

STRENGTHENING TEACHERS' READINESS FOR THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM THROUGH DIFFERENTIATED LEARNING WORKSHOPS: A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY-BASED EVALUATION

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Abstract

This community service program aimed to strengthen teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum through differentiated learning workshops at SD Humairoh, a primary school in Riau, Indonesia, in January 2026. The program involved 25 teachers and applied a quantitative survey-based evaluation design. The implementation flow included needs analysis, preparation of workshop materials, training on differentiated learning concepts, classroom simulation activities, mentoring sessions, and post-program evaluation. Data were collected through pre- and post-workshop questionnaires and analysed descriptively using mean scores and percentages. The findings showed a considerable improvement in teachers' readiness following the workshops. The average readiness score increased from 64.8 before the program to 86.6 after the program. Furthermore, 88% of participants showed improved understanding of differentiated instruction strategies, while 84% reported greater confidence in designing student-centred learning aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. The program also supported active teacher participation and synergistic reflection during the training process. The results indicate that differentiated learning workshops can enhance teachers' pedagogical readiness and practical competence in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at the primary school level.

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Introduction

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia has encouraged schools to adopt more flexible and student-centred learning approaches. One of the core principles of this curriculum is differentiated learning, which emphasises instruction based on students' readiness, interests, and learning profiles. However, many teachers still struggle to adapt their pedagogical practices to the demands of the new curriculum. Teacher readiness has become an essential factor because successful curriculum implementation depends not only on policy changes but also on teachers' pedagogical competence and confidence in classroom practice (Martinez, 2022; Wang, 2022; Ben Gurion & Nasir, 2024).

Differentiated learning is grounded in constructivist and learner-centred educational theory, particularly the idea that students learn more effectively when instruction accommodates individual differences. According to differentiated instruction theory, teachers should modify content, process, product, and learning environment to meet diverse student needs. In the context of the Merdeka Curriculum, differentiated learning is expected to support inclusive, active, and meaningful learning experiences. Nevertheless, implementing differentiated strategies requires adequate pedagogical preparation, classroom management skills, and professional training for teachers (Smets et al., 2022; Samsudi et al., 2024; Woodcock & Reupert, 2024).

Several recent studies have shown that teachers' understanding of differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum remains limited. Research on elementary school teachers found that many educators were still unfamiliar with practical differentiation strategies, although they showed strong motivation to learn. Limited training opportunities and insufficient mentoring were identified as major barriers to implementation. Teachers generally rely on self-directed learning through digital platforms because institutional support remains uneven across schools (Zhang, 2023; Witraguna et al., 2024; Stockwell & Tafazoli, 2025).

Other studies also reported that teachers face major challenges in implementing differentiated learning in classrooms. These problems include limited instructional time, heterogeneous student abilities, administrative responsibilities, and inadequate teaching resources. Teachers frequently comprehend the theoretical concept of differentiation but struggle to translate it into practical classroom activities. Furthermore, school support systems along with collaborative professional learning communities, are not always available to assist teachers during curriculum transition processes (Admiraal et al., 2021; Sofiana et al., 2024; Sianturi, 2025).

Existing studies on teacher readiness for the Merdeka Curriculum primarily utilise descriptive and correlational approaches, with limited attention to intervention-based professional development programs that include structured workshops and mentoring activities. Previous studies mainly examined teachers' perceptions, challenges, and capacity levels using surveys or interviews. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the implementation challenges of the curriculum, limited attention has been paid to community service programs that directly strengthen teachers' competencies through structured workshops and mentoring

activities. Therefore, a gap remains between theoretical understanding and practical professional development initiatives in schools (Popova et al., 2022; Ribaeus et al., 2022; Sephiawardani & Bektiningsih, 2023).

Community service activities in education play an important function in bridging this gap through providing contextual professional development for teachers. Workshops can serve as collaborative learning spaces in which teachers actively engage in instructional design, classroom simulation, and reflective discussion. Through continuous mentoring and participatory training, teachers can improve their confidence and pedagogical readiness in applying differentiated learning strategies. Such professional development programs are especially important at the primary school level because teachers are responsible for addressing diverse student characteristics during foundational learning stages (Fadil & Nurulpaik, 2026).

Based on these conditions, this community service program aimed to strengthen teachers' readiness for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum through differentiated learning workshops at SD Humairoh. The program employed a quantitative survey-based evaluation to measure teachers' readiness before and after the workshop activities. This program contributes to improving teachers' pedagogical competence and supporting the implementation of differentiated learning practices in primary education settings (Ibrahim & Aisyah, 2026).

