

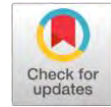
# Capturing pseudo-innovation in ELT: The analysis of implementing differentiated learning to suburban private madrasahs

Muhammad Sandy Al Fath <sup>a,1,\*</sup>, Nikmah Sistia Eka Putri <sup>b,2</sup>

<sup>a, b</sup> English Language Education Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sampit, Jl. K.H. Dewantara no.3, Sampit (74311), Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [msandyalfath@umsa.ac.id](mailto:msandyalfath@umsa.ac.id) \*; <sup>2</sup> [nikmahsistia@umsa.ac.id](mailto:nikmahsistia@umsa.ac.id)

\* Corresponding author



## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history

Received 16 June 2024

Revised 12 August 2024

Accepted 15 August 2024

### Keywords

Pseudo-innovation

Merdeka Curriculum

Differentiated Learning

ELT

Suburban Learning

## ABSTRACT

The implementation of differentiated learning in private Madrasahs raises a big question mark regarding the suitability between theory and practice in the field. The principle of differentiated learning, which is claimed to accommodate diversity, turns out to be far different when implemented, especially in private Madrasahs that are transitioning from the previous curriculum. The main purpose of this research is to explore the illusory construction of innovation in differentiated English learning that results in pseudo-innovation. The approach used is a qualitative approach with the type of ethnography. The research was conducted in 4 private Madrasahs in the suburbs of Sampit city. The research subjects were English teachers who implemented differentiated learning in the four madrasahs. The stage analysis process was assisted by the theory of innovation-decision process by Rogers, et al. (2014). The results of this study show that (1) the illusion of innovation in differentiated English learning occurs because the stages of the innovation diffusion decision process cause anomalies in the process. (2) Madrasahs are forced to follow the decision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs which requires the implementation of an independent curriculum including differentiated learning which results in Madrasahs being trapped in pseudo-innovation. (3) Madrasahs are registered as institutions that implement differentiated learning. However, in practice, Madrasahs still adopt old learning and ignore innovations because they are not considered to be following the characteristics of the Madrasah itself. (4) This research implies that it will be an evaluation material for the Ministry of Religious Affairs to pay more attention to private Madrasahs in implementing differentiated learning. (5) Confirming pseudo-innovation.



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**How to Cite:** Al Fath, M. S., and Putri, N. S. E. (2024). Capturing pseudo-innovation in ELT: The analysis of implementing differentiated learning to suburban private madrasahs. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 7(2), 124-138. <https://doi.org/10.12928/eltej.v7i2.11871>

## 1. Introduction

Differentiated learning has become one of the most popular strategies in education, especially in dealing with the diversity of students' abilities and needs (Fajariyah et al., 2023; Smale-Jacobse et al., 2019). In current learning, teachers are expected to be able to accommodate various individual differences in students, both in terms of learning styles, interests, and academic readiness (Halimah et al., 2023). However, in many educational institutions, including private Madrasahs, that are transitioning from the 2013 curriculum to the independent curriculum in East Kotawaringin, a regency

in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. Where is the concept of differentiated learning is often trapped in the illusion of innovation. Although, the terms and principles of differentiated learning are often touted as modern approaches, their implementation in the field does not always reflect the actual principles.

Schools are frequently compelled by policy constraints to quickly adopt differentiated education without sufficient preparation or assistance. As a result, the implementation usually just satisfies administrative needs and is shallow. The situation is made worse by a lack of resources, including both qualified human resources and sufficient supplies like instructional aids and textbooks. It is frequently difficult for teachers to create genuinely differentiated learning experiences when they are unprepared and feel overwhelmed by these new demands.

English language learning in Madrasahs, especially in some private Madrasahs used as the object of this study, faces challenges. Madrasahs are often seen as educational institutions prioritizing religious education, while general subjects, including English, receive less attention (Harahap, 2023). In addition, limited facilities, lack of competent teaching resources, and low access to technology and adequate teaching materials add to the burden of implementing more sophisticated learning methods, such as differentiated learning (Alam & Mohanty, 2023).

As transitional educational institutions, some private Madrasahs in East Kotawaringin also face challenges related to the characteristics of students from diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Students from families that predominantly work as farmers, small traders, or laborers certainly have limitations in accessing additional education outside of school, which is essential in supporting English language acquisition. This adds to the gap in students' academic ability, making differentiated learning even more important to implement.

Besides that, the pre-survey conducted before this research was conducted showed some interesting facts, especially their notorious arguments as shown in Figure 1.

