



**PEMAHAMAN GURU TENTANG PENILAIAN DALAM KURIKULUM MERDEKA:
KASUS DI KABUPATEN BANTUL**

**TEACHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT IN THE MERDEKA
CURRICULUM: A CASE IN BANTUL REGENCY**

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Abstract. Changes in social and technological aspects demand curriculum changes in education. Curriculum changes were made to create capable human beings according to the era. The Indonesian Ministry of Education has responded to these changes by implementing the "Merdeka Curriculum". However, there are still some challenges in practice, especially in learning assessment. This study aims to determine teachers' understanding of assessments under the Merdeka Curriculum. This type of research is descriptive, using a qualitative approach. A total of ten biology teachers participated in this study. The results showed that the teacher understood the assessment concept and the steps for compiling assessments under the Merdeka Curriculum. However, from the results of the analysis of the assessment questions used by the teacher, there are still questions that are not following the objectives of the Merdeka Curriculum. The results of this study can be used as a consideration by stakeholders and universities where there is a teacher training program in the process of socialising the Merdeka Curriculum.

Keywords: *Assessment, Merdeka curriculum, Teacher*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the essential pillars in the development of a nation (Ahmed, 2022; la Velle, 2021; Susilo et al., 2020). Education has a role in creating quality human resources for the future (Nguyen, 2019; Piwowar-Sulej, 2021). In facing the challenges of an ever-evolving era, the curriculum, a crucial element in education, must also keep up with these developments. In 2021, the Indonesian government introduced the "Merdeka Curriculum" (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). This new curriculum aims to provide freedom and diversity in learning so that students can develop their full potential according to their interests, talents and abilities (Kemendikbudristek, 2022).

Assessment is one of a curriculum's main components (Tahirsylaj & Fazliu, 2021; Westbury et al., 2016), likewise with the Merdeka Curriculum. Assessment in the curriculum plays a role in evaluating student learning progress and provides helpful feedback for the learning process (Griffin & Care, 2015; van Halem et al., 2016). Assessment can also serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of learning carried out by the teacher (Lindsay, 2015) so that learning can be improved from time to time. However, implementing assessments in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum often requires more profound understanding and adjustment by teachers.

Bantul Regency is one of the districts in the Special Region of Yogyakarta where most

schools have implemented the Merdeka Curriculum. Based on the initial study's results, several challenges were found in teachers' understanding of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. Several studies have shown that several factors indicated to affect teachers' performance of assessment, such as limited knowledge (Dochy et al., 1999), training limitations (Mak, 2019), and paradigm shifts regarding learning (Swiecki et al., 2022).

In this article, we will dig deeper into teachers' understanding of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. This study will analyse teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, including the steps in preparing appropriate assessments. In addition, it will also examine the assessment questions that the teacher has made. Hopefully, this article can provide better insight into teachers' understanding of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in the Bantul Regency. A good understanding and proper implementation will improve the quality of education and optimally develop students' potential.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research approach with a descriptive research type. A qualitative approach was chosen because the main objective of this study was to understand teachers' understanding of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum in Bantul Regency in depth (Hancock et al., 2006). The stages of research conducted adopting from (Cohen et al., 2018) consisting of (1) Locating a field of study, (2) Formulating research questions, (3) Deciding the sampling stage, (4) Finding information, (5) Data collection, (6) Data analysis, and (7) Concluding. The research was conducted at a high school in the Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The questions in the research are:

1. What is the teacher's opinion about the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum?
2. Does the teacher understand the steps in compiling a Merdeka Curriculum assessment?
3. Is the assessment prepared by the teacher suitable for the Merdeka Curriculum?

