

THE PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL (TARL) APPROACH IN A NEW LEARNING PARADIGM OF INDONESIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

The new learning paradigm ensures learning practices to be centered on learners. With this new paradigm, learning is a continuous cycle starting from the mapping of competency standards, planning the learning process, and implementation of assessments to improve learning so that students can achieve the expected competence. New paradigm learning delivers flexibility for educators to formulate learning plans and assessments according to the characteristics and needs of students (Teaching at The Right Level). The present article aimed to analyze the existing literature related to principles and implications of Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL) implementation in new learning paradigm context. The method used in the present research is Literature Review which function is to study, identify, evaluate, and interpret all existing research based on the topics raised. The results revealed that there were five principles of Teaching at the Right Level; adjustment of learning outcomes with the ability level of students, conducting a diagnostic assesment at the beginning of learning, developing lesson plans, adjustment of learning process with students' characteristics and learning outcomes stages and performing continuous assesments and evaluations for improvement.

Keywords: *Teaching at the Right Level, Principles, New Learning Paradigm, Merdeka Curriculum*

Introduction

Education has always been a crucial component to change the world especially in preparing new generations. In Indonesian context, the transformation of educational system is highly connected to the changing of the applied curriculum. Relying on this, a new modified curriculum or learning paradigm has been introduced and extensively socialized by Ministry of Education and Culture called Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka). This new learning paradigm ensures learning practices to be centered on learners and becomes a continuous cycle starting from the mapping of competency standards, planning the learning process, and implementation of assessments to improve learning so that students can achieve the expected competence. This new learning paradigm is also in line with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's thoughts about the nature of students through the Independent Curriculum. In relation to this, students come to the class with their diverse backgrounds and capability. Each student must have different background, unique characteristics and diverse multiple intelligences. Therefore, Tomlinson (2001) emphasized that each learner is a unique individual, with different needs, interests, talents and learning styles. That is a simple reason that education must reflects this diversity which will result in inclusive and effective learning. The implementation of education must ensure that this uniqueness is seen as a potential that needs to be developed through a diversity-oriented curriculum of students. This modified curriculum aims to ensure that education meets individual needs, takes differences into account and enables each learner to reach their maximum potential.

The concept of the Independent Curriculum frees teachers to openly make important decisions regarding the selection, management, design, and implementation of the learning process in the classroom (Fauzan and Arifin, 2022). In this Merdeka Curriculum, the focus also is no longer on the teacher but on the students. Classes are also no longer seen as a place to shape students into the shape desired by the teacher, but rather a place where students grow according to their individual uniqueness to achieve their best potential. This new paradigm learning is a basic concept or basis of thinking which in practice requires a separate approach so that the basis of thinking can be applied in the classroom through appropriate good practices.

Based on above explanation, it is also commonly known that students must also have diverse academic achievement levels. It is common to discover that one student in the same class or learning group has different levels of knowledge and understanding from others. Therefore, for effective teaching and optimal learning outcomes, the teacher must accommodate this range of learning abilities. This approach aligns with the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) concept. This concept is originated from the research conducted by Banerjee, Duflo, and Kremer that led to the conception of TaRL. They conducted randomized controlled trials to assess the effectiveness of various learning interventions. Their research discovered that customizing instruction based on individual students' learning levels, rather than depending on grade-level curriculum, could substantially improve learning results. (Tenry, et al. 2023). Teaching at the right level (TaRL) is a learning approach that does not refer to the class level, but refers to the ability level of students. This is what makes TaRL different from the usual approach. Teaching at the right level (TaRL) can be the answer to the problem of understanding gaps that have been occurring in the classroom. This kind of new concept is one of the actualization of the Independent Curriculum by which it gives teachers the flexibility to design and carry out lessons and assessments according to the capacity of their students or commonly known as teaching at the right level (TaRL). Teaching using the TaRL approach is managing students not tied to grade levels. However, they are grouped based on the developmental phase or according to the ability level of the same students. So that the reference is to learning outcomes, but adjusted to the characteristics, potential, needs of students. Likewise with the learning outcomes, also determined based on the evaluation of learning in accordance with the phase/level. Students who have not achieved learning outcomes in their phase, will receive assistance from educators to be able to achieve learning outcomes. Above elaboration concept inspires the author to dig up more about the principles on how the Teaching at The Right Level (TaRL) as an learning approach should be taken into consideration and effectively implemented in the classroom.

