

Teacher Assistance in The Development of Merdeka Curriculum Learning Devices

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ABSTRACT

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The main focus of this research is to understand the contributions and challenges faced by educators in designing and using learning tools that are in accordance with the principles carried by the Merdeka Curriculum. This study also aims to identify the challenges faced by teachers in adopting the Merdeka Curriculum. The method used in this research and community service activity is the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. The PAR method consists of three interconnected words: participation, research, and action. This method involves several data collection techniques, including participatory observation, structured interviews with teachers, focus group discussions, and document analysis related to the Merdeka Curriculum. The data analysis techniques employed in this study involve qualitative methods such as thematic analysis of interviews and content analysis of the curriculum documents. The findings reveal that: (a) The Independent Curriculum shares similarities with the National Curriculum, easing familiarity for teachers despite name changes. (b) Pancasila student character dimensions and new Learning Outcomes are relatively unfamiliar, needing more time for integration into teaching materials. (c) The activity significantly improves teachers' grasp of the Independent Curriculum, simplifying its application in the classroom.

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INTRODUCTION

By the changing of the times, the curriculum has also evolved to achieve better quality education. Some changes began with the 2013 Curriculum, which transitioned into an Emergency Curriculum, implemented according to the institution's conditions and focusing on specific attainable competencies. In late August 2021, amidst the ongoing pandemic, the government issued a policy to simplify the curriculum, known as the Emergency Curriculum. This policy was

outlined in Minister of Education and Culture Decree Number 719/P/2020. The implementation of the Emergency Curriculum in educational institutions was akin to an atomic bomb for those institutions themselves. The full execution of the 2013 Curriculum had not been realized to its maximum potential. This aligns with Suyanto's research, which found that out of 33 surveyed schools, 17 of them were not prepared for the curriculum change (Qasim et al., 2020).

Curriculum changes occur systematically in accordance with the evolution of time and technology (Hanelt et al., 2021). As a result, educational institutions often adjust their policies based on the latest regulations and tailored to their specific circumstances. As is known, education has undergone significant changes due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) has prepared a new curriculum that can be implemented in educational institutions, known as the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum grants institutions the freedom to apply the curriculum based on their environment. However, this curriculum remains optional for educational institutions, whether they will implement it or not (Rozandy et al., 2021). It is expected that after 2024, the Merdeka Curriculum can be uniformly implemented in all educational institutions.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum can run smoothly when various preparations are made, including teacher preparations related to its implementation in teaching (Lockee et al., 2021). One form of preparation that teachers undertake is preparing learning materials that support the execution of the Merdeka Curriculum. Learning materials are crucial as they serve as a reference for teachers to conduct teaching activities in a more structured and systematic manner.

According to the Circular Letter from the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 14 of 2019, it is known that the learning paradigm has shifted towards self-directed learning in line with the demands of the 4.0 industrial revolution. Teachers should be capable of updating the conventional teaching methods, which typically revolve around the teacher, into student-centered learning, or learner-centered learning (Zhang et al., 2021). The Merdeka Curriculum presents a new challenge for teachers to be more creative and innovative in developing teaching materials (Irawati et al., 2022).

Teaching aids are a set of tools used to support the learning process. According to (Abdulrahman et al., 2020), teaching aids are preparations made by teachers so that the implementation and evaluation of learning can be carried out systematically and yield results that meet expectations (Muñoz et al., 2022). According to (Warman et al., 2022), teaching aids are based on the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, learner orientation, and consider the readiness, interest, and learning needs (Mustika et al., 2022).

Teaching aids in the Merdeka Curriculum include, among others: teaching modules, student worksheets (LKPD), instructional media, and assessment or

evaluation. Teaching modules are guidelines containing systematically organized learning materials to assist in achieving learning objectives. Student worksheets (LKPD) are instructional tools that facilitate interactive activities between teachers and students to enhance learning outcomes. Instructional media are physical and communication means to deliver learning materials. Assessment represents the end-of-learning assessment results determined by specific instruments. The availability of teaching aids is an effort to achieve optimal learning and educational objectives (Rasmitadila et al., 2020).

Teachers, as designers of learning activities, must be skilled in developing teaching materials to assist students in achieving competence. Through teaching materials, students can learn competencies sequentially and systematically, both individually and in groups. Therefore, teaching materials play a very important role in achieving learning outcomes (Zaini et al., 2022).

The importance of preparing teaching materials to serve as references in the learning process does not align with the reality observed. The reality indicates that only a portion of teachers prepare teaching materials for the purpose of conducting the teaching process. As revealed in interviews with teachers at An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School, teachers have not yet created Teaching Modules that align with the Merdeka Curriculum. Based on the observations conducted by our team on the teaching materials used by teachers at An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School, it was found that the teaching materials created by teachers are not yet aligned and require improvement. This is because the teachers have not received any training related to the development of teaching materials. Teachers rely solely on the government-provided textbooks. Additionally, with the implementation of the Freedom Learning Curriculum at the school level, teaching materials must be adaptable to the existing curriculum (Solikhah et al., 2022).

