated learning to make educational practices in elementary schools more responsive to students' needs.

Previous studies have separately discussed differentiated learning and humanistic theory. Smale Jacobse et al. (2019) conducted a systematic review of differentiated learning at the secondary school level but did not address the philosophical aspects of humanism. Similarly, studies on humanistic theory often focus on the conceptual level without examining its application to differentiated learning in elementary schools (Syarifuddin, 2022). The results of a study by Nugroho and Darmawan (2024) indicate that studies systematically integrating these two perspectives at the elementary education level are still limited. This creates an interesting research gap that can be filled through a systematic literature review approach.

Furthermore, most previous research tends to focus on the technical effectiveness of differentiated learning without delving deeply into its philosophical underpinnings. However, the success of differentiated learning is determined not only by teaching techniques but also by the underlying educational paradigms. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2023) emphasize that differentiation is a way of thinking about teaching and learning, not simply an instructional prescription. Therefore, understanding humanistic foundations will enrich the practice of differentiated learning, making it more meaningful for students. Systematic studies examining the relationship between these two concepts are urgently needed to strengthen the theoretical and practical foundations of elementary education in Japan.

Based on these problems and gaps, this study aims to analyze the humanist perspective on differentiated learning in elementary schools through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The SLR approach was chosen because it allows for the transparent and structured identification, selection, and synthesis of literature (Page et al., 2021). Through this review, it is hoped that a conceptual framework can be formulated that integrates humanistic values with differentiated learning practices. The research findings are also expected to serve as guidelines for teachers and stakeholders in designing more meaningful, contextual, and student-centered learning experiences. Thus, this study is expected to bridge the gap between humanistic theory and differentiated learning practices in elementary schools.¹

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. This qualitative approach was chosen because it provides an in-depth understanding of phenomena through literature-based data interpretation and emphasizes meaning, context, and processes (Yadav, 2022). The SLR method is a systematic approach used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize research results in a transparent and structured manner, resulting in evidence-based findings.

Methodologically, this research adheres to the SLR stages proposed by Kitchenham and Charters (2007), which include planning, conducting, and reporting the review. Furthermore, the research reporting process adhered to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which emphasize transparency in the identification, selection, and synthesis of literature (Page et al., 2021). A systematic literature search was conducted through scientific databases such as Google Scholar, SINTA, and reputable international journals with publication years ranging from 2010 to 2025 to ensure data accuracy. The search strategy utilized relevant keywords such as differentiated learning, humanistic theory, elementary school, differentiated instruction, and humanism in education.

Based on the initial search results, 84 articles were retrieved. A selection process was then carried out based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, namely: (1) articles relevant to the research topic; (2) focused on humanistic theory and differentiated learning; (3) research objects at the elementary school level or can be transposed to the elementary school level; (4) articles have gone through a peer review process; and (5) published between 2010 and 2025 for main articles or classic fundamental works for basic theory articles. The selection process yielded 16 articles for further analysis. This literature selection process follows the PRISMA 2020 flow which consists of four stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion to ensure the transparency and validity of the research.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes in qualitative data, as described by Braun and Clarke (2021). This technique involves six stages: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The data obtained were then grouped based on key themes, such as the philosophical foundations of humanism, dimensions of differentiated learning, the integration of humanism and differentiation, and their impact on student development. The final stage of the research was to synthesize all findings to produce comprehensive conclusions regarding the integration of a humanist perspective into differentiated learning in elementary schools. The results of the analysis are presented descriptively to provide a systematic and in-depth understanding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach were obtained through an identification process of 84 articles from the Google Scholar database, SINTA, and international journals from 2010 to 2025. After going through a selection stage based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, 16 relevant articles were obtained for further analysis using thematic analysis techniques. This process resulted in several main themes related to the contribution of the humanist perspective to the implementation of differentiated learning in elementary education.

