

Training on Contextual Teaching Modules Based on Merdeka Curriculum for Early Childhood Education Teachers in Border Areas

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ABSTRACT

Teaching modules are an important component that supports teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating relevant and contextualized learning. The Merdeka Curriculum teaching module training is focused on empowering teachers to be able to develop teaching modules that are flexible, innovative, and in accordance with the characteristics of students. The training aims to increase the understanding of PAUD teachers in developing contextual teaching modules based on the independent curriculum. Through training, teachers are equipped with practical skills and knowledge to develop lesson plans, choose appropriate learning strategies, and conduct competency-based assessments. The target partners are teachers at Nurul Iman Malinau Kindergarten in North Kalimantan. In this activity there are 5 processes or stages, first socialization, training, technology application, program evaluation and follow-up plans. The essence of this service is how PAUD teachers are able to develop contextual teaching modules based on the independent curriculum. The first step that must be taken by teachers is the ability to formulate learning objectives from the flow of learning objectives that are relevant and in accordance with the characteristics of students. This activity does not only take place in one meeting, but is also carried out online to strengthen the results of the teaching module prepared by the teacher. From the results of the implementation of the teaching module preparation, it was found that the results of the teaching module work prepared were better than before. Teachers are able to develop a more complex and more elaborated material accompanied by assessments to measure the ability of students.

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INTRODUCTION

Being left behind in terms of knowledge and skills is a problem that is often found in communities in Indonesia's border and coastal areas. As is known, the government has launched an independent curriculum in 2021 (Kemendibudristek, 2022). Meanwhile, the majority of people in border and coastal areas have not implemented the independent curriculum due to a lack of understanding of the implementation of the independent curriculum and the absence of assistance provided by the government to the community. Malinau Regency is one of the regencies in North Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The district capital is located in Malinau Kota sub-district. Malinau district is the largest district in North Kalimantan, with an area of 38.973,56 km². The total population in 2022 is 85,316 people. Most of Malinau's forest area borders the state of Serawak, Malaysia. The geographical condition of Malinau Regency is dominated by forest and mountain areas. In Malinau district, there are seven large mountains that are incorporated into a series of mountains. This condition causes the community in Malinau Regency to: a) have limited access to infrastructure, including internet access, which prevents them from obtaining adequate education; b) be quite isolated from urban areas, which results in a lack of access to adequate knowledge and skills. Malinau district has great potential in human resource development. Investment in education and skills training is essential to improve the capacity of local human resources. This will help the community take advantage of existing economic opportunities, as well as improve competitiveness and adaptability in the era of globalization.

Kindergarten teachers are the first to educate and teach children the basic skills they must have before entering primary school. The condition of Malinau Regency, which is far from the city center and quite difficult to access, seems to have an impact on the lagging of teachers in developing their potential. The partners in this service activity are teachers at Nurul Iman Kindergarten located in Malinau Regency, North Kalimantan. The target partners are teachers at Nurul Iman Kindergarten. Nurul Iman Kindergarten is a private school so that in its implementation it does not get operational assistance from the local Education Office. Nurul Iman Kindergarten has 10 teachers with details of 4 permanent teachers and 6 non-permanent teachers. All teachers at Nurul Iman Kindergarten are high school graduates and there are no S1 graduates in Early Childhood Education. This also makes it difficult for partners to teach because they do not understand the characteristics of early childhood so that partners learn by themselves as kindergarten teachers. In addition, the geographical condition of Malinau district, which is quite isolated and difficult to access, makes it difficult for partners to participate in training activities/seminars that can only be accessed in Samarinda City, East Kalimantan, as the closest area that has a university that organizes an undergraduate program in early childhood education. In addition, the partners also find it difficult to bring competent resource persons to Malinau district because of the high cost and accommodation required, which is certainly difficult for the partners to fulfill. The following picture shows that the journey to Malinau district is done by sea from Tarakan City to Malinau district and continued by road. If you want to go to inland and remote areas in Malinau district, you will have to travel by speedboat.

