

**CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES WITH  
DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Differentiated learning in social studies maximizes the creative attitude of students according to learning needs. The objectives of this article are 1) to recognize the creative thinking ability of students, 2) to explore the factors that support and inhibit students' creative thinking in social studies, 3) to measure the impact of differentiated learning on social studies learning. Literature research with systematic literature review (SLR) method has five steps, namely: formulating the problem, searching for literature (identification), selecting the results of literature search with quality assessment (filtering and feasibility), and analyzing the results of literature articles. pass quality assessment, reach research conclusions. The literature used in this article is articles published from 2015 to 2023 related to differentiation, social studies learning and creative thinking skills. The results obtained in this study are: (1) the creative thinking ability of students is still in the low category, (2) supporting and inhibiting factors in social studies subjects related to the creative thinking ability of students (3) Differentiated learning in social studies subjects has an impact on the creative thinking ability of students. This research focuses on differentiated learning impact on creative thinking skills.*

**Keywords:** *Differentiated learning, creative thinking, social studies, SLR*

## INTRODUCTION

Competition in the 21st century depends on the quality of education of a country's population (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009), in line with the policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology in Indonesia, which launched the Merdeka Curriculum as a solution to developing creativity for students (Hasmiati, et al Muliardi., 2024; , 2023) . By having knowledge and skills in dealing with change, learners are able to adjust to new situations (Ongardwanich et al., 2015) . Education today requires us to have a number of skills known as the 4Cs, namely Communication, Creativity, Critical thinking and Collaboration (Erdoğan, 2019; Kisno et al., 2022) . Responding to the needs and skills of the 21st century also requires teachers to design appropriate learning not only as facilitators in learning (Yohanes Vianey Sayangan & Sayangan, 2018) . Teachers also need to ensure the success or failure of a lesson by considering the thinking ability of students so that it is in line with creating learning that is fun and attracts the attention of students (Rismawati et al., 2023) . In addition, creative thinking skills are one of the important keys in everyday life to implement education in the 21st century (Biazus & Mahtari, 2022; Hariadi et al., 2019; Ritter & Mostert, 2017).

In the world of education, the ability to think creatively is an important point to be developed, so that it helps students in carrying out learning activities to achieve the expected learning objectives (Cahyaningsih et al., 2023) . This development can be seen from the quality of the learning process, namely how the teacher's efforts activate students in learning through appropriate learning strategies (Sayani, 2015) . Learning strategies act as cognitive operators who are directly involved in completing student learning tasks (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020) .

Creative thinking is a set of multidimensional components that lead individuals or groups to the generation of new ideas that have value related to the activities of observing and analyzing a number of existing problems in the form of planning and ideas to be determined Solutions in the learning process (Corazza, 2016; Dong et al., 2017; S. C. W. Sari et al., 2020) . Social studies curriculum that is structured with a constructivist approach is one of the important programs that can develop students' creative thinking skills (Ozalp &

Akpinar, 2021) . Students' creative thinking skills are a complex part of educational learning because they have several indicators: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration (Krisdiana et al., 2020) . Critical thinking skills that dominantly appear in students are in the concept of fluency due to the tendency of students to respond to a discussion (Dani Wardani & Wardani, 2020) .

In the Merdeka Curriculum, prioritizing the concept of "Merdeka Belajar" for students designed in line with Ki Hajar Dewantara's educational philosophy (Jasiah et al., 2023) . Mapping learning needs of learners, requires learning with diverse learning activities and arranged logically, it is necessary learner-centered learning so that it is hoped that learning outcomes and learner activity will increase so that the learning objectives can be achieved optimally. Tomlinson and Eidson (in Bayumi, 2021) explain that differentiated learning is proactive learning that involves students in the process by combining various readiness learning participants students, interests and talents learning participants students. (the notion of differentiation is further deepened, plus aspects in differentiation that are more conducive to displaying creative thinking). According to (Puspitasari, 2020) differentiation can be a solution to solve problems about the diversity of students' abilities when learning in one class, namely a pleasant learning atmosphere, speech practice, collaborative learning and selection of materials and learning processes. Associated with creative thinking.

