

The Praxis of Differentiated Learning in the Independent Learning Curriculum Judging from the Idea of "Totality and Infinity" Emanuel Levinas

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Differentiation Learning, Independent Learning Curriculum, Totality and Infinity.

This article explores the praxis of differentiation learning in the context of the Free Learning Curriculum through the lens of the "Totality and Infinity" proposed by Emanuel Levinas. The literature review approach explored the relationship between the praxis of differentiation learning and Levinas' notions of ethical responsibility towards other individuals. The literature reviews the methods in this article to see their relevance and implications and provide a critical note on Levinas's ideas regarding differentiation approaches. The results illustrate the understanding of the praxis of differentiation learning in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, which is associated with Levinas' concept of ethical responsibility and relationships between individuals. The discussion explored the implications of these findings in everyday education practice, identifying challenges that may arise and opportunities to improve the praxis of differentiation learning, both on implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum and on the sustainability of education programs in Indonesia. The conclusion highlights the importance of considering ethical aspects in designing and implementing differentiation learning praxis and providing direction for further research and practice.



Introduction

One of the leading approaches to implementing the Independent Learning Curriculum (KMB) is differentiated learning, both in content or content of teaching materials, processes, products and forms of assessment or evaluation of learning. The concept of differentiation learning in the Independent Learning Curriculum application emphasises recognising individual students' diversity and efforts to provide relevant and meaningful learning experiences for each student according to their needs, interests, and potential (Jasiah, Maisura, Susilo, Trinova, & Yuniendel, 2023). The Merdeka Belajar curriculum recognises that each student has unique needs, interests, and talents. The praxis of differentiated learning emphasises the importance of understanding and accommodating this diversity in learning planning and implementation.

Differentiated learning in KMB implementation involves flexibility in teaching and assessing. Teachers must be able to adjust teaching methods, materials, and assessments according to the needs and abilities of students. This flexibility also involves using diverse resources, including teaching materials, technology, and learning activities (Fauzia & Ramadan, 2023). In addition, teachers can form small groups with students with similar levels of understanding or hold different groups for students who need additional help. This way, students can study with their peers and receive appropriate support. In terms of assessment, differentiated learning uses formative assessment continuously. Teachers actively monitor student progress, provide timely feedback, and change teaching strategies if necessary. With formative assessments, students can see where they are, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and develop effective learning strategies.

The differentiated learning model provides challenges that match the abilities and interests of students. Teachers must be able to adapt curriculum and learning activities to challenge more capable students and provide support for students who need additional assistance. In this way, students feel encouraged to reach their maximum potential (Azizah, Usman, Fauzi, & Rosita, 2023). In addition, differentiated learning encourages the active involvement of students in the learning process. Teachers must create a collaborative environment where students work together, communicate, and share ideas. They should also provide opportunities for students to ask questions, ask opinions, and participate in learning-related decision-making.

The praxis of differentiation learning in KMB can be seen through the lens of the idea of "Totality and Infinity" (1961) put forward by Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995) (Roubach, 2019). Levinas was a French philosopher famous for his concept of ethics centred on duty to others. In his work, "Totality and Infinity", Levinas highlights the importance of the relationship between the individual and the other and the moral responsibility arising from that relationship. In the context of differentiation learning, KMB emphasises the importance of accommodating individual diversity in the learning process. The concept of "Totality and Infinity" can provide a relevant view. Levinas emphasises that individuals cannot be reduced to part of a whole or totality but have a dignity that cannot be ignored and that must be respected by others. Thus, the praxis of differentiated learning in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum must reflect respect for the uniqueness and diversity of each individual. This includes acknowledging each student's different needs, strengths, and challenges. Teachers need to see every student as a subject with the right to be respected and supported in their learning process.

In addition, the principles contained in "Totality and Infinity" also underline the importance of relationships between individuals in the learning process. Collaboration, empathy, and exchange of views between individuals are essential in creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment (Norman & Zoncita, 2016). Thus, the praxis of differentiated learning in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum can be seen as an effort to recognise, respect, and facilitate individual diversity while promoting mutually beneficial relationships between individuals in the learning process. This aligns with the ethical values proposed by Levinas in his thoughts on Totality and Infinity.

