



The Importance of Understanding Students' Characteristics in The Learning Process of Kurikulum Merdeka

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ABSTRACT

This research explained the importance of understanding students' characteristics in the learning process of Kurikulum Merdeka. This research is descriptive qualitative research that involves class XI Clothing 3 as the subject of the research. The instrument of this research used questionnaires distributed to students who were taught during PPL 1 at SMK N 6 Semarang. The result of this research is that understanding the characters of students greatly determines the learning outcomes to be achieved, activities that need to be carried out, and appropriate assessments for students. In relation to the implementation of the learning process in the Kurikulum Merdeka, teachers have the freedom to choose, modify, or compile their own teaching modules that have been provided by the government to adapt the teaching modules to the characteristics of students.

Keywords: Kurikulum Merdeka, Learning process, Student characteristic

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of improving human behavior and way of thinking. Education can be obtained formally or informally. Formal education can be obtained by studying at school.

In the implementation of education, the curriculum becomes an important part of serving as a guide so that the function of education becomes a guiding direction, and behavior becomes better and maximal. In line with the times and technology, the curriculum has also changed. The definition of curriculum according to the 2003 National Education System Law Chapter 1 Article 1, a curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding objectives, content, and learning materials as well as the methods used as guidelines for organizing learning activities to achieve certain educational goals. This understanding is the basis for developing the curriculum. A curriculum is not just a document or design that has no target. However, the curriculum is the whole component of the learning process to create a learning experience.

The curriculum as a teaching plan contains objectives, materials presented, teaching activities, exercises, and teaching schedules. This shows that the curriculum as a system has several components. The curriculum as a system is part of the sub-system of the school's organizational framework, which involves determining all policies regarding the curriculum. Changes to the existing curriculum in Indonesia are currently being developed according to the context and characteristics of students, to build student competencies according to current and future needs.

In the implementation of a *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers have the freedom to choose or modify teaching modules that have been provided by the government to adapt teaching modules to the characteristics of students, or to arrange their own teaching modules according to the characteristics of students.

Based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the learning design is then referred to as the teaching module. Teaching modules are used as one of the learning tools in carrying out the learning process in an effort to achieve the Pancasila Student Profile. It doesn't just stop at designing, this teaching module must be sustainable to then be implemented, make reports, and reflect on learning practices and assessments that have been carried out. This reflection action is carried out in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process that has been implemented so that improvements can be made to carry out the next learning process.

In the learning process, it should be student-centered learning. In



supporting students' understanding and making them active students, it will make it easier to achieve educational goals, namely developing the character and competence of students.

Characteristics of students include ethnicity, culture, social status, interests emotional, and cognitive development, early abilities, learning styles, motivation, development, social development, moral and spiritual development, and motor development. The purpose of this study is to find out the importance of students' characteristics in the learning process of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kurikulum Merdeka

The results of research conducted by Sumarsih et al., (2022) mention the learning concept of *Kurikulum Merdeka* has a framework for continuous learning development. *Kurikulum Merdeka* includes competency standard mapping, independent learning, and minimal competency assessment to guarantee a more flexible space for teachers to formulate learning design and assessment in accordance with the characteristics and needs of learners. In *Kurikulum Merdeka*, *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* plays a role as a guide that guides all policies and updates in the system of Indonesian education, including learning, and assessment.

Student characteristic

A student characteristic is a central driver for student engagement, and student engagement, in turn, determines teachers' behavior, teachers need to monitor their students' engagement and make inferences with regard to underlying student characteristics. These kinds of formative, diagnostic activities are seen as a key component of teachers' professional competencies (Heitzmann et al. 2019; Kunter et al. 2013). Student characteristics as prerequisites for learning are the most decisive factor in predicting student engagement and also further learning achievement (Hattie 2008).

Research problem: How do the results of understanding student characteristics affect the teacher in the learning process?



METHOD

The method of this research is qualitative descriptive research that describes the phenomenon that happened in the field. It is supported by Gay and Airasian (2000:275) who say descriptive research determines and describes the way things are. Typical descriptive researches are concerned with the assessment of attitudes, opinions, preferences, demographics, and procedures.

In this research, the researcher used questionnaires distributed to students who were taught during PPL 1 at SMK N 6 Semarang. The researcher involved class XI Clothing 3 as the subject of the research. The questionnaires were given via the link in the class group WhatsApp. It contains questions and statements regarding the characteristics of students and is written in Bahasa. Questions and statements on the questionnaires start by asking about physical development, language development, cognitive development, socio-emotional development, moral-spiritual development, ethnic and cultural aspects, learning interest, learning style, and the emotional and social status of students' parents.

