

TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE *MODUL AJAR* AT SMP NEGERI 8 PAGAR ALAM

Margiana¹, Wisma Yunita², Syafriyadin³

¹Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia

²Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia

³Universitas Bengkulu, Indonesia

¹margiana3003@gmail.com, ²wismayunita@unib.ac.id, ³syafriyadin@unib.ac.id

Abstract. This study aimed to describe the features of the *Modul Ajar* designed by English teachers, examine how the modules were implemented in the English learning process, and identify the challenges faced by teachers in designing and implementing the modules in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through document analysis, observation, and interviews with English teachers. The results of the study showed that in general, the Teaching Module prepared by teachers is very appropriate and in accordance with the structure and components of the Independent Curriculum, with an average design suitability of 87.03%. Meanwhile, the implementation of the Teaching Module in learning is also categorized as very appropriate, with an average achievement of implementation indicators of 93.3%. These modules generally cover important components such as learning objectives, learning activities, assessments, and reflections. Challenges for teachers in the design and implementation process, such as adapting materials to the diverse needs and interests of students, time constraints, and infrastructure limitations. Teachers also have difficulty in implementing differentiated learning and designing assessments that are fair but do not burden students.

Keyword: *Modul Ajar*; English Teachers; *Merdeka* Curriculum; Implementation; Challenges

Received: 26-01-2025

Revised: 25-05-2025

Accepted: 30-09-2025

Corresponding Author: Margiana; margiana3003@gmail.com



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a roadmap for instructional activities to achieve learning objectives. It adapts to students' needs and contexts, and must be dynamically developed to address

societal demands (Supriyono, 2022). The curriculum plays a crucial role in education progress, with each country's curriculum varying based on educational goals. Institutional boundaries determine learning courses, and a legal curriculum is essential (Situmorang, 2023). The Indonesian curriculum has undergone changes, with the *Merdeka Curriculum* Policy issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology.

The *Merdeka Curriculum* is a condensed version of the 2013 curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture to address the Covid-19 pandemic's learning crisis. It allows teachers to incorporate the national curriculum into lesson plans, addressing poor student learning outcomes in basic subjects like reading literacy (Izza et al., 2020). The *Merdeka curriculum* is a continuation of the emergency curriculum created to revive post-pandemic learning and address situational challenges (Damayanti & Muhroji, 2022). The policy aims to assist in school planning by examining students' potential and abilities, focusing on improving individual skills, and making the campus system a forum for actualizing the academic community.

However, the *Merdeka Curriculum* policy faces challenges such as ensuring individual safety, accessibility, and considering difficult situations like the pandemic. The updated curriculum makes it easier to adapt to each year's class goals and focuses on key learning resources (Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023). Teachers must understand current curriculum policies, participate in the program, and supervise the examination of learning resources (Siregar et al., 2020). The *Merdeka Curriculum* is considered more accessible and comprehensive because it focuses on important things and gradually develops students' abilities.

Learning objectives and graduate profiles are developed from an ability problem first perspective, with teachers or educators being the majority of graduates from language education programs. A developed assessment system and learning model are the second perspective, with plans relevant to the learning system's aims, domains, and hierarchies (Ananda, 2022). Teachers may have different opinions about the new curriculum and its implementation, with some willing to help but others having difficulty recognizing change. Teachers must adapt to the new curriculum quickly, as they lack experience and knowledge.

Opportunities faced by teachers during curriculum implementation include a lack of comprehension of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, limitations in IT, the intricacy of translating CP, TP, and ATP, and the development of teaching modules. The absence of sufficient government assistance led to a lack of readiness among instructors, contributing to difficulties encountered during the shift (Reza et al., 2023). The *Merdeka curriculum* faces obstacles in various academic areas, including biology, art education, high school, inclusive institutions, informatics, and English. These include insufficient teaching resources, separating students with impairments, and insufficient instructor competency (Yunitasari, 2023). The researchers studied the development of *Modul Ajar*, particularly challenges in designing and implementing them in the classroom by teachers.

The *Modul Ajar*, a module in the Indonesian Independent Curriculum, aims to enhance teaching and learning processes by integrating local cultural elements, focusing on student-centered learning, and providing professional development for teachers. The *Merdeka Curriculum* encourages a shift from traditional teacher-centered approaches to student-centered learning, fostering active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills (Winda & Tiarina, 2024). The *Modul Ajar* also includes changes such as combining KI and KD into learning outcomes and adding P3, aiming to produce intelligent students who can apply Pancasila values (Ramadan, 2024). This change is particularly significant for schools implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum*, as it prepares teachers to become competent educators by introducing them to the curriculum. The module's importance lies in its ability to create a more effective and enriching learning experience for students within the framework of the Indonesian Independent Curriculum (Sari et al., 2024).