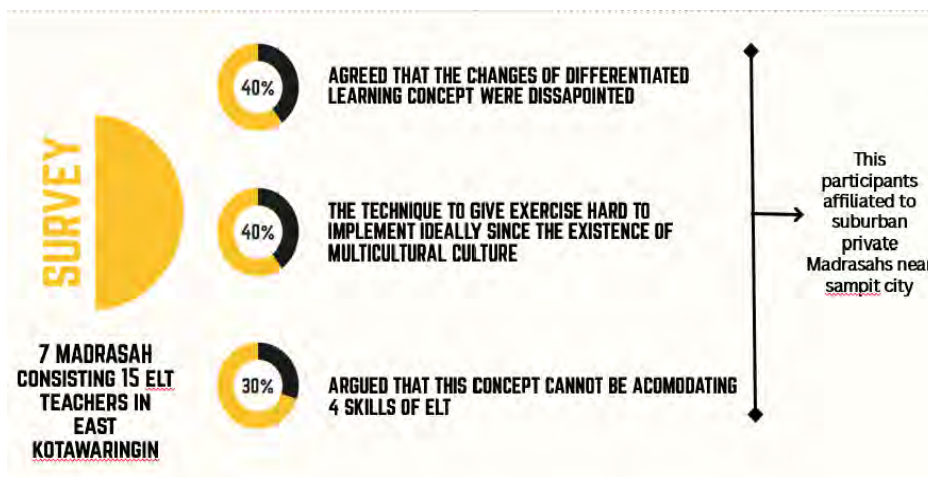


Fig. 1. Pre-survey of the research

Looking at the reality in some private Madrasahs in East Kotawaringin, there is a significant gap between theory and practice regarding differentiated learning. Although teachers understand the basic concepts of this approach, its application in the field is often cosmetic. This creates an illusion of innovation or pseudo-innovation, where there appears to be an update in teaching methods, however in reality, there has been no fundamental change in the way teachers interact with students or in the strategies used to support their diverse learning.

Although the challenges faced in implementing differentiated learning in transitional Madrasahs are quite complex, the teachers' role remain crucial in determining the extent to which this approach can be effectively implemented (Picasouw et al., 2023) To overcome the illusion of innovation, teachers need to receive adequate support, both in the form of more comprehensive training on differentiated learning strategies and the provision of relevant and accessible resources.

Previous research was conducted by Ujang et al. with the title "Implementation of Differentiated Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum in English Subjects". The results of this study indicated that differentiated English learning has been carried out well; it, is only constrained by several aspects

such as teacher ability and infrastructure at school (Barlian et al., 2023). The research merely describes the existing situation without further analyzing the critical important aspects of differentiated learning that may be missed or inappropriate. Therefore, the novelty of this research is to analyze the illusion of innovation further or to find pseudo-innovations that exist in implementing differentiated English learning. Furthermore, the main purpose of this study is to explore the illusory construction of innovation that presents pseudo-innovation in differentiated English learning using the diffusion of innovation theory as the basis for analyzing this discovery.

Research Question:

1. How does pseudo-innovation occur within the concept of differentiated learning in some private Madrasahs?

## 2. Method

This research accommodates ethnography as the method to discover the existence of the pseudo-innovation that happened in some private Madrasahs in East Kotawaringin. Ethnography is the most suitable method for this study as it allows for a deep, immersive understanding of the cultural nuances and social dynamics within the community. By participating in the daily lives of community members, researchers can uncover hidden meanings, unspoken rules, and intricate patterns of behavior in a small scale of population (O'Reilly, 2012). This is in line with the aim of the study which attempt to reveal of the construction of pseudo innovation that existed in the ELT in Madrasahs.

### 2.1. Participants

Participants were 4 English teachers from 4 Madrasahs near Sampit city as the capital of East Kotawaringin. In purposive sampling, they were chosen due to pre observation selection by criteria such as; (1) English Teachers from private Madrasahs in suburban, (2) the Madrasahs implemented differentiated learning with a minimum duration of 1 year. The differentiated learning is a student-centered approach in the Merdeka curriculum, where teachers adjust learning materials and activities to the needs, interests, and learning styles of each student.

### 2.2. Instruments

The instruments of this research were semi-structured interviews as the main instruments, which were supported by documentation, observation checklists, and researchers' notes. For detailed, the documentation analyzed the Module and the readiness document of the teachers. Then, observation check list conducted during the process of the learning process aiming to confirm the interviews statements. Moreover, researchers note conducted in the whole process of the research, it is the extracted of what researchers concluded when there were some interesting things. In other words, the interview validated other instruments.

### 2.3. Data Collection Procedures

Participants were interviewed with questions related to the main research objectives. Then, the researchers analyzed the teachers' documents, such as the preparation document and the modules they created to teach in the instructional process. Furthermore, the observation checks listed were done in the class while the teacher conducted the document of the teacher and the assessment, while the researchers also took some notes.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates the step-by-step process employed to analyze the qualitative data collected through ethnographic fieldwork. This procedure involved a rigorous approach to data coding, thematic analysis, and theoretical interpretation. In addition, data analysis was guided by Rogers, et al. (2014) innovation-decision process theory, which includes five stages.

