

Analyzing teacher-developed modules in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for senior high schools

Atikah Wati¹, Natalia Anggrarini², Ela Meiliasari³

English Education Department, Teachers Training and Education Science Faculty,
Wiralodra University
Corresponding author
Email: atikah_wati@unwir.ac.id

Abstract

One of the key elements of the Kurikulum Merdeka is the transformation of traditional lesson plans into teaching modules. However, many teachers face difficulties in compiling these modules effectively. This study aims to analyze teacher-developed instructional modules and identify the challenges encountered during their development. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through documentation analysis and interviews with four English teachers at senior high schools implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka. The findings reveal that several module components were incomplete, poorly described, or misunderstood by teachers, although most criteria outlined in the curriculum were technically fulfilled. Key challenges included unfamiliarity with new module components and terminology, limited insight into students' prior English proficiency, insufficient training, inadequate reference materials, and a lack of supporting facilities. These obstacles, if persistent, may undermine the curriculum's effectiveness. This study contributes practical insights by highlighting context-specific implementation barriers, emphasizing the urgent need for sustained teacher training and institutional support to strengthen module development and ensure successful curriculum integration..

Keywords: Teaching module; Teachers' Challenges; Kurikulum Merdeka

INTRODUCTION

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated the *Kurikulum Merdeka* to enhance Indonesia's educational systems in response to the learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 epidemic. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* provides many extracurricular learning activities, with content designed to optimize students' time for conceptual exploration and skill development (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b). There are four principles in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, one of them is changing the Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP) or lesson plan to a teaching module (Maulida, 2022). Teaching modules encompass learning objectives, procedural procedures, media, and assessments required for a single unit or topic, in accordance with the Learning Objectives Flow or Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP) (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). The word "teaching module," as assembled by the teachers, refers to the instructional framework conceived, designed, and executed by the instructor to facilitate student learning.

Based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, there are three components and six criteria for compiling a teaching module. A comprehensive teaching module must include general information, essential components, and supplementary materials. While the six criteria are 1) essential, 2) interesting, meaningful, and challenging, 3) relevant and contextual, 4) continuous, 5) presentment, and 6) completeness. A good teaching module must meet those components and criteria.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* concept allows teachers to compile and develop teaching modules and materials to meet each student's needs and school conditions (Kemendikbudristek, 2022b). Nonetheless, numerous teachers possess an inadequate comprehension of the methodologies for assembling and formulating instructional modules for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Primayana, 2022). Because most schools are still in Independent Learning (Mandiri Belajar) or Independent Change (Mandiri Berubah) (Shodikin et al., 2024). As a result, it can be said that this factor impacts teachers' low level of compiling the teaching modules (Sephiawardani & Bektiningsih, 2023). Most of the teachers faced some challenges in compiling the teaching module. Notably, discrepancies exist in the components of the lesson plan from the 2013 curriculum and the teaching module of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which may pose challenges for teachers in developing teaching modules that align with the components and criteria of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

This study was motivated by prior research conducted by Pusparini et al. (2023), Sanjaya et al. (2022), and Rahmah et al. (2024). Some prior study exclusively examines the systematics of each component of the teaching module, the preparedness of instructors in producing these modules, and solely analyzes the challenges faced by teachers in compiling them. This research aims to evaluate the teaching modules developed by teachers in accordance with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, specifically assessing their alignment with the components and criteria of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, as well as identifying the challenges encountered by teachers in the compilation of these modules. The research questions of this study are focused on evaluating the alignment and challenges related to the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Firstly, the study seeks to determine whether the teaching modules created by the teachers align with the components and requirements of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Secondly, it aims to identify the challenges faced by teachers in compiling teaching modules based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Teacher's challenges

Based on Aleksandrak (2011) the term challenge refers to the situation faced by someone who needs an effort to reach a goal. The challenges experienced by teachers can occur due to several factors, including teacher professionalism, the environment, and even the education system. Teachers have difficulties in lesson plan preparation stemming from insufficient comprehension of the curriculum. Teachers play a pivotal role in influencing the efficacy of the learning process; therefore, they must comprehend the principles of learning and cultivate optimal settings for student engagement (Yulaehah & Utami, 2024). However, according to Çalıkoğlu (2019), a challenge is a task that demands work and

whose accomplishment is not assured. In this study, "challenges" refers to the difficulties teachers had when creating the lesson plan.