Based on a systematic selection process using the PRISMA protocol, this study identified 16 articles that met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The extracted data included the year of publication, research focus, humanistic approach used, key findings, limitations, and synthesis. A summary of the articles analyzed is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Selected Articles

No	Researcher & Year	Research Title	Research Focus	Humanistic Approach	Key Findings	Syntheses
1	Widyawati et al., 2024	Integration of Humanistic Learning Theory in Differentiated Learning in Elementary Schools	Humanistic integration and differentiation	Integrative humanistic	Learning is more meaningful and student-centered	Need teacher assistance
2	Prasetyo & Suciptaningsih, 2022	Application of Humanistic Learning Theory in Differentiated Learning in Elementary Schools	Humanistic theory in elementary school	Rogers	Students are more active and motivated	Need for contextual learning design
3	Nugroho & Darmawan, 2024	Implementation of Differentiated Learning in a Humanistic Perspective in Elementary Schools	Humanistic literature studies	Maslow & Rogers	Fulfilling students' needs improves learning outcomes	Empirical studies are needed
4	Marzoan, 2023	Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Elementary Schools	Implementation of differentiation	Tomlinson humanist	Effective differentiation of content, process, product	Teachers need to be prepared
5	Pramudianti et al., 2023	Effectiveness of Implementing Differentiated PPKn Learning in Elementary Schools	PPKn Differentiation	Contextual humanism	Learning outcomes and character improve	Need for value integration
6	Yati et al., 2023	Implementation of Differentiated Learning Based on Learning Modalities in Elementary Schools	Student learning modalities	Person-centered	Effective learning style accommodation	Need diagnostic assessment
7	Azmy & Fanny, 2023	Differentiated Learning in the	Differentiation of	Applied humanistic	Supporting	Teacher workload

No	Researcher & Year	Research Title	Research Focus	Humanistic Approach	Key Findings	Syntheses
		Independent Curriculum in Elementary Schools	Independent Curriculum		students' freedom to learn	d challenges
8	Elviya & Sukartiningsih, 2023	Differentiated Learning in Indonesian Language for Grade IV	Differentiation of subjects	Contextual humanism	Improving literacy skills	Need variety of sources
9	Dista et al., 2024	The Influence of Differentiated Learning in Elementary Schools	The influence of differentiation	Student-centered	Positive influence on learning outcomes	Need replication
10	Rigianti, 2023	The Concept of Differentiation as a Solution to Learning Diversity in Elementary Schools	Basic concepts of differentiation	Philosophical humanism	Differentiation responds to student diversity	Need a practical model
11	Smale Jacobse et al., 2019	Differentiated Instruction in Secondary Education: Systematic Review	SLR differentiation	International humanistic	Differentiation is effective if it is consistent	Teacher training is needed
12	Reis et al., 2011	Effects of Differentiated Instruction on Reading Achievement in Five Elementary Schools	The impact of reading differentiation	Tomlinsonian humanistic	Significant improvement in reading achievement	Need long duration
13	Valiandes, 2015	Impact of Differentiated Instruction on Literacy in Mixed Ability Classrooms	The impact of literacy differentiation	Inclusive humanistic	Reducing the learning gap	Need system support
14	Roy et al., 2013	Validation of a Differentiated Instruction Scale	Differentiation measurement	Humanistic psychometrics	Valid scale for differentiation	Contextual adaptation

No	Researcher & Year	Research Title	Research Focus	Humanistic Approach	Key Findings	Syntheses
15	Pasaribu, 2024	The Influence of Differentiated Learning in Dance Arts	Art differentiation	Humanistic expressiveness	Increase motivation and engagement	Need to expand the context
16	Gheysens et al., 2023	Differentiated Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms	Inclusive differentiation	Ethical humanism	Supporting effective inclusive classrooms	Need for school leadership

Based on the synthesis of 16 analyzed studies, it can be seen that studies of differentiated learning in elementary schools show a strong tendency to strengthen student-centered approaches, recognize individual differences, and address students' psychological needs. Widyawati et al. (2024) and Nugroho and Darmawan (2024) confirm that integrating humanistic theory into differentiated learning significantly contributes to creating meaningful learning. In this approach, students are viewed as active subjects with unique developmental potential. However, several studies have indicated that this approach still requires the support of teacher competence and system readiness for optimal implementation.