Modul Ajar are crucial learning planning tools that enhance teachers' thinking skills and innovation (Maulida, 2022). Before designing a *Modul Ajar*, educators must consider whether textbooks are sufficient or if a teaching module is necessary. If a teaching module is needed, educators can use existing modules, modify them, or create a new one. *Modul Ajar* features include attachment, initial skills, student characteristics, facilities and equipment, learning methods, assessment, significant understanding, trigger questions, learning activities, evaluation from students and teachers, work materials, additional materials and assistance, reading materials, a glossary, and a bibliography (Romadhon, 2023). *Modul Ajars* are an alternative strategy to textbooks and can be used, modified, or created to meet the needs of students.

Teachers face challenges in developing Teaching Modules in the *Merdeka Curriculum* due to pedagogical and practical aspects (Taufik et al., 2023). These include developing an effective learning approach, creating relevant learning materials, time management, effective teaching methods, technology integration, teacher development, and diverse student characteristics and needs. The complexity of developing Teaching Modules in the Higher Education curriculum leads to a more comprehensive teaching approach, including better training, better resource allocation, and a more supportive environment for teachers. Effective teaching methods should be designed to engage students effectively, and technology integration is crucial for effective teaching practices (Nuryanti et al., 2023). The study concludes that addressing these challenges will lead to a more comprehensive and effective learning experience for students.

The *Merdeka Curriculum* involves teachers implementing *Modul Ajar* in the classroom through various strategies. These include training and capacity building, creating interactive learning modules, blended learning, continuous monitoring and feedback, and technology integration (Putri & Soeparno, 2024). The training program focuses on developing digital *Modul Ajar*, improving teacher literacy and competency in creating effective learning modules. Interactive learning modules combine existing materials for cost-effectiveness and practicality. Blended learning is implemented to cater to different student needs through workshops and mentoring (Mukhlisina et al., 2023). Continuous monitoring and feedback are crucial for teachers to adjust content modules and integration methods. Technology integration is increasingly used to create e-modules that enhance student engagement with the curriculum (Agus & Mukti, 2024). These practices not only enhance teaching effectiveness but also foster an engaging learning environment, ultimately improving student learning outcomes.

The *Merdeka Curriculum* Implementation Circular Number 124 of 2023 aims to improve education quality in Pagar Alam City by supporting data-based planning programs for driving schools and driving teacher programs. The researcher will study the challenges faced by teachers in designing and implementing *Modul Ajar* on the *Merdeka Curriculum* at Junior High School 8 Pagar Alam, a public school in Pagar Alam City. The researcher, who taught at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam as a substitute teacher in 2023, will describe the challenges faced by teachers in designing and implementing *Modul Ajar* on the *Merdeka Curriculum* at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam. SMP N 8 Pagar Alam has an A accreditation, which indicates good quality of education and high learning standards, making it a representative location for research related to education or the learning process. SMP N 8 Pagar Alam already has complete and updated basic school data, making it easier for researchers to access the information needed for analysis and field data collection.

There are several previous studies that relevant with this research. Research by Sanjaya et al. (2023) aimed to assess teachers' readiness and ability to develop teaching modules based on the *Merdeka curriculum*. Results showed many teachers were unprepared, causing difficulties in compiling teaching tools. The second research by Damayanti & Muhroji (2022) study reveals that teachers face challenges in creating thematic learning tools, despite their knowledge of regulations, and struggle with

overcoming these issues in Independent Curriculum. Then research by Winda & Tiarina (2024) study on English teachers' abilities and difficulties in designing *Modul Ajar* in *Merdeka* curriculum at SMAN 2 Batang Anai reveals both sufficient and poor skills. The last research by Sanjaya et al. (2023) study revealed that many teachers were unprepared for developing teaching modules based on the *Merdeka curriculum*, leading to difficulties in compiling teaching tools.

Based on previous research, most of them focused on teacher readiness, teacher perceptions, problems and challenges in implementing the *Merdeka* curriculum, difficulties in designing lesson plans, and teacher readiness to develop teaching modules. Based on previous research on the description above, it can be concluded that teachers must be able to conclude it by choosing the best lesson plan to be implemented, considering all the positive, negative, strengths, and weaknesses of the criteria. In addition, they often examine the implementation of the *Merdeka* curriculum reform and concentrate on teachers' opinions about the curriculum when making lesson plans for the reform.