Teaching module

In the educational process, the teachers must strategize the progression of learning, encompassing learning objectives, activities, methodologies, media, and evaluation. It is referred to as a teaching module within the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. According to the Kemendikbudristek, or Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2023), teaching modules encompass learning objectives, procedures, media, and assessments required for a single unit or topic, aligned with the Learning Objectives Flow (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran, ATP). Additionally, instructional modules might include elegantly and methodically created media tools or facilities, procedures, instructions, and learning recommendations. Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP), or lesson plans, which encompass instructional planning for the classroom, are analogous to teaching modules. However, some components are more complete in the teaching module than in the Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran (RPP) or lesson plan, so a teaching module is called RPP Plus. One teaching module usually contains a learning plan for one learning objective based on the developed Learning Objectives Flow or Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran (ATP). Teaching modules in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* are intended to help teachers teach more flexibly and contextually, not always using textbooks. A teaching module, according to Maulida (2022), is a document that includes instructional strategies, learning resources, and assessment methods ordered methodically to meet the desired learning objectives.. Meanwhile, Primayana (2022) defined teaching modules as collections of teaching materials that have been carefully and systematically organized following the learning principles teachers use to guide students. The term teaching module developed refers to a teaching module that has been created, planned, and executed by the teachers to enhance students' learning. Teachers develop teaching modules to address a specific learning objective or follow existing curriculum rules.

Kurikulum Merdeka

The long-standing learning dilemma in Indonesia, which has not improved year after year, is what spurred the adoption of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the learning dilemma by increasing learning gaps and causing learning loss. In order to decrease learning loss during the pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Culture established an emergency curriculum, which is a condensed curriculum under certain conditions. The findings demonstrated that implementing an emergency curriculum can lessen the pandemic's effects. The efficacy of the curriculum under exceptional situations underscores the necessity for a more complete alteration of curriculum design and execution methodologies (Kemendikbudristek, 2023). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has formally instituted the *Kurikulum Merdeka* beginning with the 2022/2023 academic year. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* enhances content through diverse intracurricular learning opportunities, allowing students to refine their abilities and investigate concepts. teachers may select from an array of instructional

tools to tailor lessons to individual students' interests and learning objectives. In 2022, educators can develop high-quality lessons tailored to students and their learning environments with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Kemendikbudristek, 2022) as noted by Anggraena et al. (2022).

METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative methodology utilizing a case study approach to uncover the challenges encountered by educators in developing the teaching module. This research involved four English teachers of 10th grade at four senior high schools in Indramayu. because those schools implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and used the teaching module to plan the learning activity. The researcher used interviews as the instruments of this research. This research employed interviews as the methodology to enhance data validity, improve the generalizability of the findings, and facilitate a comprehensive examination of the issues encountered by teachers in constructing the teaching module. The interview questions were derived from the works of Lidyasari et al. (2023) and Darwisah (2020). To analyze the interview data, the researcher used qualitative data analysis based on Creswell (2007), there are five steps in analyzing data, such as 1) manage data; 2) read memos; 3) interview transcript; 4) describe, classify, and interpret; 5) represent and visualize.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information regarding the difficulties in creating teaching modules was acquired through interviews. The obstacles faced by teachers in constructing instructional modules, as articulated by the participants during the interview, are delineated as follows.

Lack of understanding of the new components in the teaching module

The interview results indicate that the teacher's difficulty in creating a teaching module stems from Lack of understanding of the new components inside it. Because there were some new components in the teaching modules as the T₃ said:

T₃: "The challenges I faced when making this teaching module were quite complicated because it was not as light as the previous curriculum because, in this Kurikulum Merdeka, there were several components that were eliminated and those that appeared (new) in making the teaching module. I had difficulties because this school also just implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka, so at the beginning it was still unfamiliar and I was also confused in filling and determining the components in this teaching module."