Method

The research conducted in this study employed historical research and library research methods, utilizing data collection techniques such as literature reviews. The researchers gathered data and information from various existing literature sources pertaining to the development of the research topic. These sources included official government documents, qualitative and quantitative data from scientific articles, and other forms of previously published literature (Connaway & Radford, 2017). To gain insight into the transitional period of implementing the Independent Curriculum, the study focused on understanding the significance and application of Teaching at The Right Level as a learning approach. The data and documents collected were subjected to analysis, and additional support and context were drawn from relevant references and other pertinent literature sources.

Throughout this phase, the author thoroughly examined the literature related to Teaching at The Right Level as a learning approach, exploring its implementation and implications for learning. By employing rigorous research methods and drawing from diverse sources, the study aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the subject matter. Then, the author collects several articles; related items that have a correlation with the theme under the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). PRISMA enables researcherto conduct research with a systematic framework that begins with the collection of literature, eliminating it based on the criteria determined according to the research (screening), synthesis, and conclusions.

The process begins by collecting some literature from the latest articles from 2017 to 2022. The keywords used to search for related literature are: new paradigm education, independent curriculum, teaching at the right level, pedagogy according to the stages of ability, teaching English with TaRL, implementation of TaRL. Apart from research articles, the

researcher also collected several books related to the concept of teaching at the right level to support the theoretical framework.

Finding and Discussion

Analyzing Learning Outcomes to Set Learning Objective and Objective Flow

In this emerging educational paradigm, educators will familiarize themselves with the concept of Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), and Learning Objectives Flow (ATP). Learning Outcomes (CP) refer to the specific competencies that students are expected to attain during each stage of development for every subject in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. These learning outcomes encompass a comprehensive set of competencies and a well-structured scope of content presented in a narrative format. To ensure alignment with the students' developmental stages, the mapping of learning outcomes is categorized into age-specific phases.

The primary objective of the learning outcomes analysis activity is to establish Learning Objectives and Learning Objective Flow, which serve as guiding references for the implementation of the learning process. Educators and educational institutions have the flexibility to employ diverse strategies in formulating learning objectives and goals. However, it is imperative that the resulting learning objectives and learning objectives flow align with two key criteria:

- a) **Competency:** This entails the incorporation of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that can be demonstrably exhibited by students, showcasing their successful achievement of the designated learning objectives.
- b) **Content:** This refers to the fundamental knowledge or core concepts that students are expected to comprehend upon completing a particular learning unit.

Diagnostic Assessment is the Key

Diagnostic assessment, conducted at the outset of the learning process, serves as a valuable tool for teachers to gauge students' proficiency and requirements concerning curriculum achievements. The outcomes of the diagnostic assessment provide crucial information that both teachers and students can utilize to identify learning goals and stages. To comprehensively ascertain student profiles, the assessment should encompass both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects. The cognitive diagnostic assessment yields fundamental information on various fronts, including the stages of students' mastery in literacy and numeracy competencies, which are essential for further learning progress. It also helps determine the students' initial knowledge level in various subjects and their preferred learning methods. On the other hand, the non-cognitive diagnostic assessment offers insights into students' profiles, encompassing their interests, talents, and psychological readiness to engage in the learning process. The process of self-diagnostic assessment employs a diverse range of methods to render students' mastery and needs visible. Some of these methods include written tests, surveys, interviews, observations, interactive games, discussion forums, as well as psychological tests to assess talents and interests, among others. By employing these multifaceted assessment approaches, teachers can tailor their instructional strategies to cater to the specific needs and preferences of each student, ultimately fostering a more effective and personalized learning experience.

This is a crucial principle that should be recognized and conducted by the teacher before designing and implementing learning and teaching process. This might include both cognitive and non-cognitive aspect of students. Refers to Tenry, Nurnia, Rabiah (2023), a teacher can conduct diagnostic assessments to address the diverse levels of academic achievement. This assessment provides valuable insights into the student's readiness and achievement levels. Diagnostic assessment can be formal or informal, employing tests, observations, interviews, or self-assessments. Through this assessment, teachers can gather data to inform their instructional

decisions, learning module design, material selection, media incorporation, and the arrangement of assessments in the classroom.