Furthermore, there is a strong tendency to use a three-dimensional differentiation approach, as proposed by Tomlinson: content, process and product. This is evident in the research of Marzoan (2023), Pramudianti et al. (2023), and Elviya and Sukartiningih (2023). This approach is philosophically aligned with the principles of humanism because it provides space for students to learn according to their readiness, interests and learning profiles. These findings indicate that differentiated learning is no longer understood simply as an instructional strategy but as a pedagogical paradigm rooted in humanistic values. However, most research in this category still highlights practical limitations such as time, teacher workload, and limited learning resources.

From a psychological perspective, research by Yati et al. (2023) and Pasaribu (2024) emphasizes the importance of recognizing students' modalities and interests as the basis for learning planning. This approach demonstrates that meeting students' psychological needs is a crucial prerequisite for the success of differentiated learning. This aligns with Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which places a sense of security and self-esteem as prerequisites for self-actualization. International research, such as that of Reis et al. (2011) and Valiandes (2015), reinforces the argument that consistent differentiated learning can improve literacy achievement and bridge student learning gaps. These findings confirm that the humanistic approach is not merely normative but also has a tangible impact on students learning outcomes.

Various studies have also indicated a gap between concept and implementation. Many studies, including those by Smale Jacobse et al. (2019) and Gheysens et al. (2023), highlight that although the concept of differentiated learning is well-established, there are still limitations in terms of teacher training, school leadership support, and flexible curriculum policies. This indicates that differentiated learning requires the support of a comprehensive educational ecosystem for sustainable implementation. Thus, the

analysis shows that the integration of a humanist perspective into differentiated learning is not a single concept but rather a synthesis of various complementary philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical aspects. Furthermore, the role of a humanist perspective in differentiated learning is as follows

Humanism as a Philosophical Foundation for Differentiated Learning

Based on the study's findings, humanism occupies a crucial position as a philosophical foundation for differentiated learning in elementary schools. Prasetyo and Suciptaningsih (2022) showed that the application of humanistic learning theory encourages learning that places students as the primary subjects. From a humanistic perspective, students are not merely objects of instruction but individuals with the potential, feelings, and freedom to learn. This finding is supported by Widyawati et al. (2024), who asserted that differentiated learning with a humanistic foundation can create a safe and enjoyable learning environment. This demonstrates that humanistic values provide a solid philosophical framework for differentiated learning.

Furthermore, a humanist perspective provides an ethical justification for differentiated learning because it recognizes the uniqueness and dignity of each student. Maslow (1970) stated that humans have a hierarchical set of needs that must be met before they can achieve self-actualization. In the context of elementary education, this means that students' needs for safety, acceptance, and self-esteem must be met before they can learn optimally. Rogers (1969) added that meaningful learning occurs when students feel accepted and understood by their instructors. Therefore, differentiated learning based on humanism considers not only the cognitive aspects but also the affective and social aspects of the students.

The study also shows harmony between humanistic values and the basic principles of differentiated learning proposed by Tomlinson (2017). Tomlinson stated that differentiated learning is rooted in the belief that students learn differently therefore, teaching must be tailored to their needs. This belief reflects a humanist perspective that places individual uniqueness as a primary principle. Thus, humanism and differentiated learning are not two separate entities but rather a mutually reinforcing philosophical and practical unity. This is in line with Nugroho and Darmawan (2024) who concluded that a humanistic perspective is the spirit of differentiated learning in elementary schools.

Integration of Humanism in Differentiation of Content, Process, and Product

In addition to serving as a philosophical foundation, the humanist perspective also plays a role in strengthening the three dimensions of differentiated learning: content, process, and product. In the content dimension, humanistic principles encourage teachers to select learning materials relevant to students' interests and experiences. Elviya and Sukartiningsih (2023) found that content differentiation in Indonesian language learning can increase student engagement because the material is structured according to students' backgrounds and interests. This aligns with Rogers' (1969) view, which emphasizes that meaningful learning occurs when the subject matter relates to students' lives and goals.