The interview results indicate that T₃ views the growth of the teaching module as intricate due to the elimination of specific components and the incorporation of new ones. T₃ had confusion in completing and identifying the elements of the teaching module. Because this component did not exist in the lesson plan. So T₃ was confused when developing the teaching module. Additionally, T₄ expressed confusion on the elements of the teaching module throughout the interview.:

T₄: "At first, I was also very confused with the components in this teaching module, I try to follow it and adapt more because actually we can find out a lot of information and we can understand from there."

According to the interview results, T₄ exhibited confusion regarding the components of the training module. Yet, T₄ endeavored to seek information about these components. Some new components in the teaching modules are initial competency, Pancasila Student Profile, trigger questions, meaningful understanding, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment, and so on. Due to the addition of new components in the teaching modules, the teachers think that the teaching modules are very complex. The new components perplex T₃ and T₄ in the development of teaching modules, particularly following the recent implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This finding aligns with research by Nuryanti et al. (2023), which indicates that teachers perceive the components of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* teaching modules as overly intricate due to their complex assembly. Rahimah (2022) corroborated this, noting that teachers struggle to independently identify all components of the teaching module, as they lack a comprehensive understanding of its elements. Rahmah et al. (2024) shown that English teachers encounter difficulties in developing instructional modules due to a lack of comprehension about the components, with awareness limited to learning objectives and their progression. This results from an insufficiency of informational resources pertaining to appropriate instructional modules.

The teachers confuse about the terms in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The interview results indicate that the teacher's issue in constructing a teaching module stems from confusion regarding the new terminology in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. It was supported by T₁ which said:

T₁: "In addition, the difference in several terms in this teaching curriculum is also quite confusing for me, such as the change from lesson plan (RPP) to teaching module, KI to CP, KD to TP, and so on."

Based on the result of the interview, T₁ was confused with the difference in the terms between the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the prior curriculum. Several terms used in the teaching module are quite different from the lesson plan in the previous curriculum, although the meaning is still the same such as Core Component or *Komponen Inti (KI)* to Learning Outcomes or *Capaian Pembelajaran (CP)*, Basic Competence or *Komponen Dasar (KD)* to Learning Objectives or *Tujuan Pembelajaran (TP)*, and so on. These differences make T₁ confuse when developing the teaching module. It also happened to teacher 2 who said:

T₂: "This change of terms is sometimes confusing too, even though the points are the same as the previous curriculum, only the terms are different. For example, from KI to CP, KD to TP, Syllabus to ATP, the Mid-Semester Summative or Sumatif Tengah Semester (STS), then there is one semester called the End of Semester Summative Assessment or Penilaian Sumatif Akhir Semester (PSAS), and the End of Year Summative Assessment or Penilaian Sumatif Akhir Tahun (PSAT), if grade 12 is called the End of Level Summative

Assessment or Penilaian Sumatif Akhir Jenjang (PSAJ) or used to be called US (school exam).

Based on the result of the interview, T2 was also confused with several terms in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* that differed from the previous curriculum. The changes are not only in the components of teaching modules but also used in the name of examination. T2 had confusion during the initial phase of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation. The new terminology conveys the same concept as the prior curriculum; only the terms differ. Nurrahman (2023) also found in his research that teachers are still confused in determining several terms of the teaching module.

Difficulty in knowing the history of the student's English skill

The interviews indicate that the teacher's challenge in developing a teaching module stems from comprehending the historical context of the student's English competency. In developing teaching modules, teachers must know the history of students' English language skills to adjust the material to be taught later. This is very important, if the teacher does not know the history of the students' abilities then the learning will not run optimally. It is supported by T1, T2, and T3 who said:

T1: "We still cannot measure students' abilities, because they come from various junior high schools, so we have difficulty knowing the history of their English language skills. This will affect the creation of the teaching module, while we don't know the students' previous abilities."

T2: "The student background knowledge is the main challenge in making teaching modules."

T3: "Moreover, this teaching module must be adapted to the abilities of students, which I also don't know the abilities of each student. because yes, maybe the application in the junior high school is less detailed because the program in junior high school is a 9-year learning program, where children can or cannot continue to go up, so that is also my challenge in making this teaching module."