This aligns with the findings of Aeini's research, which revealed that teachers are not motivated to create teaching materials because direct classroom teaching is considered more important than crafting complicated teaching materials. In practice, teachers have not yet succeeded in creating appropriate teaching materials (Villa et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the research conducted by Aprilia & Irawati indicates that teachers have a good understanding of the concept of teaching materials. However, on average, teachers have not demonstrated sufficient abilities in developing teaching materials. This underscores the need for an improvement in the quality and competence of teachers in designing teaching materials (Kilag et al., 2023).

Susda Heleni and Zulkarnain state in their research that teachers still find it challenging to develop teaching materials based on the Merdeka Curriculum because it is a newly implemented curriculum, and teachers have not fully grasped its concepts. In their research findings, information was obtained regarding the obstacles to implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, one of which is related to teaching materials (Ingthias et al., 2022). The Learning Achievement

Mapping prepared by teachers does not have complete components in accordance with the Ministry of Education and Culture regulations. Teaching Modules that are created are also not developed based on the needs of students that refer to the school environment. Instead, teachers are merely copying teaching materials readily available on the internet. The materials are created with a focus on administrative requirements provided by the teachers without considering the intended learning objectives (Atika et al., 2020). Teachers also face difficulties in designing Student Activity Sheets (LKPD) that can help students discover their own concepts about the material being studied (Fitria et al., 2020).

Due to the importance of teaching materials in the curriculum implementation process at schools, the researchers felt the need to provide assistance to teachers in developing teaching materials as an effort to address this issue. This assistance is based on a situational analysis, including: (1) the unavailability of Merdeka Curriculum teaching materials in An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School, (2) teachers have not received training and guidance on developing Merdeka Curriculum teaching materials, leading to difficulties, and (3) the low proficiency of teachers in developing Merdeka Curriculum teaching materials.

RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research and community service activity is the Participatory Action Research (PAR) method. The PAR method consists of three interconnected words: participation, research, and action. Through the PAR method, community service is not limited to socialization but involves research, guidance, and the integration of all these aspects in the process of social change in the community, collectively (Afni et al., 2021). The basis for conducting PAR is the need to achieve the desired changes. PAR is usually related to self-assessment of organizations, where research subjects participate with professional researchers. PAR, as described by Yoland Wadworth, is a research method involving the participation of participants, leading to action on new knowledge and understanding (Inayah et al., 2021). According to Watters, PAR is research that actively involves all parties in examining ongoing actions (Sembiring et al., 2021). In other words, PAR is often referred to as research that involves the community as the subject of the research. PAR has three main pillars, which are the research dimension, action dimension, and participation dimension, aiming to promote transformative action or change (Afni, Sari and Prihati, 2021). In this context, the desired change is the competence of teachers in developing teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, which is a new curriculum that must be used by all formal educational institutions.

The research activities were conducted at the An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School in Kalianget, Banyuglugur, Situbondo. An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School is one of the institutions under the auspices of the

Nadwatul Muta'allimin Foundation, located in the village of Kalianget, Banyuglugur District, Situbondo Regency, East Java. This institution has just entered its fourth year since its establishment in 2019. As a new institution, An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School is still working on organizing its systems and administration, particularly in the field of the curriculum. The term "Integrated" is a distinctive feature of this institution, setting it apart from others by combining two curriculum concepts. In its teaching approach, An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School integrates the government curriculum with a local curriculum based on the Quran (Islamic knowledge).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results include: (1) Socialization of the Community Service Program and a Workshop on Developing Teaching Materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) Assistance in Developing Teaching Materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, (3) Implementation of the Teaching Materials Development Program, and (4) Program Evaluation.

This activity was carried out over one month with three face-to-face meetings, throughout the month of April 2023, in the fourth-grade classroom of An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School. The steps involved in this process are as follows:

Table 1. The steps in the fourth-grade classroom of An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School

No	Activity	Steps
1	Socialization of the Community Service Program	This step was conducted in the first week of April. During this phase, the activities began with the socialization of the community service program to the teachers at the partner school, followed by providing material on the process of developing teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum.
2	Assistance in Developing Teaching Materials	This step was carried out in the second week of April. During the second meeting, the community service team provided guidance to the teachers in developing teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum.
3	Implementation of Teaching Modules in Teaching	At the end of this activity, teachers implement the Teaching Modules that have been developed in accordance with their curriculum and group of learners. Throughout this process, the community service team will provide support and conduct observations

Socialization of the Community Service Program and a Workshop on Developing Teaching Materials for the Merdeka Curriculum

The community service activity began with a program socialization and a workshop on developing teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum. This

event was attended by five teachers from An-Nadwah Integrated Elementary School on April 4, 2023. The activity commenced with an opening session and an introduction to the community service program for the teachers, followed by an explanation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

The materials that need to be understood include the orientation and new paradigm of the Merdeka Curriculum, the design of the Strengthening of Pancasila Learner Profiles (P5) project, Learning Achievement Mapping (CP) and Learning Objectives (TP), the development of the Learning Objective Flow (ATP), the preparation of the School Operational Curriculum (KOSP), Annual Programs (Prota), Semester Programs (Prosem), and Teaching Modules.