By learning social science, learners can develop creative activities that involve their imagination, discovery, curiosity and skills to make predictions and guesses (Prihatin, 2021) . The main purpose of social studies is to develop the potential of students to be sensitive to social problems and skillfully overcome any problems that occur either to him or the community (Indraswati et al., 2020) . In addition, social studies education is also based on values (Aslamiah et al., 2021) . Social Sciences (IPS) is a simplification of the disciplines of social sciences and humanities, which are basic human activities organized and presented scientifically for educational purposes (Ariyani & Wahyudi, 2023) . Social studies learning is able to display creative thinking skills with the support of the emergence of meaningful learning followed by a fun learning model, so as to increase the ability and potential of students by utilizing the way students think (I Kadek Rusadi Putra et al., 2019) . Learners

who are in the upper academic achievement group, have a relationship with higher creative thinking skills (Jumanto & Adi, 2023) .

However, in reality, creative thinking skills have not been optimally developed (Leasa et al., 2021; Wulandari et al., 2019) . The low creative thinking power of students is evidenced by the tendency of students to find it difficult to come up with diverse solutions in addressing a problem (Damaiyanti et al., 2023; M. Z. Sari & Hermawati, 2020) . The reality in the field shows that the implementation of learning still focuses on memorization so that the lecture method is more dominant (Herijanto, 2012; Suci et al., 2023) . The school environment is still often focused on curriculum and exams or cognitive tests that indirectly hinder the development of students' creative thinking skills (Adisel et al., 2022) .

Previous research revealed that differentiated learning is able to develop students' creative thinking skills by paying attention to learning readiness, learning profiles, students' interests and talents combined with strategies that are suitable to facilitate students in the learning process (R. Astria & Anggun Badu Kusuma, 2023) . Research conducted by Nindi Sri Rahayu & Muhamad Sofian Hadi, (2023) shows the relationship between the word "differentiated" with creative thinking in the learning process increases the harmonization of students' creative thinking abilities. Furthermore, the differentiated learning model has a significant effect in improving students' creative thinking skills (Ayu Sri Wahyuni et al., 2023) . Creative thinking skills can also provide stimulation to learners to be able to work together and complete the project given in the problem-based learning model (Prihatin, 2021) . Creative thinking skills can also be influenced by learning design outside the classroom in social studies learning in elementary schools (Maharani et al., 2022) .

So far, social studies subjects have not implemented differentiated learning, but actually social studies with differentiation that develops creative thinking skills. Based on a search conducted on Google Scholar, several studies have been conducted to determine the effect of differentiated learning on creative thinking. However, not many of these studies focus on innovative thinking in elementary schools. In addition, no one has thoroughly examined the effect of differentiated learning on creative thinking in elementary schools. What factors encourage creative thinking after the implementation of differentiated learning

models, and what are the obstacles to implementing differentiated learning in elementary schools? To answer these questions, an in-depth literature review is required. For this reason, the author conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) to find out the application of differentiated learning to the creative thinking skills of elementary school students.

Based on the above review, the purpose of this study is to determine the aspects that bring out creative thinking skills in students, especially in learning Social Science using differentiated learning for elementary school students, especially in implementing the Merdeka curriculum.

## **METHOD**

### **Study Design**

This research was conducted as a systematic review of the literature based on the original guidelines proposed by Kitchenham and Charters (2007), which are the most widely accepted guidelines in the field of software engineering (Calderón & Ruiz, 2015). The Systematic Literature Review research process, following the PRISMA framework, includes various important phases, including initial identification, careful screening, thorough feasibility assessment, and ultimately determining the exact number of articles for comprehensive review and analysis (Haddaway et al., 2018). This research review involved the analysis of various sources and references related to the relationship of differentiated learning in social studies with students' creative thinking skills.

