

Student Perceptions of Assessment Practices in High School Social Studies: Implications for Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of assessment practices in social studies subjects consisting of Economics, Geography, History and Sociology at SMAN 2 Tanggul and their implications for teaching and learning. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research collected data through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. A total of 30 students from grades X, XI, and XII were purposively selected to ensure the diversity of their experiences and views. The results showed that students tend to favour formative assessments that provide constructive feedback and opportunities to improve over summative assessments that are often perceived as adding pressure. Positive perceptions of formative assessment were associated with increased motivation to learn and active participation in class. In contrast, negative perceptions of summative assessments that are perceived as unfair and overly pressurised negatively impact student motivation and confidence. This research reveals that diverse and innovative assessment practices are needed to accommodate students' learning needs more effectively. The implications of these findings emphasise the importance for teachers to develop assessment strategies that are fair, useful and responsive to students' needs, which can ultimately improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in social studies classes.

Keywords—Formative Assessment, Summative Assessment, Student Perception, Social Studies Teaching and Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Assessment in education plays an important role in the learning and teaching process. In senior high school (SMA), particularly in social studies subjects, assessment practices become a tool to measure students' understanding of the material taught. Effective assessment not only assesses students' abilities, but also provides constructive feedback for academic improvement. Despite this, many students often feel anxious and dissatisfied with the assessment methods applied. Therefore, it is important to understand students' perceptions of assessment practices in order to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning in social studies subjects.

Students' perceptions of assessment are influenced by various factors, including the type of assessment, frequency, and feedback received. Formative and summative assessments, the two main forms of assessment, have different impacts on students' learning experiences. Formative assessment aims to monitor students' learning progress continuously, while summative assessment assesses students' final achievement at a period of learning. Research shows that students tend to favour formative assessment as it gives them the opportunity to improve. However, often, assessment practices in schools lean more towards summative assessment which adds pressure on students (Black & Wiliam, 2018).

The influence of students' perceptions of assessment practices can have a significant impact on their learning motivation. When students feel that the assessment applied is fair and useful, they are likely to be more motivated to learn and actively participate in the learning

process. Conversely, if students feel that assessment is unfair or irrelevant to learning, they may become less motivated and less confident. This suggests that students' perception is a crucial element in determining the effectiveness of assessment. Therefore, understanding students' views on various assessment practices can assist educators in designing more effective assessment strategies (Brookhart, 2017).

Social studies lessons in high school cover a variety of complex aspects, ranging from history, geography, economics, to civic education. The diversity of this material demands varied and appropriate assessment methods. However, in reality, many teachers tend to use traditional assessment methods such as written exams and essay assignments. While these methods are effective for measuring cognitive understanding, they often fail to assess students' critical and analytical thinking skills. Thus, exploring students' perceptions of diverse assessment methods can provide valuable insights for improving teaching practices in social studies classrooms (Guskey & Brookhart, 2019).

This study aims to identify and analyse students' perceptions of assessment practices in social studies in high school. The research will also assess how these perceptions affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning. By understanding students' views, it is hoped that assessment strategies can be found that not only accurately measure students' abilities but also increase their learning motivation and participation. In addition, this research is expected to provide practical recommendations for educators in designing and implementing assessments that are more responsive to students' needs. This is important to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment (McMillan, 2020).

The study involved a number of high schools in different regions to ensure the representativeness of the sample. Students from different grade levels and socio-economic backgrounds will be included in the study. This is important to understand how various demographic factors may affect students' perceptions of assessment. In addition, this study will also consider gender differences in students' perceptions. Thus, it is expected that the results of this study can provide a holistic picture of students' perceptions of assessment practices in social studies (Bryman, 2016).

The results of this study are expected to make a significant contribution to educational literature, particularly in the field of evaluation and assessment. The findings from this study can be used by educators and policy makers to develop better assessment practices in senior high schools. In addition, this study can also serve as a basis for further research exploring the relationship between students' perceptions and learning outcomes across different subjects. Thus, this research not only contributes to the theoretical understanding, but also provides practical impact to the world of education. Efforts to improve the quality of assessment are expected to improve the overall quality of education (Stiggins, 2017).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a qualitative method with a case study approach. The case study approach was chosen to deeply understand students' perceptions of assessment practices in social studies subjects at SMAN 2 Tanggul. The study aimed to explore and analyse students' experiences and views regarding the various assessment methods used by teachers. The research was conducted at SMAN 2 Tanggul, a senior high school located in Tanggul Sub-district, Jember Regency, East Java. The research subjects consisted of students in grades X, XI, and XII who took social studies subjects. A total of 30 students were selected as participants through purposive sampling technique to ensure diversity in their experiences and views. Data collection techniques used in-depth interviews and observations. Data obtained from interviews and observations were analysed using thematic analysis techniques, which included 1). Transcription: All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data, 2) Coding: The transcribed data was coded to identify the main themes that emerged related to students' perceptions of assessment practices, 3) Theme Organisation: The identified