It can be concluded that the challenge faced by most of the teachers is difficulty in knowing the history of the students' English skills when they were in Junior High School. This can influence the creation of teaching modules. Meanwhile, teaching modules are usually developed when students are on holiday, and teachers cannot test their students' abilities at that time. So, this is the main challenge for teachers in developing teaching modules. The diversity of students in one class who have different English language abilities is quite influential in making teaching modules. Ngaisih et al. (2023) stated that students with one another have different readiness in receiving learning materials, some do not know at all, and some are already skilled. The teachers must first assess the circumstances and requirements of the students. By examining the conditions and needs of students, teachers can tailor the course to accommodate varying student abilities. Nuryanti et al. (2023) also reported that teachers have difficulty collaborating on the needs that must be developed according to the characteristics of diverse learners, especially some students who have learning difficulties. The varied capabilities of students pose a challenge for teachers in creating teaching modules. The teachers must also consider this

while articulating ideas to cultivate the learning interests and styles of varied students, ensuring that all students' abilities are equitable.

Lack of training in developing teaching module

The interview results indicate that the primary issue faced by teachers in constructing a teaching module is insufficient training in this area. It was supported by all the teachers that said:

T1: "Lack of training in developing this teaching module, so we often feel confused. Because the training is only done once through the Subject Teacher Conference or Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP) which is usually held during In House Training (IHT)."

T2: "For training, it is usually held before the lesson begins, besides that we usually also participate in MGMP to share with each other about developing this teaching module. Usually, we also share with the piloting teacher here about what things we don't understand in making teaching modules or related to the Kurikulum Merdeka"

T3: "In the past, there was one training before the beginning of learning, when I was still very confused about accepting the form of teaching modules and teaching materials in this Kurikulum Merdeka, I just started to understand in the current academic year. So in the past, I just carelessly entered the components of this teaching module, but over time I have begun to understand. The previous training also only introduced what the independent curriculum was, CP, ATP, and so on, but did not explain how to develop the teaching module."

T4: "For training, we usually participate in online training such as webinars independently. But for the training in a school that directly brings the informant/speaker, we don't have any in our school."

It can be inferred that T1 underwent training solely once during the Subject Teacher Conference, or Musyawarah Guru Mata Pelajaran (MGMP), typically conducted during In House Training (IHT) in school holidays. T2 received training prior to the commencement of the school year, at the Subject Teacher Conference (MGMP), and consulted the piloting teacher regarding the teaching module or *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Similarly, T3 also participated in only one training session. Moreover, the training exclusively focused on the introduction of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, rather than the components of the teaching module or its development. T4 never had training from the school, but the teacher joined the training or webinar independently. That is why the teachers are still confused about developing the teaching module. Furthermore, the educators have not undergone supplementary training in the creation of teaching modules, resulting in ongoing confusion regarding this process. Furthermore, their comprehension of teaching module development and the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is insufficient due to the lack of relevant training.

Most of the teachers only got one training before the school began. The training only introduced the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, not directly about the teaching module. This outcome aligns with Rahimah (2022), indicating that teachers' proficiency in developing teaching modules for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* remains significantly inadequate due to

insufficient training for its implementation. This results in challenges for teachers in planning teaching modules, stemming from insufficient training on the procedures for developing modules for the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, along with a lack of willingness among teachers to independently seek knowledge on constructing these modules. Nurahman (2023) revealed that a significant problem teachers encounter in creating the teaching module is inadequate training in its development. Owing to insufficient teacher training in module construction, certain teachers engage in independent online training or consult the pilot teacher at their institution. Consequently, they can gradually comprehend the teaching modules and the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Lack of teaching materials

According to the interview results, teachers face challenges in constructing teaching modules due to insufficient reference materials. It is corroborated by the T1, which stated:

T1: "Lack of reference books on materials related to English. Because the package books provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture do not cover the material in the learning outcome indicators. So, I am quite challenged in finding references that are in accordance with the learning outcomes. Many teachers also experience this, as the Kurikulum Merdeka remains relatively nascent, resulting in a scarcity of references."

It can be concluded that the challenge faced by T1 is about the teaching references such as lack of teaching material references, students' books provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture did not include the material on Learning Achievement or *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP). The application of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is nascent, resulting in a scarcity of references. This is in line with Wantiana and Melisa (2023) that found learning resources are only limited to package books because the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has not yet become a national curriculum which is still in the experimental stage and is still receiving feedback from schools that use it so that at any time the package books can change both content and edition.