FINDINGS

As teachers in designing the learning process, it is necessary to understand the characteristics and initial abilities of students. Analysis of students' initial abilities is an activity of identifying students in terms of needs and characteristics to determine specifications and qualifications for changes in behavior or objectives and materials. Teachers are highly recommended to be able to make profiles of their students according to the learning objectives in class. This activity will help teachers to be able to manage classes and provide better teaching when mapping the conditions of the students in the class being taught. The characteristics of students are defined as characteristics, traits, character, and habits possessed by someone who is relatively fixed. In addition, it can also be defined as the overall pattern of behavior or abilities possessed by students as a result of nature and the environment.

Whether the learning process is effective or not depends on how well the teacher understands the characteristics of the students. An understanding of the characteristics of students determines the learning outcomes achieved, activities to be carried out, and appropriate assessments for students. Along with this, the characteristics of students must be the concern of teachers in carrying out all learning activities.

Based on the characteristics of the students that have been described previously, the following are the results of the questionnaires that have been answered by students in class XI Clothing 3, a sample of 18

students was taken.

Physical Development

The average height of the observed subject is 155 cm, and the average body weight is 56 kg. there are 11 students who have minus eyes, black hair, and brown skin.

Language Development

As many as 13 students were able to use Indonesian correctly. As many as 11 students used Indonesian during the lesson. As many as 12 students felt able to present the results of the discussion in language that was easy to understand.

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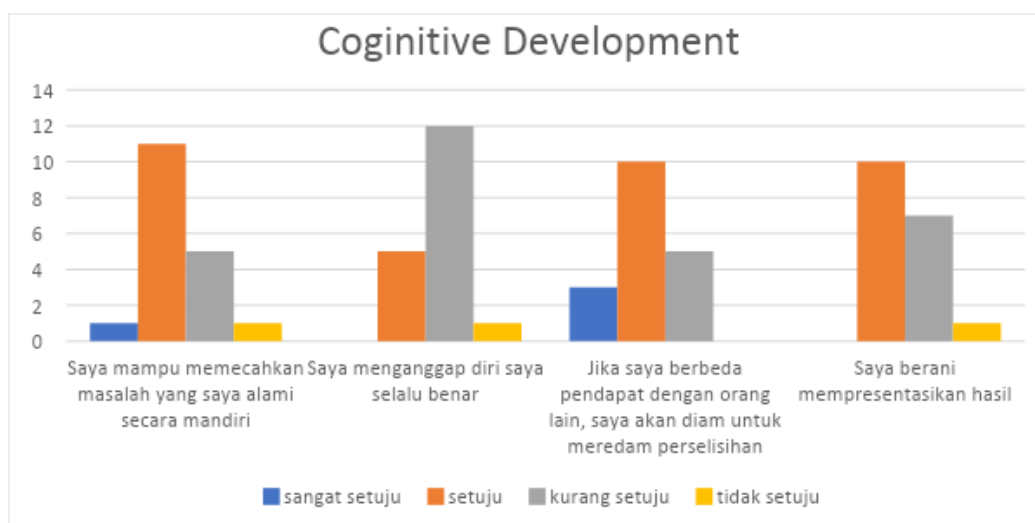
Figure 1
Language Development



Cognitive Development

As many as 11 students agreed that they were able to solve the problems they experienced independently, and 10 people agreed to be fair if they differed from others. There are 12 students who do not agree to think of themselves as students who are always right.