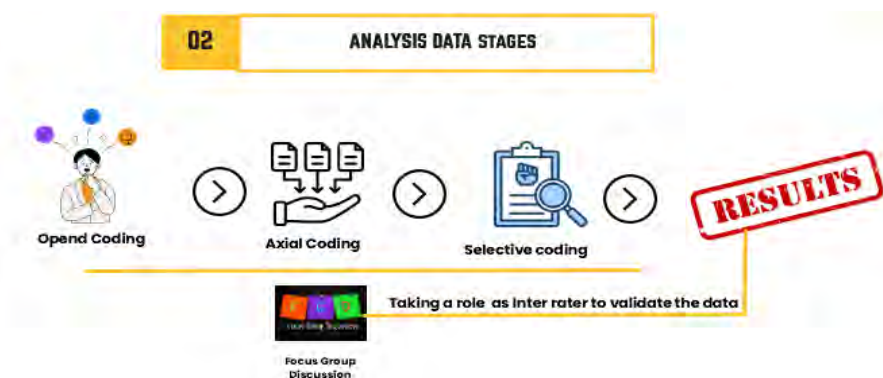


Fig. 2. Analysis data procedures

### 3. Findings and Discussion

Innovations in a curriculum cannot necessarily be implemented immediately. Implementing an innovation requires a long process. In social reality, in general, the implementation of an innovation can be analyzed using Rogers's innovation diffusion theory (Rogers, et al., 2014). This theory explains how an innovation spreads through a population or social system over time (Jiang et al., 2024).

In the context of education, including in Madrasah, this theory is very relevant to analyze the process of acceptance and adoption of curriculum innovations. Rogers divides the diffusion process into five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation (Rogers, 2014; Cain et al., 2024). Each stage describes how teachers, students, and other parties involved in the education system will realize, consider, and ultimately decide whether to accept or reject the implemented curriculum innovation (Nasucha, 2021).

This theory also divides individuals into five categories based on their speed in adopting innovations: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Currie et al., 2021). *Innovators* and *early adopters* in Madrasahs are those who are open to change and actively seek new ways to improve the learning process, such as using technology or new approaches in religious learning (Koroleva & Andreeva, 2024).

They become agents of change who can influence other groups. The *early majority* and *late majority* tend to be more cautious and wait for tangible results before adopting innovations, while *laggards* are more conservative and tend to stick to old practices (Wang et al., 2024).

Concerning curriculum innovation in Madrasah, this theory can identify factors that influence the adoption of a new curriculum, such as government policies, resource readiness, support from educators, and responses from students and parents. By understanding how the diffusion of innovations works, Madrasah managers can design more effective strategies to introduce and implement the new curriculum, minimize resistance and accelerate adoption across all elements of the Madrasah. This is important so that curriculum innovation can have a positive impact the quality of education in Madrasah.

Referring to the theory of diffusion of innovation, the results of this study are organized based on the theoretical framework juxtaposed with empirical data in the field. The stages passed by the private Madrasahs studied in the diffusion of differentiated English learning innovations are as follows.

#### 3.1. Knowledge Stage

The knowledge stage in the innovation diffusion theory is a critical initial phase in the innovation adoption process, including in the context of curriculum changes in Madrasah. The knowledge stage refers to when individuals or organizations first hear about an innovation and get initial information about how it works (Guo et al., 2024). In the context of Madrasah, the knowledge stage occurs when the school, teachers, and education policymakers hear about the curriculum innovation that will be introduced (Muntaha & Amin, 2023). For example, if the government or an educational institution announces a curriculum change, the first stage is the dissemination of information about the essence of the change. This information includes the purpose of the curriculum change, the expected benefits,



and how implementing the new curriculum can improve the quality of learning in Madrasahs (Xue & Chen, 2024).

At this stage, stakeholder in the Madrasah need to obtain complete and clear information about the innovation. Teachers, Madrasah heads, and other relevant parties must understand what will change in the curriculum, whether related to teaching methods, subject matter, evaluation structure, or expected learning objectives (Sugiono, 2024). This process is usually facilitated through curriculum socialization, training, seminars, or the provision of reading materials and other resources to introduce new elements to the curriculum (Sinaga & Fauzi, 2024).

In addition, the knowledge stage also involves an initial understanding of how the innovation can be applied in the specific context of the madrasa (Papaioannou, 2024). For example, teachers need to know how this curriculum change will affect their teaching methods, whether they have to master new skills, or how the curriculum can be adapted to the characteristics of students in the Madrasah. The knowledge dissemination process at this stage is very important because it will affect teachers' and Madrasah's attitudes and initial perceptions towards the innovation (Kisno & Fatmawati, 2023). The knowledge stage focuses not only on receiving information, but also on the active search for information by the individuals or organizations involved (Seidu et al., 2024).