Based on previous research on the description above, it can be concluded that there has been research on the difficulties in developing Teaching Modules and analysing the implementation of Teaching Modules in the classroom. The researcher found a picture of previous research, namely that there has been no research examining the challenges of teachers in designing Teaching Modules and implementing Teaching Modules in junior high schools. Therefore, the researcher chose the title *Teacher Challenges in Designing and Implementing the Merdeka Curriculum Teaching Module at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam*. The objectives of this research is to describe the English Teachers' challenges in designing and implementing the *Modul Ajar* in *Merdeka* Curriculum at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam. The research questions of this research are:

1. What are the features of the *Modul Ajar* designed by English teachers in *Merdeka* curriculum at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam?
2. How do the English Teachers implement the *Modul Ajar* in the class at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam?
3. What are the English Teachers' challenges in designing and implementing the *Modul Ajar* in *Merdeka* Curriculum at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam?

METHOD

This studied was employed a qualitative research technique. Qualitative research is a technique for analyzing and understanding an individual's or a group's perception of a social or human situation (Creswell, 2014). The study was taken place at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam, Keban Agung Village, in Pagar Alam City, South Sumatra. English teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam who are the subjects of the research as a whole. The subjects of the research are informants who are used as data sources, discussing how to describe, consider information, who is the informant, and the data is recorded (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher was employed three data collection procedures, with the theoretical judgments provided in the sources (Creswell, 2012) serving as the basis. While observation, interviewing, and documenting was used to gather study data. The researcher also employed an observation sheet, which is an adaptation from (Salsabila, 2023b), as an instrument and observation indicator, the researcher used classroom observation as the primary data collection technique. A structured interview was conducted by the researcher. The researcher was posed general and targeted questions that touch on issues related to curriculum reform from the teacher's point of view. The researcher employed document analysis as the primary data collection technique. This method is aligned with Creswell (2012) recommendation for qualitative research, which emphasizes the use of multiple data sources, including written documents, to understand the subject of study.

In order to make data easily comprehensible and useful for others, (Sugiyono, 2013) defines data analysis as the methodical process of looking through and organizing information gathered from field notes, interviews, and other sources. The researcher was employed Huberman and Miles data analysis in this investigation. Data analysis, according to (Miles & Huberman, 2014), entails three simultaneous tasks are data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions and conducting verification. Technical triangulation and source triangulation verify the veracity of the data that researchers was employ. Checking data using several sources and methods is known as triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

This section discusses the Teaching Module, a teaching aid designed by English teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam, its implementation, and the challenges faced by the teachers.

1. The features of the *Modul Ajar* designed by the English teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam

This study examines the teaching modules designed by English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam, focusing on Bahasa Indonesia. Data was analyzed using a checklist instrument and content analysis. The study identifies three main components: general information, core components, and appendices, adjusting to the Merdeka curriculum standards.

Table 1 Checklist Analysis of Teaching Module 1, 2, and 3

Component	Indicator	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3
General Information	Module Identity	√	√	√
	Initial Competence	x	√	√
	Pancasila Student Profile	√	√	√
	Facilities & Infrastructure	√	√	√
	Target Students	√	√	√
	Learning Model	√	√	√
	Learning Objectives	√	√	√
	Meaningful Understanding	x	√	√
Core Components	Trigger Questions	√	√	x
	Teaching Preparation	√	x	√
	Learning Activities	√	√	√
	Assessment	√	√	√
	Enrichment & Remedial	√	√	√
	Reflection (Student & Teacher)	√	√	√
Appendices	Student Worksheets (LKPD)	x	√	√
	Glossary	√	√	√
	Bibliography & Resources	√	√	√
	Reading Materials	x	√	x

Based on the table show that the Teaching Module 1 lacks key components like initial competence section, meaningful understanding and reflection, student worksheets, and reading materials, despite having 14 out of 18 checklist items. Teaching Module 2 is comprehensive, containing 17 out of 18 items, demonstrating compliance with Merdeka Curriculum guidelines. However, the absence of trigger questions may limit students' critical thinking. The teaching module 3 document provided 16 out of 18 checklist items, but did not mention teaching preparation, limiting clarity on tools, media, and classroom management.

The features were evaluated using four levels: Very Appropriate, Appropriate, Fairly Appropriate, and Less Appropriate, based on the number of components marked “√” in the checklist.

Table 2 Checklist Results of Three Teaching Modules

No	Teaching Module	Total “Yes” Components	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Modul Ajar 1	14 out of 18	77.8%	Appropriate
2	Modul Ajar 2	17 out of 18	94.4%	Very Appropriate
3	Modul Ajar 3	16 out of 18	88.9%	Very Appropriate

$$\text{Average} = \frac{(77.8 + 94.4 + 88.9)}{3}$$

$$= 261.1 \div 3 = 87.03\%$$

Average Percentage: 87.03%

English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam have demonstrated high commitment and competence in designing teaching modules aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The three modules scored 77.8%, 94.4%, and 88.9%, respectively, with an average of 87.03%, categorized as very appropriate. This demonstrates that the modules effectively combine essential components such as learning objectives, learning activities, and assessments, making them suitable for classroom implementation.