In the process dimension, humanistic principles encourage the creation of diverse learning strategies that accommodate students' learning styles. Yati et al. (2023) demonstrated that differentiated learning that considers students' learning modalities, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic, significantly improves student understanding. This approach aligns with the humanistic principle that each individual has a unique way of understanding the world. Pasaribu (2024) also emphasized that process differentiation in dance learning enriches students' aesthetic experiences because each

child is given space to express themselves. Thus, process differentiation is not only about the method but also about recognizing the diversity of students' learning styles.

In the product dimension, humanistic principles encourage students to demonstrate their understanding in ways that align with their strengths and interests. This means that students can present learning outcomes in various formats, such as writing, images, videos, or oral presentations. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2023) emphasize that product differentiation provides space for students to demonstrate their competencies without being tied to a specific assessment format. This is particularly important in the elementary school context, as students at this stage are in the process of discovering their identities and interests. With humanistic product differentiation, assessment becomes a tool to support student development rather than simply measuring a single achievement.

Fulfillment of Students' Psychological Needs and Self-Actualization

The study also showed that humanism-based differentiated learning is effective in meeting students' psychological needs. Pramudianti et al. (2023) found that students studying in differentiated classes showed increased self-confidence and motivation to learn. This is relevant to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, which places self-esteem as a crucial foundation for self-actualization. In this context, differentiated learning serves as a means to meet the psychological needs of elementary school students. Students who feel valued and understood are better prepared to learn and explore their potential.

Furthermore, Rogers' (1969) principle of freedom to learn is highly relevant to the practice of differentiated learning. This freedom does not mean that students learn without direction rather, they are given the autonomy to make choices in the learning process. Marzoan (2023) found that differentiated learning, which provides a choice of tasks and learning strategies, can increase students' sense of responsibility. This approach is also consistent with the Self-Determination Theory, which states that autonomy is a basic psychological need that fosters intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, humanistic differentiated learning can sustainably strengthen students' learning motivation.

Furthermore, humanistic-based differentiated learning contributes to students' social and emotional development. Gheysens et al. (2023) explain that classrooms that implement differentiation can create an inclusive climate where students learn to appreciate differences. Diverse learning experiences in the classroom make students more empathetic and collaborative. Rogers (1969) stated that empathy is an essential condition for effective learning. Therefore, humanistic differentiated learning impacts not only cognitive outcomes but also the holistic development of students' character. This demonstrates the transformative power of this approach in the field of elementary education.

The Role of Teachers as Humanist Facilitators

One important finding of this study is that the success of humanistic differentiated learning depends heavily on the teacher's role as a facilitator. Rogers (1969) stated that effective teachers possess three key qualities: congruence (authenticity), unconditional positive regard, and empathy. These three qualities are prerequisites for creating humanistic pedagogical relationships. Widyawati et al. (2024) found that teachers who display these three qualities can facilitate differentiated learning more effectively. Thus, teachers' personal qualities are key elements in the success of differentiated learning in elementary schools.

Furthermore, the teacher's role as a facilitator requires adequate pedagogical competence to map student needs. Roy et al. (2013) developed the Differentiated Instruction Scale, which explains that teachers must be able to accurately identify students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This presents a particular challenge for elementary school teachers dealing with highly diverse student population s. Marzoan (2023) stated that many teachers still struggle to conduct diagnostic assessments that form the basis for differentiation planning. Therefore, training and mentoring are needed so that teachers have both technical skills and a humanistic orientation in managing learning processes. Without these competencies, the principles of humanism in differentiated learning are difficult to implement consistently.

In addition to technical competencies, teachers need to develop pedagogical reflection oriented toward student growth. Tomlinson and Imbeau (2023) state that differentiation is a way of thinking that prioritizes student growth. Pedagogical reflection enables teachers to continuously improve their teaching practices based on student responses and needs. From a humanistic perspective, teachers are not merely instructors but also learning partners who grow with their students. Pasaribu (2024) points out that teachers who adopt a reflective and humanistic orientation can create a more dynamic and student-centered learning climate. Thus, the teacher's role as a humanistic facilitator is central to the success of differentiated learning in elementary schools.