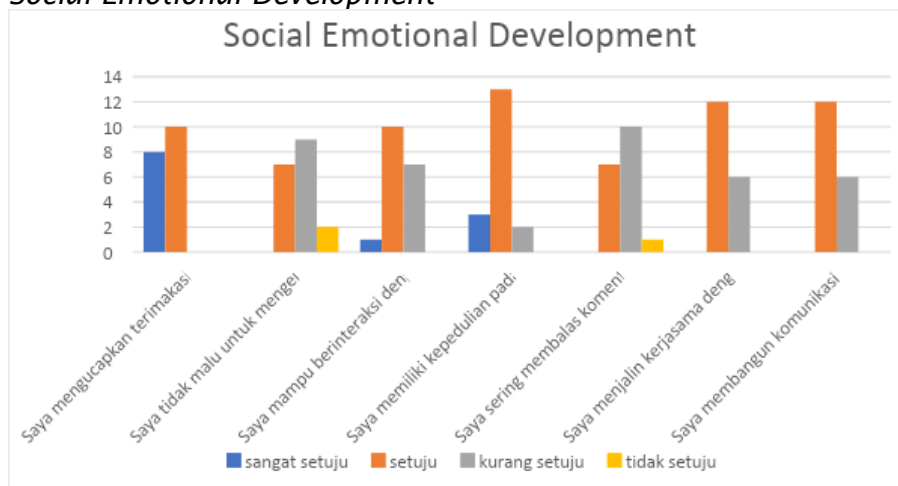
Figure 2
Cognitive Development



Social-Emotional Development

The subject of observation is able to understand what other people feel, this means that the subject has a high sense of empathy. There were 13 students who cared about their own friends, 10 students agreed to collaborate and build good communication with friends and teachers, and 8 students strongly agreed to say thank you after receiving help from others.

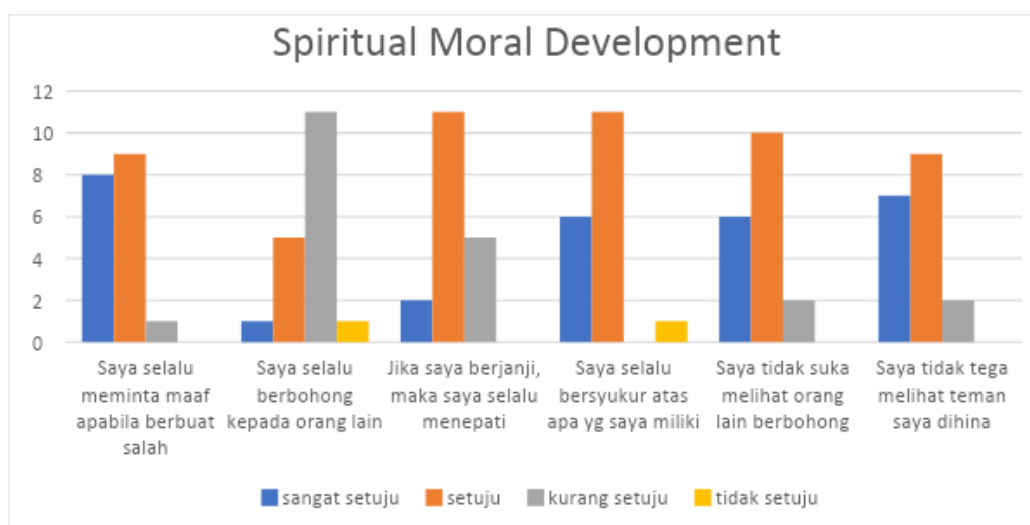
Figure 3
Social-Emotional Development



Spiritual Moral Development

Almost all students agree to always apologize if they make a mistake. There are 11 students who agree to always be grateful for what they have and keep promises that have been made, and 7 students strongly agree not to have the heart to see their friends being insulted.