2. The Implementation of the Modul Ajar Designed by the English Teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam

This study focuses on the implementation of the Indonesian Language Teaching Module in English learning at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam. Three English teachers, Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3, were observed using the teaching modules prepared for each learning theme. Observations were conducted twice a week for two weeks to assess the module's effectiveness in the learning process and student responses. The researcher conducted classroom observations using observation sheets to understand the impact of the Independent Curriculum teaching module on English learning. The results of the observations were documented in writing. The learning implementation stage consists of opening activities, core activities, and closing activities.

Table 4.3 Observation Checklist Results for Teaching Module Implementation

No	Implementation Indicator	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3
1	Trigger questions used to activate prior knowledge	√	√	√
2	Learning objectives clearly stated	√	√	√
3	Activities followed as planned in the Modul Ajar	√	√	√
4	Instructional media and materials used	√	√	√
5	Student engagement and collaboration encouraged	√	√	√
6	Teaching strategies aligned with learning outcomes	√	√	√
7	Assessment or feedback conducted	x	√	√
8	Differentiated instruction implemented	x	√	√
9	Student reflection guided	√	√	√
10	Lesson closed with review and follow-up plan	√	√	√

Teaching Module 1 achieved 8 out of 10 implementation indicators, but lacks assessment and differentiation practices, indicating further training is needed to strengthen formative evaluation and support diverse learning needs. Teaching Module 2 achieved all 10 implementation indicators, demonstrating successful integration of differentiation, formative feedback, and engaging learning strategies, thereby fostering an inclusive environment aligned with the Independent Curriculum. Teaching Module 3 successfully met all 10 implementation indicators, demonstrating thorough preparation,

balanced instruction, differentiation, and formative evaluation, promoting active engagement and creative expression in alignment with Merdeka Curriculum principles.

Table 4.4 Checklist Results of The Implementation the Modules

No	Teaching Module	Total Indicators Achieved	Percentage (%)	Category
1	Module 1	8 of 10	80%	Appropriate
2	Module 2	10 of 10	100%	Very Appropriate
3	Module 3	10 of 10	100%	Very Appropriate

$$\text{Average} = \frac{(80 + 100 + 100)}{3}$$

$$= 280 \div 3 = 93.3\%$$

Average Percentage: 93.3%

English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam have implemented the teaching modules (*Modul Ajar*) effectively, with Modules 2 and 3 achieving 100% of the indicators and falling into the "Very Appropriate" category. Module 1 achieved 80% of the indicators but showed limitations in assessment and differentiation strategies. The average percentage for the three modules was 93.33%, falling into the "Very Appropriate" category, indicating that the modules are well-structured, carefully implemented, and aligned with the objectives of the Independent Curriculum, with some minor areas requiring improvement.

3. The teachers' challenges in design and implementing the Modul Ajar designed by the English teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam

This section describes the challenges faced by English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam in designing the *Modul Ajar* according to the Merdeka Curriculum. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with three teachers (T1, T2, T3).

1. Designing the Modul Ajar

Designing teaching modules is the process of creating systematic, structured, and effective learning materials to achieve learning objectives. Designing teaching modules includes several main steps, which aim to create effective and interesting learning materials for students. Teachers consistently stated that designing learning objectives required conducting diagnostic assessments to understand students' strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Based on the results of interviews with teachers, designing Teaching Modules with the following steps. T1,T2,T3 answer the question of the interview:

The teacher explained:

"Desain yang berdasarkan pada kebutuhan siswa, pertama-tama harus menganalisis kebutuhan siswa untuk mengidentifikasi masalah-masalah yang timbul dalam pembelajaran."

("The design based on student needs, first must analyze student needs to identify problems that arise in learning.")

Teachers face challenges in designing teaching modules due to time constraints and the complexity of aligning objectives with diverse student needs. They use a systematic, student-centered approach, analyzing students' needs through diagnostic assessments to create clear, measurable learning objectives. They aim for relevant, engaging, and logically structured modules connected to real-life experiences. However, challenges include limited resources, time constraints, and the need for more training.

Organize material in designing a teaching module is the process of organizing and arranging learning materials into a logical, systematic, and easy-to-understand structure. The purpose of organizing material is to make learning materials easier to understand, by organizing learning materials into a logical structure, learners can more easily understand the material. Increase the effectiveness of learning, by organizing learning materials into a systematic structure, learners can more easily follow the learning process. Make teaching modules more effective, by organizing learning materials into a logical structure, teaching modules can be more effective in achieving learning objectives. Teachers described similar experiences in preparing materials that were suitable for diverse learning styles (visual, audio-visual, kinesthetic) and relevant to students' interests.