Teachers who act as agents of change will actively seek additional information through various sources to better understand the curriculum innovations introduced (Wahidah et al., 2023). If this knowledge process is successfully carried out well, teachers and policymakers in Madrasah will have a strong basis for entering the next stage, namely persuasion, where they will begin to evaluate the benefits and challenges of the curriculum innovation (Magdalena, et al., 2024b). However, if at this knowledge stage the information conveyed is insufficient or unclear, resistance or incomprehension may arise, which hinders the adoption of curriculum innovations (Magdalena, et al., 2024a). Therefore, an effective and comprehensive information dissemination process is needed at this stage, so that the parties in the Madrasah can be prepared for the curriculum changes that will be implemented.

However, in fact, the knowledge stage passed by the private Madrasahs that are the objects of this research is inversely proportional to the stages that should be done. The knowledge stage is not followed properly due to several factors. The demand from the government to implement the independent curriculum too quickly without taking into account the readiness of Madrasahs from various sides causes the implementation of the independent curriculum to seem forced. This can be seen from several madrasahs such as MTs Sabilal Muhtadin, which did not carry out teacher training on differentiated learning. While at Madrasah A, Madrasah C, and Madrasah B have implemented teacher training or they have been trained before. Unfortunately, the training is merely as a formality and have not explored the essence of the curriculum, especially differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is a promising approach to improving the quality of education. However, effective implementation is often hindered by a lack of information and support for teachers. One of the main challenges is the insufficient training, especially in terms of diagnostic assessment and the adjustment of differentiation strategies.

In addition, there is no more attention from the Ministry of religion regarding the socialization of the independent curriculum, especially for private Madrasahs. The Madrasahs are only encouraged and tasked with seeking their own knowledge related to the independent curriculum and differentiated learning without any concern and facilitation from the ministry of religion. Another problem that arises is that the Madrasah itself does not play an active role in initiating teachers to seek their own information regarding the steps for implementing the independent curriculum, especially in the aspect of differentiated learning, so that the knowledge stage that should be maximized by the Ministry of Religion and the Madrasah itself is neglected. In the end, this knowledge stage was not maximized and even failed to be carried out in the case of the implementation of differentiated English learning in private Madrasahs in East Kotawaringin.

More specifically, in the aspect of differentiated learning, teachers have not fully obtained accurate information about the right steps in implementing differentiated learning. For example, English teachers at Madrasah A, Madrasah C, and Madrasah B, despite having received technical guidance on differentiated learning, did not implement it correctly. Visible mistakes such as not applying diagnostic assessments both cognitive and non-cognitive. Mr. M.A., an English teacher at Madrasah A, for example, immediately mapped students' learning styles by simply asking students to choose

their preferred skills between listening, reading, writing, or speaking. The teacher considers that this method is a form of diagnostics to find out the learning styles of students. Another case is Madrasah B teachers who are not familiar with CP and ATP in differentiated learning planning. The teacher of Madrasah C, started the learning by asking students to guess vocabulary in English, then concluded and categorized students who liked speaking for those who often answered vocabulary and concluded that students liked writing when they liked to write on paper the answers to the vocabulary asked.

These actions illustrate that socialization related to important aspects of differentiated learning still fails to be carried out in private Madrasahs, even though the teachers have received technical guidance. However, because the implementation process was too abrupt, teachers' knowledge was not yet mature and maximized and they were forced to implement differentiated learning immediately.

### 3.2. Persuasion Stage

The persuasion stage is a phase where a person or group of people who have previously known about an innovation (in this case differentiated learning), begin to form a positive or negative attitude towards the innovation. This attitude is built through the various information they receive, their experiences, and how they perceive the relevance and benefits of the innovation (Guo et al., 2024).

At the persuasion stage, Madrasah teachers, principals and other education stakeholders begin to explore more about differentiated learning (Magdalena et al., 2023). They will seek information about the benefits and challenges that may arise from implementing this learning (Schewe et al., 2024). This information can be obtained through various sources such as training, seminars, workshops, academic literature, or from the experiences of fellow teachers who have already implemented the method. Teachers will also consider how this method might affect the way they manage the classroom, prepare lesson plans and assess the learning progress of students with diverse abilities and needs.

This persuasion can be a complex process as it involves subjective considerations (Orwenjo, 2024). In the context of Madrasahs, teachers not only look at the technical aspects of implementing differentiated learning, but also consider the religious, cultural and local values aspects that exist in their educational environment (Zaeni et al., 2023). They need to ensure that this approach is in line with the Islamic values that form the foundation of the Madrasah. This is important, as Madrasahs often have specific characteristics that distinguish them from public schools, especially in terms of moral and spiritual values (Judrah et al., 2024).

Another factor that influences the persuasion stage in the context of curriculum innovation in Madrasah is the presence of key figures or "opinion leaders" in the educational environment (Hayati et al., 2023). The Madrasah principal, for example, can play a significant role in shaping teachers' attitudes towards innovation (Iddris et al., 2024). If the Madrasah head is supportive of differentiated learning, he or she can provide direction, motivation, and the necessary resources for its implementation, so that teachers will be more easily persuaded and have a positive attitude towards this innovation. Conversely, if there is resistance or incomprehension from the Madrasah leader, the persuasion process may be hindered, and teachers may be more skeptical towards implementing of the method (Aprima & Sari, 2022).

