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Differentiated Assessment Implementation for Students with Disabilities Under the Merdeka Curriculum

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Abstrak

Meskipun Kurikulum Merdeka mengamanatkan fleksibilitas yang berpusat pada siswa, panduan empiris tentang pengoperasian penilaian diferensiasi untuk berbagai kelompok disabilitas masih langka. Studi kasus kualitatif ini mengatasi kesenjangan tersebut dengan menyelidiki implementasi penilaian diferensiasi untuk siswa dengan karakteristik Tuna Rungu, Lambat Belajar, disabilitas fisik/intelektual, dan Gangguan Spektrum Autisme (ASD) dalam kerangka kurikulum baru Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen. Studi ini mengungkapkan bahwa penilaian yang efektif membutuhkan adaptasi yang sangat spesifik: instrumen diagnostik visual-spasial untuk siswa tuna rungu, tugas formatif yang tersegmentasi dan diperluas untuk siswa lambat belajar, alat bantu terintegrasi teknologi untuk disabilitas fisik, dan lingkungan terstruktur dengan stimulus rendah untuk siswa dengan ASD. Melampaui pengujian standar, pendekatan diagnostik, formatif, dan sumatif yang disesuaikan ini berhasil memetakan lintasan pembelajaran individu dan mempromosikan Profil Siswa Pancasila. Studi ini memberikan matriks praktis bagi pendidik inklusif, yang menunjukkan bahwa penilaian diferensiasi bukan hanya modifikasi instruksional tetapi juga kebutuhan struktural untuk pembelajaran yang adil.

Kata Kunci: Penilaian Diferensiasi, Kurikulum Merdeka, Pendidikan Inklusif, Pendidikan Khusus

Abstract

While the Merdeka Curriculum mandates learner-centered flexibility, empirical guidance on operationalizing differentiated assessment for diverse disability clusters remains scarce. This qualitative case study addresses this gap by investigating the implementation of differentiated assessment for students with Deafness, Slow Learner characteristics, physical/intellectual disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within the framework of Indonesia's new curriculum. Data were gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis. The study reveals that effective assessment requires highly specific adaptations: visual-spatial diagnostic instruments for deaf students, segmented and extended formative tasks for slow learners, assistive-technology-integrated tools for physical disabilities, and structured, low-stimulus environments for students with ASD. Moving beyond standardized testing, these tailored diagnostic, formative, and summative approaches successfully map individual learning trajectories and promote the Pancasila Student Profile. This study contributes a practical matrix for inclusive educators, demonstrating that differentiated assessment is not merely an instructional modification but a structural necessity for equitable learning.

Keywords: *Differentiated Assessment, Merdeka Curriculum, Inclusive Education, Special Education*

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INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian educational landscape is currently undergoing a transformative paradigm shift through the nationwide implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. This contemporary framework moves away from rigid, standardized instructional models toward a flexible, student-centered approach designed to cultivate core competencies alongside the Pancasila Student Profile (Profil Pelajar Pancasila). While the philosophical foundation of this curriculum champions learner autonomy and pedagogical adaptability, its systemic success hinges significantly on its inclusivity specifically, how effectively it operationalizes within classrooms that accommodate students with special educational needs (SEN) ((Florian, 2019); (UNESCO, 2020)). In inclusive settings, the traditional disparity between a student's inherent potential and their classroom performance is frequently exacerbated by rigid environmental and evaluative barriers rather than the student's actual disability (Loreman, 2014). Consequently, the structural flexibility embedded within the Merdeka Curriculum provides a critical policy and pedagogical opening to dismantle these barriers through tailored educational supports (Pritchard, 2023).

To bridge this operational gap, differentiated assessment has emerged as an indispensable pedagogical tool. Unlike traditional psychometric evaluations that benchmark diverse learners against standardized norms, differentiated assessment focuses on idiosyncratic growth, formative progression, and individual mastery by systematically modifying the evaluation's content, process, or product ((Tomlinson, 2014); (Pozas, 2020)). Within the Merdeka Curriculum, this approach requires a structural shift toward continuous diagnostic and formative strategies, directly informing the "Teaching at the Right Level" (TaRL) approach. By utilizing thorough diagnostic profiling, educators can adapt subsequent formative and summative tasks not by diluting academic standards, but by introducing adaptive tools and alternative modalities through which students can authentically express their comprehension (Black, 2018); (Hattie, 2007).

