

INVESTIGATING ENGLISH TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

A teacher is responsible for assessing students' work and should possess a clear understanding of assessment, testing, examination, and evaluation. However, in reality, there are instances where teachers encounter confusion when distinguishing between these terms, mistakenly perceiving them as synonymous. Moreover, the teachers' understanding of these terms also plays a critical role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences for students. Based on the reasons above, this research aimed to describe the English teachers' understanding of English language assessment and how the teachers assess the students' work. The research conducted on UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. There were five English teachers as research subjects. The research method used was qualitative design. The data collected through interview. Analysis data with data collection, data reduction, data display, and the last is data conclusion and verification. The result of the research showed that the teachers' understanding has difference and similarity as from five teachers. The difference was from four teachers, only one teacher that related to Assessment understanding and the similarity was four other teachers beside Assessment understanding which is the most dominant, their teachers' understanding was also related to Instructional understanding, Subject matter understanding and Pedagogical understanding. The teachers' assessment of the students prioritize learning by using a range of assessment methods such as daily tests, semester exams, and attitude assessments. Group activities and projects are also utilized to enhance confidence and encourage active learning.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In education matter, assessment holds a very important position. Teachers and students pay attention to assessment considerably since through the result and process of Assessing, in broad term, is the process of acquiring information and making judgments about students' learning. The purposes of assessment include the following; to assist student learning related to outcomes, to make judgments about students' achievements, to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programs, to

inform decisions about students' future learning. Hence, sound assessment should be both a barometer of how well things are progressing as well as a compass indicating future direction. Sound assessment results only when there is a clear purpose for assessment, clear and appropriate targets, proper methods, an appropriate sample of the targets, and elimination of bias and distortion in measurement. Assessment as the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning. Assessment in education institution like school is ideally educative. It means, the assessment should be informative or rich with information about what the students have achieved, and at the same time, its existence provides opportunity for educating human components to develop themselves and make progress in what they are doing. The human components in education are not only students and teachers, but also stake holders and parents at large.

Based on teachers' classroom activities, four traditional reasons were given for why teachers assess - namely, to determine students' current status, monitor students' progress, assign grades, and determine a teacher's own instructional effectiveness. Based on recent uses of educational assessment results, three more current reasons teachers need to know about instruction were identified. Those more recent functions of educational tests are to influence public perceptions of educational effectiveness, help evaluate teachers, and clarify teachers' instructional intentions. Regardless of the specific application of test results, however, it was emphasized that teachers should use the results of assessments to make better decisions. That's really the only excuse for taking up students' time with assessment (W. James Phopam, 2017). Moreover, teachers who possess a deep understanding of assessment, test, examination, and evaluation can make informed decisions about instructional strategies, differentiate instruction to meet students' needs, and provide constructive feedback to support students' learning and growth (Mertler, 2014).

UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare located in Matahari Street No. 3, Mallusetasi, Ujung Subdistrict, Parepare City, South Sulawesi Province. This school is a one of favorite high school in Parepare. This is shown based on the number of students recorded. In 2023, UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare has the most high school students in Parepare with 1.020 students based on Directorate General of Early Childhood Education, Basic Education and Secondary Education Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Parepare. UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare strives to equip students with strong language skills, enabling them to engage effectively in a globalized world. However, the extent to which English teachers at this institution possess an understanding of English language assessment remains a topic of interest.

In the context of education, particularly in the teaching profession, "teachers' understanding" refers to the depth of comprehension and insight that educators possess regarding specific concepts, pedagogical methods, and educational contexts. It influences teaching practices, decision-making, and interactions with student. Teachers' understanding is pivotal in promoting effective instruction and fostering students' learning experiences. This integration highlights the multidimensional nature of understanding, encompassing both the cognitive dimensions identified by scholars and the application of understanding within the teaching profession. Teachers' understanding plays a critical role in facilitating meaningful learning experiences for students.