The analysis process in this study is realized in the first by identifying the research objectives, namely to see whether there is an effect of differentiated learning in social studies on students' creative thinking skills. Second, looking for sources that match the theme or title or research variables from journals and other reliable sources. Third, the process of selecting sources that can be summarized with the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected sources are required to be related to the variables determined in this study. Fourth, review and analyze the sources by listing the main information in tabular form in the form of methods, results or findings, and conclusions from previous research. Fifth, compile the article by presenting the results of the evaluation of various sources of previous research.

### **Population, Samples, and Sampling**

Based on the findings of this study, indicators of differentiated learning were used. The data contained in this SLR will be evaluated based on the following quality assessment criteria: (1) from accredited Sinta professional journals; (2) from journal articles published between 2015 and 2024; (3) from journal articles that discuss differentiation; and (4) unique and prominent during differentiation. The researcher was able to collect articles from Publish or Perish (PoP) Google Scholar journals with the help of Google Scholar. Differentiation learning, creative thinking, and social science are the three most important aspects of this research in general. In view of this, SLR-Forschung uses acceptance and rejection criteria.

#### **Description of Inclusion Criteria**

1.	Journal papers published during the last ten (10) years are the data source. 2015-2024
2.	The information was obtained from the accredited journal Sinta.
3.	The information provides an explanation of the signs of differentiated learning, creative thinking and social studies.

#### **Description of Exclusion Criteria**

1.	In the selection of articles, the title of the article must contain learning keywords differentiation is not just learning or differentiation alone.
2.	There is more to differentiation than just learning or differentiation itself. During the selection process, scholarly articles that provided research findings were sought. This process requires the removal of books, book collections, short literature reviews, and literature reviews and reviews

### **Procedure**

#### **The first stage is to hold the formulation of the problem**

Problem formulation is the first step of the process that occurs before the review of the research object. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of diversified learning on the creative thinking of students from different backgrounds. During this investigation, the following questions will be addressed as topics of discussion:

RQ 1: What impact does the differentiated approach in social studies courses have on the creative thinking of elementary school students?

RQ 2: What factors contribute to the improvement of students' creative thinking after the implementation of differentiated learning?

RQ3 :When introducing varied approaches to social studies in primary schools, what are the main challenges that prevent students from engaging in creative thinking?

**The second stage is the literature search (identification) stage.**

The data used in this research is secondary data, meaning that it is not collected from direct experience but from research that has been done before. This research utilizes Google Scholar (website address <https://scholar.google.com/>) and publish or pheris to conduct a search for existing literature. When looking for information or data sources relevant to the effect of differential learning on students' creative thinking, the main source used is publications or pheris.

Using the keywords "differentiated learning on creative thinking in social studies and different subjects", the search results yielded 260 articles. These results were obtained by using publish or pheris software to conduct the search.

**The third stage involves selecting literature search results that are suitable for the quality assessment being conducted (screening and eligibility).**

In the next step it is necessary to determine whether the articles searched are suitable for the research needs. Based on the following criteria, this research was conducted:

- a. The data are articles published between 2015 and 2024 (the last ten years).
- b. Data utilized is published in articles that discuss the impact of differentiated learning on the creative thinking of students attending primary schools or Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Indonesia.

**The fourth stage includes analyzing the literature results of articles that pass the quality assessment.**

The next step in the SLR technique is the review of literature results from publications that have passed the Quality Assessment. The following criteria will be used to evaluate product quality at this stage:

QA1: Does the journal paper discuss the relationship between the differentiation approach and students' creative thinking, or does it explain its effect on students' creative thinking?