Developing Lesson Plans

The teaching module is the development of a lesson plan which is equipped with more detailed guidelines, including student activity sheets and assessments to measure the achievement of learning objectives. Referred to as modules because these devices can be used in a modular manner. With this teaching module, teachers can use a more varied set of tools, not just textbooks with the same lessons throughout the year. In other words, this gives teachers the opportunity to use a wider variety of teaching resources, not limited to textbooks. Teaching modules are not only developed by the government but can also be developed by teachers and other education communities in Indonesia through good practice. Educators and educational units can use various strategies to develop teaching modules as long as the resulting teaching modules meet predetermined criteria and activities. Learning in teaching modules in accordance with the principles of learning and assessment. According to Kemendikbud (2020), teaching modules are expected to meet four criteria as below :

- a. Essential: conceptual understanding of each subject through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning.
- b. Interesting, meaningful, and challenging: fostering an interest in learning and involving students actively in the learning process. Related to previous knowledge and experience, so it's not too complex, but also not too easy for his age stage.
- c. Relevant and contextual: related to previous knowledge and experience, and in accordance with the context at the time and place where students are.
- d. Continuous: The connection between the flow of learning activities according to the learning phase of students. Writing teaching modules aims to guide educators to carry out the learning process. Components in the teaching module are determined by educators based on their needs.

Adjustment of Learning Process with Students' Characteristics and Learning Outcomes Stages

With the shift towards student-centered learning, teachers play a crucial role in fostering active growth and development based on individual capabilities. The work of Banerji revealed a concerning reality where many children struggled with basic reading skills, prompting doubts about the efficacy of the existing education system. This concern gave rise to the development of the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, which draws on Piaget's theory by emphasizing a focus on "what children can do" rather than prescriptive expectations. In essence, TaRL underscores the importance of customizing instruction to align with students' cognitive development and achievements. To address this challenge, teachers can craft comprehensive lesson plans or teaching modules that accommodate the unique characteristics and diverse learning needs of their students, drawing insights from diagnostic assessment results. Furthermore, they can design learning activities that incorporate tailored instructions, taking into account the individual stage of achievement and specific traits of each student. By implementing these customized approaches, teachers empower students to engage actively in the learning process, promoting their overall growth and development.

Continuous Evaluation of Learning and Assessment

Continuous evaluation of learning and assessment is a vital aspect of the teaching process, ensuring that educators can enhance their instructional methods and optimize students' progress. This process involves several key steps:

- a) Learning Reflection and Assessment: Educators engage in introspection, carefully evaluating the learning and assessment strategies employed in each teaching module. This analysis entails identifying which learning objectives have been successfully achieved and which areas require further attention. The formative assessment results serve as a foundational basis for these reflective activities.

- b) Identification of Successes and Improvements: In order to identify successful aspects and areas for improvement, educators can adopt a multi-faceted approach. They may hold discussions with colleagues, analyzing assessment data, and gathering feedback from students. These diverse perspectives provide valuable insights to shape future teaching strategies.
- c) Modification of the Next Teaching Module: Subsequent to the evaluation and assessment process, educators collaboratively work with colleagues to modify the content and structure of the upcoming teaching module based on identified needs and areas for improvement. This iterative process ensures continuous refinement of teaching practices to better cater to students' learning requirements. By actively engaging in continuous evaluation and assessment, educators can adapt their teaching methodologies to foster a more effective and dynamic learning environment, supporting the overall growth and achievement of their students.

Conclusion

Based on the results of a literature review related to the principles of the Teaching at The Right Level approach as a learning approach during the transitional period of implementation of the independent curriculum it is important to do. Learning by considering teaching that is appropriate to the ability level of students is an effective way to meet the diverse academic needs of students. So, in its application educators must be able to consider the principles of its implementation so that it is in accordance with the expected results. Teachers need to consider the above principles which starts from analyzing the learning outcomes to set learning objective and objective flow, conducting diagnostic assesment to understand students' current cognitive conditions, developing lesson plans based on the diagnostic assesment results, adjustment of learning process with students' characteristics and learning outcomes stages, and continuous evaluation of learning and assesment. Teaching at the Right Level represents a paradigm shift in education, making it more equitable, inclusive, and effective. By recognizing the diversity of learners and providing personalized instruction, TaRL ensures that every child reaches their fullest potential. As educational institutions embrace this student-centered approach, we can look forward to nurturing a generation of confident, capable, and well-rounded individuals prepared to face the challenges of the future.

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