During this persuasion stage, teachers also look for concrete examples of how differentiated learning is implemented in the classroom (Solihin & Muhlis, 2023). They want to know how this method can provide better results for students in Madrasah, especially students with different abilities. Therefore, this stage plays an important role in limited trials or implementation as part of the persuasion strategy, where teachers can directly see the positive impact of innovations on students.

However, the facts in the field show a different situation. Private Madrasahs in East Kotawaringin are forced to take a stand and agree to the implement the independent curriculum, especially in the application of differentiated learning, although previously, it was not maximally carried out at the knowledge stage. These Madrasahs only follow the mandatory instructions issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs without reconsidering the characteristics of innovations sought such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability that are compatible with the characteristics of each Madrasah. For example, in the aspect of compatibility. In this aspect, the private Madrasahs studied, such as MTs and Madrasah A, revealed that the innovations brought to differentiated learning, especially in product differentiation, are not in accordance with the learning climate of students. They feel differentiated in intellectual terms when the tasks given are also different. In addition, teachers' ability to provide diverse evaluation instruments is also still minimal

given the limited resources available. In the end, this aspect of suitability becomes irrelevant to the innovation presented in differentiated learning.

Meanwhile, English teachers at Madrasah C and Madrasah B revealed that product differentiation is still appropriate to be applied to students. However, after observation during learning, teachers did not really apply product differentiation appropriately. For example, in Madrasah B, the teacher only differentiated the number of vocabulary memorization based on the students' ability to memorize. The teacher considers that this action is product differentiation. Meanwhile, at Madrasah C, after observation, the teacher only told students to do the tasks on the LKS after observation.

Another aspect is complexity, teachers consider the complexity of differentiated learning to be a higher level than learning in the previous curriculum. Teachers are fixated on adjusting to the new curriculum document and are too focused on aspects that are referred to as innovations so they are too forceful to be present in every lesson such as assignments that are always project-based.

For example, in the learning carried out by English teachers at Madrasah B and Madrasah C, teachers are more worried about making inappropriate documents than implementing them in the classroom. Teachers are fixated on student observation sheets and project-based assignment results. So in some tasks such as material in grade 10 about Simple Present Tense which actually does not require project-based tasks, but instead is forced always to be project-based. Students are assigned to make a video containing Simple Present Tense material. In the end, students just copy the material on Google into video slides to be collected by the teacher. In fact, the essence of the material aims for students to understand simple present tense, not about making videos. Seeing these obstacles, in the end, this complexity aspect must be ignored because the Madrasah inevitably has to accept a high level of complexity in implementing differentiated learning.

The persuasion stage in the diffusion of innovations related to differentiated learning in Madrasah involves a critical evaluation process, where teachers consider the benefits of these innovations to student learning, their relevance to Madrasah values, and support from the environment and educational leaders. This process is critical to the successful adoption of innovations in the context of Madrasah education. However, if this stage of determining attitudes towards innovation is not done properly, it will have an impact on the next stage of innovation diffusion.

### 3.3. Decision Stage

The decision stage in the innovation diffusion theory according to Rogers is the process in which individuals or organizations make decisions to accept or reject an innovation (Riley et al., 2020). In the context of curriculum innovation in Madrasah, especially related to differentiated learning, this stage is crucial because it determines whether the innovation will be widely implemented or only limited to a small number of educators and institutions. Differentiated learning, which aims to accommodate students' different abilities, interests and learning styles, is an approach that demands significant adaptations in learning practices. Therefore, the decision phase involves several interrelated components (Ho, 2022).

First, in the decision-making process, teachers, Madrasah principals and other education stakeholders need to understand the purpose and benefits of this innovation deeply. At this stage, information about differentiated learning must be effectively socialized, either through training, workshops or group discussions. If teachers feel that this innovation can improve the quality of learning, especially in the context of Madrasah which tends to have a diversity of social and intellectual backgrounds of students, then the tendency to accept the innovation will be greater. (Winianti et al., 2023). On the other hand, if the information received is inadequate or the innovation is considered difficult to implement, the innovation may be rejected or ignored.

The facts found, as happened in MTs, Madrasah A, and Madrasah B, show that information about innovation in differentiated learning is still minimal. For example, the terms CP, ATP, and others in lesson planning are not well understood by teachers. In addition, do not understand the benefits of differentiated learning, which can improve the quality of learning. Teachers assume that the way of learning is still almost the same as learning in the previous curriculum. The same thing also happens at Madrasah C; teachers, consider differentiated learning as learning that makes it difficult for teachers even though it does not have a significant impact on students.