Despite the theoretical alignment between the Merdeka Curriculum's mandates and inclusive principles, a critical synthesis of existing literature reveals a profound discrepancy between macro-level policy and micro-level classroom execution. Prior scholarship has extensively documented the foundational concepts of differentiated instruction and general assessment mechanisms for mainstream student populations (Suprayogi, 2017). However, the existing body of research remains heavily saturated with purely descriptive, localized accounts that merely recount teacher perceptions or summarize policy text without empirical validation. Furthermore, much of this localized discourse relies heavily on non-peer-reviewed grey literature, institutional reports, or unverified repository drafts that lack academic validity and rigorous psychometric scrutiny. Concurrently, what has been established in current literature is a broad, theoretical acceptance of differentiated learning, but what remains entirely unaddressed is a systematic, cross-disability empirical investigation into how distinct learning barriers are measured. There is a severe empirical deficit regarding how differentiated assessment instruments are operationalized for specific disability clusters such as students with Deafness, Slow Learner characteristics, physical/intellectual disabilities, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) within the framework of Indonesia's new curriculum.

This critical gap stems from a tendency in previous studies to treat special education needs as a homogenous category, failing to synthesize the highly nuanced communication styles, cognitive paces, and sensory-behavioral requirements unique to each diagnosis (Norwich, 2021). For instance, while high-quality empirical studies in international contexts emphasize that deaf students require specialized visual-spatial psychometrics (Marschark, 2015) and learners with ASD demand highly predictable, low stimulus evaluative settings to mitigate test anxiety (Humphrey, 2008), Indonesian educational research has yet to systematically integrate these findings into the Merdeka Curriculum's assessment modules. Furthermore, the literature lacks empirical clarity regarding how these assessment mandates are executed and validated in specialized schools (SLB) versus regular inclusive schools. Without rigorous, peer reviewed evidence evaluating the operational

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validity of these instruments, teachers are left with vague pedagogical concepts rather than actionable, evidence-based metrics.

Information literacy and technical systemic readiness also represent severe friction points in this paradigm shift. While current educational modules advocate for student profiling, recent empirical evaluations in leading international journals indicate that many practicing educators lack the formal competence to translate diagnostic data into actionable, differentiated instruments ((DeLuca, 2019); (Pastore, 2019)). This challenge is further compounded by a critical gap in adaptive technology research within the Indonesian context; there is an urgent need for studies exploring how digital tools and assistive software can be leveraged to streamline the creation of accessible, meaningful assessments for SEN students (Cullen, 2022). Additionally, long-term empirical tracking regarding how these differentiated strategies impact the academic and socio-emotional transition of SEN students into higher education or independent living remains virtually non-existent in contemporary discourse (Shogren, 2018).

Seizing upon these critical limitations, this research seeks to address these interconnected gaps by moving beyond the superficial, descriptive question of what differentiated assessment is, focusing instead on a systematic, empirical analysis of how it is ethically and effectively implemented. The primary novelty of this study lies in the formulation of a practical, empirical matrix that maps specific learning barriers such as nonverbal communication in ASD or visual spatial processing in deaf students directly to targeted diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment types within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Utilizing a qualitative case study design, this article analyzes the authentic execution of these strategies across diverse learner profiles. By synthesizing field-based practices and evaluating current policy against rigorous international inclusive standards, this study offers a comprehensive implementation model that translates macro level curriculum guidelines into explicit, usable diagnostic tools for inclusive educators. Ultimately, this research provides an empirical roadmap to ensure that assessment serves as an equitable gateway to progress rather than a barrier to inclusion.

METHOD

The research design is this study adopts a systematic scoping review design to map, evaluate, and critically synthesize the empirical literature regarding differentiated assessment practices for students with special educational needs (SEN) under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum framework. A scoping review approach was selected over a traditional narrative review because it allows for a rigorous, transparent, and replicable procedural mapping of an emerging educational policy landscape ((Arksey, 2005); (Tricco, 2018)).The Search Strategy and Information Sources to ensure academic rigor and minimize publication bias, comprehensive literature searches were systematically executed across four primary academic databases: Scopus, ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center), DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), and Google Scholar.

