

Empowering Teachers through a Workshop on Developing Teaching Modules to Promote Adaptive, Inclusive, and Independent Learning in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI)/Equivalent Schools

Emilya Ulfah^{1✉}

¹Pendidikan Guru Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Institut Agama Islam Darussalam Martapura
ulfahemilya@gmail.com

Abstract

The implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum in Indonesia required teachers to be creative and adaptive in developing teaching materials. Teaching modules are still seen by many *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) teachers as only an administrative responsibility. This incompetence frequently stems from prior professional training that was purely theoretical and lacked comprehensive mentoring. The goal of this community service project is to empower MI teachers in the Martapura area by increasing their independence and proficiency in creating inclusive, flexible, and effective lesson plans. In particular, the program aims to change the teacher's role from a passive implementer to an *Merdeka* Curriculum creator. The activity utilized a Service-Learning approach through an Empowerment Workshop design. The implementation followed three systematic stages: conducting surveys, observations, and instrument development, intensive 15-day guidance and hands-on practice in module development, and analysis of teacher feedback, comparison of pre-test and post-test data, and quality assessment of the resulting modules. The program resulted in a significant paradigm shift and quantitative improvement in teacher capacity. The main conclusions are 33% improvement in comprehension of the *Merdeka* Curriculum's philosophy and 43% improvement in the capacity to develop teaching modules independently. To accommodate the uniqueness of their students, teachers have effectively used diversified learning methodologies and diagnostic evaluations. Participants moved away from internet templates, producing original modules that serve as primary pedagogical guides tailored to their students' specific needs.

Keywords: Elementary Islamic School; Merdeka Curriculum; Teacher Empowerment; Teaching Module

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1. Introduction

Education is a fundamental need that plays a vital role in supporting a nation's progress. The quality of education is a key indicator in assessing a country's development. Therefore, a nation's progress can be measured by the quality of its education [9]. In Indonesia, the government introduced the *Merdeka* Curriculum as a form of curriculum transformation that is more relevant and adaptive, taking into account individual student needs and global developments. Within this curriculum, teachers are given the freedom to design and implement learning tailored to the conditions and characteristics of students in each school.

The *Merdeka* Curriculum is an educational policy that aims to provide schools and teachers with the freedom to develop curricula that are tailored to student needs and local contexts [11]. The *Merdeka* Curriculum fundamentally embodies adaptive values, namely the

ability of the education system to adapt the learning process to the unique needs and potential of students. Teachers are encouraged to develop flexible and contextual teaching modules and learning strategies, rather than relying on a single, uniform approach.

The implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum presents significant challenges, particularly in teacher preparedness. Teachers must possess sufficient knowledge of the curriculum's basic principles and the skills to employ more innovative approaches and methods. Teacher preparedness, both in terms of professional competence and their ability to utilize technology in learning, is key to the successful implementation of this curriculum. Therefore, the role of teachers is vital in determining the extent to which the objectives of the *Merdeka* Curriculum can be achieved [13]. Teachers play a central role in the successful implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, particularly in developing appropriate teaching materials, such as teaching modules.

Teaching modules are not merely teaching materials, but rather comprehensive learning plans that are systematically structured and tailored to student characteristics and the context of the educational unit [2].

Therefore, it is necessary to increase teacher capacity in accordance with the latest curriculum innovations so that teachers are ready to face system changes, especially at the school level. *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) or equivalent, in order to be able to develop relevant, adaptive, and inclusive teaching modules. Teaching modules are said to be relevant if they are in accordance with the context of the students, the school environment, and the real needs of the community. This module raises themes, materials, and learning activities that are directly related to the lives of students and the issues around them, so that learning becomes meaningful [10]. Then, teaching modules are adaptive if they can be adjusted to the characteristics, ability levels, and learning styles of diverse students. Adaptive modules allow teachers to rearrange strategies and content based on student diagnostic assessments [6]. Finally, inclusive learning means that all students without exception are given the same opportunity to learn, develop, and feel valued in the classroom. Teachers must create a friendly, open, and fair learning environment for all students, including those with different backgrounds (religion, ethnicity, and gender), economic conditions, and even students with special needs [3].

Inclusive modules mean being friendly to all student backgrounds, including those with special needs, learning disabilities, or those from vulnerable groups. Inclusive modules emphasize neutral language, accessibility of teaching materials, and non-discrimination [8]. On the other hand, *Madrasah*, as religious-based educational institutions, face unique challenges in adapting to the new curriculum. Limited resources, access to training, and minimal assistance in curriculum implementation are obstacles frequently encountered in the field [5]. Therefore, the initiative to hold a workshop on developing teaching modules for the *Merdeka* Curriculum is crucial as part of teacher empowerment efforts.