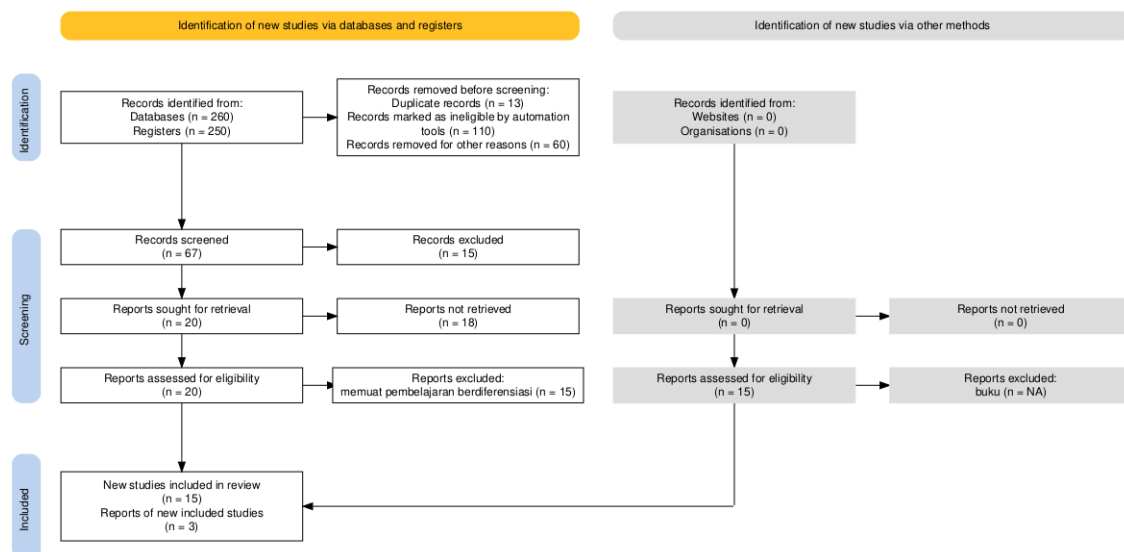
QA2: Does the journal paper contain material related to the factors that contribute to improving students' creative thinking through the implementation of differentiated learning?

QA3: Does this paper address any challenges that may arise when trying to implement differentiated learning programs in primary schools.

**The fifth stage includes Drawing Research Conclusions.**

Furthermore, conclusions are drawn from the data that has been collected, and the findings are in accordance with the research questions or problem statements.

**Data Analysis**



**Figure 1. Prism groove**

The study selection process used in this study followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow. At the **identification** stage, a total of 510 articles were found, consisting of 260 articles from the database and 250 articles from the register. Prior to the screening process, 13 duplicate articles, 110 articles deemed irrelevant through automation tools, and 60 articles were removed for other reasons, leaving 67 articles for further screening. At the **screening** stage, of the 67 articles screened, 15 articles were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria, leaving 20 reports that were requested for further review. However, of the 20 reports, 18 were inaccessible, so only 2 reports could proceed to the next stage.

At the **eligibility** stage, the 20 retrieved reports were further evaluated to assess their suitability to the inclusion criteria. As a result, 15 reports were excluded due to a focus on "differentiated learning," which was not relevant to the objectives of this review. At the final **inclusion** stage, 15 studies were eligible for inclusion in the review, plus 3 new studies discovered during the review process, bringing the total number of studies analyzed in this study to 18.

## RESULTS

Based on 18 previous studies that researchers have described in the form of table 1, researchers get comprehensive data in analyzing creative thinking skills with differentiated learning in social studies subjects.

**Table 1. Summary of Results of Articles used**

No.	Author	Paper Title	Year
1	FN Sarie	Implementation of differentiated learning with a problem-based learning model for grade VI elementary school students	2022
2	Y Sulistyosari, HM Karwur...	Implementation of differentiated social studies learning in the learning independence curriculum	2022