codes were grouped into larger themes to provide an overall picture of students' perceptions, 4) Interpretation: The themes were further analysed to understand the implications of students' perceptions for social studies teaching and learning.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 *Result*

According to SMAN 2 Tanggul, various assessment methods are applied by social studies teachers to evaluate students' understanding. Social studies teachers at SMAN 2 Tanggul here are teachers who teach Geography, Economics, Sociology, and History subjects. From some assumptions given by students, the methods used by teachers in conducting assessments include written tests, group projects, presentations, and daily assessments such as quizzes and individual assignments. Students generally appreciate this variety as it gives them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities through various means. However, this variety also poses challenges in terms of fairness and consistency of assessment. Students feel that the standard of assessment can be different depending on the method used and who the teacher is.

Firstly, the written test was considered the fairest method of assessment by most students at SMAN 2 Tanggul. They felt that the written test provided equal opportunities for all students to demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter. Written tests are also considered more transparent because the assessment criteria are clear and structured. However, some students felt that written tests focus too much on memorisation and do not evaluate deep understanding of concepts. Fairness in written tests depends on the extent to which the questions reflect the material that has been taught in class.

Secondly, the assessment of group projects led to differences of opinion among students regarding its fairness. SMAN 2 Tanggul students appreciated that the group project allowed them to work together and learn from each other. However, there were complaints about the uneven distribution of workload within the group, where some group members were more active and contributed more than others. This led some students to feel that the group project assessment did not always accurately reflect individual effort. Some students also felt that the project assessment was more subjective as it relied on the teacher's judgement on aspects that were less objectively measurable.

Thirdly, the interviewed students of SMAN 2 Tanggul thought that presentation is considered a useful assessment method because it trains public speaking skills and the ability to convey information clearly and effectively. However, some students feel less confident and experience anxiety when they have to make a presentation in front of the class. This can affect their performance and lead to a feeling that the presentation assessment is unfair to those who have limitations in public speaking. Students also revealed that the presentation assessment criteria were often not explained in detail by the teacher, which caused confusion about what was expected of them. Transparency and clarity in the assessment criteria are essential to ensure fairness in this method.

One of the important findings of this study was the inconsistency in assessment standards between teachers at SMAN 2 Tanggul. Students felt that grading could differ significantly depending on who was teaching and grading them. This was particularly evident in the assessment of projects and individual assignments, where some teachers gave higher or lower grades than others for similar endeavours. This inconsistency creates a feeling of unfairness among students and affects their motivation. To improve fairness, there is a need for alignment of grading standards and better communication among teachers regarding grading criteria and expectations.

One of the main complaints from students of SMAN 2 Tanggul is the subjectivity in project assessment. Students feel that the project assessment criteria are often unclear and rely too much on the subjective judgement of the teacher. This causes uncertainty and unfairness, as

students do not always know what is expected of them. Some students revealed that project grading is sometimes based more on presentation and visual appearance rather than actual content and effort. Students suggested that teachers provide a detailed and transparent grading rubric before the project starts to reduce subjectivity and improve clarity.

Another complaint widely expressed by students is the excessive workload of assessment tasks, especially group projects. Students felt that the number and complexity of projects were often too high, leading to stress and fatigue. They revealed that these tasks sometimes overlapped with other subjects, exacerbating their workload. Some students felt that the pressure to complete projects in a short time reduced the quality of their learning and understanding. Students suggested that teachers should pay more attention to workload balance and provide sufficient time to complete tasks well.

Students also complained about the lack of constructive feedback from teachers regarding their assessment results. Many students felt that they did not get an adequate explanation of why they got a particular grade, making it difficult for them to correct mistakes and improve their performance. The feedback given is often general and not specific to the areas that need improvement. Students suggested that teachers provide more detailed and specific feedback and include concrete suggestions for improvement. This will help them understand their shortcomings and perform better in the future.