Challenges and Shifts Towards a Differential Humanistic Approach

Despite its great potential, integrating a humanist perspective into differentiated learning in elementary schools faces several challenges. Smale Jacobse et al. (2019) stated that one of the main obstacles is teachers' limited time and resources. Furthermore, administrative burdens and academic demands often hinder the implementation of flexible and humanistic approaches. Marzoan (2023) added that many elementary schools lack a collaborative culture that supports differentiated learning practices. Consequently, learning practices tend to revert to conventional, uniform patterns. These challenges demonstrate that paradigmatic transformations require the support of a comprehensive educational ecosystem.

Another challenge identified in this study is teachers' limited understanding of the concept of humanism. Syarifuddin (2022) stated that many teachers understand humanism solely as a child-friendly approach, without delving into its philosophical and psychological aspects. However, humanism has a rich theoretical framework and can serve as a basis for learning innovation. Without a comprehensive understanding, the integration of humanism into differentiated learning tends to be shallow and inconsistent. Therefore, professional development for teachers is needed that focuses not only on techniques but also on a philosophical understanding of education. This development is a prerequisite for realizing truly humanistic differentiated learning practices.

Another important finding of this study is the paradigm shift from uniform learning to differentiated humanistic learning. This shift is supported by the introduction of the Independent Curriculum in Indonesia, which provides teachers with the freedom to design context-specific learning (Azmy & Fanny, 2023). Reis et al. (2011) emphasized that a consistent differentiation approach can significantly improve student academic achievement. Valiandes' (2015) study supports this finding by demonstrating that differentiation can bridge literacy gaps in heterogeneous classrooms. Thus, humanistic-based differentiated learning is not merely a trend but a strategic response to the complexities of basic education in the contemporary era.

Based on the synthesis of all the articles analyzed, it was found that the successful integration of a humanist perspective in differentiated learning is influenced by several main factors, namely: teacher competence in understanding the philosophy and techniques of differentiation, the availability of accurate diagnostic assessments, flexible school leadership support, collaboration between teachers, and a supportive family environment. These findings indicate that differentiated humanistic education depends not only on a noble philosophy, but also on the readiness of the education system as a whole. Without the support of a complete ecosystem, the principle of humanism in differentiated learning risks becoming a mere formality. Conversely, with the support of a strong ecosystem, a humanist perspective can be a catalyst for a more meaningful and equitable transformation of basic education. This process resulted in several main themes related to the contribution of a humanist perspective to the implementation of differentiated learning in elementary schools.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the fundamental problem in implementing differentiated learning in elementary schools lies not in a lack of concepts but rather in the epistemological fragmentation between humanistic philosophical foundations and everyday pedagogical practices. Many differentiated learning practices remain confined to the technical level of instruction, lacking comprehensive philosophical understanding. This finding aligns with the findings of Smale Jacobse et al. (2019) who states that differentiation is often applied mechanistically without considering the humanistic dimension. Consequently, differentiated learning, which should embrace student uniqueness, risks becoming a technical routine devoid of meaning.

Ontologically, the humanist perspective provides a strong foundation for differentiated learning by recognizing the uniqueness and dignity of each student. Maslow (1970) states that every individual has the drive to actualize themselves, while Rogers (1969) added that every human being has an inherent capacity to learn. These two propositions are highly relevant to the basic assumption of differentiated learning, namely that every student has the potential to develop according to their uniqueness. Thus, differentiated learning is essentially a practical manifestation of the humanistic paradigm in basic education. This serves as an important foundation for guiding practice in the field to remain oriented toward humanistic values.

The findings of this study also confirm that differentiated learning cannot be understood through a purely technical approach but rather requires a comprehensive philosophical framework. This indicates the need for a paradigm shift from an instrumental approach to a substantive approach that integrates philosophy, psychology and pedagogy. Nugroho and Darmawan (2024) emphasize that integrating a humanistic perspective can provide deeper meaning to differentiation practices. Within a humanistic framework, teachers not only implement differentiation techniques but also understand their importance and impact on student development. This understanding forms the foundation for sustainable and reflective practices.