Second, the decision stage also involves evaluating the resources needed to implement differentiated learning (Grgurović, 2019). Teachers in Madrasahs should consider whether they have enough time, training, and institutional support to adopt this approach. Implementing differentiated learning requires not only additional knowledge of teaching strategies, but also adjustments to evaluation methods, teaching materials, and classroom management. In some cases, Madrasah heads may need to consider whether there are policies that support the implementation of this innovation, for example, those related to time allocation or the availability of adequate facilities and infrastructure. (Nurjanah & Mustofa, 2024).

At this stage, the Madrasahs studied seemed to ignore and focus only on the Ministry of Religious Affairs' mandate to implement differentiated learning. Teachers ignore their knowledge of appropriate differentiated teaching strategies. For example, regarding the collaboration of learning models, Mrs. A.W. who is a teacher at Madrasah D revealed that she only combined two methods in learning and claimed it as process differentiation. In good differentiated learning, however, one differentiation is actually not enough to provide meaningful experiences to students. Thus, in this decision stage, the teachers have not fully considered whether or not their abilities and actions are in accordance with the principles of differentiated learning.

In addition, the decision to accept or reject differentiated learning innovations is also influenced by social and cultural norms in the educational environment, namely the Madrasah itself (Fedorov et al., 2021). If most teachers and educational staff in the Madrasah support this innovation, it will be easier for other teachers to go with the flow and try to implement differentiated learning strategies (Basra, 2023). However, if there is resistance or skepticism among teachers, especially those with traditional approaches for a long time, implementation of these innovations could be hampered. A culture in Madrasahs that supports collaboration and sharing experiences is also important in helping teachers feel more confident to adopt these new approaches.

Based on the interviews that have been conducted, the majority of teachers are not ready and do not agree with the implementation of differentiated learning. As MTs and Madrasah A teachers and Madrasah C teachers feel that the application of differentiated learning is currently not appropriate to be implemented. Meanwhile, teachers at Madrasah B agree with this implementation. However, his knowledge of the principles of differentiated learning is still minimal. This shows that most teachers in these private Madrasahs only agree because of obligation, not their own personal choice based on the situation in the field.

Finally, the decision stage often involves a trial or initial implementation of the innovation. (Waheed et al., 2015). For example, some teachers may start testing the implementation of differentiated learning on small groups of students before fully implementing it in the classroom. The feedback from these trials then becomes the basis for teachers to determine whether or not to continue using the innovation. If the trial results show a positive impact on the learning process, the decision to accept this innovation will be stronger (Sachdeva et al., 2019).

In fact, the teachers had never tested or implemented differentiated learning before it was implemented. Most of them only listened to the technical guidance without any direct practice with students. So the teachers do not know the impact they feel because they have never tested the effectiveness of differentiated learning for students in their respective Madrasahs.

Teachers in learning have shown concrete evidence, as happened in Madrasah A, where Mr. M.A. made planning documents for differentiated learning. He admitted that he made the document only to fulfil the demands of the Madrasah to immediately collect learning documents. However, in practice, Mr. M.A. did not actually implement the learning steps that he listed in the planning document. The same thing was also done by the English teacher at Madrasah C.

As for Madrasah D and Madrasah B, teachers have never made any learning documents related to differentiated learning. This shows that as long as the policy related to differentiated learning obligations runs, they only claim to have implemented differentiated learning based on the curriculum endorsement document but have never implemented either administratively or directly.

Thus, the decision stage in the diffusion of innovations in the context of differentiated learning in Madrasah is a complex process, involving various considerations from cognitive, social and institutional aspects. The successful adoption of this innovation is highly dependent on the extent to which teachers and stakeholders can see the direct benefits of the approach as well as their readiness



to overcome the challenges that arise during the implementation process. However, the result of this study shows that neither the institution nor the teachers utilize the decision stage well in adopting differentiated learning innovation.

### 3.4. Implementation Stage

This stage is the most important stage in the innovation diffusion process. The implementation of differentiated learning innovations in MTs and Madrasah A, Madrasah C, and Madrasah B is not optimal to be implemented because the decision taken to implement differentiated learning is a compulsion. Minimal socialization, unsuitable learning climate, and unqualified teacher resources make implementing differentiated learning innovation only superficial and resistance to change. In daily practice, teachers still apply the old ways, especially in learning practices. Although the curriculum promotes differentiation of learning to meet learners' individual needs, teachers may only make minimal or standard modifications, which do not substantially change students' learning experience.

Some deviations are made, for example, by adding models, methods or media that were also applied in the previous curriculum. For example, English teachers at MAS and Madrasah D combine two learning methods, which is referred to as process differentiation. Mrs. A. W. Combines the drill method and the project-based learning when teaching self-introduction material in class. The same thing is also done by Mr. M.A. who applies dual media for listening, learning, and reading. He thinks that providing more than one medium can provide opportunities for other students who do not like listening to be able to use reading learning media.