Based on the explanation above, ideally as a teacher whose job assesses the students' work he or she must understand about the assessment, testing, examination and evaluation. In fact, we sometimes find phenomena where the teacher gets confused to differ among them. They think all of them are the same. Assessment is popular but sometimes misunderstood term in current educational practice. Sometimes, we think of testing and assessing as synonymous, but they are certainly not. One of the misunderstandings of assessment is it is only "test" at the end of a unit of work of series of lesson. The phenomena can be found in UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare where some of the teachers have been asked about the assessment including testing, examination and evaluation and did not give the clear answer about them. This problem is also supported by the students where they said many of their teachers just assess them based on their final project and even there are also teachers involve their personal feeling toward their like or dislike in assessing the students.

Based on the problem above, the research entitled Investigating English Teachers' Understanding of English Language Assessment, wanted to conduct. The teachers today must know or understand about assessing, how he or she assesses the students. That is one of the reasons why the researcher is interested in carrying out an indepth interview to the teachers. The other reason is the researcher wanted to investigate how the teachers assess the students' work.

The questions of this research are how is the teachers' understanding of assessment at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare and how do the teachers assess students' work at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. While the objectives are to describe the teachers' understanding about assessment at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare and to describe the teachers' assessment of students' work at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. The significances of this research are theoretical benefits, which this research is expected to be useful information for the development of English language study especially for assessment and practical benefits which divided into two that are for researcher that can be used as one of the bases or guidelines to further investigating about teachers' understanding of assessment, for teachers and lectures that are can provide some information about teachers' understanding of assessment, for other researchers that are expected to be able to find insights and ideas from the contents of this research and develop scientific ideas related to conducting more in-depth research. With that further research will provide a lot of insight and knowledge in the research process. The scope of the research is English teachers' understanding of English language assessment aspects, such as testing, examination, and evaluation and how do they assess the students' work at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare.

Based on all previous studies, there are similarities and differences. The similarities are all the studies, have a focus on education and assessment in the context of teaching the English language. The other similarities is all the studies involve English teachers as research subjects. This demonstrates the focus on the understanding of teachers regarding English language assessment. The differences are all of the previous study above focused on the specific kind of assessment such as authentic assessment, portofolio assessment, formative assessment, assessment literacy level and alternative assessment. The differences also can be seen on the location of the research including the Czech Republic, Malaysia, Iraq, and Hong Kong, whereas my research conducted in Parepare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research method also different such as interviews, lesson plan analysis, and questionnaires. However, the differences in research focus, context, and methods can provide diverse contributions to the understanding of English language assessment. The researcher could leverage these differences to identify specific weaknesses or needs in the understanding of English language assessment among teachers in a UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. Furthermore, the researcher could design appropriate solutions based on findings.

The novelty of the current study is not focus on the specific kind of assessment such as authentic assessment, portofolio assessment, formative assessment, assessment literacy level and alternative assessment but focused on the teachers' understanding. The other novelty is also from the location of the research that was conducted in Parepare, South Sulawesi, Indonesia which is there is no similar research was conducted there. The research method also different which not interview, lesson plan analysis, and questionnaires, but used indepth interview. However, the differences in research focus, context, and methods can provide diverse contributions to the understanding of English language assessment. The researcher could leverage these differences to identify specific weaknesses or needs in the understanding of English language assessment among teachers in a UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. Furthermore, the researcher could design appropriate solutions based on findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process that encompasses a much wider domain. Whenever a student responds to a question, offers comment or tries out a new word, or structure the teacher subconsciously makes an assessment of the students' performance. It is the process of gathering information to monitor progress and make educational decisions if necessary (Cosme J. Gómez Carrasco and Pedro Miralles Martínez, 2016). Another definition of assessment is a series of activities to obtain, analyze, and interpret data about student learning processes and outcomes carried

out systematically, accurately, and continuously. this assessment carried out using certain measurement tools, so that it becomes information in making decisions on competency achievement (Kunandar, 2015). In other words, assessment consists of process whenever the student responds to a question, offers a comment or tries out. So, the teacher's role in assessing the students is not only from the test given after the teacher explained one topic but also the teacher also must consider with the activity of the students in teaching learning process whether they are active or not in class, how his or her attitude to the teacher etc.