In this context, humanism makes a crucial contribution to differentiated learning. Humanism emphasizes the internalization of the values of recognition, empathy, and freedom as the foundation of educational interactions. However, the humanistic approach tends to produce idealized practices if not balanced with concrete learning strategies (Prasetyo & Suciptionsih, 2022). As a result, a gap can arise between humanistic values and their implementation in the classroom setting. Therefore, integrating humanism with systematic differentiation strategies is key to bridging

philosophical and pedagogical practices. This integration must be reciprocal to produce meaningful learning outcomes.

Next, the dimensions of differentiation proposed by Tomlinson (2017) become a practical instrument that can translate humanistic values into learning activities. Content differentiation allows students to learn material relevant to their interests, process differentiation provides space for diverse learning styles, and product differentiation provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their unique competencies. Together, these three dimensions serve as channels for the realization of humanistic values in learning. Without systematic differentiation, humanistic values risk becoming mere rhetoric devoid of concrete practice. Conversely, without a humanistic foundation, differentiation tends to become a technical routine that loses its pedagogical meaning.

However, the psychological development of elementary school students requires special attention to affective and social aspects. At this age, students are in the process of forming their identity, self-confidence, and social skills. Humanistic differentiated learning provides space for the development of these aspects by addressing students' psychological needs holistically (Pramudianti et al., 2023). Ryan and Deci (2020) state that the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are basic psychological needs that must be met to foster intrinsic motivation. Humanistic differentiated learning appropriately addresses these three needs, thus supporting students' holistic development.

The results of the SLR-based study also show that the systematic integration of humanism and differentiation has a positive impact on the quality of learning, although there are still limitations in its field (Widyawati et al., 2024). This indicates a gap between theory and practice that needs to be bridged through teacher training, the provision of varied learning resources, and support for flexible curriculum policies. Reis et al. (2011) strengthened these findings by showing that consistent differentiation resulted in significant improvements in student learning outcomes. Meanwhile, Valiandes (2015) showed that differentiation can reduce literacy gaps among heterogeneous students. These findings confirm that differentiated learning based on humanism has a real and measurable impact.

Thus, this discussion confirms that the success of differentiated learning is greatly influenced by the integration of humanistic foundations and differentiated practices in the classroom. Without such integration, differentiated learning risks losing its essence, namely the recognition of the uniqueness and dignity of each student. Conversely, through a systematic, integrative approach, differentiated learning can be applied, contextualized, and made meaningful for elementary school students. This approach also aligns with the vision of the Independent Curriculum, which emphasizes freedom of learning, the Pancasila student profile, and holistic character development. Therefore, a humanistic perspective on differentiated learning is a strategic orientation for transforming elementary education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, it can be concluded that differentiated learning in elementary schools cannot be separated from the humanist perspective, which serves as a fundamental philosophical foundation for the learning process. The study results show that humanism provides a strong philosophical framework through

the recognition of the uniqueness of each student, freedom to learn, and fulfillment of psychological needs. The humanistic approach pioneered by Maslow and Rogers aligns with the principles of differentiated learning developed by Tomlinson. The integration of the two results in more meaningful, contextual, and student-centered learning practices. Such learning can holistically support the formation of character, motivation, and academic achievement.

This research also confirms that the main problem in differentiated learning lies not in the lack of a concept but rather in the gap between the humanistic philosophical foundation and practice in the field. The implementation of differentiated learning still tends to be technical and has not fully addressed the substantive aspect of recognizing student uniqueness. Therefore, the main contribution of this research is to provide a comprehensive synthesis of the importance of an integrative approach between humanism and differentiation as a solution to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, this study provides practical implications for teachers and policymakers in designing learning that is oriented not only toward cognitive outcomes but also toward the holistic development of students.

However, this study had several limitations. First, the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was employed, resulting in conceptual findings that are not yet supported by direct empirical data from the field. Second, the limited number and variety of articles analyzed could potentially impact the breadth and generalizability of the research results. Third, this study did not specifically examine practical implementation models that teachers could directly apply in the classroom. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop empirical studies and innovative learning models that can integrate a humanist perspective with differentiated learning strategies in a more applicable manner for elementary schools.

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