A teacher shared:

"Tantangan utamanya mengakomodasi perbedaan minat belajar siswa. Materi harus sesuai dengan karakteristik dan minat masing-masing."

("The main challenge is accommodating differences in students' learning interests. Materials must match their characteristics and interests.")

Based on the interview results, teachers explained that one of the main challenges in organizing materials for the *Modul Ajar* is the need to adapt content to the school context and student readiness, rather than strictly following the curriculum sequence. If certain themes cannot be completed within one grade level, they are continued in the next, so that students have sufficient time to understand the material in depth.

Another challenge is accommodating differences in students' learning interests and styles, such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preferences. To address this, teachers often have to prepare materials in multiple formats and differentiate final assignments according to group needs.

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam design their teaching modules through a systematic and student-centered process. Teachers also strive to create content that is engaging and connected to students' real-life experiences, using frameworks such as ADDIE and aligning with national curriculum standards. However, despite these efforts, several challenges remain. Teachers face time constraints, limited resources, and the complexity of adapting materials to accommodate diverse student interests and learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic). They also need to adjust content to the school environment and, when necessary, continue unfinished themes to the next grade level to ensure deeper understanding.

Overall, these findings indicate that while teachers are committed to developing effective and relevant teaching modules, additional support, training, and infrastructure improvements are essential to help them fully implement the principles of differentiated, student-centered learning as expected in the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

2. The teachers' challenges in implementing the *Modul Ajar* in english learning process

A teaching module is a structured and systematic learning package designed to help students achieve specific learning objectives. Its purpose is to increase time efficiency, improve the quality of learning, and increase student motivation. The process involves planning, delivery, learning, and evaluation. Teachers prepare the module, deliver learning materials, and students learn independently or in groups. Teachers then evaluate students' progress in understanding the materials. Implementing the *Modul Ajar* in English learning involves managing the diversity of students' abilities, balancing materials and activities to avoid frustration or boredom for those who struggle or learn quickly. English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam have faced challenges in implementing the *Modul Ajar* in the English learning process.

As one teacher described :

“Tantangannya adalah berbagai tingkat kemampuan siswa yang harus diseimbangkan supaya tidak membuat siswa frustrasi atau bosan.”

(“The challenge is the various levels of student ability that need to be balanced so as not to frustrate or bore students.”)

This challenge requires teachers to prepare materials and activities that accommodate different ability levels in one class. If lessons are too easy, advanced students may become bored; if too difficult, less proficient students may feel frustrated. To address this, teachers often use differentiated tasks or grouping strategies, but this approach demands more preparation time, creativity, and resources to implement effectively.

In addition, implementing fair and accurate assessments without overloading students requires careful planning and time management. Teachers mentioned that assessments need to be adapted to different ability levels while still maintaining clear learning objectives.

The teacher said:

“Melaksanakan penilaian yang adil tanpa membebani siswa itu cukup menantang.”

(“Implementing fair assessments without burdening students is quite challenging.”)

This means that teachers must design assessments that are balanced and appropriate for all students, so that they accurately measure learning without causing stress or excessive workload. They need to adapt tasks to different ability levels while ensuring that the core objectives remain clear and consistent. This process often requires extra preparation time and careful selection of assessment methods that are both fair and motivating for students.

Organizing learning activities in the *Modul Ajar* requires teachers to plan tasks that are relevant, engaging, and adapted to different student needs. Teachers explained that limited infrastructure, especially unstable internet access, often makes it difficult to use digital tools consistently. In addition, preparing differentiated activities and materials for students with varied interests and abilities demands extra time and resources.

The teacher said:

“Menerapkan pembelajaran berdiferensiasi memerlukan persiapan materi dan aktivitas yang berbeda untuk setiap siswa.”

(“Implementing differentiated learning requires preparing different materials and activities for each student.”)

Teachers face numerous challenges in implementing the *Modul Ajar* in English learning, including managing student diversity, maintaining motivation, and designing fair assessments. Limited infrastructure, particularly unstable internet access, hinders consistent use of technology. To address these issues, differentiated tasks and grouping strategies are often used, but require additional preparation time, creativity, and resources. Despite these obstacles, teachers remain committed to flexible and student-centered learning, ensuring all students can engage effectively. The successful implementation of the *Modul Ajar* depends on teachers' pedagogical skills, systemic support, adequate resources, and a supportive learning environment, in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. The study highlights the importance of adapting to these challenges and ensuring a supportive learning environment for all students.