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No.	Author	Paper Title	Year
3	DA Rukmi, BHC Khosiyono	Improving creativity and confidence through differentiated learning in elementary social studies lessons	2023
4	DA Rukmi, T Mutiah	Implementation of Differentiated Learning in the Perspective of Humanistic Learning Theory	2023
5	DN Jumiarti	Improving 21st Century Skills in Social Studies through Differentiated Learning	2023
6	FD Nurhabiba, M Misdalina	Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) in Differentiated Learning SD 19 Palembang	2023
7	PA Sanjaya, IM Pageh...	E-Module Book Creator Teaching Materials for Differentiated Social Studies Learning in Driver Schools	2023
8	R Ismail, YL Lasari	Analysis of Differentiated Learning Approaches on IPAS Materials at SDN 09 Baringin	2023
9	R Nuriyani, SA Waluyati...	Application of Differentiated Learning in Improving Students' Learning Activeness and Creativity	2023
10	R Widyawati, P Rachmadyanti	Analysis of the Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Social Studies at Elementary School	2023
11	S Ndiung, M Jediut, F Nendi	The Need for Differentiated Teaching Modules for IPAS Learning in Elementary Schools	2023
12	Y Fitri, Y Erita	Efforts to Improve Student Learning Outcomes of IPAS by Using the Discovery Learning Model Based on Differentiated Learning in Class IV SDN 11 Gadut	2023
13	AR Kusumaningpuri	Implementation of Differentiated Learning in IPAS Phase B Class IV Elementary School	2024
14	BP Arzfi, J Jamna	Implementation of Humanistic Learning Theory in IPAS Differentiated Learning in Elementary School	2024

No.	Author	Paper Title	Year
15	E Fitriana, AF Nisa, BH Cahyani	Analysis of the Application of Differentiated Learning with Problem Based Learning Model on Ipas Material in Elementary School	2024
16	HA Prasetyo	Differentiated Learning Analysis for Grade 5 Elementary School Students Social Studies Theme "Regional Products of Excellence"	2024
17	RS Ramdhani, D Sarifudin...	The Effect of Differentiated Learning on Student Motivation in Learning History	2024
18	S Natawijaya, F Nugraha...	Improving Social Studies Learning Outcomes through the Use of Differentiated Learning Strategies in Class IV Students of SDN 2 Cikalang	2024

## DISCUSSIONS

### Creative Thinking Ability of Students in Social Studies Learning

The development of learning in social studies requires students to be able to maximize the ability to think creatively. The current social studies learning model has a tendency to be teacher-centered, so that students are less able to reason and bring out their creativity during learning (Yusrani Fitri & Yeni Erita, 2023) . Learning design that still makes the teacher as the only source of knowledge and has not understood the important role of differences in the needs of learners, making it difficult for learners to identify the knowledge gained (Aditya Rini Kusumaningpuri, 2024; Bima Prakarsa Arzfi & Jamaris Jamna, 2024; Dian Aprelia Rukmi & Banun Havifah Cahyo Khosiyono, 2023) . Real problems faced in social studies learning have the hope that it can have an impact on the higher creativity of students in understanding the concepts received (Fitriana et al., 2024; Florens Dianni Nurhabiba et al., 2023) . Social studies learning that is packaged with interesting and fun learning can be one of the efforts of teaching techniques that improve students' creative thinking skills (Jumiarti, 2023) . Social studies learning that aims to develop positive prospects of learners, facilitate the confidence to express opinions and also become a place to channel the creativity of learners (Lucky Taufik Sutrisno et al., 2023) . The development of teaching materials in the social studies learning process makes it easier

for students to access information and generate creativity to support their learning needs (Sanjaya, 2023; Yusrani Fitri & Yeni Erita, 2023)

**Supporting and inhibiting factors for creative thinking skills in social studies learning in the application of differentiated learning**

Differentiated learning is described as an approach that pays attention to, serves and recognizes the diversity of students in the learning process according to their willingness, interest and learning preferences in social studies subjects (Bima Prakarsa Arzfi & Jamaris Jamna, 2024) . The differentiated learning process is proven to improve creative thinking skills that have a focus on social science (Jumiarti, 2023; R. Astria & Anggun Badu Kusuma, 2023; Yusrani Fitri & Yeni Erita, 2023) . The conclusion of the 18 articles referenced in this study related to the supporting factors and inhibiting factors of creative thinking skills in social studies by applying differentiated learning can be seen in table 2 below.