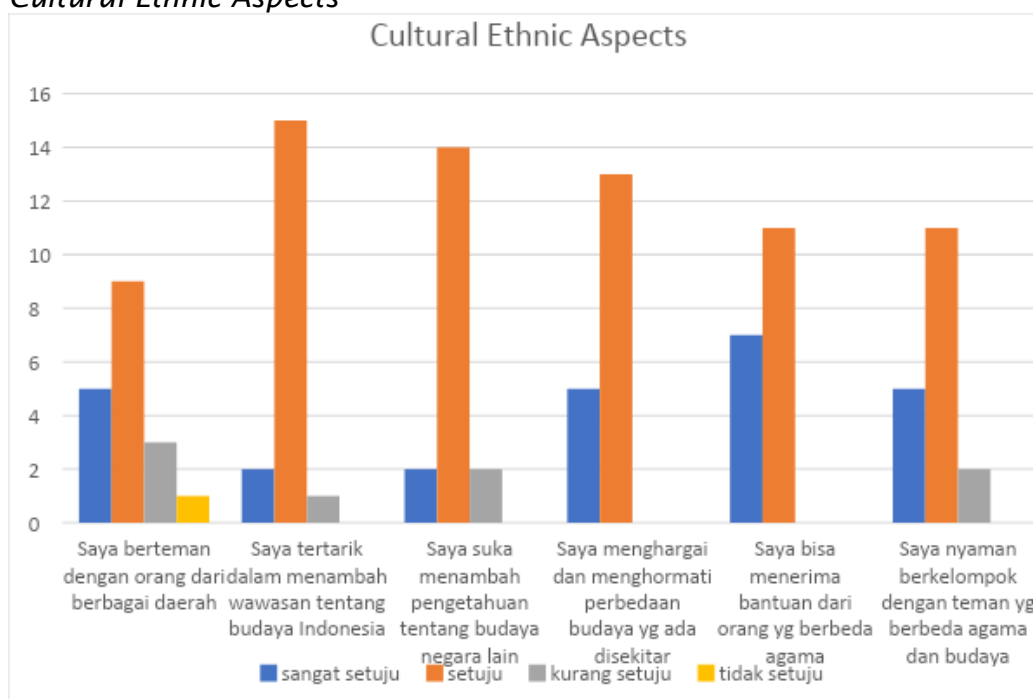
Figure 4
Spiritual Moral Development



Cultural Ethnic Aspects

A total of 15 students were interested in adding insight into Indonesian culture. Most students stated that they wanted to gain knowledge of other countries' cultures without forgetting their original culture, and they felt comfortable in groups with friends of different religions and cultures.

Figure 5
Cultural Ethnic Aspects



Interest to Learn

Half of the subjects of observation try hard to understand the lesson. As many as 12 students agreed that the knowledge they learned would be useful.

Figure 6
Interest to Learn



Motivation to Learn

As many as 14 students paid attention to the teacher's explanation with great enthusiasm and showed a sense of enthusiasm in each lesson. More than half of the research subjects feel able to do the work independently. However, many students disagree if asked to express opinions without being asked.

Figure 7
Motivation to Learn





Learning Style

More than half of the students chose to listen to an explanation from someone who had used a tool before reading the instructions. When learning a new skill, students are most happy to try and practice it directly rather than asking and seeing what the teacher does.

Socio-Economic Status of Students' Parents

There are 14 research subjects that still have both parents. For educational status, most of the students' parents are high school graduates. In terms of employment, most of the research subject's fathers work as entrepreneurs and mothers as housewives. However, the research subjects stated that they felt fulfilled with all their needs. Parents' economic level does not affect the way they make friends and their level of self-confidence.

DISCUSSION

In carrying out the fun learning in the classroom, it is necessary to have a good relationship between teacher and students. In the context of fun learning, students are more directed to have high motivation in learning. Factors that need to be considered in carrying out fun learning strategies are understanding the character of students, utilizing student behavior in organizing learning, developing critical thinking skills, creative and problem-solving abilities, utilizing the classroom environment as a learning environment, providing good feedback to improve learning activities, and make the surrounding environment a source of learning. Understanding the character of students greatly determines the learning outcomes to be achieved, activities that need to be carried out, and appropriate. For example, on the ethnic-cultural aspect, many students are interested in adding insight into Indonesian culture. So teachers need to develop teaching modules that contain regional culture to attract students' attention to the learning process.

In the aspect of learning style, the results show that more than half of the students choose to listen to an explanation from someone who has used a tool rather than read the instructions. In the learning process, teachers can apply group learning, where students who are smarter become leaders of each group, and serve as teachers in the group.

Then on the aspect of learning motivation, the results showed that more than half of the research subjects felt they were able to do the work independently. This is in line with the profile of *Pancasila* students in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, where the independent



dimension, explains that Indonesian students are independent students who are responsible for their learning processes and materials.

Furthermore, on the aspect of cognitive development, the results stated that as many as 11 students agreed that they were able to solve problems that were experienced independently. In the implementation of the learning process that applies the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, students are the center of learning, where the task of the teacher is as a facilitator and not as the only source of learning. So, it is important for students to explore their own knowledge, and have a creative dimension in the Pancasila student profile, which is expected to be able to produce something original, meaningful, useful, and impactful.

Teachers, in carrying out the learning planning process need to understand the characteristics and initial abilities of students. The teacher's understanding of student backgrounds such as family background, and economy, influences the process of formulating learning systems. Another aspect that needs to be considered by the teacher in the learning process is understanding student learning styles. Learning style refers to the way students prefer to learn. The diversity of student learning styles needs to be known by the teacher at the beginning of teaching. So that the teacher has a basis for determining the approach and learning media is determined by the suitability between learning approaches based on the level of psychological development with the learning styles preferred by students.

CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, understanding the characteristics of students is necessary in the learning process to achieve the learning objectives expected by the teacher. The desired goal in understanding the initial characteristics of students is to condition what should be taught and how to condition students to learn according to their respective characteristics. Understanding the characteristics of students makes learning centers centered on students according to the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. In the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, it is hoped that there will be a collaboration between teachers and students, including student-centered learning processes, students be more active and creative and develop thinking skills in the learning process, and teachers use learning approaches before starting class, are open to technological innovation and can respond effectively active and creative in every educational development, so that what to taught to students can be useful, both for their own lives and others.



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