Eligibility Criteria (Inclusion and Exclusion) to filter out non-validated data and ensure the quality of the synthesized dataset, strict eligibility boundaries were established:

a. Inclusion Criteria: (1) Peer-reviewed empirical journal articles using qualitative, quantitative, or case study methods; (2) Documents published within a four-year window (2022–2025); (3) Studies explicitly investigating assessment alterations, diagnostic profiling, or formative/summative adaptations for specific disability clusters; (4) National journals indexed in SINTA or international journals indexed in reputable academic databases.
b. Exclusion Criteria: (1) non-peer-reviewed grey literature, institutional repository working papers, or unverified pre-prints lacking blind peer review (e.g., non-reviewed personal ResearchGate uploads); (2) Dissertations, book reviews, or opinion pieces; (3) Research focusing broadly on general differentiated instruction without distinct assessment tools for SEN.

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Justification of Timeframe (2022–2025): The 2022–2025 chronological boundary was intentionally applied because 2022 marks the official national launch and initial pilot implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Restricting the window to 2025 ensures that all synthesized literature directly evaluates contemporary classroom realities under this specific curriculum policy.

Study Selection and Data Extraction is the initial database search yielded raw bibliographic records. Title, abstract, and full-text screenings were managed using Mendeley Reference Manager to systematically identify duplicates, organize metadata, and ensure strict technical alignment for citation indexing. Following a multi-stage vetting process based on the inclusion criteria, 9 core peer-reviewed articles were selected for complete synthesis. Data from these final articles were extracted into a structured analytical matrix categorized into three thematic domains: (1) Systemic frameworks and teacher assessment literacy, (2) Specialized tools for neurodevelopmental disorders (ASD/Slow Learners), and (3) Visuo-spatial evaluative modifications for Deaf students.

Table 1. Synthesized Empirical Dataset Matrix

No.	Author(s) & Year	Source / Journal Focus	Target Student Profile	Core Finding & Pedagogical Application
1	(Abadi, 2024)	Jurnal UNIK: Pendidikan Luar Biasa (National)	Special Education Teachers	Highlights a critical competency gap; underscores the urgent necessity of structural mentoring and targeted training for SLB teachers to successfully develop operationalized differentiated assessment instruments.
2	(Prawira, 2024)	Journal of ICSAR (International/National Focus)	Slow Learner	Empirically validates a micro-level curriculum adaptation using the ADDIE model in mathematics; demonstrates that structured formative modifications directly yield higher academic performance scores.
3	(Larosa, 2022)	ERIC Indexed Journal (International)	Sensory & Physical Disabilities	Identifies deep systemic barriers in educational environments; proves that relying on rigid, unmodified standardized testing introduces severe construct-irrelevant variance for disabled students.
4	(Suryadi, 2024)	Jurnal Sinkron (National)	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Explores early-childhood diagnostic profiling using technology-driven digital e-assessments; establishes an automated baseline for learner readiness under the Merdeka framework.
5	(Meza Saputri1, 2025)	Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (National)	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	Validates the effectiveness of technology-supported structured observation tools to accurately capture behavioral indices and reduce evaluative anxiety in autistic learners.
6	(Alemu, 2025)	Peer-Reviewed International Publication	Deaf / Hard of Hearing	Formulates a specialized Deaf Disability Assessment Model; argues for an ontological shift away from language-heavy test items toward objective, performance-based non-verbal matrices.
7	(Banten, 2024)	Jurnal AICiEl (National)	Deaf / Hard of Hearing	Investigates classroom-based evaluative practices; proves that portfolio-driven tasks and direct behavioral observation yield higher validity for deaf students than standardized written exams.

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8	(Mursita, 2025)	Journal of ICSAR (International/National Focus)	Deaf / Hard of Hearing	Examines the assessment of affective and social domains within the Pancasila Student Profile (P5); reports severe systemic communication barriers during collaborative group assessments.
9	(Santoso, 2022)	Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Biasa (National)	Hearing Impairment	Provides a foundational baseline detailing that written language mechanics and expressive communication must be the primary targets for early diagnostic interventions.

Data Analysis and Synthesis is the extracted data were subjected to inductive Thematic (Braun, 2012). The analytical protocol followed a strict six-phase sequence: familiarization with the data corpus, generation of initial codes, searching for broader themes, reviewing themes against the raw text, defining and naming thematic clusters, and producing the final report.