If observed, the modifications made by these teachers have not been only minor modifications that do not change students' learning experience. A similar case also occurred at Madrasah B, which interrupted students' learning activities in the classroom by learning outside and around the Madrasah environment. Meanwhile, at Madrasah C, students were assigned to give speeches to the class to develop their speaking skills. However, students are free to memorize in full or while reading. The learning experiences realized by these teachers have also been realized in the previous curriculum, so that the differentiation aspect is not too prominent and can change students' learning experience to the maximum. In the end, the goal of innovation is not achieved because of the implementers' mistakes in implementing differentiated learning and failure of the previous stages.

When referring to the theory of innovation diffusion, at the implementation stage, innovations that have been decided to be adopted begin to be applied in daily practice (Costa & Cooper, 2024). In Madrasah, the implementation of differentiated learning requires teachers to adjust their teaching approach according to students' individual needs. Differentiated learning aims to accommodate students' different abilities, interests and learning styles to make the learning process more effective and inclusive. So in this implementation, several things need to be considered (Purnawanto, 2023).

First, the preparation of resources needed to support successful implementation. Teachers and educators need to be trained to understand the concepts and methods of differentiated learning in depth. This training can include techniques in designing a flexible curriculum, how to assess students' needs and potential, and adaptive learning strategies. In addition, supporting facilities such as teaching aids and technology also need to be prepared to make the learning process more interactive and varied according to student needs (Ainissyifa et al., 2024).

Second, changes in teaching practices. In this phase, teachers start trying to implement differentiated learning methods and strategies in the classroom. This implementation can start from simple aspects such as making variations in tasks and activities tailored to each student's ability, to the implementation of more complex strategies such as flexible grouping, where students are divided into groups based on their ability level or certain interests. In addition, teachers need to familiarize themselves with using ongoing formative assessments in order to monitor individual students' progress and adjust their approach according to the results of these assessments (Anwar & Sukiman, 2023). Third, resistance management. Every innovation implementation, including differentiated learning, is often faced with resistance from various parties, both from teachers who find it difficult to adjust to new methods, as well as from students who are not used to a more personalized approach. In this case, Madrasah leaders and curriculum managers need to support teachers and students during the transition period. Mentoring, supervision, and discussion forums between teachers can effectively help teachers face the challenges of implementing differentiated learning (Rohmah et al., 2024), and finally,

evaluation and adaptation. Once differentiated learning has been implemented, an evaluation is needed to see how effective this strategy is in improving the quality of learning. This evaluation can be done through student feedback, learning outcomes, and direct classroom observation (Whitley et al., 2019). Based on the evaluation results, Madrasahs need to make adjustments and adaptations in teaching strategies, curriculum design, and other supporting policies, so that differentiated learning can continue to develop and be implemented optimally.

However, all of the above stages are largely ignored by the Madrasah. This is evident from the minimal preparation of resources, the absence of changes in teaching practices and only making small modifications that have less impact, the absence of efforts to carry out resistance management, and the absence of evaluation and adaptation efforts from Madrasahs to continue developing differentiated learning. These Madrasahs only resigned themselves to the existing situation and only carried out orders from the Ministry of Religious Affairs without any other initiatives to develop themselves.

### 3.5. Confirmation Stage

Ideally, at the confirmation stage, individuals or groups have adopted an innovation seek to ensure that their decision is correct and sustainable. They evaluate their experience using the innovation and seek feedback to reinforce or cast doubt on their decision (Grgurović, 2019).

The confirmation stage is crucial in the context of curriculum innovation, especially in differentiated learning in Madrasah. Differentiated learning is an approach that allows teachers to customize learning methods, materials and assessment according to diverse students' needs interests. At the confirmation stage, teachers and the Madrasah as a whole will reflect on the effectiveness of this approach, and its impact on the quality of learning and the achievement of student learning outcomes (Nurjanah & Mustofa, 2024).

During the confirmation stage, teachers will reflect on their experiences in implementing differentiated learning. They may gather evidence from evaluations of student learning outcomes, including how well students with different abilities could master the materials and skills taught. This reflection can be done individually or through collaboration with peers or Madrasah leaders, such as Madrasah heads and supervisors (Kisno & Fatmawati, 2023).

Based on the results of this study, the four Madrasahs have reflected on their activities related to implementing differentiated learning and found various obstacles to its implementation. However, the Madrasahs cannot change their decision to stop implementing differentiated learning as part of the independent curriculum.

In addition, teachers may also collect feedback from students themselves, which can provide an important perspective on how differentiated learning affects their motivation, engagement and comfort in learning. This feedback can strengthen the teacher's decision to continue implementing the differentiated approach or evaluating whether there are weaknesses that need to be corrected.