The samples used in this study were ten high school biology teachers in the Bantul Regency who were randomly selected. The ten chosen teachers will become informants in this study. As a form of confirmation, we also asked teachers to design assessment questions used in the Merdeka Curriculum and lesson plans used in learning. Selected teachers were invited to a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to find out their opinion about assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. Next, they were asked to write down their understanding. Teachers are also invited to make examples of assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum and collect lesson plans they have used in learning. The data obtained will then be carried out by content analysis to determine the teacher's understanding of the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we will present the findings obtained based on the research questions we posed. Before delivering the results, we describe the principle of a Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers already know the meaning of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. They have also understood how to prepare appropriate assessment steps for the Merdeka Curriculum. However, not all of the assessment questions prepared by the teacher show conformity with the understanding possessed by the teacher.

Merdeka Curriculum Principles

Before explaining the understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, we will outline the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. In general, the central tenet of the Merdeka Curriculum is to give freedom and independence to students in the learning process, which is then described as follows: (1) Empowering Students; Students are given the freedom to determine the course

of learning, explore their interests and talents, and participate in making decisions related to learning. (2) Flexibility; Merdeka curriculum is designed to be adapted to local needs and conditions. (3) Subject Integration; The Merdeka Curriculum promotes an interdisciplinary approach. This condition helps students to develop a holistic understanding and connect knowledge from various disciplines. (4) Project-Based Learning; Students are given assignments or projects related to real life. Contextual projects enable them to develop critical skills, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. (5) Fulfillment of Individual Needs: The Merdeka Curriculum recognises the diversity of students in terms of interests, talents and learning styles. In this principle, differentiated learning is developed to accommodate differences in students. (6) Character Development: Merdeka Curriculum also focuses on character development and students' values. Students are encouraged to develop positive attitudes, leadership, independence, ethics, and social concern.

The teacher's opinion about the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum

The teacher defines assessment as:

"A series of activities in the learning process consisting of data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation which aims to determine the level of understanding and student performance"

All teachers agree with this definition. The conception of an individual's assessment develops along with the individual's intuitive understanding (Brown, 2008). The teachers involved in this study were senior teachers who had received much training on assessment, so their understanding was good. This result is suitable with several studies which show that teaching experience has a relationship or influence on teachers' understanding of learning (Brandenburg et al., 2016; Ibrohim et al., 2022; Tayyebi et al., 2022). Teachers' understanding of assessment is mainly shaped by the interaction between their knowledge, beliefs, and emotions (Kyttälä et al., 2022). Furthermore, Xu & Brown (2016), states that conception consists of cognitive and affective dimensions that govern how susceptible the conception is to change. Based on this opinion, if the information possessed by the teacher is sufficient, then their conception will be stronger.

The teacher's conception of the assessment will influence the teacher's actions and the quality of the teacher's learning process (Barnes et al., 2017; Kyttälä et al., 2022). Several studies have shown that the most prominent purpose of assessment is to improve the quality of teaching conducted by teachers and the learning received by students (Ibarra-Sáiz et al., 2021; Levy-Vered & Alhija, 2018; Nieminen et al., 2023). Teachers who commit to improving their teaching based on the assessment results tend to increase student responsibility and performance in their learning (Daniels & Poth, 2017). However, other studies also show that although teachers understand the principles of assessment in learning and are theoretically familiar with various assessment methods, they do not necessarily apply them in practice. (Deneen et al., 2019; Siegel & Wissehr, 2011). This condition was also found in the research and will be discussed in the last sub.

Steps in compiling assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum

Through discussions in the FGD activities, the teachers agreed that the steps in preparing the assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum were:

"Determine learning objectives, Design ability indicators, Develop assessment strategies, Process assessment results, and Prepare reports"

The teacher's answer suits the general assessment design stages ([Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015](#)). The teacher has arranged the stages in more detail. The use of appropriate assessment preparation steps will affect the teacher's assessment quality ([Darling-Hammond et al., 2015](#)). Designing an assessment involves deciding its purpose, the learning outcomes, the context, how the feedback will be managed, and what strategy will be used to carry out the assessment ([Bearman et al., 2016](#)). The assessment strategy includes assignments that will be given to students. The type of task in the assessment is critical because it is on the task that the performance and understanding of students will be assessed ([Black & Wiliam, 1998](#); [Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2006](#)).

