

THE URGENCY OF DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT IN THE APPLICATION OF DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING IN THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Assessment is an activity carried out to determine the quality and results of a learning process. Assessment consists of tests and non-tests which are usually given to measure student abilities. In its implementation, the assessment given to students is adjusted to the curriculum applied, including the independent learning curriculum. In the Merdeka Curriculum, initial assessments are always used before the learning process to make it easier for teachers to implement differentiated learning. The diagnostic assessment consists of 2 tests, namely a cognitive assessment and a non-cognitive assessment. This research aims to find out how urgent the diagnostic assessment is in implementing differentiated learning in the independent learning curriculum. The method used in this research is literature study. Researchers look for sources related to research through journals, relevant books and the Merdeka Curriculum platform. The research results show that the urgency of the diagnostic assessment in implementing differentiated learning in the Merdeka Curriculum has a very big influence.

Keywords: *Assessment, Diagnostic Assessment, Differentiated Learning, Merdeka Curriculum*

INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian state is currently seeking new breakthroughs in an education system. This breakthrough was made to improve the quality of the education system starting from elementary school to tertiary level. Therefore, the implementation of an appropriate curriculum will be able to improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

UU No. 20 Tahun 2003 Curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and learning materials as well as ways used as guidelines for the implementation of learning activities to achieve educational goals. A good curriculum is a curriculum that is oriented towards improving the quality of the learning process and optimizing learning outcomes while still considering the diversity of characteristics of educational units.

'*Kurikulum Merdeka*' of learning is a new curriculum policy implemented by the Minister of Education and Culture to carry out a transformation in the education system in Indonesia. Merdeka Belajar was first introduced by the Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim during the commemoration of National Teachers' Day in 2019. Merdeka Belajar was inspired by the thoughts of Ki Hajar Dewantara, namely "*Ing Ngarso Sun Tulodho, Ing Madyo Mangun Karso, and Tut Wuri Handayani*". Ki Hajar Dewantara has a view on Education that includes the

concept of independence, namely Education must provide opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests freely without pressure or limitations that limit their potential.

Freedom in developing potential in teachers and students is expected to provide flexibility in the process of learning and teaching activities so as to develop interests and talents, foster creativity, independence, and innovation. This is to prepare outputs that do not fail to understand in the face of the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

Basically, the potential interests and talents of students vary from one student to another. This difference must be understood by teachers in order to implement an independent learning system. In the same class, it is undeniable that among students there will be a variety of characteristics, this includes the diversity of interests, learning styles, backgrounds and students' ability to grasp information on learning material that has been delivered by the teacher.

Differentiated learning is the concept of providing learning in order to facilitate the interests and talents of students in the classroom with diverse needs and abilities. Differentiated learning is an attempt to adjust the learning process in the classroom in order to meet the individual learning needs of each student (Tomlinson 1999). Differentiated learning is a series of *common-sense* decisions made by teachers that are oriented to the needs of students. Differentiated learning is an adjustment to student interests, learning tendencies, readiness in order to achieve improved learning outcomes (Marlina in Susila and Aryasuari 2023).

In the application of differentiated learning, an assessment is needed. Assessment in the independent curriculum emphasizes student-centered learning practices (Puspendik Kemdikbud, 2021). In the independent curriculum, there are 3 assessments used to measure the ability of students, namely diagnostic assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods that involve collecting data from various literature sources or literature sources, by reading, recording, analyzing relevant information. And Data processing techniques through materials found from library sources. The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method by collecting data through literature sources or library sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The effort implemented by the government after the outbreak of *Covid-19* in Indonesia is the Merdeka Curriculum which aims to restore educational conditions (GH, Sadriani, and Adminira 2023). Freedom of learning provides flexibility for teachers in carrying out learning activities to achieve the goals to be achieved. Thus, teachers play a vital role in classroom management even though in teaching and learning activities active student involvement must be a top priority.

In the world of education, the initial conditions and initial abilities of students become a very important part. The success of teaching and learning activities is largely determined by the readiness of students. However, to create such readiness is not an easy thing. A method is needed to measure this readiness. The measurement results themselves become a reference for a teacher in applying strategies and approaches in the learning process.

Theoretically, the Merdeka Curriculum can be said to be able to accommodate all the needs of teachers and students. The characteristics of a teacher such as the level of knowledge, tendencies of thinking, teaching style, to personal traits certainly provide color in learning activities in the classroom and this situation is very much considered by the Merdeka Curriculum. The first thing that a teacher must understand is himself, one by one.

Learners also have a more complex diversity than teachers. The difference in roles that become a meeting point between the two. After understanding personal characteristics, a teacher is obliged to understand the characteristics of each learner. Extracting information is absolutely carried out by a teacher before teaching and learning activities are carried out. Extracting this information in the Merdeka Curriculum is called diagnostic assessment.