The analytical coding specifically focused on extracting three cross-cutting pillars: (1) the conceptual and practical alignment of specialized assessments with the core tenets of the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) verified operational modifications observed in fieldwork, and (3) the technical validation challenges of instruments customized for distinct disability clusters.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Synergistic Paradigm of SEN Assessment and the Merdeka Curriculum

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesian special education marks a paradigm shift from a rigid, standardized educational framework to a flexible, person-centered pedagogy. Rooted in the philosophy of Merdeka Belajar (Freedom to Learn), this curriculum provides the legal and structural flexibility necessary to accommodate diverse learners. Under this framework, assessment is no longer operationalized as a static tool for academic categorization or deficit-mapping, but rather as a dynamic, formative mechanism designed to optimize each student's functional potential, regardless of sensory, cognitive, or physical barriers.

A central tenet of this alignment is the mandatory integration of diagnostic assessment as an absolute precursor to the instructional cycle. In the context of Special Educational Needs (SEN), baseline evaluation identifies specific learning barriers whether physical, intellectual, or sensory neurological alongside latent capabilities (Alemu, 2025) This preliminary data establishes the foundation for constructing Individualized Learning Plans (Rencana Pembelajaran Individual / RPI) and executing the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach. Consequently, assessment serves as the operational compass that directs curriculum flexibility, ensuring that learning objectives remain realistic, adaptive, and attainable.

Furthermore, this relationship is solidified through the Pancasila Student Profile (Profil Pelajar Pancasila), which deliberately shifts the evaluative focus from standardized psychometric scores to holistic character development. In an inclusive or special classroom setting, differentiated assessment allows SEN students to externalize these values through alternative behavioral markers. For instance, while a neurotypical student might demonstrate "Critical Thinking" (Bernalar Kritis) through a structured argumentative essay, a student with a hearing impairment can express the identical competency via a visual infographic or an Indonesian Sign Language (SIBI/Bisindo) presentation.

However, critical field analysis reveals a significant divergence between this conceptual framework and field realities across Indonesian schools. While the Pancasila Student Profile offers a progressive rubric for holistic evaluation, teachers often struggle to translate abstract philosophical dimensions (e.g., "Global Diversity" or "Mutual Cooperation") into concrete, measurable behavioral indicators for students with profound intellectual or behavioral disorders. Without localized, empirical behavioral rubrics, character assessment risks devolving into a subjective, checklist-driven compliance exercise, undermining its intended transformative value.

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Empirical Case Analysis: Special Education Assessment across Disability Classifications

To substantiate the operationalization of these assessment adaptations, this study evaluates the empirical implementation of differentiated assessment practices. The following sections contrast empirical findings with current literature across four primary SEN classifications.

1. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Recent initiatives in the Merdeka Curriculum emphasize the development of specialized diagnostic instruments aligned with Graduate Competency Standards (Standar Kompetensi Lulusan) to differentiate between mild and moderate ASD variations in early childhood and primary settings. Contemporary practices increasingly favor digital, questionnaire-based applications to increase diagnostic efficiency and precision (Suryadi, 2024)

Empirically, as observed in specialized institutions such as SLB Hamong Putro Jombor Sukoharjo, diagnostic and formative assessments for ASD students must comprehensively track multi-dimensional domains: social (Bunda, 2024) emotional reciprocity, expressive and receptive communication, sensory motor processing, and adaptive adaptive behaviors (Bunda, 2024). Unlike standardized academic tests, assessment for ASD heavily relies on structured observation protocols and corroborative caregiver interviews to measure self-regulation and environmental adaptability.

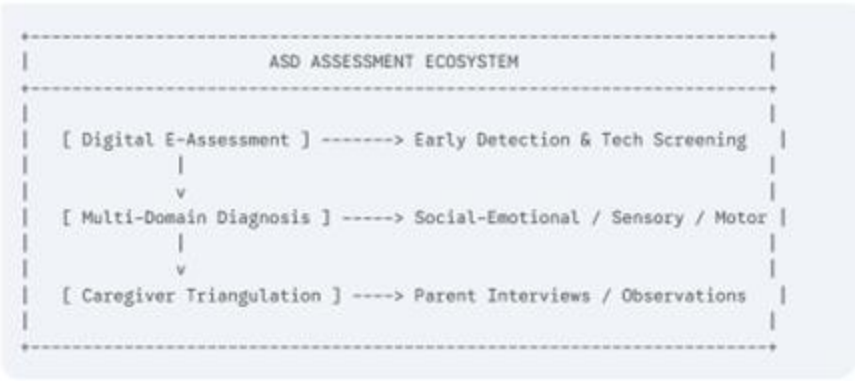

Figure 1. ASD Assessment Ecosystem

A critical tension emerges when contrasting these digital assessment trends (Obsesi, 2025); (ResearchGate, 2025)) with regional infrastructural realities. The literature heavily advocates for web- and mobile-based e-assessment systems to streamline early screening. However, empirical observation reveals a severe digital divide between urban centers and rural or semi-urban schools like those in the Sukoharjo region.

