



## Capacity Building for Raudhatul Athfal Teachers through the Development of Merdeka Curriculum Teaching Modules

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Article Info	Abstract
<p><b>Received:</b> 20-10-2024</p> <p><b>Revised:</b> 03-01-2025</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> 26-03-2025</p> <p><b>Published</b> 30-04-2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Asset-Based Capacity Building, Mentoring, Merdeka Curriculum, Raudhatul Athfal, Teaching Modules</p>	<p><b>Background:</b> Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers often face challenges in developing effective teaching modules aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum due to limited training and difficulties in translating curriculum principles into classroom practice.</p> <p><b>Aims:</b> This community service aims to strengthen RA teachers' capacity in developing teaching modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum.</p> <p><b>Methods:</b> This program employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach through mentoring activities conducted offline over two days. The program involved 52 RA teachers in a series of activities including material delivery, hands-on module design, and reflective discussions. Data were collected through observations, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and questionnaires.</p> <p><b>Result:</b> The results indicate a significant improvement in teachers' understanding and skills in developing teaching modules aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers demonstrated better comprehension of curriculum structure, learning outcomes (CP), and the formulation of learning objectives (TP) and teaching modules (ATP). In addition, their ability to design structured and contextualized modules improved, particularly in aligning learning activities with student needs and integrating appropriate learning media. The evaluation results showed a high level of participant satisfaction, with an average score of 3.95 categorized as "Good," indicating that the mentoring activities were well-received. Teachers also showed increased confidence in implementing the curriculum in classroom practice, including the use of technology. Furthermore, the participatory and hands-on approach enabled active engagement, leading to deeper understanding and improved practical skills.</p> <p><b>Conclusion:</b> The mentoring program effectively enhanced RA teachers' capacity in designing innovative and contextualized teaching modules aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, making it a practical and replicable model for similar educational programs.</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Entering 2022, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek) officially launched the Merdeka Curriculum as part of efforts to recover learning (Cahya et al., 2025; Ridwanulloh et al., 2024; Yuniarti, 2024). This recovery initiative was based on various educational challenges, including the significant disparity in learning quality across regions and among socio-economic groups (Khodarasih et al., 2025; Sabrifha et al., 2025; Salmiah et al., 2025; Syaharra et al., 2025). These issues were further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022, which severely impacted student learning outcomes.

The Merdeka Curriculum simplifies the curriculum under emergency conditions to address learning gaps caused by the pandemic. Based on data obtained from <https://www.pusatinformasi.guru.kemdikbud.go.id> [accessed: March 25, 2024], it was reported that 31.5% of schools implementing the emergency Merdeka Curriculum experienced a reduction in the pandemic's negative effects on literacy and numeracy outcomes. Specifically, literacy learning loss was reduced by 73%, while numeracy loss decreased by 86% (Idhartono, 2022; Jojo & Sihotang, 2022).

These data illustrate that changes in curriculum design and implementation strategies must be carried out comprehensively. The Merdeka Curriculum is seen as a means to support post-pandemic learning recovery while granting schools the autonomy to choose and apply the curriculum that best suits their needs (Sriandila et al., 2023; Warmansyah et al., 2023). The Merdeka Curriculum framework is designed to be more flexible and student-centered, aiming to foster student competence development through character and skill enhancement.

The policy for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum extends across all levels of education and was adopted by the Tanah Datar Regency Government through the issuance of Tanah Datar Regent Decree No. 347 of 2022 concerning the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Madrasahs (Lestarinigrum, 2022; Sugiri & Priatmoko, 2020). Fundamentally, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in madrasahs follows national policies and frameworks outlined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Kemendikbudristek.

In madrasahs, it is expected that curriculum implementation can be adapted to suit specific learning needs, offering reinforcement in line with the distinctive characteristics of each institution (Huda et al., 2022; Saihu, 2022). Raudhatul Athfal, as an early childhood education level within madrasahs, plays a vital role in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum as part of the learning recovery effort (Durtam, 2022). Raudhatul Athfal is encouraged to engage in innovation, creativity, and breakthroughs in educational management by fostering a positive

and conducive school environment (Suryadi, 2023). This approach aims to enhance both teacher and student motivation in the learning process. By providing opportunities for innovation and creativity, it is expected that the quality of learning in Raudhatul Athfal will improve.

