

## **Optimizing the Teacher's Role in Assessment of Children's Language Development in Accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum at Mekar Sari Preschool**

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***Abstract:** This research aims to optimize the role of teachers in the process of assessing children's language development according to the Merdeka curriculum in Mekar Sari Early Childhood Education (preschool). This research focuses on how teachers can be more effective in assessing and encouraging children's language development in the context of the Merdeka curriculum. Through a literature approach and descriptive method, this research identifies strategies and practices that can help teachers improve the quality of their assessments. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide valuable insights in improving the quality of preschool education by optimizing the role of teachers in assessing children's language development in the context of the Merdeka curriculum.*

***Keywords:** the role of teachers, assessment, merdeka curriculum*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Indonesian government continues to strive to provide policies regarding the education system such as demanding curriculum changes where a good curriculum is a curriculum that must be in accordance with the needs and developments of the times. The Merdeka curriculum itself emphasizes more on increasing efforts towards the talents and interests of each student. This is because students have different abilities in their respective fields. However, a curriculum is good, but the success or failure of the curriculum ultimately depends on the hands of a teacher. To achieve all this success, professional teaching staff are needed (Pribadi Adya, 2023).

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an important foundation in a child's development, providing a strong foundation for their cognitive, social, emotional and language abilities. In an effort to advance ECE, Merdeka Curriculum was introduced as an approach that focuses on holistic child development. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes child-oriented learning, where teachers have a very important role in the assessment process to measure children's progress. Early childhood is an individual who has 6 aspects of development that must be optimized in their growth, the six aspects are religious and moral values, language, cognitive, physical motor, social emotional, and art.

One of the child's developments that most affect children in their growth and development is the development of children's language. children's language development is very important for children to continue their social life because language is important to help children communicate. Good language and communication are needed so that the activities carried out can run smoothly (Daroah, 2013).

Teachers who carry out their duties as educators are required to be able to adapt to current developments. This is a challenge for teachers in carrying out the educational process. At this time teachers are expected to be able to change their teaching methods from the old methods that still focus on students. Only as recipients, students are the main focus of learning activities that are currently taking place (Husnani, Zaibi, Rollies, 2019). This is how ideal teachers can be formed so that the quality of education in Indonesia can continue to improve and be able to compete internationally.

Teachers at Mekar Sari Preschool have a big responsibility to ensure that the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented well and that assessments are effective. Assessment in this context covers various aspects, including evaluation of the child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. The results of the assessment not only provide guidance to teachers, but also serve as a basis for identifying children's language development needs and designing appropriate learning programs to develop children's language skills.

However, in practice, there are various challenges that ECE teachers face in optimizing their role in assessment. Some of these challenges include a lack of teacher knowledge and skills in conducting appropriate assessments, limited resources, and various other practical obstacles. Therefore, this study aims to find out how teachers can be more effective in assessing children's language development in the context of Merdeka Curriculum at Mekar Sari Preschool.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The methods used in this research are the literature study method and

descriptive method. This method describes how teachers optimize early childhood assessment in preschool institutions by implementing an merdeka curriculum. a series of activities relating to methods of collecting library data, reading and taking notes, and managing research materials (Zed, 2008. In line with this, according to Sugiyono (2005) states that the descriptive method is a method used to describe or analyze research results but is not used to make broader conclusions. The data collection technique in this research is an observation technique using an observation sheet, interviews and document review tools.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Results of observations and interviews conducted at Mekar Sari Preschool, the resource person was successfully interviewed, namely the head of Mekar Sari Preschool, with the informant on 04 October 2023. The research results show that teachers who teach in preschool still do not understand the assessment in the merdeka curriculum. The problems that occur in the process of making assessments are because they have only been implemented using the merdeka curriculum, so educators still don't understand the assessment and are still studying this assessment. In Preschool, educators use assessment instruments, anecdotal notes, checklists, and work results.

Based on the author's interviews with informant regarding the structure of the curriculum, it seems that teachers do not really understand it. Teachers know the structure of the merdeka curriculum in Early Childhood Education but teachers do not yet have a clear picture of how to implement this curriculum, but currently it is still in the initial stages or preparation.

In this problem, the solution to solving this problem could be for educators to attend training and seminars on early childhood assessment more often. As you follow the program more often, hopefully your understanding will also increase. Also, we as researchers helped with the assessment instruments for documenting serial photos and rubiks. We as researchers helped create instruments for assessing documentation of photo series and rubiks. This stage was carried out online.

Teachers' lack of understanding of assessment in the preschool context can be seen in several aspects. First, there is confusion regarding the concept and purpose of assessment. According to Johnson (2018), "many early childhood teachers do not have a complete understanding of the nature and benefits of assessment at this level." This can cause assessment performance to be not optimal. Second, teachers may not be familiar with assessment methods that are developmentally appropriate for preschool children. As Smith (2019) states, "the use of assessments inappropriate for early childhood can produce data that is inaccurate or does not reflect true abilities."

Based on the results of interviews regarding assessments of children's language development to stimulate them to think critically, it can be concluded that children develop language through various methods. Teachers say, speak, read and categorize, always hoping to use Indonesian when communicating, even though this does not directly involve them in actively participating in learning and when children are active in learning and teaching.