DISCUSSION

1. The features of the *Modul Ajar* designed by the English teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam

Teachers' Challenges in Designing and Implementing the Modul Ajar at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam

Margiana, Wisma Yunita, Syafrudin

The findings of this study indicate that the Modul Ajar developed by the English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam was classified as very appropriate, based on its alignment with the structural components outlined in national curriculum guidelines. Teachers demonstrated a clear understanding of curriculum design elements, including learning objectives, core activities, assessments, and supporting sections like glossaries and bibliographies. The modules aligned with standards due to experience with previous curriculum frameworks, availability of official guidelines, collaboration among teachers, and school support. The teaching module introduced new terms such as learning outcomes, Pancasila student profiles, meaningful understanding, trigger questions, reading sources, and a glossary. Each component in the module plays a crucial role in supporting optimal learning objectives.

The main components analyzed include learning objectives, teaching materials, learning methods and strategies, learning steps, learning media, evaluation and assessment, feedback, learning resources, time, summary, assignments or exercises, and reflection. Research by Marlina (2023) emphasizes the importance of a complete and systematic structure for clarity and consistency in learning implementation. These findings suggest that teachers can design structured and purposeful modules, but further support is needed to enrich and complete supporting materials, especially those related to differentiated learning and enrichment tasks, to fully address students' varied needs and characteristics.

2. The Implementation of the Modul Ajar Designed by the English Teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Modul Ajar in the English learning process at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam was very appropriate and fully aligned with the principles and expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers conduct structured lessons, focusing on clear communication of objectives and well-planned activities to encourage student engagement and active participation. They applied various instructional strategies, such as contextual learning, group work, and creative assignments, demonstrating a commitment to creating student-centered, interactive, and relevant learning experiences.

The implementation was aligned with curriculum standards due to preparation, professional experience, commitment to curriculum goals, and collaboration with colleagues and school leadership. Teachers demonstrate a strong sense of professional responsibility and commitment to realizing the goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, even when faced with limitations such as limited time or uneven student readiness. Teachers also implemented key principles of the Merdeka Curriculum through differentiated learning, which accommodates students' varied learning needs by adjusting content, process, and assessment according to their readiness, interests, and learning profiles. This is consistent with research by (Astuti, 2020) on this differentiated approach, which shows that teachers not only deliver content but also facilitate learning responsively and adaptively, reflecting an understanding of the curriculum's expectation that all students are given equal opportunities to succeed.

The Ajar Module was integrated with efforts to build the Pancasila Student Profile, which emphasizes developing students' character, faith, critical thinking, creativity, and mutual cooperation. Teachers connected learning materials to spiritual values, encouraged group work, and used interactive, discovery-based learning methods to promote creativity and critical thinking. These practices are consistent with (Nisa' & Sholihah, 2022), who noted that learning achievements in the Merdeka Curriculum are organized per phase to provide students with adequate time to master competencies at their own pace. The evidence from this study demonstrates that teachers have internalized this principle by implementing flexible strategies that accommodate diverse learners in the classroom.

3. The teachers' challenges in design and implementing the Modul Ajar designed by the English teachers at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam

The findings clearly demonstrate that the challenges experienced by English teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam in designing and implementing the *Modul Ajar* emerged from a combination of practical conditions, student diversity, and curriculum expectations. The interviews revealed that despite their commitment to structured, student-centered learning, teachers faced persistent challenges due to infrastructure limitations, time constraints, and diverse student abilities. This is consistent with the perspective of Amelia (2024), who emphasized that teaching modules are curriculum-based learning designs intended to meet established competency standards. The purpose of developing teaching modules is to provide resources that guide educators in planning and delivering instruction. Importantly, teachers are also given the freedom to adapt or modify the modules according to the characteristics and needs of their students. This flexibility, while beneficial, can also create additional demands on teachers' time and skills, especially when resources are limited.

Furthermore, Salsabila (2023) highlight that teaching modules are a critical component of learning resources and are closely linked to the success of curriculum implementation in schools. In this study, teachers developed modules that followed a clear, logical structure and were designed to be relevant and meaningful for students, as also suggested by Nurhasanah et al. (2022). The modules took into account developmental stages and specific learning objectives, reflecting an understanding of how the Independent Curriculum requires alignment between content and student readiness.

Despite this understanding, teachers consistently reported challenges related to designing modules effectively and efficiently. They needed to balance depth of understanding, manage complex materials, and tailor activities to a wide range of student readiness levels. This reality supports Maryam et al. (2022), who argued that the Independent Curriculum modules should not only refer to learning plans but also be adapted dynamically to meet students' needs.