Many special school teachers lack consistent access to updated hardware, stable internet, or institutional technical training. Consequently, while tech-supported instruments offer high precision in controlled research environments, their systemic application remains constrained. Teachers frequently resort to manual, unstandardized observation checklists, which introduces substantial evaluator bias and compromises the longitudinal tracking of behavioral adjustments.

2. Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Students

Assessment for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing (DHH) students under the Merdeka Curriculum necessitates an absolute shift toward visual-manual language modalities. Because standardized verbal and written measures depend on acoustic-linguistic prerequisites, they often fail to accurately measure a DHH student's actual cognitive capacity ((Larosa, 2022). Although DHH students target the same core Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran), the evaluative format must switch entirely to non-verbal mediums where these students demonstrate natural proficiency (Unismuh, 2023).

To address this, current paradigms require comprehensive instrument modifications across three primary areas:

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a. Total Communication Integration: The systematic utilization of visual prompts, contextual images, and sign language (SIBI or Bisindo) for both question delivery and student response modes.
b. Alternative Performance Matrices: Shifting grading weights from traditional written exams to performance-based rubrics, longitudinal work portfolios, and direct psychomotor observations (Banten, 2024).
c. Assistive Technological Hardware: Leveraging interactive digital interfaces and LED-supported visual signaling systems to facilitate real-time classroom formative testing (Innovillage, 2025).

In practice, the implementation of these strategies reveals a critical pedagogical conflict. While literature from urbanized resource centers advocates for sophisticated digital portfolios and LED assisted testing hardware (Innovillage, 2025), field practices at the institutional level demonstrate that the primary barrier remains foundational communication consistency.

There is an ongoing systemic debate regarding the use of SIBI (the formal, structurally rigid state-sanctioned sign system) versus Bisindo (the natural, community preferred sign language) within assessment instructions. Because many teachers are not fully fluent in either system, instructions are frequently misinterpreted. This linguistic mismatch means that low assessment scores often reflect a communication breakdown during testing rather than a lack of conceptual mastery by the student.

3. Students with Physical Disabilities

For students with orthopedic or motor impairments, the cognitive targets (Capaian Pembelajaran) set by the Merdeka Curriculum remain identical to those of neurotypical peers. The objective of differentiated assessment is to modify the logistical process and response formats, separating cognitive performance from motor execution. The guiding principle is clear: assessment must evaluate what the student conceptually understands, not what the student can physically perform.

Data collected from inclusive educational settings highlights four primary areas of procedural accommodation and modification:

Area of Accommodation	Specific Strategy	Relevance to Merdeka Curriculum
Response Method	Allow responses via oral dictation, typing using adaptive keyboards/switches, or using eye-gaze technology.	Ensures the assessment measures cognitive understanding (CP achievement), not handwriting speed or fine motor skills.
Time and Setting	Provide extended time (often 1.5 to 2 times longer) and administer the assessment in a physically accessible, ergonomic location (e.g., a quiet room with specialized desk setup).	Physical effort required for writing or manipulating technology is draining; extra time compensates for this fatigue.
Materials and Format	Provide large-print materials, audio formats, or digital copies compatible with screen readers. Ensure answer sheets/forms are minimal and simplified.	Reduces visual strain and ensures accessibility, aligning with the principles of universal design for learning.
Personnel Support	Use a scribe (amanuensis) or an assistant who records answers exactly as dictated by the student. The scribe must not provide guidance or hints.	Facilitates participation in standardized or complex written assessments without physical barrier interference.

Beyond academic testing, the holistic mandate of the Merdeka Curriculum requires nonacademic functional assessments. These are executed via structured observation checklists to evaluate a student's spatial navigation, their use of assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs or orthotics), and their level of independence in daily living tasks. These functional diagnostics directly inform the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals (Mursita, 2025).

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However, analyzing the operational reality reveals a stark gap between universal design principles and actual school funding models. While the provided matrix outlines ideal accommodations, most Indonesian public special schools lack the financial resources to procure advanced assistive technologies like eye-gaze systems or specialized adaptive switches.