Teachers have conducted surveys related to student responses in the learning process. For example, Mrs. A.W., a teacher at Madrasah D, revealed that students felt unsuitable for product differentiation. Students prefer uniform assignments as in previous learning. This shows that even though teachers have conducted feedback on the impact of differentiated learning and found negative responses, teachers cannot stop differentiated learning.

The Madrasah, as an institution, also plays an important role in this confirmation stage. Through education policy and supervision, the Madrasah can provide support and feedback to teachers and facilitate discussion forums to share experiences and best practices related to the implementation of differentiated learning (Oktavianti et al., 2024). For example, further training or workshop activities can be organized to strengthen teachers' understanding and skills in implementing differentiated learning effectively.

Ideally, if at the confirmation stage it is found that differentiated learning does have a positive impact, then this innovation will be more strongly internalized in the school culture and become part of daily learning practices. However, if there are obstacles or suboptimal results, then teachers and Madrasah can re-evaluate the approach used, and perhaps adjust the strategy or find an approach that is more suitable for the educational context in the Madrasah (Pradana et al., 2024)

At this confirmation stage, Madrasahs should be given the freedom to confirm whether to continue or end innovation in differentiated learning. However, because the basis of this innovation decision-making is compulsion, until now, Madrasahs can only continue the idea of innovation that is echoed without being accompanied by appropriate concrete actions in the field.

The wrong stage of diffusion from the beginning causes the adoption process of this innovation in the independent curriculum to be an illusion. The introduction of innovation in the aspect of differentiated learning is not comprehensive, the formation of attitudes and decision-making by Madrasah towards the implementation of differentiated learning is not exempted, and the implementation in learning is forced to be rough, until there is no option to confirm continuing or stopping the innovation offered in differentiated learning. These irregularities cause the concept of differentiated learning to become a 'pseudo-innovation' that is promoted but is not a change. Madrasahs have only become followers and cannot determine the fate of their institutions in implementing a learning process that suits the characteristics of teachers and students.

As a final statement of the innovation diffusion process, pseudo-innovation can occur when the innovation diffusion stage is not carried out properly. Innovations are not socialized carefully and prepared perfectly, so the execution is only an idea without action. In the end, an innovation that is only illusory is formed. The worst impact of pseudo-innovation on learning in madrasahs is that teachers are not free to provide learning because they adjust various things to the new learning concept. Madrasahs only practice the old learning method even though the concept promoted is differentiated learning.

#### 4. Conclusion

The illusion of innovation in differentiated English learning in private Madrasahs in East Kotawaringin occurs because the diffusion of innovation is done wrongly. Madrasahs, which should be given the freedom to determine the process of innovation adaptation stages, are trapped in coercion caused by binding policies. Ultimately, Madrasahs only carry the idea of differentiated learning innovation and are trapped in pseudo-innovation that does not impact the learning process. Teachers who claim to have followed the principles of differentiated learning still use old methods that are no different from learning in the previous curriculum.

The implication of this research is to pay more attention to Madrasahs in implementing the independent curriculum, especially in the aspect of differentiated learning. The Ministry of Religious Affairs should not only require but guarantee the readiness of madrasahs to implementing innovations that will be implemented. This research only proves the illusion of innovation in the case of differentiated learning implementation. It produces a new theory called pseudo-innovation theory, so it is important for future research to explore more deeply the validation of this pseudo-innovation theory in cases and Madrasahs or other educational institutions as comparative material.

The suggestion that can be taken to leveling up the quality of learning is about to give more attention to them by raising up the quantity of teachers training. It led by how the problems comes up from the knowledge of the teachers that have some issue in the understanding way to conduct the differentiated learning. Besides that, the evaluation is also the crucial issue in the differentiated learning in the private madrasahs. That problem comes up due to there was not the instructional support during the process of instructional process.

#### Acknowledgment

The researcher extends sincere gratitude to Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Riset, and Teknologi (DRTPM) for the research grants provided. The experts deserve special recognition for their insightful advice, encouragement, and remarks. Their time and insightful comments were invaluable in helping to maximize the possibilities of this study. Furthermore, sincere gratitude is given to the participants, whose hard work and enthusiasm were crucial to the accomplishment of this research. With their gracious assistance, the project was effectively finished.

**Author contribution** : Muhammad Sandy Al Fath was responsible for the entire research project. He also led the writing of the manuscript and collaboration with the second author. Nikmah Sistia Eka Putri participated in the

data collection, transcription and analysis. She also revised the manuscript. Both authors approved the final manuscript.

**Funding statement** : This research was funded by Hibah Kemendikbudristek in 2024 with contract number 68/LL11/KM/2024

**Conflict of interest** : Both authors declare that they have no competing interests.

**Ethics declaration** : We, as authors, acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms with our university's regulations and that we have obtained permission from the relevant institutes when collecting data.

We support *English Language Teaching Educational Journal (ELTEJ)* in maintaining high standards of personal conduct, practicing honesty in all our professional practices and endeavors.

**Additional information**

No additional information is available for this paper.

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