Teachers in Raudhatul Athfal, positioned at the frontline of curriculum implementation, are urged to focus on shaping students' character, instilling 21st-century competencies, and promoting life skills through more creative and adaptive learning tailored to the students' needs in today's era (Kasra et al., 2022; Sitorus et al., 2024). Consequently, teachers must continuously enhance their capabilities, master competencies, and broaden their perspectives in order to deliver the best possible learning services to students.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in schools and madrasahs places the child at the center of the learning process. Differentiated learning and comprehensive authentic assessment models within the Merdeka Curriculum aim to accommodate students' interests, talents, and potential in the Tanah Datar context (Angyanur et al., 2022; Idhartono, 2022). Evaluation is no longer focused solely on cognitive outcomes; instead, it is expected to reflect a holistic human profile that embraces the full spectrum of intelligence. With this view, all students are seen as possessing strengths and achievements based on their respective talents, interests, and tendencies. The success of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Raudhatul Athfal can be measured by how enjoyable the learning experience becomes for all students (Suwanjal & Apriani, 2023; Wulandari, 2022). A joyful and meaningful learning atmosphere helps ensure that all children are actively engaged in the process and contributes to the cultivation of a learning culture.

Lifelong learning ensures that educational outcomes become more meaningful, effective, and efficient. Furthermore, changes in classroom atmosphere can contribute to character building among students, equipping them with the competencies and life skills required to meet the demands of the present era (Pérez-Rodrigo & Aranceta, 2001). To ensure successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers are expected to fully understand the process and stages of its application. Based on the core content of curriculum implementation, there are several key understandings that teachers must acquire (Maskur, 2023). These include understanding the philosophical foundations of the Merdeka Curriculum, mastering strategies for learning and assessment, comprehending the development of the operational curriculum at the madrasah level, and understanding the development of student character through projects that reinforce the Pancasila Student Profile and the rahmatan lil alamin profile

(Directorate of KSK Madrasah, Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Tanah Datar, 2022:8).

To gain these understandings, Raudhatul Athfal teachers are expected to be capable of designing and developing operational curricula, enhancing their learning strategies, and managing the implementation of character-building projects based on the principles of Pancasila and the concept of rahmatan lil alamin (Thowilah & Hoiriyah, 2024). In order to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to develop operational curricula and implement instructional approaches aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers should actively participate in socialization programs, professional training, seminars, and technical mentoring facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, training institutions, lecturers, and other relevant stakeholders.

Such ideal conditions, as previously described, cannot be achieved solely through curriculum formulation. Teachers, as the primary agents of change in the field, are vital to the successful implementation of the curriculum. Research conducted by Tomlinson, (2014) indicates that many early childhood educators, particularly those in PAUD institutions, still face significant challenges in understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in relation to developing and designing teaching materials and modules. Supporting the previous research findings, Utami et al. (2022) conducted a study aimed at enhancing the character and competencies of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in the implementation of the Merdeka Bermain (Freedom to Play) curriculum. This study was based on the observed issues of inadequate character development and low competency levels among PAUD teachers in applying the Merdeka Bermain approach.

Based on interviews with Raudhatul Athfal teachers who are members of the Raudhatul Athfal Teachers Association (IGRA) in Tanah Datar Regency, conducted in March 2024, it was found that most teachers had received socialization related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. However, 12 Raudhatul Athfal institutions in Tanah Datar Regency had not yet implemented the curriculum. According to HW, a teacher who also serves as the secretary of IGRA in Tanah Datar, many school administrators and teachers do not fully understand how to carry out teaching practices, learning planning, curriculum evaluation, development of operational curricula at the school level, or how to integrate the Pancasila student profile. Supporting HW's statement, 11 Raudhatul Athfal teachers admitted experiencing difficulties in developing teaching tools or modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum. A lack of understanding and skills among teachers related to learning development was identified as a primary obstacle to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Raudhatul Athfal throughout Tanah Datar Regency.

From the above research findings and the problems encountered by Raudhatul Athfal teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in Tanah Datar, support is needed from related stakeholders to enhance teachers' understanding and competencies in developing and implementing the curriculum. The Tanah Datar Ministry of Religious Affairs expects that all components of the madrasah and associated parties will work collaboratively to maximize efforts in empowering teachers through institutional support and capacity-building programs. The Department of Islamic Early Childhood Education (PIAUD) at Universitas Islam Negeri Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, as a partner of madrasahs, bears the responsibility to contribute to the improvement of educational quality in Raudhatul Athfal.

In this regard, the Department of Early Childhood Islamic Education aims to design mentoring activities for IGRA teachers in developing teaching modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum, with the goal of strengthening their understanding and skills in effectively implementing the curriculum in Raudhatul Athfal settings.