Assessment is a data collection process that shows the development of students in terms of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor (Agustianti 2022, Ismail 2020 & Sumarsih, et al 2022). Assessment is a systematic and continuous process or activity to collect information about student learning processes and outcomes in order to make decisions based on predetermined criteria and considerations (Nasution, 2022). In the 2013 curriculum, formative and summative assessments conducted by educators will monitor student progress, monitor learning outcomes, and identify the need to continuously improve student learning outcomes. The Merdeka Curriculum is focused on formative assessment and the use of assessment results to shape

learning according to student ability. The assessment aspect of the 2013 syllabus is divided into assessment of attitudes, knowledge and skills. Regarding the independent curriculum, there is no separate assessment of attitudes, knowledge and skills (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022; Susilo, 2022a). The results of formative assessment can be used as a basis for further learning improvements (Kurka, 2022a).

Diagnostic Assessment is one of the assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum is a diagnostic assessment (Sagita Mawaddah, 2023). Diagnostic assessment is an assessment carried out specifically to identify students' abilities, strengths, and weaknesses so that learning can be designed according to students' abilities and status (Basic, 2020). The results of diagnostic assessments can be used by educators as a basis (entry point) to plan learning activities according to student characteristics and learning needs. Indeed, diagnostic assessment is not new in the world of education. Diagnostic assessment has been widely known among education practitioners. However, the application of the assessment has not been carried out massively. Among the teachers themselves, there are several understandings that consider diagnostic assessment similar to pre-test activities given before learning begins.

Pre-test and diagnostic assessment have fundamental differences. Pre test is intended to measure students' initial ability before learning begins. While diagnostic assessment is carried out to determine the needs of students based on the cognitive and affective characteristics of students who are very diverse.

The current Merdeka Curriculum provides clear instructions regarding the current position of students. Various factors have not escaped the attention of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, it can be concluded that freedom of learning provides equal opportunities for every student to progress, explore and develop their abilities. However, each student certainly has different characteristics and abilities.

Differentiated instruction specifically responds to students' continuous learning progress; what they already know and what they want to learn (Heacox, 2002 in Ditasona 2017). The differentiated learning contained in the Merdeka Curriculum was created to reduce these barriers. So that each student is able to grow and develop evenly. Thus, it is expected that education can accommodate every need of students.

In an effort to realize this goal, diagnostic assessment must be carried out by teachers. Diagnostic assessment itself is carried out to track the potential of students in the cognitive and affective domains. The implementation of diagnostic assessment should be carried out by the teacher before the start of material delivery.

Initial assessment or diagnostic assessment is an assessment that is applied during the initial learning activities to determine the ability of students so that differentiated learning can be carried out properly. Diagnostic assessment aims to identify the competencies, strengths, weaknesses of learners. The results are used by educators as a reference in planning learning according to the learning needs of students (Abarca, 2021; Zega, 2022 in Sudirtha).

The position of diagnostic assessment is none other than to create a healthy learning climate and certainly based on the implementation of differentiated learning. The results of assessments carried out by previous teachers can be a reference for teachers in learning activities. In diagnostic assessment which is used to measure cognitive abilities, the results of diagnostic assessment will show the level of ability of students to understand a material, see the tendency of student learning styles, to see the level of knowledge of students about one material. While in the affective realm, assessment itself can be used to see various student learning potentials such as asking for learning, cooperation, mutual respect, and other things related to students' emotions.

Teachers are encouraged to conduct diagnostics periodically to diagnose cognitive conditions (students' learning abilities and achievements) and non-cognitive conditions (psychological aspects and emotional conditions of students). This diagnostic assessment is expected by teachers to provide appropriate learning according to student conditions and needs.

The objectives of cognitive diagnostic assessment are: (1). Identify student competency outcomes (2). Tailor classroom learning to the average ability of students, (3). Provide opportunities to repeat or give additional lessons to students whose abilities are below average. Non-cognitive diagnostic assessments, on the other hand, aim to: (1). Knowledge of the psychological and socio-emotional well-being of students (2). Know the activities in home learning (3). Knowledge of the student's family status, (4). Know the social background of the student (5). Understand students' learning styles, personalities, and interests. Diagnostic assessment follows the following principles: 1). Diagnosis is the process of making decisions about individuals or groups of students to achieve learning objectives 2). Diagnosis is

comprehensive and balanced by considering the factors that cause student learning difficulties 3) Diagnosis and treatment go hand in hand, because the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process depends on students' mastery of what they learn (Sagita Mawaddah, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Diagnostic assessment has a very important role and is a typical assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. Diagnostic assessment consists of cognitive diagnostic and non-cognitive diagnostic. Diagnostic assessment is the initial assessment in a learning activity. This assessment aims to be able to map all the potentials contained in students, both knowledge abilities and in terms of students' emotional abilities. This is the step to form a differentiated learning process. With the application of differentiated learning, it is expected to be able to achieve the goals of the application of the Merdeka Curriculum, namely, students who are independent in developing their talents. The suggestion that the application of this diagnostic assessment should continue to be applied in the early stages of learning. And the division of students from the results of diagnostic assessment must also vary, namely in one group must consist of high, low and medium ability students so that learning becomes meaningful.

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