The organization of learning activities in a diverse classroom is challenging due to limited facilities, lack of digital resources, and insufficient time. Teachers use content, process, and product differentiation strategies to address student abilities and interests. However, these approaches require additional time, planning, and resources. The success of differentiated learning depends on professional commitment, understanding of pedagogical principles, adequate infrastructure, supportive school policies, collaboration opportunities, and active engagement from families and communities.

CONCLUSION

This research explores the features of the Modul Ajar designed by English teachers for the Merdeka curriculum at SMP N 8 Pagar Alam, its implementation, and the challenges faced by the teachers. The *Modul Ajar* developed by the English teachers was classified as very appropriate, demonstrating strong alignment with the structural components and instructional expectations outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum. The modules, designed by teachers, included essential elements like learning objectives, core activities, assessments, and appendices, demonstrating a clear structure, logical sequence, and relevance, reflecting their commitment to providing student-centered learning resources.

The classroom implementation of the *Modul Ajar* was classified as very appropriate, indicating a strong alignment with the core principles and pedagogical expectations of the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers utilized interactive learning strategies like contextual activities, group work, and differentiated instruction to support active participation, understanding, and competency development. Despite constraints like limited digital resources and time, the overall implementation demonstrated strong commitment and

professional competence, demonstrating the effectiveness of the modules and their content.

The study identified several challenges faced by teachers in both designing and implementing the Modul Ajar. These included managing the diversity of students' abilities, limited time for preparation, restricted access to infrastructure and learning media, and the complexity of designing fair and differentiated assessments. Additionally, external factors such as limited parental involvement and the lack of an English-speaking environment also affected students' motivation and opportunities to practice. These challenges illustrate that while teachers have shown dedication and professionalism, successful implementation requires adequate support systems, training, and infrastructure improvements.

In conclusion, the research shows that teachers at SMP Negeri 8 Pagar Alam have successfully designed and implemented the *Modul Ajar* in ways that were appropriate to the objectives and expectations of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Their efforts reflect significant progress in creating more student-centered, contextual, and differentiated English learning experiences. However, ongoing support, resources, and collaboration are essential to address the challenges identified and to further strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of curriculum implementation.

REFERENCE

- Agus, R. E., & Mukti, D. P. (2024). Dinamika Implementasi Modul Ajar Di Era Kurikulum Merdeka Studi Kasus: Smp N 5 Belinyu, Kep. Bangka. *Jurnal Wawasan Nusantara (JWN)*, 1(1), 6–11.
- Amelia, E. (2024). Analisis Kesulitan Guru di Sekolah Dasar dalam Menyusun Modul Ajar Kurikulum Merdeka. *BASICA Journal of Arts and Science in Primary Education*, 3(2), 199–212. <https://doi.org/10.37680/basicajournal.v3i2.4597>
- Ananda. (2022). Evaluation Of Implementation Of Independent Curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogic Studies (JCPS)*, 1((4)). <http://ejournal.lp2m.uinjambi.ac.id>
- Astuti, L. (2020). The Development of Web-Based Learning using Interactive Media for Science Learning on Levers in Human Body Topic. *Journal of Science Learning*, 3((2)).
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (4th Ed)*. Pearson.
- Damayanti, G., & Muhroji, M. (2022). The Difficulties of Elementary School Teacher in Developing Thematic Learning Tools for the Merdeka Curriculum. *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Dan Kajian Kepustakaan Di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran Dan Pembelajaran*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v8i3.5770>
- Izza, A. Z., Falah, M., & Susilawati, S. (2020). *STUDI LITERATUR: PROBLEMATIKA EVALUASI PEMBELAJARAN DALAM MENCAPAI TUJUAN*.
- Maryam, S., Ningsih, D. N., Sanusi, D., Wibawa, D. C., Ningsih, D. S. N., Fauzi, H. F., & Ramdan, M. N. (2022). Pelatihan penyusunan modul ajar yang inovatif, adaptif, dan kolaboratif. *JE (Journal of Empowerment)*, 3((1)), 82–92.
- Maulida, U. (2022). Pengembangan Modul Ajar Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka. *Tarbawi: Jurnal Pemikiran Dan Pendidikan Islam*, 5((2)), 130–138. <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.51476/tarbawi.v5i2.392>
- Miles, & Huberman, S. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis (3rd Ed)*. Sage Publication, Inc.
- Mukhlisina, I., Danawati, M. G., & Wijyaningputri, A. R. (2023). Penerapan Modul Ajar sebagai Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka pada Siswa Kelas IV di Sekola Indonesia Kuala Lumpur. *Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat Nusantara (JPkMN)*, 4(1), 126–133.
- Nisa', R., & Sholihah, M. (2022). Pengembangan Modul Ajar Program Sekolah