## **METHODS**

### **Community Services Design**

This community service program employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, a collaborative and cyclical methodology that integrates action and reflection to solve practical problems while simultaneously generating knowledge. PAR emphasizes active involvement of participants in every stage of the process, including problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This approach was selected as it aligns with the objective of empowering Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers, positioning them not as passive recipients but as active contributors in developing teaching modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum. Through PAR, the program facilitated a process of shared learning, critical reflection, and continuous improvement, enabling teachers to construct knowledge collaboratively and apply it directly in their teaching practices.

### **Location and Time of Implementation**

The program was conducted in several Raudhatul Athfal (RA) institutions and implemented through an offline mentoring scheme over two days (June 1–2, 2024). The selection of offline implementation was intended to maximize direct interaction, hands-on practice, and immediate feedback during the mentoring process. The intensive two-day structure allowed participants to engage in a complete cycle of learning, practice, and reflection within a structured timeframe.

## **Participants**

The participants consisted of 52 RA teachers who were actively involved in early childhood education and responsible for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in their respective institutions. The participants were selected based on their need for capacity building, particularly in developing teaching modules that align with curriculum demands. Most participants reported limited experience in designing structured teaching modules, especially in translating key concepts such as *Capaian Pembelajaran (CP)*, *Tujuan Pembelajaran (TP)*, *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP)*, student-centered learning, and differentiated instruction into practical classroom applications. In this program, teachers acted as co-researchers who actively contributed to discussions, decision-making, and reflection processes.

## **Data Collection Techniques**

To ensure comprehensive and valid data, multiple data collection techniques were employed. These included documentation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and questionnaires. Documentation consisted of teaching module drafts, participants' reflective notes, attendance records, and visual documentation of activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, challenges, and perceptions before and after the intervention. FGDs were used to facilitate collective reflection and to capture diverse perspectives among participants. Questionnaires were administered in pre- and post-intervention formats to measure changes in teachers' knowledge, confidence, and perceived competence in developing teaching modules. The use of multiple instruments allowed for data triangulation, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings.

## **Program Implementation Procedure**

The implementation of the program followed a structured PAR cycle consisting of four main stages:

### **Problem Identification**

This initial stage involved diagnosing the challenges faced by RA teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Data were collected through preliminary observations, informal interviews, and discussions with participants. The findings indicated that teachers experienced difficulties in understanding curriculum components and translating them into structured teaching modules. This stage provided a baseline for designing appropriate interventions.

### **Collaborative Planning**

Based on the identified problems, facilitators and participants collaboratively designed the mentoring program. This included determining the

learning objectives, selecting relevant materials, and structuring the sequence of activities. The planning process emphasized participant involvement to ensure that the program addressed real needs and contextual challenges faced by teachers.

### Action and Intervention

The action stage involved the implementation of mentoring activities, including theoretical sessions, guided practice, and peer-review of teaching modules. Teachers were engaged in hands-on activities to develop their own modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Facilitators provided continuous guidance, feedback, and support throughout the process. This stage emphasized experiential learning, allowing participants to directly apply concepts in practice.

### Reflection and Evaluation

The final stage involved reflective discussions and evaluation of the program outcomes. Participants shared their experiences, identified challenges encountered during the process, and discussed possible improvements. Evaluation was conducted using questionnaire results, observation notes, and feedback from participants. This stage aimed to assess both the effectiveness of the program and the extent of participants' learning and development.