Based on the partner's situation and existing conditions, this service activity seeks to improve the quality of partners as teachers. The most obvious problem experienced by partners is that they are far behind in implementing the independent curriculum. The Independent Learning Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning so that the content is more optimal with sufficient time available in exploring concepts and competencies tailored to the learning needs and interests of these students (Dewi, 2022). Problems that occur in the independent curriculum where teachers lack understanding of contextual integrated learning that can support learning discourse and challenges in preparing teaching tools in lesson planning, especially teaching modules. The Independent Curriculum teaching module is designed to help teachers or educators teach more flexibly and contextually and not always stick to one source, namely textbooks. (Triana, Yanti, Hervita, 2023).

One of the main learning tools to smooth the implementation or application of learning in schools that use an independent learning curriculum is the teaching module. The implementation of an independent curriculum in schools cannot be separated from the teacher's ability to prepare teaching modules. Teachers are required to be able to compile teaching modules properly and correctly. This teaching module is one of the learning tools from the independent curriculum which is useful as a teacher's guide when carrying out learning activities. It turns out that in the implementation of the independent learning curriculum there are obstacles, one of which is the difficulty in preparing teaching modules (Agusty, Afrida, & Prafitasari, 2023).

Teaching modules are the development of a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) equipped with more detailed guidelines, including student activity sheets and assessments to measure the achievement of learning objectives (Mukhlisina, Danawati, & Wijyaningputri, 2023). Marlina (2023) the preparation of the independent curriculum teaching module made changes to the learning process for individual students, including reviewing initial abilities, intellectual levels, talents, potential, interests, learning motivation, learning styles, special needs, learning speed, cultural background of each student, norms, values and student environment. From the changes in the learning process, it is centered on students so that the spirit of learning, motivation, interest, creativity, initiative, inspiration, innovation and independence are created by constructivism that arises in students. The teacher in this case facilitates and directs students in order to create learning objectives in accordance with what is implemented from the independent learning curriculum guidelines and compiles teaching modules tailored to these needs.

Partners faced a number of problems related to the development of Teaching Modules. The main challenge faced is the lack of knowledge in aspects of developing Teaching Modules, including determining objectives, designing assessments, and developing activities (Iqbal, 2024). Faced with these obstacles, improving partners' understanding and skills in the preparation of Teaching Modules is crucial to ensure successful implementation and achievement of national education goals.

The proposed solution to overcome partners' challenges in compiling Teaching Modules is through special training and assistance in compiling Teaching Modules, by ensuring compliance with the Merdeka Curriculum development guidelines. This Community Service activity aims to improve the quality of Teaching Modules in Early Childhood Education (PAUD), so that they are in accordance with the components listed in the development of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, the implementation of community service activities aims to facilitate partners in increasing their knowledge and skills in compiling teaching modules based on the independent curriculum.

METHOD

The following is a training implementation method consisting of 5 stages to develop teachers' ability to formulate contextual teaching modules that are in accordance with the concept of the Merdeka Curriculum:

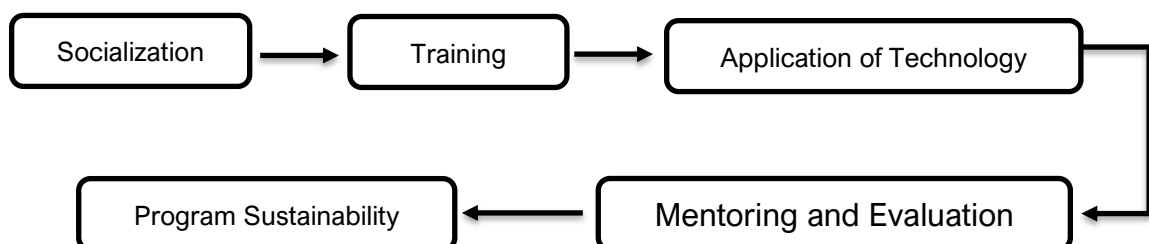


FIGURE 2. Stages of service activities

Socialization

The first stage carried out by the service team is to conduct socialization related to service activities to partners. Socialization is carried out by offering solutions to the problems and situations experienced by partners. In addition, socialization activities also include discussions regarding what things are needed for the smooth running of service activities.