Finally, students suggested that teachers use more variety in assessment methods to cover different learning styles and skills. Some students feel that assessments that focus too much on written tests do not accommodate their abilities that are better expressed through creative projects or oral presentations. They wanted a more balanced assessment between written tests, practical projects, class discussions and individual assignments. Students believe that in this way, they will have a fairer chance to demonstrate their abilities and understanding more comprehensively. These suggestions suggest that diversifying assessment methods can improve equity and quality of learning for teachers who teach social studies.

At SMAN 2 Tanggul, feedback from teachers is an important component in the learning and assessment process. Teachers provide written and oral feedback after formative assessments such as quizzes, daily assignments, and class discussions. However, many students feel that the feedback provided is often lacking in detail and specificity, making it difficult for them to understand their mistakes and how to correct them. Teachers tend to give general comments such as "good" or "needs improvement" without detailed explanations. Students want more constructive feedback, with concrete guidance on areas for improvement and strategies for improvement.

Formative assessment at SMAN 2 Tanggul includes a variety of activities such as quizzes, individual assignments, and class discussions designed to monitor student progress on an ongoing basis. Students generally appreciate formative assessment as it helps them identify areas that need more attention before facing summative assessment. However, some students feel that formative assessments are sometimes not taken seriously by themselves or by teachers, resulting in less effective feedback. They also complained that formative assessments were often not followed by adequate feedback. Students wished that formative assessments could be more structured and integrated with useful feedback to improve their understanding.

Summative assessments, such as end-of-semester exams and major projects, are considered very important by students at SMAN 2 Tanggul as they have a major effect on their final grades. Students feel that summative assessments are more stressful and high-risk, so they tend to prepare more for these assessments. Although summative assessments are recognised as important, some students complained that this assessment method often focuses too much on memorisation rather than conceptual understanding. They also felt that a single summative assessment did not always reflect their overall ability and effort over the semester. Students suggested that summative assessments could be more varied and include different forms of evaluation, such as projects and presentations.

One need expressed by SMAN 2 Tanggul students was for more structured and detailed feedback, especially for summative assessments. They want feedback that not only identifies

errors, but also provides concrete suggestions for improvement. Detailed feedback will help students understand where they went wrong and how to improve for the next exam or project. Students also expect feedback to be provided sooner after the assessment, so that they can apply it to their learning immediately. This suggests that timely and detailed feedback is key to helping students learn more effectively.

3.2 Discussions

The findings from SMAN 2 Tanggul show that the variety of assessment methods applied by teachers reflect the principles of constructivist education theory which emphasises the importance of active learning and authentic assessment. Constructivism theory, outlined in recent works, suggests that students learn more effectively through direct experience and social interaction, which is in line with the project and presentation-based assessments appreciated by students. A study by Mvududu and Thiel-Burgess (2019) confirmed that constructivist assessments, such as projects and presentations, support students' engagement and deep understanding. In addition, the constructive feedback desired by students is consistent with learning theories that emphasise the important role of feedback in improving student performance and motivation (Brookhart, 2017).

SMAN 2 Tanggul students' complaints about unfairness and inconsistency in grading between teachers are in line with findings in educational research that emphasise the importance of fairness and transparency in grading. According to Black and Wiliam (2018), fair and consistent assessment is key to building students' trust in the assessment system. According to a meta-analysis by Brookhart and Nitko (2019), fair and consistent assessment is key to building student trust in the assessment system. Fairness in assessment is also related to the theory of assessment validity proposed by Kane (2013), which states that assessments should reflect student performance accurately and consistently. This finding is reinforced by Wiliam's (2018) research which shows that uniform assessment standards can reduce inequity and increase student confidence in assessment results.

The findings regarding the negative impact of excessive workload on student motivation at SMAN 2 Tanggul support motivation theories such as the Self-Determination theory by Deci and Ryan (2000), which has been adapted and expanded in recent research by Ryan and Deci (2020). They emphasised that excessive workload can reduce students' intrinsic motivation. Another study by Pekrun et al. (2019) showed that excessive pressure and stress from assessment can disrupt the learning process and reduce student performance. Therefore, these findings point to the need for balancing between academic demands and student well-being.

Students' request for more detailed and specific feedback is in line with the literature stating that good feedback should be specific, relevant, and timely to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses. Brookhart (2017) emphasises that clear feedback can significantly improve learning outcomes. A study by Wisniewski et al. (2020) confirmed that feedback is one of the biggest factors influencing learning, and clear and timely feedback can significantly improve student performance. These findings highlight the need for teachers to provide detailed and practical feedback to support student learning.