Teaching and learning activities make it possible for children's learning outcomes to improve children's language skills. The results were sourced from interviews with school principals, the results of direct observations by researchers noticed that the role of preschool educators is to stimulate the language development so that it can be implemented well. Children's language development needs to be improved through speaking, reading, writing and listening with more interesting

methods. As children's development increases, the teacher's role is to stimulate their development. Children have used various methods or media, one of which is using Indonesian to improve language skills. in children (Natiti, 2019). The teacher's ability to create linguistic stimuli. Specifically, to stimulate speaking skills, namely by developing language fluency, developing the ability to master vocabulary, developing integrating language in everyday life and developing the ability to express yourself (Silawati, 2012)

The Merdeka Curriculum is an educational curriculum development program designed to improve the quality of education in Indonesia through a more contextual, inclusive and student-centered approach. This program offers a new approach in developing educational curriculum in Indonesia with an emphasis on developing student potential with a more inclusive and creative approach. Apart from that, this program also places student needs on curriculum development, responding to current challenges, pressure on student participation in the teaching and learning process, and competency-based learning. In this way, it is hoped that the Merdeka Curriculum can create a learning environment that is more interesting, useful and in line with students' needs. The 2013 Curriculum (K13) and the Merdeka Curriculum are two different curricula used in early childhood education in Indonesia. The results of interviews conducted with preschool teacher regarding the differences in assessments in K13 and the merdeka curriculum are based on the following table:

K13 curriculum	Merdeka curriculum
Using structured academic assessments	Using non-academic assessments, such as portfolios and projects, anecdotal notes
Curriculum 13 has assessment instruments that are in accordance with established competency standards.	The merdeka curriculum provides more flexibility in the assessment process.
Assessments are carried out to measure student achievement of these competencies.	Assessments can be more tailored to the learning approach used and student needs. This may include formative assessments that are more oriented towards the child's development.

The Merdeka Curriculum and K13 are two different curricula. The following are the differences between the merdeka curriculum and K13 according to Andriani (2022):

1. Goal: The goal of the Merdeka Curriculum is to strengthen students' character and morals, while the goal of K13 is to improve the quality of education and students' abilities in various fields.
2. Approach: The Merdeka Curriculum uses a character and skills approach, while K13 uses a competency approach.
3. Class: The Merdeka Curriculum is aimed at grades 1-6 elementary school, while K13 can be used from elementary school to high school.
4. Subjects: The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes character and moral learning, while K13 has more complete and structured subjects.
5. Assessment: The Merdeka Curriculum uses non-academic assessments, while K13 uses more structured academic assessments.
6. Focus: The Merdeka Curriculum focuses on developing students' character

and morals, while K13 focuses on students' general academic abilities.

7. Implementation: The Merdeka Curriculum is more flexible and gives teachers freedom to develop learning, while K13 is more structured and has clear guidelines.

Teachers' lack of understanding of the assessment process can have a significant impact on children's learning experiences at the ECE level. Children may not receive the right support to reach their full potential. In addition, inaccurate assessment data can result in learning recommendations not being tailored to individual children's needs.

### **Teacher Competency**

As explained in Law no. 14 of 2005, states that teachers are professional educators who have the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and engaging students in formal early childhood education, basic education and secondary education. Academic qualifications are academic education certificates that must be obtained by teachers or lecturers according to the type, level and unit of formal education at the place of assignment. Competency is a collection of knowledge, skills and behavior that must be possessed, internalized and mastered by teachers or lecturers carrying out professional duties. Certification is the process of granting educational certificates to teachers and lecturers. An educator certificate is formal proof of recognition given to teachers and lecturers as professionals. A professional teacher organization is an association with a legal entity established and managed by teachers to develop teacher professionalism. Apart from the above, in Law No.14/2005 it is stated that teachers and lecturers (in this case there is more pressure on teachers) are a specialized field of work carried out based on the following principles:

- Have talents, interests, calling, and idealism,
- Have commitment, academic qualifications, competence, responsibility,
- Obtain income determined according to work performance,
- Have a guarantee of legal protection,
- Having a professional organization related to teachers' professional duties.

To overcome these challenges requires various efforts. First, training and professional development is needed that focuses on assessing understanding at the ECE level. According to Brown (2020), "comprehensive training will equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to carry out assessments effectively". In addition, a collaborative approach between teachers, parents and other education personnel can also help ensure that assessments are carried out appropriately and in the best interests of the child and understanding of teacher competence.

### **CONCLUSION**

Teachers' lack of understanding of the assessment process in the context of Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a significant challenge that affects children's learning experiences at the ECE level. This can be seen from confusion regarding the concept and purpose of assessment, as well as a lack of familiarity with assessment methods that are appropriate to early childhood development. The impact of this lack of understanding can result in children not getting the right support to reach their full potential. In addition, inaccurate assessment data can also lead to learning recommendations that do not suit individual children's needs.

To overcome this challenge, efforts are needed such as training and

professional development that focus on understanding assessment at the ECE level. A collaborative approach between teachers, parents and education personnel is also important to ensure assessments are carried out appropriately in the child's best interests.

This research has an important contribution in improving the quality of ECE by ensuring that the Merdeka Curriculum is implemented well and assessments are carried out effectively. Through this effort, it is hoped that teachers at Mekar Sari Preschool can be more effective in understanding and implementing assessment in accordance with the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

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