
The Implementation of Differentiated Learning in Merdeka Curriculum In Learning English at High School

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Abstract

An independent curriculum is a policy of learning program designed to restore the national education system. It enables schools, teachers, students, and all school resources to innovate, be creative, and learn independently. Teachers are the main drivers in this process. In differential learning, teachers choose the material to be taught taking into account students' readiness, interests, and learning styles. Currently, educators are more inclined to use conventional learning approaches. In this case, a teacher-center learning approach is used rather than a student-centric learning approach. The aim of this study is to find out how differential learning is used in an independent curriculum for English courses in high school (SMA). The study uses qualitative descriptive methods. The results of this study show that differential learning can be applied in an independent curriculum to English subject.

Keywords: *Implementation, Merdeka Curriculum, differentiated learning*

Introduction

Curriculum has always been related to education because curriculum is a tool used to educational goals. Therefore, the curriculum can be considered as a reference to the educational process in Indonesia. (Angga dkk., 2022). Therefore, the statement suggests that the curriculum should not be seen as a mere document; instead, it should be used as a tool and reference for educators to implement optimal teaching learning activities to educational goals. The curriculum contains a basic or living perspective in education, which clearly defines the purpose of education. The curriculum is designed to make education easier. Current curricula are changing frequently, causing confusion and hindering the educational process.

The term curriculum comes from the Latin word "currere", which means "run or search". Then there's a curriculum, which means a race trail, a journey, or a trail that a horse trail goes through. In fact, it's meant to be a route or a vehicle's trail which leads to a final destination. Along with this Act, Government Regulation No. 57 on the 2021 National Education Standards states the same thing about the obligation to develop a diversified curriculum based on the characteristics of the region, the educational unit, and

the pupil. The implementation of the curriculum development provides the education unit with extensive opportunities to develop its respective operational curricula according to its needs and characteristics.

Carol A. Tomlinson has been an educator since 1995. In his book *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed Ability Classrooms*, he writes about how to give teaching that takes into account the individual differences of students. This idea was later known as differential learning, or different learning. By using a differentiated learning approach, teachers can teach materials based on students' readiness levels, interests, and learning styles. Teachers can also change the content of the lesson (content), the learning process, the learning product or outcome, and the learning environment. The aim of applying this approach is to give freedom to students in learning.

Differential learning allows teachers to teach materials based on students' readiness levels, interests, and learning styles. Teachers can also change the content of lessons, learning processes, learning products or outcomes, and the learning environment in which students learn. It is hoped that this learning process can help students according to their respective circumstances. Schools can use differential learning approaches to liberate. There are four components that are included in this approach:

a. Content is what the student learns and relates to the curriculum and the learning material. In this case, teachers can modify curricula and learning materials based on the student's learning style and their disability conditions, as well as adapting the learning materials to the condition and abilities of the student. However, the teacher usually does not have the ability to control the content specifically (which is not understandable to all students) and adapt it to the students' learning style. Differential learning has two ways to change the content of the lesson. The first is to change what the teacher will teach or what the student will learn based on their interests and readiness. The second is to modify how the teacher or what will be learned by the student is delivered or learned based on the learning profile that the student has.

b. Process—students process concepts and data. How students interact with content and how such interactions affect their learning choices. Classes must be modified to meet different learning needs due to the many different learning styles and choices shown by students. According to Gregory and Chapman (2002), the modified learning process is as follows:

- Activates learning. The learning activity focuses on what has been learned, connects what has not been mastered, gives the student an opportunity to determine why the material is important, and explains what the student does after learning. It involves organized learning activities.

- Individual and group learning activities should be planned during the learning process. Products, the way students show what they have learned. This product is usually the end product of learning that demonstrates the knowledge, skills, and understanding of students after one unit of lesson or even one semester discussing the subject matter. The product is summary and should be rated, so that teachers can evaluate what students have learned and provide the next material. The student's learning style also affects the learning outcome, which is shown by the teacher.

c. Learning Environment: The learning environment includes the personal, social, and physical arrangement of the class. The study environment should also be in line with the student's readiness,

interests, and learning profile so that the student remains motivated to study. Teachers, for example, can organize student seats on the class announcement board based on their learning readiness, interests, and learning styles. Therefore, students can be in larger or smaller groups, work individually or in pairs, and have the same interests and different levels of readiness. Depending on the learning objectives, these groups can also be made based on the student's readiness level and how well they work. Students can also feel safe and appreciated at work.