The Pancasila Learner Profile consists of several competencies that students must achieve during the learning process. The main principle of the Pancasila Learner Profile is lifelong learners who are competent, have character, and behave in accordance with the values of Pancasila activity (Satria et al., 2022).

The Pancasila Learner Profile Strengthening Project provides students with the opportunity to experience knowledge as a character-strengthening process and a chance to learn from their surroundings. Students have the opportunity to explore important themes or issues such as sustainable lifestyles, culture, entrepreneurship, and technology. Through this learning, it is expected that students will be able to take concrete actions in response to these issues according to their learning stages and needs. This strengthening project can also inspire students to contribute and have an impact on their environment (Nurani et al., 2022).

The teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum consist of Learning Achievement Mapping and Learning Objectives (CP TP), the development of the Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and the preparation of Teaching Modules (MA). Through this activity, teachers can determine the concept of the Teaching Module that will be developed and implemented at the end of the activity (Satria et al., 2022).

Assistance in Developing Teaching Materials for the Merdeka Curriculum

In the second phase of this activity, teachers began developing teaching materials. This activity took place during the second week of April, specifically starting on April 10, 2023, and lasting for one week. On the first day, teachers were guided in the process of developing these materials, and then they were given tasks to be completed over the course of the week. During the development process, the teachers received intensive guidance from the community service team. This guidance was also carried out as a form of collaboration between the community service team and the teachers in developing the teaching materials.

The process of developing teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum involves mapping Learning Achievement and Learning Objectives (CP TP) in the teacher's and student's books. This analysis is necessary to determine the Time Allocation and Lesson Hours (JP) for each chapter or unit in the Teaching

Module. After mapping CP and TP, the teacher selects a subject and chooses one unit or concept to develop. Then, the teacher creates Learning Achievement Mapping, the Development of Learning Objective Flow (ATP), and a Teaching Module based on the chosen concept. The Teaching Module includes Student Worksheets (LKPD) and assessment sheets to measure student comprehension.

After one week, the teachers collected the teaching materials they had created, which were then reviewed and examined by the community service team. During this meeting, the community service team asked the teachers to prepare learning media that supported the teaching modules they had created. The teaching modules that were improved by the teachers following the suggestions from the community service team were deemed suitable for implementation in the classroom.

Implementation of the Teaching Materials Development Program

This activity was carried out in the third week of April 2023. During this phase, teachers implemented the teaching materials, specifically the Teaching Modules, that they had created in their respective classrooms. (Afni, Sari and Prihati, 2021), states that teachers must have teaching methods as strategies that can facilitate learners in mastering the knowledge provided. In order to enhance the students' abilities, a suitable and curriculum-aligned learning process is necessary (Martinez et al., 2022).

An example of a teaching module developed by a teacher is the concept of Mini Shadow Puppet in the subject of Visual Arts for Grade IV. The teacher prepared a teaching video to help students understand what a shadow puppet is.

After the students understood the concept of the shadow puppet, the teacher divided them into several groups. The teacher then asked the students to answer questions that had been prepared in the form of paper cutouts. Each piece of paper had points assigned to it. The student group that successfully answered the questions with the highest total point received a reward from teacher.

Program Evaluation

After all the community service activities are completed, the teachers and the community service team evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching with the Teaching Module that has been developed. The community service team and teachers reflect on the teaching activities. This activity takes place in the fourth week of April.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussions presented earlier, it can be concluded that; (1) this community service activity was carried out to enhance teachers' understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum and to provide guidance in the development of teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, (2) the

community service activity was divided into three stages: (a) Socialization of the Service Program and Workshop on the Development of Teaching Materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, (b) Guidance in the Development of Teaching Materials for the Merdeka Curriculum, and (c) Implementation of the Teaching Materials Development Program. at the end of the activity, the teachers at SD Terpadu An-Nadwah were able to develop teaching materials for the Merdeka Curriculum and implement the Teaching Module they had created in the classroom teaching process.

This research is expected to provide a more in-depth look at how technological innovations have transformed and improved learning in the digital age. The implications of these findings are expected to help direct education policies and learning practices that are more adaptive, responsive, and technology-based for a higher quality education future.

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