Furthermore, the assignment of a dedicated scribe is often unfeasible due to chronic understaffing. In practice, classroom teachers are forced to compromise, frequently omitting complex assessment items because they lack the physical infrastructure or support personnel to administer them safely and equitably.

4. Slow Learners

Slow learners occupy a distinct position within inclusive classrooms. They display a generalized cognitive delay and a significantly slower learning pace than their peers, yet they do not present with a diagnosed intellectual disability. Under the Merdeka Curriculum, assessing slow learners requires modifying both the depth and pacing of evaluation.

DIFFERENTIATED ASSESSMENT MATRIX FOR SLOW LEARNERS	
COMPONENT	STRATEGY
Diagnostic	Multi-trial observations over low-stakes testing to minimize cognitive anxiety.
Process	Extended timeframes and frequent, structured breaks across multiple shorter sessions.
Content	Reduction of items; focus on 3-5 core prerequisite concepts, removing peripheral complexities.
Product	Performance-based portfolios, visual posters, or oral reports instead of dense written essays.

Figure 2. Merdeka Curriculum and SEN Assesment

Empirical evidence confirms that curriculum modification rather than minor accommodation is necessary to support slow learners. For example, a case study tracking mathematics instruction for a slow learner demonstrated that restructuring fractional concepts via the ADDIE framework led to an increase in academic performance from a baseline score of 29 to a mastery level of 100, while significantly improving the student's learning confidence (Prawira, 2024). This success underscores the importance of running formative and diagnostic checks on prerequisite foundational skills before introducing grade-level content.

Comparing this success case against broader implementation data reveals a persistent systemic challenge: the tension between criterion-referenced progress and rigid administrative demands. The Merdeka Curriculum advocates measuring a student against their own historical progress. However, teachers remain bound to the centralized data-entry systems (Dapodik and Rapor Pendidikan), which still pressure educators to report standardized, norm-referenced grades.

This creates an institutional paradox. While a teacher may empirically document exceptional progress within a modified curriculum framework, the administrative system pressure them to conform to standardized benchmarks. This tension often compromises the integrity of individual learning plans for slow learners.

Systemic Barriers: Teacher Competency and Administrative Burdens

A consistent finding across current literature is the systemic challenge teachers face when designing and executing differentiated assessment instruments (Abadi, 2024). While the Merdeka Curriculum grants teachers pedagogical autonomy, many educators feel unequipped to construct valid, reliable, and differentiated diagnostic tools. This competency gap has prompted the Ministry to publish technical guidebooks and instrument manuals to support teachers in the field.

However, a critical review indicates that the core issue is not merely a lack of theoretical understanding, but rather the overwhelming administrative burden imposed on Indonesian educators. Under the Merdeka

Curriculum, teachers must generate extensive diagnostic profiles, maintain individualized portfolio logs, update continuous formative assessment trackers, and draft detailed qualitative descriptions for the Rapor Pendidikan.

When an educator is responsible for a large, diverse classroom with multiple SEN profiles, the paperwork required for differentiated assessment becomes unsustainable. Consequently, the quality of assessment often deteriorates. Instead of using data dynamically to guide daily instruction, teachers are frequently forced to treat assessment as a bureaucratic, retroactively completed compliance task.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of differentiated assessment within the Merdeka Curriculum framework is vital for achieving educational equity for students with special needs (Deaf, Slow Learners, Physical Disabilities, and ASD). This approach shifts the paradigm from standardized evaluations to flexible, individualized assessments, ensuring that learning aligns with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) principle and fosters the Pancasila Student Profile. The study's core contribution underscores that successful inclusive education relies heavily on diagnostic-driven, formative assessments that adapt to a student's unique functional and cognitive profile.

Practically, this flexibility transforms classrooms into empowering spaces but requires urgent systemic support. To prevent teacher burnout and ensure effective curriculum modification, schools must provide educators with sustained training, adaptive resources, and specialized assessment instrument books. Furthermore, close collaboration among regular teachers, special education experts, and parents remains a critical pillar for success.

A primary limitation of this study is its reliance on localized, short-term data, which may not capture the long-term systemic challenges or the full regional diversity of Merdeka Curriculum implementation across Indonesia. Future research should look into longitudinal studies across varied geographical regions and focus on developing standardized yet adaptable digital diagnostic tools. Ultimately, addressing these practical gaps is essential to fully realize the promise of "Freedom to Learn" (Merdeka Belajar) and ensure an inclusive educational future where no child is left behind.

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