Differentiated learning is the application of a flexible and non-rigid curriculum that believes in only one way to school educational goals. To this, teachers are directed to apply differential learning, which means learning that is tailored to the character, needs, interests, and learning styles of each student. The basic principle of this approach is that there are no stupid students; there are smart teachers. I found in the field that many teachers have not implemented an independent curriculum because they understood it. Currently, educators are more inclined to use conventional learning approaches. In this case, a teacher-centered learning approach is used rather than a student-centric learning approach. Teachers still serve as a source of learning, so students only concentrate on what teachers teach. Although students in one class have different characters, interests, and learning styles, the learning process will be different among students. Learning continues in the same way. Teachers are not creative in providing learning media, so they only teach through lectures. Besides, the teacher assessment process only looks at the cognitive aspect.

The researchers found this background interesting to discuss in this study, so the researchers conducted research with the title "Implementation of differential learning in the independent curriculum on English subjects. The general purpose of this study is to find out the implementation of differential learning within the independent Curriculum in the English subject. The specific objective is to gather data and information about: 1. implementing differentiated learning in English independent curriculum; 2. Differentiation learning barriers in English autonomous curricula; and 3. Different learning solutions in English lesson.

Methods

Qualitative research methods are used in this research. The format is descriptive. Qualitative methods are used to conduct research on the conditions of natural objects. In this method, the researcher serves as the primary tool and does not attempt to determine how one variable affects another variable. The qualitative method is used to obtain in-depth and significant data, according to Sugiyono. (2016, p. 15). The problem is unclear, comprehensive, complex, dynamic, and meaningful, which is why using this qualitative method, according to Sugiyono (2012, p. 145).

According to Arikunto (2005, p. 234), descriptive research is defined as research aimed at obtaining information about the status or symptom that is occurring, i.e. the symptoms that are occurring at the time of the study. This research uses different research designs. It starts with observing problems in the field and

finding out what is the focus of research. After formulating the research focus, the researchers directly went to the site to collect data through interviews and documentation studies.

After obtaining the data, the researchers processed the data by classifying and comparing the data with existing theories. The results of the data processing are used as research findings presented narratively. From the findings of the research, researchers can draw some conclusions that can be used as recommendation materials for the parties concerned. Participants or data sources in this study use purposive sampling techniques. (Sugiyono, 2012, p. 54). Based on the problem of research on the implementation of differential learning in the independent curriculum on English subjects, then the participants or data sources in this study are the head of the school, deputy head of school, and teacher. The data collection technique used in this research is through interviews and documentation studies.

According to Arikunto (2013, p. 44), an interview is a method used to obtain answers from respondents by questioning and answering. An important emphasis in this interview technique is that researchers can dig deeper into the required data. In this study, the interview method is used to obtain data by digging information, searching for descriptions, or explanations from informants related to the implementation of differential learning in the independent curriculum on the English language outlet. The interview technique used in this study is a structured interview using the interview guidelines of questions prepared by the researchers. While documentation studies are carried out as a supplement to research data by collecting documents from reliable sources. No matter what kind of documents are used, they can be in the form of writing, pictures, or monumental works of someone (Sugiyono 2016, p. 329). In this study, the supporting documents obtained by the researchers are administrative teaching teachers. In addition, the researchers also used triangulation techniques, i.e. data collection techniques that combine various techniques and existing data sources (Sugiyono, 2016, p. 330).