- Penggerak Berbasis Problem Based Learning. *JNPM (Jurnal Nasional Pendidikan Matematika)*, 6(4), 719. <https://doi.org/10.33603/jnpm.v6i4.7199>
- Nurhasanah, A., Pribadi, R. A., & Sukriah, S. (2022). Memanfaatkan Lingkungan Sekolah Sebagai Sumber Belajar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Telaah*, 7(1), 66. <https://doi.org/10.31764/telaah.v7i1.6618>
- Nuryanti, N. E., Mulyana, E. H., & Loita, A. (2023). Analisis Kesulitan Guru dalam Pengembangan Modul Ajar Berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka. *Jurnal Paud Agapedia*, 7(2), 176–183. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jpa.v7i2.63929>
- Putri, N. S., & Soeparno. (2024). ANALISIS IMPLEMENTASI MODUL AJAR BERBASIS KURIKULUM MERDEKA PADA ELEMEN DESAIN PERMODELAN BANGUNAN DI SMKN 1 SIDOARJO. *Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Teknik Bangunan (JKPTB)*, 10(01), 78–85.
- Ramadan, D. A. dan Z. H. (2024). Analisis Kesulitan Guru Dalam Mengembangkan Modul Ajar Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Di SDN 17 Pekanbaru. 10(September), 260–278.
- Reza, F., Rohmah, Z., & Abdullah, N. N. (2023). CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING KURIKULUM MERDEKA FOR EFL TEACHERS. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 10(2), 439–469. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v10i2.1899>
- Romadhon, K. (2023). *Implementasi Modul Ajar Dan Asesmen Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Di Kelas I Dan Iv Sd Negeri Babarsari Yogyakarta*. UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Salsabila, A. I. (2023a). *The analysis of teachers' perception on Merdeka Curriculum implementation in English teaching and learning at SDN 3 Pakelan, Banjarnegara*.
- Salsabila, A. I. (2023b). *THE ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON MERDEKA CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN ENGLISH TEACHING AND LEARNING AT SDN 3 PAKELAN, BANJARNEGARA ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM EDUCATION DEPARTMENT FACULTY OF TARBIYA AND TEACHER TRAINING*.
- SANJAYA, W., ERITA, Y., PUTRI, R. S., & INDRIYANI, N. (2023). Teachers' Readiness and Ability in Designing Teaching Modules in The Independent Curriculum. *Journal of Digital Learning and Distance Education*, 1(7), 288–296. <https://doi.org/http://doi.10.56778/jdlde.v1i7.46>
- Sari, D. K., Hardoko, A., & Marwiah, M. (2024). Efektivitas Rancangan dan Implementasi Modul Ajar pada Pembelajaran PKn Kelas IX di SMP Negeri 1 Samarinda Marwiah Marwiah beriman dan bertaqwa kepada tuhan yang maha esa, berahlak mulia, sehat, berilmu, cakap, membentuk karakter seseorang yang dihar. *Jurnal Sadewa: Publikasi Ilmu Pendidikan, Pembelajaran Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 2(3). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.61132/sadewa.v2i3.920>
- Siregar, N., Sahirah, R., & Harahap, A. A. (2020). Konsep Kampus Merdeka Belajar di Era Revolusi Industri 4.0. *Fitrah: Journal of Islamic Education*, 1(1), 141–157.
- Situmorang, D. L. (2023). *Junior High School English Teachers' Experience towards Merdeka Curriculum Implementation in Jambi City, Thesis. English Education Study Programme, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education Universitas Jambi*. Jambi University.
- Supriyono. (2022). The Proposed Model of the G*Gold Way Strategy For Teachers to Implement The "Kurikulum Merdeka" at All School Levels. *Journal of Innovation Research and Knowlwdge*, 11(12). <https://doi.org/DOI:10.53625/jirk.v1i12>
- Taufik, Andang, & Imansyah, M. N. (2023). ANALISIS KESULITAN GURU DALAM MENYUSUN MODUL AJAR BERBASIS KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Media Pembelajaran (JUNDIKMA)*, 02(03), 48–54.
- Tricahyati, S., & Zaim, M. (2023). Journal of English Language Teaching English Teachers' Readiness in Implementing of "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum in Teaching

- English at Junior High School in Padang. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 12(1), 97–105. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v12i1.121783>
- Winda, S. N., & Tiarina, Y. (2024). Journal of English Language Teaching An Analysis of English Teachers ' Abilities and Difficulties in Designing ' ' Modul Ajar ' ' in the Merdeka Curriculum at SMAN 2 Batang Anai. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 13(2), 473–484. <https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v13i2.128061>