<b>Supporting Factors</b>	<b>Inhibiting Factors</b>
a. Highlighting student characteristics, starting from the selection of content and continuing through the process to the products made by students.	a. Teachers' ability to modify learning to be able to find approaches that recognize and accommodate the diversity of learners in the learning process according to the ' willingness, interest, and preferred learning methods
b. Integration with technology in learning, allowing learners to add learning resources which can be in the form of e-learning modules.	b. The teaching atmosphere tends to focus on the teacher who is seen as the only source of knowledge in this learning process.
c. Students can learn happily and without pressure.	d. Gaps in learners' confidence
e. Many excellent activities foster student creativity in a social and communal setting.	f. Evaluation instruments that are not yet relevant to the situation of learners who have different stages
g. Differentiated learning is best for problem solving and knowledge integration in the global era.	h. Early information is needed for teachers, to map learners' needs and learning profiles.
i. Adjustment to students' interests so that students can independently demonstrate their understanding of the knowledge learned	

Supporting and inhibiting factors for creative thinking skills in differentiated learning in social studies

**Differentiated learning in social studies has an impact on students' creative thinking skills.**

Differentiated learning that is more inclined to meet the needs of students in concept acceptance, can have a positive impact on students' creativity (Dian Aprelia Rukmi & Banun Havifah Cahyo Khosiyono, 2023) . Evidence of previous research is obtained from reference articles that have been matched in this study. First, research that suggests that the nature that learners bring to learning can be the basis of differentiation that affects their creativity. The differentiation in question is differentiation in content, process and learning products that allow teachers to recognize the potential of learners and help optimize the creative thinking ability of learners (Dian Aprelia Rukmi & Banun Havifah Cahyo Khosiyono, 2023; Lucky Taufik Sutrisno, 2023; Ndiung et al., 2023) . Secondly, previous research mentioned that differentiated learning facilitates the creation of a pleasant learning environment and allows students to unleash their potential according to their interests. This differentiated learning method can also be utilized as a break to form independence in the learning process according to the independent learning plan being implemented (Lukitaningtyas, 2022; Widyawati & Rachmadyanti, 2023; Yunike Sulistyosari et al., 2022; Yusrani Fitri & Yeni Erita, 2023) . Third, further analysis of the previous 18 articles, states that the 21st century skills that are the demands that must be owned by students, in which there are creative thinking skills can be highlighted with differentiated learning, which is closely related to understanding the concept of socio-cultural development in social studies which is packaged in a fun way (Aditya Rini Kusumaningpuri, 2024; Dian Aprelia Rukmi & Banun Havifah Cahyo Khosiyono, 2023; Florens Dianni Nurhabiba et al., 2023; Jumiarti), 2023)

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings of the literature review, it is known that differentiated learning strategies used in the social studies learning process have a beneficial effect on developing students' creative thinking skills. In ninety-four percent of the cases, or seventeen papers, differentiated learning methodologies were found to have a major impact on improving

creative thinking skills, particularly with regard to social science topics. It is impossible to ignore the fact that 6% of the articles revealed that there were scenarios where varied learning strategies had less impact on students' creativity, yet they had an impact on students' confidence in the process of learning social studies.

The findings of this study provide educators and policymakers with an opportunity to have a better understanding of the different learning strategies and pedagogical contexts currently in use. As most of the articles are based on the concept of efficiency, educators are required to be more flexible and open-minded to implement various strategies and employ students who are not yet enrolled in the classroom.

The recommendation for future research is to conduct additional research on the impact of differentiated learning strategies on creative thinking skills in social studies. This recommendation is based on the fact that according to the data obtained, there is limited research related to this issue. It is suggested that a learning needs analysis be conducted prior to the implementation of differentiated learning techniques. This will enable the determination of the differentiated learning approach to be used.

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