Assessment arranged by the teacher

In this FGD the teacher presented several examples of assessment instruments used in their class. The teachers have used several types of assessment in their learning.

Non-cognitive diagnostic assessment

"Interesting learning materials are... (a) Just listening, (b) Seeing pictures or videos, (c) Reading references, (d) Listening and viewing pictures or videos, (e) Case studies of developing problems, (f)) Other..."

Cognitive diagnostic assessment

"In your opinion, after we are vaccinated, are we no longer exposed to the same virus?"

Formative Assessment

"Coronavirus that causes Covid-19 spreads very easily. The following way the coronavirus is spread is through... (a) mosquito bites that carry the coronavirus, (b) contact with the patient's body fluids such as directly into the bloodstream, (c) small droplets (droplets) from the nose or mouth when coughing or sneezing, (d) contact with fluids from the nose, mouth and blisters on human skin, (e) syringes and personal tools used by other people"

Based on the assessments prepared by the teachers, they have shown progress in applying the assessments in their learning. The teacher has carried out a diagnostic assessment of his learning. Diagnostic assessment in learning is very important to know the condition of students ([Fan et al., 2021](#)). This is following one of the principles of a *Merdeka Curriculum*, namely, carrying out differentiated learning. The teacher also expresses this principle in the following statement.

"The teacher facilitates students according to their needs because each student has different characteristics..."

This opinion follows the concept of differentiation learning. [Tomlinson \(2001\)](#) stated that teachers proactively plan and implement various approaches to content, processes, and products in different classrooms to anticipate and respond to students' differences in learning readiness, interests, and needs. Furthermore, [Tomlinson \(2001\)](#) also states that differentiated instruction is rooted in assessment. Assessment is carried out routinely when learning begins. The purpose of this assessment, of course, is to determine the specific needs of individuals concerning the achievement of learning objectives. The thing that needs to be considered is

that throughout learning, the teacher must continue to monitor the level of readiness, interest, and student learning methods that continue to develop (Tomlinson et al., 2003).

In the formative assessment prepared by the teacher, questions still fall into the Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) category. Several questions are still not following the goals in the *Merdeka Curriculum*, namely, developing student character and competence. The teacher has tried to create analytical questions using infographics, but the types of questions are too simple (students can find answers in the infographics). Figure 1 shows the infographic used by the teacher.



Figure 1. Infographics used by teachers in assessment

Questions used by teachers:

	Statement	True	False
A.	Always wear a mask when travelling.	.....	.....
B.	Often touch the face area when the hands are still dirty.	.....	.....
C.	If there is no facility to wash hands with soap, we can clean our hands using hand sanitiser.	.....	.....
D.	Cover the nose and mouth with your hands when coughing.	.....	.....
E.	Touch the nose before washing hands.	.....	.....

This research can help the development of education policies at the local and national levels. The study results on teachers' understanding of assessment in the context of the Merdeka Curriculum can provide input to policymakers about expanding and improving teacher training in relevant and sustainable assessments, especially in improving the quality of learning in the classroom. This research can also provide input to educational institutions and teacher training providers in designing training programs that suit the needs of teachers in understanding and implementing assessments in the Merdeka Curriculum. This research can be a basis for further research involving more respondents or a wider area. By observing teachers' understanding of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum in various contexts, follow-up research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' challenges and needs in implementing the new assessment approach.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that teachers' understanding of assessment in the Context of the Merdeka Curriculum in Bantul district is good, but challenges still need to be overcome. Teachers already have the correct concept of assessment in the Merdeka Curriculum. They also understand how to make assessments to improve the quality of their learning. In the example of the assessment made by the teacher, most of the questions follow the principles of a Merdeka

Curriculum, but there are still questions that lead to LOTS, so it needs to be improved. Coordinated efforts are required between the government, educational institutions, and the educational community to provide appropriate training, resource support, and a collaborative environment that enables teachers to develop and implement effective assessments.

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