2.2. Test

A test is a special form of assessment. It made under contrived circumstances especially so that they may be administered. In other words, all tests are assessment, but not all assessments are tests. The key to teacher made test or the way to assess the students is to make the tests a part of assessment not separate from it. Test should be instructional and ongoing. Another explanation of test is basically an objective and standardized measurement of a sample of behavior (Hartoyo, 2011). Cronbach Lee J, 1970) defined test is a systematic procedure to compare the behavior of two or more people. Then (Frederick G Brown, 1970) defined a systematic procedure for measuring a sample of a person's behavior. Systematic also has an objective understanding, standards and other quality requirements. Moreover, tests are questions that must be answered and or instructions that must be carried out, which is based on how the testee must answer the questions or carry out the instructions. A test refers to a tool, technique, or method that is intended to measure students' knowledge or their ability to complete a particular task. In this sense, testing can be considered as a form of assessment. Tests should meet some basic requirements, such as validity and reliability. Validity refers to the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure while reliability refers to the consistency of test scores when administered on different occasions (Faustino, Carmen, Kostina, Irina, & Vergara, Omaira, 2013).

2.3. Examination

Examination is test that is school scheduled tend to cover more of the curriculum and count more than other forms of evaluation (Stiggins, 1999). An examination is defined as the evaluation of the understanding of the knowledge of a person. The assessment can be done in the form of a formal test. The exam is taken to check the knowledge of a student of a particular subject. Examination is an evaluation process that involves the use of test instruments or exams to measure students' knowledge, understanding, and abilities in a specific field of study (Brown & Race, 2013). The exam includes a variety of questions like objective, subjective, one word, etc. each question in the exam is assigned with marks according to the level of knowledge it requires. The students are required to answer the questions asked in exams. Marks are given based on the quality of answers given by a student in their examination. Evaluation is done on the basis of marks obtained in the exam. Moreover, examination in education refers to a formal assessment process that involves the use of tests or exams to evaluate students' knowledge, understanding, skills, and abilities in a specific subject or field of study. It is a systematic approach to measure students' learning outcomes and assess their level of mastery in relation to the defined learning objectives (Phan., Ngu., & K. Mc Queen, 2020). Schools and colleges conduct intermediate exams, the final exams also known as the semester exams to evaluate the knowledge of the student. Examination is a formal test that student take in order to show their knowledge about the particular subject often done in written or oral form (Igor Todorovic, 2020). It means that they are tests which are conducted together with the other subjects and they are school scheduled to know whether the students can pass them or not.

2.4. Evaluation

In simplistic terms, making judgement or determination of the quality or worth about an object, subject or phenomenon can be referred to as evaluation. Relating the concept to education, Coleman defines evaluation as the determination of how successful a program, a curriculum, a series of experiments, etc. has been in achieving the goals laid out for it at the outset. Evaluation is the systemic gathering information of the students through assessment then it evaluates, judges and compares the quality of the students in order to make decision. One of the characteristics of evaluation is it uses various strategies of assessment such as achievement, aptitude, personality, character, test, questionnaire, interviews, osbervation technique etc (Hartoyo, 2011). Stake (2004)

defined evaluation is a process of inquiry that focuses on gathering and interpreting information about programs or policies in order to gain understanding and influence their development and implementation. This means evaluation is a process that doing while gaining students development data. Evaluation in education is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data on learning and teaching in order to understand the impact of educational programs on the achievement of student learning outcomes (Teachmint, 2022). As mentioned above, evaluation ensures that the students achieve the learning objectives that are set by the educational institution or the relevant authorities. These evaluations are a great way to improve the learning outcomes of the students. Then, evaluation can be defined as process to determine students' achievement by collecting, analyzing and interpreting students' data. When students are evaluated, you as teachers will be able to get an idea about how you can make changes in your teaching methodologies and in their learning styles. These evaluations can help you curate the best learning experiences for your students.