"Totality and Infinity" (1961) is one of the most influential philosophical works of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas of the 20th century. The book is particularly challenging in exploring many core themes that have preoccupied philosophical thinkers throughout history, including the nature of human existence, the limits of perception, and the meaning of freedom. Levinas' central thesis is that all philosophical inquiry begins with our awareness of our existence as human beings. By reflecting on life experiences, we can understand the nature of consciousness, the limits of our knowledge, and the conditions that allow us to be free. At the heart of Levinas' philosophy is the concept of 'the Other'. For Levinas, the Other is everyone separate from us – physically and in terms of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. By meeting with 'Others', we face aspects of reality that fundamentally differ from our reality (Muthohar, Syukur, & Junaedi, 2020).

In Levinas' thought, "Other" refers to another individual or "the other." This concept is fundamental in Levinas's philosophy, emphasising the ethical relationship between individuals and "others". Levinas argued that individuals cannot be understood or reduced to part of a larger totality or concept. Instead, he emphasised that there is something unique and unexpected in the relationship between one individual and another. In ethical relationships with "others" or "others", individuals are faced with moral responsibilities that cannot be ignored. This responsibility transcends any existing concept or regulation and is a call to act ethically for the welfare and justice of "others." Thus, in Levinas' thinking, "Other" represents another individual with a dignity that must be recognised, respected, and faced with genuine moral responsibility. This concept led Levinas to develop the idea of ethics centred on the relationship between the individual and "others", which became the basis for many of his philosophical works (Hand, 1997). Levinas argues that this encounter with the 'Other' has profound implications for our understanding of ethics. Ethics unfolds through interactions with others rather than based on abstract principles or rules. By responding to the needs of the 'Other', we can begin to live ethical lives grounded in the reality of human existence.

Method

This article uses qualitative research methods with a literature review approach (Fan, Breslin, Callahan, & Iszatt-White, 2022). The literature review is preceded by identifying and collecting relevant literature sources (Snyder, 2023). Literature review in this context is an approach that involves identifying, collecting, and critically analysing various literature sources relevant to the topic of differentiation learning in the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, seen from the perspective of the concept of "Totality and Infinity" by Emanuel Levinas. This method aims to present a deep understanding of how Levinasian ethical principles can be applied in educational contexts to strengthen inclusion and justice. Relevant literature may include scientific journals, books, articles, and other documents discussing differentiation learning, the Free Learning Curriculum, and the works of Levinas relating to ethical responsibility towards other individuals. This literature analysis is then used to construct a comprehensive understanding of

differentiation learning practices in freedom- and equality-oriented education while identifying relevant practical and theoretical implications.

Results and Discussion

Differentiated learning is an approach that treats each student as a unique individual and requires different learning approaches according to their conditions and needs. It allows educators to design learning programs that are responsive and adaptive to students, improving the quality of learning and achieving the goals of the Free Learning Curriculum (Jasiah et al., 2023).

The Merdeka Belajar Curriculum (KMB) is a curriculum that places students as the centre of learning and provides freedom and flexibility to educational institutions to design learning programs that suit students' conditions and needs. In the implementation of KMB, integrating a differentiation learning approach is very important because it can help educators meet the goals of this curriculum, namely forming students who can think critically and independently and have the ability to search, find and use information effectively (Aisah, Munandar, Wadiono, & Jannah, 2024).

In particular, the role of differentiated learning in implementing KMB is as follows: first, adapting learning to student needs. In the KMB system, students can choose a learning program and even design it to adapt to their conditions and interests. With a differentiated learning approach, educators can design learning programs that better suit students' needs and learning styles (MS, 2023). Second, it encourages creativity. Differentiated learning can increase students' creativity because it gives them the freedom to be creative and choose the way of learning that suits them best. This learning approach allows students to explore their interests and talents and build critical thinking and analytic skills (Wulandari, 2022). Third, increase flexibility. Learning programs are designed to accommodate student needs and preferences in a differentiated learning approach. Therefore, educators can provide flexibility in curriculum design and learning methods. This can help students to learn in a way that suits their needs and preferences (Ningsih et al., 2023). Fourth, increase academic achievement. Educators can design more focused and effective student learning programs in differentiated learning. In implementing KMB, educators can use this approach to achieve set learning targets, thereby increasing students' academic achievement. Fifth, enhance the learning experience. In the differentiation learning approach, students have the opportunity to choose the way of learning that is most suitable and comfortable for them. This can enhance their learning experience, provide higher motivation and reduce learning-related stress and anxiety.