In this study, researchers used source triangulation that is to collect data from one informant to another informant who is also involved in the implementation of differential learning. After obtaining field data, data analysis is carried out aimed at finding important and learned and understood things to answer research questions and formulate research conclusions. The data analysis technique used in this research is data analysis of Miles & Huberman model (Sugiyono, 2016, pp. 337-345). This includes: 1) data reduction, which is the process of summarizing data and choosing the substantive and important things; 2) data display in the form of a short description of a narrative nature; and 3) conclusion drawing, which can answer the problem formula so that it can be obtained implications and suggestions that can be used for the parties concerned. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is that researchers act as tools as well as data collectors. There are additional tools that can be used by researchers other than people, such as questionnaires, interview guidelines, and observation guidance, but they can only help researchers in their work as primary tools.

Findings and Discussions

The implementation of differential learning in Merdeka Curriculum in English subjects, such as:

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- Differentiated learning is a student-side learning manifestation that is designed, implemented and evaluated to meet the individual needs of students by paying attention to readiness, learning interests, and learning profiles.

Using the results of this study, it can be concluded that differential learning in the independent curriculum of English subjects has gone well. Differential learning is carried out in three stages, namely: a. Early stages: At this stage, English teachers make the planning by making the teaching administration starting from *CP*, *TP*, and *ATP*. They also perform diagnostic assessments to identify students' interests, learning styles, and learning style so that they can measure them and adapt the materials and learning methods that will be used in the classroom. In addition, the teacher also analyzes the curriculum to determine what material will be given to the student. The English teacher decided to teach the text procedure material at this meeting.

Implementation phase: In this phase, teachers differentiate learning using four components: content, procedures, products, and learning environments. In terms of material, the teacher adapts the material to the interests and learning styles of the student according to the results of the diagnosis. Differential learning has two ways to change the content of the lesson. The first is to change what the teacher will teach or what the student will learn based on their interests and readiness. The second is to modify how the teacher or the learning material will be delivered or learned by the student based on the learning profile of each student. To enhance students' knowledge, teachers can use a variety of materials, use study contracts, and provide learning. Evaluation phase: In this phase, the teacher evaluates the tasks performed by the student. Every learning process that differentiates improvements in the selection of processes and content, as well as the evaluation of learning objectives, is periodically evaluated. In addition, student evaluations provide information that can be used to broaden the understanding of student profiles.

- Differentiated learning in the independent curriculum of English subjects faces several challenges, among them are:

a. Teacher's abilities: Teachers are still very poor in understanding the independent curriculum. Socialization can only be done through the digital world since the independent curriculum began. Bimtek and face-to-face seminars were held only a few times. Schools should be able to socialize the school's environment with teachers. Because learning resources and resources are connected to applications known as independent learning platforms, teachers who are not skilled in digital literacy will face difficulties. To be able to adapt to the changing times is a great task for teachers. Teachers must have the ability to keep up with the developments of the times.

b. Facilities: Teachers face challenges because they do not have the means and tools necessary to carry out teaching learning activities. Everyone knows that the skills that students should have in English

subjects are reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Therefore, the English lab is essential for teaching activities to run well.

- Solutions to differential learning problems in an independent English curriculum include:

a. School Teacher Capacity aims at improving teacher competence through socialization activities on independent curricula, providing the opportunity for teachers to pursue education and training, and participating in socialization and seminars on improving the teacher's competence both inside and outside the school.

b. Facilities and infrastructure: Schools will consult with the Bandung district education department if they want to improve school facilities and infrastructure. Besides, they also work with school committees so that they can work together to find solutions.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research and data analysis carried out by researchers on how differential learning is used in English subjects in an independent curriculum, researchers can conclude that differential learning has begun in English subject. Learning is carried out in three stages, namely: 1) Early stage, at this stage the teacher performs curriculum analysis and assessment diagnostic to be able to do mapping of interests and learning styles of students. 2) Implementation stage, in this stage teachers do learning by paying attention to four elements namely content, process, product of learning environment. 3) Evaluation stage. Teachers conduct formative and summative tests to determine the follow-up and improvement of the further learning process.

Suggestion

Research results show that differential learning in the independent curriculum of English subjects in the Wachid Hasyim 2 educational park has started well, despite some obstacles. It is expected that this research will help future researchers conduct research on the application of differential learning in independent curricula. This research is not complete, so it needs to be done again in the next study.

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