2.5. Teachers' understanding

A teacher's understanding encompasses not only the content knowledge of their field but also a deep awareness of how students learn, their diverse learning needs, and the capacity to adapt instruction to meet those needs. This comprehension goes beyond the theoretical; it involves the practical application of this knowledge in the classroom, where teachers make informed decisions on curriculum design, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. Teachers' understanding is a dynamic and evolving process influenced by ongoing professional development and reflection on classroom experiences (Bachtiar, 2024; Bachtiar et al., 2024). There are ten kinds of teachers' understanding that contribute to effective teaching and student learning, (a) Subject matter understanding, refers to the level of deep comprehension about the subject matter a teacher is instructing. It involves an in-depth knowledge of core concepts, theories, principles, and relevant facts within a specific subject area. Teachers with strong Subject Matter Understanding can explain content clearly, connect different concepts, and answer student questions with clarity and confidence. This understanding enables teachers to be more flexible in adapting teaching methods and making deeper connections across different topics. By possessing a robust understanding of the subject matter, teachers can provide students with richer and more meaningful learning experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2000). (b) Pedagogical understanding, refers to a teacher's knowledge and expertise in various teaching methods, strategies, and instructional techniques. It involves understanding how to effectively convey information, engage students, and create a conducive learning environment. Teachers with strong pedagogical understanding are skilled at selecting appropriate teaching approaches based on the needs of their students and the learning objectives. This understanding goes beyond subject knowledge and includes the ability to design engaging lessons, manage classroom dynamics, use technology effectively, and adapt teaching methods to cater to diverse learning styles. Pedagogical understanding empowers teachers to facilitate meaningful learning experiences and promote student success (Darling-Hammond, 2017). (c) Student understanding, refers to a teacher's awareness and appreciation of the diverse backgrounds, abilities, learning styles, and needs of their students. It involves recognizing individual differences and adapting teaching approaches to accommodate various student profiles. Teachers with a strong understanding of their students can create a more inclusive and effective learning environment that caters to the unique needs of each learner (Bachtiar & Nirmala, 2023; Bachtiar & Rizky Pratiwi, 2023). This understanding encompasses empathy, effective communication, and the ability to differentiate instruction to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential (Grant & Sleeter, 2019). (d) Assessment understanding, refers to a teacher's ability to design, implement, and interpret assessments effectively. It involves knowing how to create assessments that align with learning objectives, accurately measure student progress, and provide meaningful feedback. Teachers with a strong assessment understanding can use various assessment methods, such as quizzes, tests, projects, and observations, to gauge student learning and guide instructional decisions. This understanding goes beyond administering tests; it encompasses the skill of analyzing assessment results to adjust teaching strategies and provide targeted support to students. Effective assessment understanding contributes to improved learning outcomes and helps teachers tailor instruction to meet individual student needs (Brookhart, 2013). (e) Cognitive understanding, refers to a teacher's awareness of how students learn, think, and process information. It involves knowledge of cognitive