Thus, integrating differentiation learning is very important in the implementation of KMB. This approach can help educators design learning programs that are more responsive and adaptive to students, improve the quality of learning, increase academic achievement, and enhance student learning experiences. Differentiated learning and KMB must be integrated with the same goal: to achieve high-quality education and independent and creative students. The idea of integrating differentiation learning in

KMB implementation received his affirmation through Levinas' thoughts on "Totality and Infinity", which discussed responsibility to 'the Other' (other individuals) and the importance of total involvement with 'the Other' in forming ethical relationships. This thinking is one of the contributing preferences in implementing differentiation learning in implementing KMB (Amalia, Rasyad, & Gunawan, 2023).

Here are some of the relevance and implications of his thinking with differentiation learning practices in implementing an independent curriculum. First, it places students as the main subject in the learning process. Levinas' thinking on the importance of full engagement with the Other suggests that individuals must understand their environment, including in the context of learning. In differentiation learning practice, this can be interpreted as placing students as the main subject in the learning process, considering their respective experiences, needs, and preferences. By opening space for students to choose learning programs that suit their talents and interests, learning can be better adapted to individual needs (Ghani et al., 2023). Second, it forms ethical, solid relationships between students and educators. Levinas' thinking on the importance of shaping ethical relationships between individuals implicitly emphasises the role of educators in shaping ethical relationships with students and making them the centre of attention in the learning process. In differentiation learning practice, the ethical relationship between students and educators can be realised through a learning approach that is responsive and adaptive to students' individual needs and conditions. Third, improve intercultural skills in the classroom. Levinas' thoughts and views on the importance of full engagement with 'the Other' apply to relationships between close individuals in society and reinforce interculturality within the classroom. In the independent learning curriculum, students are expected to be able to work together with native students and transmigrant students who have different cultures. Differentiation learning practices can accommodate these cultural differences, thus increasing student interaction and understanding, and, in the more extensive run, foster enthusiasm and the ability to develop cultural diversity. Fourth, improve critical and independent thinking skills in students. Levinas' thinking about the position of 'the Other' as a source of ethical learning and development can enhance students' ability to think critically and independently. By making students the main subject in the learning process, the gap in the differentiation approach can make the learning process more exciting and dynamic, ultimately increasing students' desire to acquire knowledge. This can help students develop critical and independent thinking skills and build meaningful learning experiences appropriate to their existential conditions.

Thus, Emanuel Levinas's thought is relevant to differentiation learning, especially in implementing KMB. Her thoughts on the importance of full engagement with the Other, ethical relationships, and social responsibility can help build learning situations that better suit individual needs and preferences. By employing a differentiated learning approach, Curriculum Merdeka Belajar can guarantee that every student gets the right learning approach to develop their potential and become independent and wise individuals.

There are several models and examples of good practice in the application of differentiated learning that can be applied in the classroom and school: 1) Learning-Based Assessment (ABP). ABP is an assessment program specifically designed to determine the needs and potential of each student. The program is designed to measure individual learning and student ability using various more selective measurement methods. This assessment helps teachers understand how to support students in learning more effectively. This program also helps determine each student's most suitable differentiation learning scenario (Undikma et al., 2023). 2) Description of the grading rubric. An assessment rubric is a procedure for assessing performance criteria used in teaching and evaluating the learning process. In differentiated learning, assessment rubrics are essential in facilitating competency-based assessment. The rubric is designed to provide clear criteria and indicators of what is expected during the learning and evaluation process. 3) Cooperative and collaborative learning. Cooperative Learning is a learning approach that has proven effective in applying differentiation learning. In this learning model, students are grouped based on their abilities or needs. Groups are formed in such a way that students who have higher abilities can help students who need help in completing their tasks. Thus, this learning model allows students to learn according to their own pace and preferences. 4) Video recordings of student progress. This method helps monitor student progress and provides reviews and feedback towards individual student development. Students can check and control their abilities by supervising their video footage. Teachers can also use video recordings to assess students' abilities or assist students in identifying weaknesses they may have (MAHYUDDIN et al., 2016). 5) Peer Support and Teaching Method Program" (PSTMP). PSTMP is a personalised learning program designed to accommodate students' learning needs. In this program, students take initial tests to evaluate their ability level in various subjects. The results of this test are used to design learning programs according to student needs and interests (Wijayanti & Prihandini, 2024).