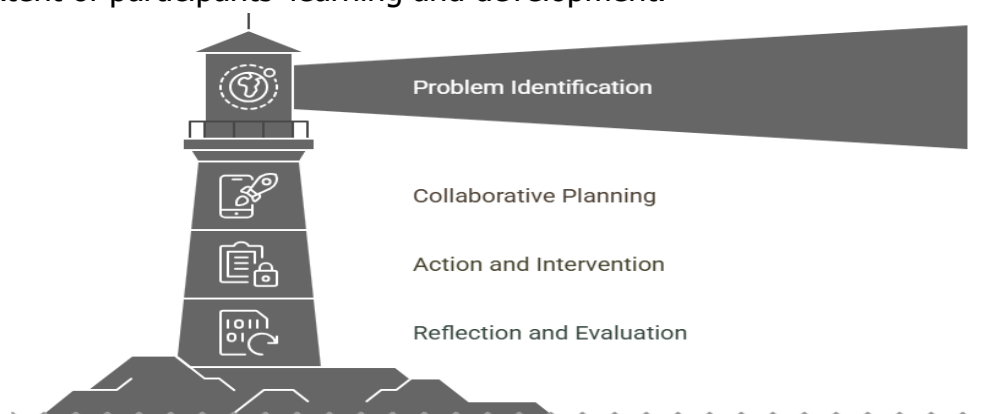


Figure 1. PAR Model

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a combination of qualitative and descriptive quantitative approaches. Qualitative data from interviews, FGDs, and observations were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify patterns related to teachers' understanding, skills, and confidence. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to measure participant satisfaction and perceived improvement. The integration of both approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The implementation of the community service program was carried out in an offline format over two consecutive days, from Saturday, June 1 to Sunday, June 2, 2024. The activity took place at one of the Raudhatul Athfal institutions located in Tanah Datar Regency. This program specifically targeted Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers within the regency, involving a total of 52 participating educators. Prior to the execution of the training, the community service team conducted a comprehensive review of all necessary preparations, which included finalizing the training materials and module contents. In addition, the team coordinated with partner institutions to distribute the training modules related to the preparation of Merdeka Curriculum-based instructional materials.

The implementation phase encompassed both theoretical and practical sessions, where participants not only received conceptual material but were also directly involved in the process of designing instructional modules for their respective early childhood education units. The training began with an opening ceremony led by a moderator, followed by remarks from the Head of the Islamic Early Childhood Education (PIAUD) Department at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Subsequently, a representative from the Tanah Datar IGRA (Association of Islamic Early Childhood Teachers) delivered a welcoming address, acknowledging the presence and contributions of the community service team.



**Figure 2.** Banner Design of the Mentoring Program on Teaching Module Development

During the core sessions, participants received in-depth guidance on the development of teaching modules aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. The training was delivered in a face-to-face setting and focused on contextualizing the curriculum to suit early childhood learning environments. Facilitators provided theoretical insights and practical frameworks, encouraging participants to engage actively through discussions, reflections, and hands-on module development.



**Figure 2.** Opening Remarks by the Head of the Department of Early Childhood Islamic Education

Based on the observations, interviews, and interactive sessions conducted throughout the training, several outcomes were evident. Firstly, there was a marked improvement in participants' knowledge and skills related to instructional module development. The intensive mentoring enabled teachers to better understand the structure, objectives, and pedagogical strategies required under the Merdeka Curriculum. Secondly, the participants expressed overwhelmingly positive responses, noting that the program had provided them with valuable insights and practical tools to enhance their teaching practice. Many teachers reported increased confidence in designing and implementing learning modules that are relevant, structured, and aligned with current curriculum reforms.



**Figure 3.** Delivery of Material on Teaching Modules for the Merdeka Curriculum



**Figure 4.** Training Participants Being Guided in Developing Assessments Based on the Merdeka Curriculum Using Teaching Modules

Moreover, the activity significantly enriched the pedagogical knowledge and perspective of PAUD teachers in Tanah Datar Regency. Through this program, teachers acquired a deeper understanding of various instructional methods, strategies, and approaches that can be applied in designing effective modules. They also gained exposure to the integration of information technology and digital media as tools to improve the quality of classroom instruction. As educators operating within the framework of the Merdeka Curriculum, the ability to utilize available technological resources has become an essential competency for enhancing early childhood learning outcomes.

Ultimately, the mentoring process supported teachers in internalizing and applying the core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, contributing to the creation of more dynamic, engaging, and innovative learning environments in early childhood education institutions.



**Figure 5.** Evaluation and Discussion Related to the Teaching Module Training Activities for the Merdeka Curriculum

**Table 1.** Mentoring Program Evaluation Results

No	Description	Score	Category
1	The material presented in the community service program	3.7	Good
2	Public response to the presented material	3.7	Good
3	Relevance of the material to the needs of the participants (teachers)	4.2	Very Good
4	Applicability of the material to teaching practice	4.1	Very Good
5	Alignment of the material with participants' needs	4.2	Very Good
6	Presenters and their delivery techniques	3.9	Good
7	Time allocation for the delivery of materials	3.9	Good
8	Clarity of the material	3.8	Good
9	Teachers' interest in the mentoring activity	4.0	Good
10	Overall satisfaction with the program	4.0	Good

The evaluation results in Table 1 show that the mentoring program received a positive response, with an average score of 3.95 categorized as "Good." The highest scores were found in the relevance and alignment of the material with teachers' needs, while other aspects such as delivery, clarity, and engagement were also rated positively. These results indicate that the program was well-received and effectively addressed participants' professional needs. Several factors contributed to these outcomes, including active participant engagement, varied teaching experiences that supported peer learning, and the presence of competent facilitators who delivered practical and contextual material. In addition, the relevance of the content to classroom challenges and the availability of adequate facilities supported the smooth implementation of the program and enhanced its overall effectiveness.