processes such as memory, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Teachers with strong cognitive understanding can design lessons and activities that align with how students naturally learn, facilitating deeper comprehension and engagement. This understanding allows teachers to make informed decisions about instructional strategies, curriculum design, and the sequencing of content to optimize student learning experiences (J. Hattie & G. C. Yates, 2013). (f) Socioemotional understanding, refers to a teacher's ability to recognize and address the social and emotional needs of students. It involves understanding emotions, relationships, and social dynamics within the classroom. Teachers with strong socioemotional understanding create a safe and supportive learning environment, fostering positive interactions and emotional well-being among students. This understanding enables teachers to build strong teacher-student relationships, promote empathy, and implement strategies that help students manage emotions and develop social skills (M. A. Brackett & S. E. Rivers, 2014). (g) Cultural understanding, refers to a teacher's awareness and sensitivity to the diverse cultural backgrounds, perspectives, and identities of their students. It involves recognizing and respecting cultural differences and integrating them into the learning experience. Teachers with strong cultural understanding create an inclusive classroom where all students feel valued and represented. This understanding enables teachers to design culturally responsive curriculum, engage in cross-cultural communication, and promote a positive and respectful learning environment for students from various cultural backgrounds (G. Gay, 2010). (h) Instructional understanding, refers to a teacher's proficiency in designing and delivering effective instruction. It involves the ability to plan well-structured lessons, create engaging learning activities, and manage classroom interactions. Teachers with strong instructional understanding can adapt their teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles and needs, ensuring that students are actively engaged and learning optimally. This understanding encompasses skills in classroom management, lesson design, and the use of educational technologies to enhance the learning experience (H. K. Wong & R. T. Wong, 2009). (i) Technology understanding, refers to a teacher's proficiency in effectively integrating technology tools and resources into the teaching and learning process. It involves knowing how to use various technological platforms, applications, and resources to enhance instruction and engage students. Teachers with strong technology understanding can leverage technology to create interactive lessons, facilitate virtual learning environments, and promote digital literacy skills. This understanding empowers teachers to adapt to the digital age and provide students with modern, technology-enhanced learning experiences (M. D. Roblyer & A. H. Doering, 2014). (j) Reflective understanding, refers to a teacher's ability to engage in self-assessment and critical reflection on their teaching practices. It involves analyzing one's teaching methods, strategies, and outcomes to continuously improve instructional effectiveness. Teachers with strong reflective understanding regularly evaluate their teaching approaches, identify areas for growth, and make thoughtful adjustments to enhance student learning. This understanding promotes a culture of professional growth and development, leading to more effective teaching practices over time (A. W. Campbell, 2012).

3. METHOD

In this study, the researcher applied qualitative approaches. Qualitative research tends to be an effort to generate descriptions and situational interpretations of phenomena that the researcher can offer colleagues, students, and others for modifying their own understandings of phenomena (Stake, 2015). In this case, the researcher conducted in-depth qualitative research of teachers' understanding of English language assessment. This research conducted at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare which located in Jl. Matahari No. 3, Mallusetasi, Kec. Ujung, Kota Parepare, Sulawesi Selatan. The duration of the research was according to the teachers' teaching schedule in school to be available to interview. The researcher took around 20 minutes for each teacher to interview. The research subjects were the English teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. There were 5 English teachers, they are Mr. U, Mrs. S, Mrs. N, Mrs. R, and Mrs. H and the researcher took all 5 teachers as subject of this research. In this research, researcher used interview. Researcher used in-depth interview to get more accurate data. The data gained from the interview were the teachers' explanation of English language assessment and the teachers' assessment of students' work. The data next analyzed to get the result

as on the research problems that are the teachers' understanding of English language assessment and the teachers' assessment of students' work.

The procedure of collecting data for this researched was conducted through some steps. The researcher contacted the teachers as the subjects of this research. Then the researcher asked about the teachers' available to interview. The researcher interviewed the teachers about how is the English teachers understanding about language assessment that are testing, assessment, examination, and evaluation and how they assess the students' work. They have interviewed around 20 minutes for every English teacher. The data collected through interviews should be transcribed. The researcher recorded the interview process then transcribing them.