Training

The purpose of this training activity is to facilitate partners in increasing their knowledge and skills as teachers in the era of the independent curriculum. The training implementation method uses experiential learning, which contains four elements of stages, namely real experience, reflection, conceptualization, and implementation. Each training material is given a pre-test and post-test. In summary, the following is an overview of the implementation of training activities covering the three main materials:

- PAUD Teacher Training: Improving Understanding of Early Childhood Characteristics
 - Session 1: Introduction to basic concepts of development
 - Session 2: Characteristics of early childhood physical development
 - Session 3: Characteristics of early childhood cognitive development
 - Session 4: Characteristics of early childhood socio-emotional development
 - Session 5: Observation of early childhood development characteristics
- Contextualized Teaching Skills Training
 - Session 1: Variations in early childhood education
 - Session 2: Introduction to contextual teaching and learning approach
 - Session 3: Application of numeracy, literacy and science in early childhood learning
 - Session 4: Simulation of developing a contextualized learning plan
- Training on the Preparation of Teaching Modules Based on the Independent Curriculum
 - Session 1: Introduction to the independent curriculum in early childhood education
 - Session 2: Introduction to the project on strengthening the Pancasila student profile
 - Session 3: Preparation of contextual teaching modules based on the independent curriculum
 - Session 4: Implementation of the independent curriculum in the early childhood learning process
 - Session 5: Assistance in implementing the independent curriculum

Application of Technology

TABLE 1. Implementation of Technology

Material	Application of Technology
Preschool Teacher Training: Improving Understanding of Early Childhood Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening of presentation materials with the help of laptops and LCDs • Video of young children practicing observing early childhood characteristics
Contextualized Teaching Skills Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening of presentation materials with the help of laptops and LCDs • Video of numeracy, literacy and science applications in early childhood learning
Training on the Preparation of Teaching Modules Based on Merdeka Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of presentation materials with the help of laptops and LCDs • Video introduction to the project of strengthening the profile of Pancasila students

Mentoring and Evaluation

After the training is given, periodic evaluations will be carried out to see changes in partner knowledge and skills. Mentoring is also carried out for 4 months after the training activities are given. Evaluation is carried out every month for a period of 4 months to see the progress of partners.

Program Sustainability

Program sustainability is carried out by forming a “PAUD care community” in border and coastal areas. This community is planned to be formed with 10 partner members and accompanied by the service team. The community routinely conducts activities aimed at improving the knowledge and skills of PAUD teachers in border and coastal areas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Training on the preparation of teaching modules based on the independent curriculum for PAUD teachers in border areas was held on September 14, 2024 at Mahkota Hotel Malinau, Malinau Regency, North Kalimantan. The activity began with the opening which was attended by the head of PAUD Malinau, partner school teachers and the service team from the University of Borneo Tarakan. In the initial session, the service team conveyed the objectives of the activity, the timeline of PKM activities, the materials to be delivered and the presenters, indicators of training success, activity evaluation and follow-up plans. Then enter the core activity, namely the delivery of material, the first material focuses on understanding the characteristics of students, especially at the PAUD level. The characteristics of students in PAUD are certainly the most important thing because it is rather difficult to know the various characteristics of students. Therefore, teachers must be able to know and learn each of their students so that when the learning process takes place it can run well. The materials in learning about understanding the characteristics of learners presented are recognizing the basic concepts of development, the characteristics of early childhood physical development, the characteristics of early childhood cognitive development, the characteristics of early childhood socio-emotional development, observation of early childhood development characteristics.