In conclusion, many good practices can be applied to differentiation learning in the classroom and school. Programs such as PLSP, cooperative learning, rubric assessment description, and learning-based assessment have proven successful in helping students develop their potential. Differentiated learning can help students learn in ways that better suit their needs and abilities, thus improving academic outcomes and building students into independent and creative individuals.

Although from the point of ideas and concepts, differentiation learning has many benefits and relevance in modern education and is ideal for implementing KMB; it is also faced with several challenges and obstacles in its application in the classroom and schools. Here are some of the main challenges that may be faced (Cakranegara, 2021) (Fitriah & Widiyono, 2023): 1) Limited resources. One of the main obstacles is limited resources, both in terms of time, teaching staff, and learning materials that can be tailored to students' individual needs. Not all schools have sufficient infrastructure or funding to support differentiated learning effectively. 2) Teacher training. Teachers need specialised training in designing, managing and evaluating differentiation learning. Unfortunately,

not all teachers have adequate training, so implementing this approach can be challenging. 3) Monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring each student's progress individually and evaluating their learning in the context of differentiated learning can be a complicated task. Providing appropriate feedback and tailoring instruction based on individual needs can be challenging for teachers who have classes with large numbers of students. 4) Administrative challenges. In some cases, rigid school or administrative policies can hinder the implementation of a differentiated learning approach. Curriculum standardisation or uniform evaluation policies may not support the flexibility necessary to practice differentiation effectively. 5) Resistance or fear. Some teachers may feel uncomfortable or afraid of trying differentiated learning methods because of concerns over failure or the complexity involved. Uncertainty about the outcome or concerns about how students, parents, or administrators respond can also be obstacles. 6) Stereotypes or stigma. Some students or groups may experience stigmatisation if placed in a different learning group or get extra help. This can affect their emotional well-being and complicate the implementation of differentiated learning.

The challenges and barriers to implementing differentiated learning in the classroom and schools are not limited to the individual or instructional level. However, they are also influenced by the ecosystem and cultural factors surrounding the educational environment. Here are some ecosystem and cultural challenges and barriers that can affect the implementation of differentiation learning (Jayanti, Umar, Nurdiniawati, & Amar, 2022). 1) School culture and learning traditions. Strong school cultures and established learning traditions can hinder change and innovation, including implementing differentiated learning. If this approach is inconsistent with existing values or practices, it cannot be easy to introduce it and gain support from the entire staff and school administration. 2) Systemic policies and structures. Education policies, curriculum standards, and other systemic structures can also be barriers to implementing differentiated learning. If policies or standards do not support flexibility and adaptability in learning, this can limit teachers' ability to differentiate effectively. 3) People's mindset and expectations. People's expectations of education and their perceptions of what counts as successful learning can also influence acceptance of differentiated learning. If society prioritises standardised exam results over individual adjustments, it can make teachers feel pressured to focus on uniform learning. 4) Inequality of access and resources. Inequality of access to quality education and adequate educational resources can be a significant obstacle to implementing differentiated learning. Schools in areas with high poverty levels or lack of government support can have difficulty providing the services and support needed to support differentiated learning. 5) Support from school administration and leadership. Support from school administration and leadership is essential for successfully implementing differentiated learning. If principals or administrative staff do not support change or do not provide sufficient resources, teachers may find it challenging to implement differentiation practices effectively.