Lack of facilities and infrastructure

The interviews indicate that teachers face challenges in constructing a teaching module due to insufficient resources and infrastructure. It received endorsement from Teacher 1 and Teacher 2, who stated:

T1: "Lack of facilities and infrastructure such as infocus which is still limited and package books for students. So that the learning process does not run optimally."

T2:: "The facilities are being worked on, yes, some things have been fulfilled and some things can be completed later because we are also new to using this Kurikulum Merdeka. In developing teaching modules, I still think about what facilities exist in the school because the projector here is still quite limited and not all students get the package books. So, I have to be smart in finding a learning model that suits the conditions at school."

The execution of the teaching module is deficient owing to poor facilities and infrastructure, including a lack of projectors and insufficient student textbooks supplied

by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It can cause the learning process to not be maximal and optimal. The implementation of the teaching module is suboptimal due to inadequate facilities and infrastructure, including a scarcity of projectors and insufficient student books provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture. It will be useless if the teacher has prepared the learning as interesting as possible but is not supported by good facilities from the school. Anggraeni et al. (2024) asserted that infrastructure and facilities are essential for facilitating learning and are a critical determinant of educational performance, since they influence student development and can disrupt the teaching and learning process.

The analysis of teachers' issues in designing teaching modules reveals a lack of comprehension of the components of the teaching module and the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. difficulty in knowing the history of the student's English skills, lack of training in developing teaching modules, lack of teaching materials, and lack of facilities and infrastructure. If this challenge continues, it will eventually become a weakness. Therefore, teacher professional development is urgently needed, especially workshops to develop well-organized teacher teaching modules. This is in line with the research conducted by Taufiq et al. (2023) that found most of the teachers do not understand teaching modules and their components. Wantiana and Melisa (2023) found that teachers also face challenges in finding the learning material due to the learning resources are only limited to package books because the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has not yet become a national curriculum which is still in the experimental stage and is still receiving feedback from schools that use it so that at any time the package books can change both content and edition. Besides that, Rahimah (2022) found that the ability of teachers to design teaching modules for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is still very low because there is not enough training for teachers in its implementation. This also happened to most of the teachers who said they only got one training before the schools started. If this challenge continues, it will eventually become a weakness. In addition, discussions among teachers about *Kurikulum Merdeka* with related components, such as teaching modules, initial competencies, student targets, meaningful understanding, assessment, and so on, can also be carried out in every teacher association meeting.

These findings align with previous research conducted by Rahmah et al. (2024), who also reported that English teachers encountered challenges in understanding the structure and components of the teaching module in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Similarly, Nurrahman (2023) highlighted the confusion among teachers regarding new terminology and the absence of adequate training.

However, this study provides a more detailed and grounded analysis by drawing directly from teacher interviews in four senior high schools that have recently implemented the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Unlike prior studies that focused on general readiness or perceptions, this research examines specific obstacles related to the development process of the teaching module, such as difficulties in accessing students' language history and adapting to infrastructure limitations.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its practical insights into real-world implementation barriers faced by teachers, especially in schools transitioning into the new curriculum framework. It contributes not only to the understanding of recurring issues but also offers direction for targeted teacher training and institutional support.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges faced by teachers in developing teaching modules within the framework of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The findings revealed several key obstacles, including: (1) limited understanding of the new components introduced in the teaching module; (2) confusion regarding unfamiliar terminology within the curriculum; (3) difficulty in identifying students' prior English proficiency; (4) insufficient training in module development; (5) lack of access to adequate teaching materials; and (6) inadequate school facilities and infrastructure.

If left unaddressed, these challenges may significantly hinder the successful implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and compromise the quality of classroom instruction. Therefore, targeted teacher professional development is urgently required. In particular, structured training programs and continuous mentoring are essential to enhance teachers' competencies in designing effective, student-centered teaching modules. By strengthening institutional support and teacher capacity, schools will be better equipped to implement the curriculum with fidelity and foster more meaningful learning outcomes for students.

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