This workshop specifically aims to improve the professional competence of MI/equivalent teachers in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum through the achievement of measurable targets. [4] Through this series of training, each participant is targeted to be able to compile at least one complete teaching module, which includes the Learning Objective Flow (*Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran*) and a relevant assessment plan. Furthermore, this activity is designed so that teachers can integrate the values of the Pancasila Student Profile into learning designs to support the holistic growth and development of students. In line with the principle of empowerment, this workshop also equips teachers with analytical skills to make pedagogical decisions independently in solving problems in the

classroom. [12] The success of this activity is measured by the results of the participants' work that meets the minimum quality standards with a "good" predicate based on the established teaching module review instrument, thereby being able to encourage real and sustainable improvements in teaching performance.

The current state of partner programs demonstrates a high urgency for intervention, given that teachers' understanding of learning modules remains largely confined to the administrative realm. On the ground evidence suggests that many MI partner teachers still view learning modules merely as supplementary documents for supervision or accreditation, rather than as primary pedagogical guidance. This is evidenced by the low quality of the learning materials they develop, with most of the resulting modules merely being copied and pasted from the internet without any adaptation to student characteristics and local needs.

This low level of competency stems from previous professional development patterns; teachers were only exposed to the *Merdeka* curriculum through webinars or short, theoretical, one-way technical guidance sessions (less than 8 hours), without intensive mentoring. Consequently, teachers felt insecure about implementing classroom learning, given their limited knowledge. Template without a strong philosophical understanding. [1] The disparity between the demands of the adaptive and inclusive *Merdeka* curriculum and the reality of teachers' technical capabilities is a major obstacle to achieving educational transformation. Therefore, workshops focused on direct practical mentoring are an urgent strategic step to empower teachers to produce contextual teaching modules that have a real impact on student growth and development.

Through this activity, teachers are equipped not only with conceptual understanding but also with practical skills in developing teaching materials relevant to students' needs. Thus, this workshop is a real necessity to support the success of Independent Learning in *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*/primary education. By focusing on improving teacher understanding of the principles and structure of the *Merdeka* curriculum, and encouraging teachers' abilities in integrating adaptive and inclusive learning approaches into teaching modules.

2. Methods

The method used in this community service is the Service Learning with the Empowerment Workshop design. This service method that integrates learning with community service activities [7], so that it benefits teachers in developing skills in compiling *Merdeka* curriculum teaching modules. This approach was chosen to ensure the transfer of knowledge from resource persons to teachers, accompanied by tangible results in the form of the product "Teaching Module of *Merdeka* curriculum".

This community service implementation method is implemented through three systematic stages designed to ensure the success of the 15-day intensive teacher empowerment program. These stages include:

- a. Preparation Stage
The activity began with an initial survey and observation to map the situation and conditions of partners in the Martapura area, Banjar Regency. In this phase, the implementation team identified stakeholders, conducted literature studies, and developed a framework. Technical preparations were carried out by developing research instruments, conducting instrument trials, and finalizing the implementation schedule and workshop logistics so that all variables needed for the community service were accurately available.
- b. Implementation Stage
This stage is the core activity, which is realized through a workshop on preparing teaching modules for the *Merdeka* curriculum for teachers. *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* (MI) /equivalent. During this phase, lecturers from the PGMI Darussalam Martapura Islamic Institute provided intensive mentoring to foster understanding of adaptive and inclusive education and the principles of Freedom to Learn. The implementation team collected data directly through module development practices, organized data on participant competency development, and ensured data validity throughout the workshop.
- c. Evaluation Stage
The final stage is carried out by evaluating the success of the activity by distributing feedback forms to all participants. The team compared field results with the initial objectives to measure the effectiveness of the empowerment. The collected data was then checked for accuracy and analyzed to draw conclusions and strategic recommendations. As a form of accountability to stakeholders, the entire series of activities was compiled into a formal report and converted into a scientific article for publication in a national journal.

3. Results and Discussion

This community service activity resulted in significant changes in the pedagogical competence of MI/SD teachers in the Martapura area. This success was not only evident descriptively but also measurable through data comparison. Pre-test and post-test, and the quality of the teaching module products produced.

a. Knowledge Enhancement and Paradigm Shift

Based on the activity evaluation, there was an increase in teachers' understanding of the *Merdeka* curriculum philosophy and the strategic function of teaching modules. Before the workshop, most teachers viewed teaching modules as merely an administrative burden for supervision. [8] This was due to a lack of understanding of their practical benefits, rigid design, excessive paperwork, and a lack of adequate training, making it difficult for teachers to see how modules could facilitate teaching or support learning differentiation. After the mentoring, a paradigm shift occurred, where teachers began to position teaching modules as the primary guide for professional decision-making in the classroom. The quantitative improvement in participant competency is summarized in the following table:

Achievement Indicators	Pre-test Score (mean)	Post-test Score (mean)	Percent age Increase
Philosophical Understanding of the Independent Curriculum	55%	88%	33%
Preparation of Independent Teaching Modules	42%	85%	43%
Diagnostic Assessment Design	38%	80%	42%
Integration of Inclusive Learning	45%	82%	37%

Tabel 1.1 Data on Workshop Participants' Skill Improvement

b. Independence in Instructional Design

After the hands on practice session, participants are no longer dependent on template instant and can develop systematic learning steps based on student characteristics and local context. Direct practice allows teachers to create, try, and then revise modules according to students' real needs, which increases autonomy and professional engagement. [9] Documentation of the collaboration and technical guidance process during module development can be seen in Figure 1, which showed intensive interaction between the supervising lecturer and participants.