The next material discusses the independent curriculum and contextual learning. This material focuses on an introduction to the independent curriculum (definitions, dimensions, characteristics and others) and an understanding of contextual learning. The material discussed is about variations in early childhood education, introduction to contextual approaches (Contextual teaching and learning), application of numeracy, literacy, and science in early childhood learning, simulation of developing contextual learning plans. By providing this independent curriculum material as a basic start in compiling teaching modules, especially contextual-based, which is in accordance with the output of this service activity. Furthermore, the delivery of the last material is about Teaching Modules in PAUD and the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project. In general, the material presented was about the introduction of the independent curriculum in early childhood education, the introduction of the project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, the preparation of contextual teaching modules based on the independent curriculum, the implementation of the independent curriculum in the early childhood learning process, and assistance in implementing the independent curriculum in compiling teaching modules in PAUD. In compiling teaching modules, there are several things that must be known so that the learning process can run well. The first step that must be taken by the teacher is the ability to formulate learning objectives from the flow of learning objectives that are relevant and in accordance with the characteristics of the students. In addition, teachers are invited to share their experiences in formulating learning objectives and show the teaching modules they have made before.



FIGURE 2. Material delivery

After the delivery of the material, then continued with assisting teachers in compiling teaching modules, the teachers were divided into several groups. The work is still carried out individually so that it is based on teaching modules that have been made before so that in this case it is more of a stabilization process in compiling contextual teaching modules, especially those based on the independent curriculum. During the process of working on teaching modules, the service team went around and assisted teachers in compiling teaching modules and directed them according to the teaching module guidelines on the independent curriculum. From several things it was found that there were still teachers who did not understand in detail about teaching modules, compiling teaching modules and especially formulating learning objectives. After these activities, teachers are directed to collect their work even though it is not complete. This activity does not only take place on that day, it will be continued at the next meeting but through the zoom application to further strengthen the teaching modules that have been made.



FIGURE 3. Assistance in the preparation of PAUD Teaching Modules

Teaching modules are tools used by teachers to direct the learning process to be more structured and measurable. In the Merdeka Curriculum, teaching modules function as flexible and adaptive learning guides according to the context of students and the learning environment. Effective teaching modules contain several components, such as learning objectives, learning materials, learning steps, and assessment instruments designed in accordance with the desired learning outcomes (Suherman, 2023). Teaching

module training helps PAUD teachers understand how to develop and implement teaching modules that are in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, this training also teaches teachers to be more creative in designing learning experiences that are in accordance with the real conditions in the field, so that students can develop competencies more holistically.

The Merdeka Curriculum teaching module training is a strategic step in strengthening the capacity of PAUD teachers to implement this curriculum well. Through this training, teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to design student-centered, flexible, and contextualized learning. However, for this training to deliver optimal results, there needs to be full support from various parties, including government policies and collaboration between education stakeholders. The most important training material in providing an understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum and how to develop teaching modules is how teachers are able to formulate learning objectives from learning outcomes and also translate them into learning objective indicators (Hariani, Andayani, & Ain, 2023). The difficulties initially felt in compiling teaching modules due to lack of knowledge, time, confusion about what methods to use to analyze learner characteristics, confusion with the use of technology, and lack of reference sources can be reduced by this teaching module training (Sthephani, Zetriuslita, & Hadiyanti, 2023).

In addition to understanding the steps and strategies for preparing teaching modules, teachers must also be able to understand the importance of conducting assessments as a basis for formulating teaching modules that are in accordance with the characteristics of students (Asriadi, Sukaria, Perdana, Jafar, & Nurdin, 2023). Learning and assessment are a unity that cannot be separated in the learning process. Assessment is used to see the progress or achievement of learning by students through the behavior displayed by children (Wiyani, Mulyani, Fatmawati, 2024).

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum also requires support from various parties, such as school principals, education offices, and school communities. Good cooperation between various stakeholders will determine the success of implementing this curriculum in the field. In addition, supportive government education policies, such as providing adequate resources and updating related regulations, also play a major role in facilitating the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (Gunawan, 2021).

CONCLUSION

From the service activities that have been carried out, it runs smoothly and well, but the objectives of this activity have not been fully achieved because there are still processes and further stages to be carried out. In this activity, teachers were very enthusiastic in participating in the training on the preparation of contextual teaching modules based on the independent curriculum. The output of this activity is that teachers can produce a contextual teaching module that can be implemented in the learning process in the classroom.

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