In order to get out of the obstacles and challenges described above, there are several essential recommendations and suggestions related to efforts to change the mindset and

behaviour of teachers, including Teachers' need to prioritise ethics and responsibility to others. Mutual respect and care for each student's needs, interests, and potential should be fundamental in designing and implementing differentiation learning. School teachers and staff must understand that every student has a dignity that must be recognised and respected. Teachers need to develop independently in terms of empathy and sensitivity to understand each student's needs, concerns, and potential. This requires an awareness of each student's uniqueness and the ability to feel their perspectives and experiences. In classroom learning activities, a teacher must create a safe, inclusive, and responsive learning environment where every student feels welcome and supported. This can include paying attention to students' emotional and psychological needs and promoting student collaboration and support (Wahyuningsari, Mujiwati, Hilmiyah, Kusumawardani, & Sari, 2022). In this case, teachers must acknowledge and positively respond to student diversity. This could mean providing a wide range of learning materials, tailoring teaching methods, and providing additional support for students' needs. Teachers must constantly monitor student progress and tailor their instruction to individual needs. This ensures that every student gets appropriate support and has equal opportunities to develop and reach their potential (Fuadi et al., 2023). In addition, in classroom learning, teachers need to be flexible in designing learning experiences that can be tailored to the needs and interests of students. This could mean varying teaching methods, adjusting task difficulty, or providing options and alternatives for task completion.

In order to support individual capacity and broaden horizons related to differentiation learning, teachers need to receive adequate training and support in planning, implementing, and evaluating differentiated learning. Teachers attend training and Professional development (Rofiah et al., 2024). Teachers must have adequate training and professional development in designing, managing, and evaluating differentiated learning. This can include training on introducing different learning styles, differentiation strategies, and curriculum adjustments. Teachers may involve workshops, seminars, or professional development focused on inclusive learning strategies. In addition to training and professional development activities, teachers must build collaboration and participation externally and internally. Collaboration between teachers, school staff, students, parents, and other schools' learning communities is essential in supporting effective differentiated learning (Wijayanti & Prihandini, 2024). By collaborating, they can share knowledge, experience, and resources to create a supportive learning environment for all students.

While recommendations and suggestions for schools, it is necessary to build an inclusive and accepting culture. Schools must promote an inclusive and accepting culture where every student feels valued and supported. This can include building diversity awareness, encouraging student collaboration, and providing space for diversity in curriculum and learning (Wa'alin & Munandar, 2024). Of course, this is also supported by vital administration and resources. School administrations need to provide vital support to teachers in implementing differentiated learning. This can be in the form of

providing additional resources, ongoing training, and moral support to teacher staff (Cakranegara, 2021).

In terms of the culture and ecosystem of schools and communities. The need for parental and community involvement. Parental and community involvement is critical in supporting differentiation learning. Schools need to communicate with parents about the importance of this approach and get their support in expanding differentiation learning practices at home (Fauziati & Hidayati, 2023). In addition, public education about Levinasian values. As emphasised by Levinas, public education about ethical values and responsibility to others can help build a better awareness and understanding of the importance of supporting differentiated learning in an educational setting. Communication and education can work if schools build productive partnerships with external organisations and institutions (Rosiyani, Salamah, Lestari, & Anggraini, 2024). Schools can work with external organisations and agencies that support differentiation learning through training programs, additional resources, or technical support in designing differentiation strategies.

By following the recommendations and suggestions above, teachers, schools, and communities can contribute together to ensure that the application of differentiated learning in the classroom and schools is practical and impactful and reflects the ethical values espoused by Levinas in "Totality and Infinity". By implementing the above recommendations, the school can create a learning environment that conforms to the ethical principles and responsibilities espoused by Levinas in "Totality and Infinity". This will help ensure that every student is treated fairly, respected, and supported on their academic success and personal development journey.

Conclusion

In implementing the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum, applying a differentiation learning approach is very important because each student has different needs and interests in learning. Referring to the philosophical idea of "Totality and Infinity" Emanuel Levinas, the awareness and moral responsibility of teachers, schools and communities towards the diversity of individuality of each student becomes fundamental. In this regard, there is a demand that educational institutions should strengthen interpersonal relationships between teachers and students and improve teachers' ability to accommodate student needs and avoid discrimination. The learning ecosystem and school culture must be structured and open to encourage student participation and effective decision-making and continue to motivate students to become independent. In order to create an inclusive and respectful educational environment, continuous reflection and evaluation of the learning practices implemented are needed. If applied correctly, differentiated learning approaches can help increase education's effectiveness, impact, and meaning in ensuring individual student success.

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