## **Discussion**

The findings indicate that structured mentoring grounded in participatory principles effectively enhances teachers' capacity to design teaching modules aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The improvement in understanding and skills reflects the strength of experiential learning that integrates theory with direct practice. Professional development is more effective when teachers actively engage in creating instructional materials rather than passively receiving information (AbdulRab, 2023; Garay Abad & Hattie, 2025). Practice based training also strengthens teachers' ability to connect curriculum frameworks with classroom realities, leading to deeper pedagogical understanding (Alzubi, 2023). The strong participant response and high satisfaction score indicate that the program addressed authentic classroom needs, particularly through the relevance and applicability of its content. When training aligns with teachers' daily practice, motivation and engagement increase significantly (Le & Nguyen, 2024). This alignment reflects context responsive professional learning that adapts to local conditions and supports meaningful instructional improvement.

The collaborative learning environment further strengthened program outcomes through active knowledge exchange and peer support. Interaction among teachers with diverse experiences encouraged reflection and mutual assistance, while collaborative professional learning communities are known to improve teacher effectiveness through shared inquiry and collective problem solving (Boudouaia et al., 2024). Facilitator competence also played a central role, as effective facilitators guide reflection, provide feedback, and translate abstract concepts into practical applications (Marshall et al., 2022). In addition, the integration of technology contributed to more adaptive and innovative teaching practices, as digital tools are increasingly recognized as essential competencies in

modern education (Nikoçeviq-Kurti et al., 2025). The program also strengthened teacher confidence, which is crucial for implementing new curriculum approaches and adopting innovative strategies (Veth & Bon, 2026). Through mentoring and guided practice, teachers were able to build both competence and confidence, supporting more effective and sustainable instructional practices.

### ***Community Service Contribution***

This community service program contributes to strengthening the professional capacity of Raudhatul Athfal (RA) teachers in developing teaching modules aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The program enhances teachers' understanding of curriculum structure, including learning outcomes, learning objectives, and the formulation of teaching modules that are contextual and student-centered. In addition, the mentoring approach supports the development of practical skills in designing structured and innovative learning activities, as well as integrating appropriate learning media and technology. The collaborative and participatory model implemented in this program encourages active engagement and reflective practice among teachers. From both practical and academic perspectives, this program offers an effective and replicable model for improving teacher competence in early childhood education through structured mentoring and module development.

### ***Limitations and Suggestions***

This program has several limitations that should be considered. The relatively short duration of the mentoring activities limits the ability to observe long-term changes in teachers' instructional practices. In addition, the program involved participants from a limited number of institutions, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The evaluation primarily relied on descriptive and perception-based data, which may not fully capture measurable improvements in teaching performance. Future programs are recommended to be conducted over a longer period, include a wider range of participants, and incorporate more comprehensive evaluation methods, including classroom observations and performance-based assessments. Continuous mentoring and follow-up activities are also necessary to ensure sustained improvement in teachers' competence.

## **CONCLUSION**

The mentoring program significantly strengthened the professional capacity of Raudhatul Athfal teachers in understanding and implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers gained practical knowledge in designing teaching modules that integrate differentiated learning, character education, and child-centered approaches. They also developed skills in utilizing digital tools and instructional media to enhance the quality of early childhood education. The program fostered

a more reflective and collaborative teaching culture, enabling participants to align their instructional planning with the core values and principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Overall, this initiative contributed to improving pedagogical competence, enriching learning environments, and promoting innovation in PAUD institutions across Tanah Datar.

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### **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

JW contributed to the conceptualization and coordination of the community service program as well as manuscript writing. MS, RY, and SW were responsible for designing and implementing the mentoring activities. RSS and ZZ contributed to data collection, observation, and documentation during the program. All authors participated in the evaluation, analysis, and revision of the manuscript and approved the final version for publication.

### **AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

The authors used ChatGPT during the preparation of this work for improving academic language quality, structure, and clarity. After using the tool, the authors thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

### **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declare that there are no financial, institutional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the conduct of this study, the analysis of data, the preparation of the manuscript, or its publication.

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