The technique to analyze the data is by identifying the answers of the teachers related to the questions given by the researcher and classified them into the right teachers' understanding. To analyze the interview data, the researcher used interactive model analysis. There are four concurrent verification flow of activity in the model: data collection, which collected the data by interviewing the English teachers of UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. All the interview and record data have collected and then researcher analyzed the teachers understanding of assessment and how the teachers assess the students' work based on the real fact and the researcher made the transcription of the record from the teachers' interview. Data reduction, which selected data that have been obtained at the time of research regarding the teachers' understanding of assessment and how the teachers assess the students' work from the English teachers of UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare. Then the researcher made summary of the answers based on the questions mean. Data display, which developed a structured description of the information to draw conclusion and take action. The presentation of data commonly use in this research is narrative text form. The purpose of narrative text is that the researcher would describe previously summary information about how does the teachers understanding of assessment and how the teachers assess the students' work from the English teachers of UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare, then the conclusion presented in narrative text form. The last is data conclusion and verification, which the researcher made conclusion and suggestion based on the data analysis from English teachers of UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the interview have been transcribed. The way they explained about English language assessment and the teachers' primarily explanation related to are English teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare have both differences and similarities in how they assess students. One key difference is how the curriculum, like the Merdeka and K13 Curriculum, affects their assessment methods and teaching styles. Despite these differences, all teachers share a strong emphasis on understanding assessments, knowing how to create, carry out, and understand assessments effectively. The most dominant understanding possess among all the teachers was Assessment understanding. It can be seen from the analyzing of the interview that all five teachers have ability to design, implement, and interpret assessments effectively. They know how to create assessments that align with learning objectives, measure student progress, and provide meaningful feedback. The teachers also can use various assessment methods, such as quizzes, tests, projects, and observations, to measure student learning and provide better instructional decisions. The teachers also agree on the importance of understanding how to teach well, manage classrooms, and use technology for better learning. Understanding the subject matter and effective teaching methods, called pedagogical understanding, are common themes too. Teachers like Mrs. N and Mrs. H stress that knowing your subject well helps in creating assessments that match learning goals. They also agree that recognizing each student's abilities and attitudes is crucial. In a nutshell, while curriculum differences impact methods, a common commitment to understanding assessments, teaching, subject matter, and effective methods unites these teachers in providing student-focused language education.

The way the teachers assess the students are all five teachers, demonstrated both differences and similarities in their methods of evaluating students. Mr. U employs a comprehensive approach, incorporating daily tests, semester exams, and assessments of attitudes and active learning, all aligned with the 2013 Curriculum and emphasizing differentiation based on individual abilities. Similarly, Mrs. S, also following the Merdeka Curriculum, utilizes diagnostic and formative assessments to understand learning styles, complemented by summative assessments focusing on

competencies and attitudes, particularly through the P5 project. On the other hand, Mrs. N concentrates on English teaching, emphasizing differences in students' abilities within the Merdeka Curriculum. Her assessment covers speaking skills, pronunciation, grammar, spelling, and participation, combining daily grades and attitude assessments. Mrs. R adopts a unique approach by starting with theory and employing various assessment methods in English, emphasizing active participation and group activities to boost confidence. Meanwhile, Mrs. H utilizes the 2013 Curriculum for assessment, incorporating attitude assessments through direct observation and cognitive assessments related to the studied topics.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research can be explained. 1. Dealing with English teachers' understanding of English language assessment, English teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 1 Parepare have both differences and similarities in how they assess students. One key difference is how the curriculum, like the Merdeka and K13 Curriculum, affects their assessment methods and teaching styles. Despite these differences, all teachers share a strong emphasis on understanding assessments, knowing how to create, carry out, and understand assessments effectively. The most dominant understanding possess among all the teachers was Assessment understanding. All five teachers have ability to design, implement, and interpret assessments effectively. They know how to create assessments that align with learning objectives, measure student progress, and provide meaningful feedback. The teachers also can use various assessment methods, such as quizzes, tests, projects, and observations, to measure student learning and provide better instructional decisions. The teachers also agree on the importance of understanding how to teach well, manage classrooms, and use technology for better learning. Understanding the subject matter and effective teaching methods, called pedagogical understanding, are common themes too. 2. Relating to the teachers' way in assessing the students. All five teachers employ diverse yet effective approaches to assessment within the context of either the 2013 Curriculum or the Merdeka Curriculum. They prioritize individualized learning by using a range of assessment methods such as daily tests, semester exams, and attitude assessments. Diagnostic and formative assessments play a crucial role in understanding learning styles and adapting instruction accordingly. Emphasis is placed on competencies and attitudes, with a notable focus on English language skills, including speaking, pronunciation, grammar, spelling, and active participation. Group activities and projects are utilized to enhance confidence and encourage active learning. Overall, the teachers' commitment to differentiation and a comprehensive evaluation framework contributes to a well-rounded educational experience for their students.

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