Students' desire for more varied assessment methods supports findings in educational literature that suggest the use of various assessment methods to accommodate students' various learning styles. Research by Brookhart and Chen (2019) shows that diversifying assessments can improve the validity and reliability of assessments and provide a more comprehensive picture of students' abilities. This is also in line with the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles further developed by Meyer, Rose and Gordon (2018), which encourage the use of multiple ways to evaluate student learning to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. The findings suggest that diversification of assessment methods can improve equity and quality of learning in Social Science classrooms.

The finding of inconsistency in assessment among teachers at SMAN 2 Tanggul points to the need for increased transparency and consistency in assessment practices. One step that

can be taken is the harmonisation of assessment standards across Social Studies subjects, through regular training and discussion among teachers. By applying clear and uniform assessment rubrics, teachers can ensure that assessments are more objective and fair. Research by Brookhart (2018) emphasises the importance of grading rubrics to increase transparency and clarity for students. In addition, the development of a comprehensive grading guide can help reduce unnecessary variations in grading standards between teachers.

Students' desire for more varied assessment methods indicates the need for diversification of assessment methods at SMAN 2 Tanggul. Teachers can adopt various assessment methods, such as group-based projects, presentations, written assignments, and formative assessments. This diversification can help accommodate students' various learning styles and abilities, as well as provide a more comprehensive picture of their understanding. A study by Andrade and Heritage (2018) showed that the use of various assessment methods can increase the validity of the assessment and provide a fairer opportunity for students to demonstrate their abilities. The implementation of diverse assessment methods can also increase student engagement in the learning process.

The finding that students felt that they lacked constructive and specific feedback indicates the need for improvement in the provision of feedback at SMAN 2 Tanggul. Teachers need to provide more detailed and relevant feedback to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses. Effective feedback should be specific, immediate, and focused on the process rather than the end result. Brookhart (2017) emphasises that high quality feedback can significantly improve student performance. By improving the way feedback is given, teachers can help students identify areas for improvement and provide concrete guidance for improvement.

Student complaints about excessive workload from assessments emphasise the need for a balance between academic demands and student well-being. Teachers at SMAN 2 Tanggul need to pay attention to the distribution of student workload and ensure that the number and complexity of assessment tasks are not excessive. Research by Pekrun et al. (2019) showed that excessive workload can cause stress and decrease students' learning motivation. By organising a more balanced assessment schedule and allowing sufficient time to complete tasks, teachers can create a more conducive learning environment and support student well-being.

To implement these changes effectively, it is important for teachers at SMAN 2 Tanggul to receive ongoing training in effective assessment practices. Training may include techniques for providing feedback, developing assessment rubrics, and strategies for diversifying assessment methods. The study by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) shows that teacher training that focuses on assessment practices can improve teaching quality and student learning outcomes. With the right training, teachers can be better equipped to implement assessment practices that are fair, consistent and support overall student learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that students had mixed views regarding the assessment practices implemented in social studies subjects at SMAN 2 Tanggul. Some students felt that the assessment was relevant and fair, while others felt that it did not reflect their overall understanding. Positive perceptions of assessment practices can increase student engagement and motivation in the learning process. Conversely, negative perceptions may lead to a decrease in students' motivation and interest in learning. The results of this study may suggest that there is a need to revise or improve the assessment methods used by teachers to better reflect students' true understanding and support more effective learning at SMAN 2 Tanggul. For example, more frequent formative assessment and constructive feedback could be areas that need attention. Assessment practices that are perceived as fair and relevant by students are likely to encourage the development of critical and analytical thinking skills. Assessments that include various

forms, such as projects, essays, and discussions, can be more effective in measuring students' abilities comprehensively.

5. RECOMENDATION

This study suggests that teachers in senior secondary schools should more frequently use diverse formative assessments, such as group projects, presentations, and essays, to reflect students' various learning styles and provide a more comprehensive picture of their abilities. In addition, sufficient training for teachers on assessment techniques and constructive feedback is essential to improve assessment effectiveness. Involving students in the assessment process, as well as utilizing technology and involving parents and the community, can create a more supportive learning environment and improve student motivation and performance. Further research into the specific impacts of different assessment methods is also needed to understand the long-term effects of assessment practices.

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