Figure 1. Documentation of Intensive Mentoring and Practice in Preparing Teaching Modules

c. Strengthening Inclusivity and Assessment

Another crucial achievement is teachers' ability to design diagnostic assessment instruments to accommodate diverse student ability levels. Valid diagnostic assessments help teachers identify conceptual and skill gaps, allowing for systematic and efficient learning. Furthermore, the modules produced in this process are no longer one size fits all; they integrate differentiated learning strategies such as leveled assignments, activity choices based on interests and learning styles, and varied formative assessments to monitor individual progress. This strategic integration strengthens classroom inclusivity because the modules incorporate adaptations for students from different socioeconomic backgrounds, making the learning environment more equitable, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of learners.

d. Program Sustainability Analysis

The findings of this community service reinforce the theory of teacher empowerment, which states that autonomy in curriculum design is the key to improving teaching quality. This increases teacher independence in developing independent modules without relying on template internet in line with the concept Teacher as Curriculum Maker, where teachers are positioned as the subjects who best understand their students' local needs. However, the implementation team's reflective analysis also noted challenges in terms of supporting facilities in several partner madrasas, which were not yet fully adequate to optimally implement digital-based modules. Despite the immediate positive impact, the SWOT analysis indicated that the limited duration of the workshops and the high administrative burden on teachers remain challenges. Short workshops often provide knowledge without sufficient time for repeated practice, reflection, and feedback, resulting in inconsistent or rapidly

fading classroom implementation. As a follow up, an ongoing monitoring strategy is needed to ensure the consistent implementation of the developed modules. The focus of further development will be directed towards establishing a community of practitioners among teachers to share best practices in instructional design, so that teacher autonomy in creating adaptive classes can be maintained.

e. Tantangan dan Rekomendasi Keberlanjutan

Although the results showed a positive trend, the discussion also identified obstacles in the form of teachers' limited time to conduct in-depth research on module content due to their heavy teaching load. Therefore, a follow up to this community service program is aimed at establishing a Teacher Working Group (*Kelompok Kerja Guru*) based on good practices. It is hoped that the independence that has been established will not fade after the program ends, but rather serve as a foundation for the creation of a *madrasah* ecosystem that continues to learn and adapt to the needs of the times.

The workshop had a significant transformative impact on MI teachers in the Martapura area, both in terms of technical competence and professional autonomy. Before the workshop, partners faced significant challenges, including reliance on ready made administrative documents that were irrelevant to classroom needs. After participating in the mentoring, the tangible impact was increased teacher confidence in translating Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) into concrete instructional steps without having to rely on the template on the internet. Specifically, positive changes are evident in the effectiveness of learning management at partner schools. Teachers can now map student needs through assessment and inclusive learning. The long term impact of this empowerment is the formation of a new, more collaborative and reflective work culture, where teachers no longer merely fulfill administrative duties but play an active role as adaptive curriculum designers. The improved quality of these independently produced teaching modules directly contributes to partner schools' readiness for accreditation and educational supervision based on the higher quality of *Merdeka* curriculum standards.

4. Conclusion

This community service activity has concretely transformed the pedagogical competency of MI teachers in the Martapura region in implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum. The main results showed that MI teachers in the Martapura region who participated in the workshop are now able to independently develop teaching modules integrated with diagnostic

assessments and differentiated learning methods, leaving behind the old pattern of reliance on the template. The real impact on the school community is an increase in the quality of educational services that are more inclusive and adaptive to the diversity of student characteristics, creating a more competent generation, improving community welfare, and strengthening moral and social values. Institutionally, this activity has strengthened teachers' professional autonomy in making instructional decisions that favor students, while also equipping *madrasah*'s partner with quality and valid teaching tools to support the successful and sustainable transition of the national curriculum.

Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	W
Emilya Ulfah	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

C : Conceptualization I : Investigation
 M : Methodology R : Resources
 So : Software D : Data Curation
 Va : Validation W : Writing - Review
 Fo : Formal analysis

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Biographies of Author



Emilya Ulfah  Emilya Ulfah works at the Faculty of Tarbiyah, Primary Teacher Education Program for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (PGMI), Darussalam Institute of Islamic Studies Martapura, South Kalimantan, Indonesia. She completed her undergraduate (S1) degree at the State Islamic Institute Antasari, majoring in Primary Teacher Education for Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (PGMI), and pursued her master's degree (S2) in the same field at the Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University of Malang. Since 2018, she has been a lecturer in the PGMI Study Program at the Darussalam Institute of Islamic Studies Martapura, **South Kalimantan.**