Educational Service Method

This community service activity employed a quantitative, survey-based evaluation design to examine the effectiveness of differentiated learning workshops in strengthening teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. The activity was conducted in January 2026 at SD Humairoh, Kubang Raya, Riau, Indonesia, involving 25 primary school teachers as participants. Quantitative evaluation was selected because it allows researchers to systematically measure changes in participants' readiness, perceptions, and pedagogical understanding before and after the intervention program (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The implementation of the community service program was divided into several stages. The first stage involved a preliminary needs analysis to identify teachers' understanding of and challenges related to implementing differentiated learning in the Merdeka Curriculum. This stage was conducted through informal interviews, classroom observations, and initial questionnaires. Needs analysis is considered essential in educational professional development because it helps ensure that training activities are aligned with participants' actual instructional needs and contextual problems (Guskey, 2002).

The second stage consisted of preparing workshop materials and training instruments. The materials focused on differentiated learning, the characteristics of the Merdeka Curriculum, differentiated instructional strategies, classroom management, and student-centred learning design. In addition, the service team developed presentation media, learning scenarios, worksheets, and evaluation questionnaires. The preparation of contextual and practice-oriented materials is important for

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improving teachers' pedagogical competence and instructional readiness (Tomlinson, 2017).

The third stage was the implementation of the differentiated learning workshops. The workshop activities combined lectures, group discussions, collaborative reflection, classroom simulations, and practical exercises in designing differentiated lesson plans. Teachers were encouraged to actively participate in cooperative problem-solving activities to strengthen their understanding of differentiated instruction practices. Engaged involvement and collaborative professional learning have been widely recognised as effective approaches in teacher professional development programs (Desimone & Garet, 2015).

The fourth stage involved mentoring and assistance activities. During this stage, participants received guidance from the service team in developing learning activities aligned with differentiated instruction principles and the Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers discussed classroom implementation strategies, learning assessment, and pupil engagement techniques. Mentoring activities are important because sustained professional support can improve teachers' confidence and facilitate the transfer of training outcomes into classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The final stage was program evaluation. Data were collected using pre- and post-workshop questionnaires designed to measure teachers' readiness, understanding, and confidence in implementing differentiated learning. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of 20 items adapted from differentiated learning readiness indicators. Prior to implementation, the instrument underwent expert validation and reliability testing. The reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating good internal consistency. The collected data were analysed descriptively using percentages and mean comparisons to identify changes in teachers' readiness levels before and after the workshops, and in participants' readiness after the workshop activities. Descriptive quantitative analysis is frequently employed in educational service evaluations because it provides a practical overview of program effectiveness and participant responses (Sugiyono, 2019). The following is the community service implementation flow, as shown in Figure 1.

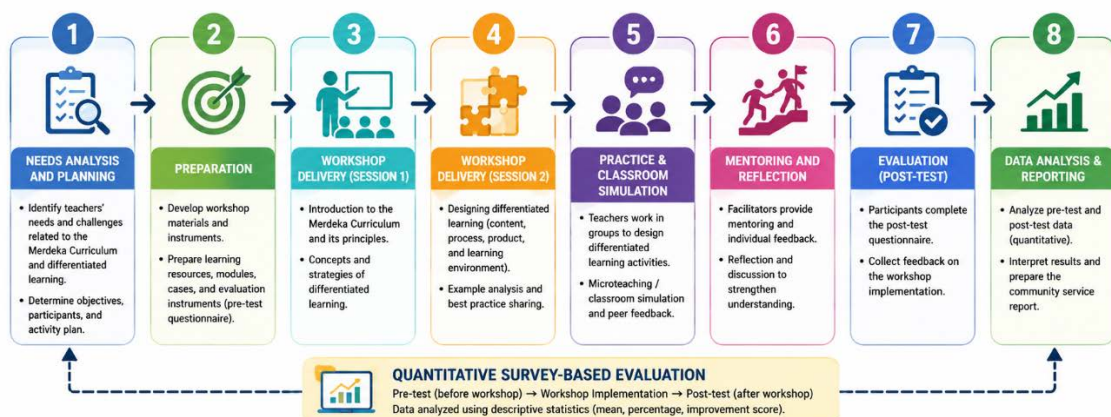


Figure 1. Flow of community service implementation based on Strengthening Teachers' Readiness for the Merdeka Curriculum through Differentiated Learning Workshops

Results and Discussion

A. Description of Community Service Implementation

The community service program entitled Strengthening Teachers' Readiness for the Merdeka Curriculum through Differentiated Learning Workshops: A Quantitative Survey-Based Evaluation was conducted in January 2026 at SD Humairoh. The activity involved 25 primary school teachers as participants and aimed to improve teachers' pedagogical readiness in implementing differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. The program began with a preliminary needs analysis to identify teachers' understanding, challenges, and training needs related to differentiated instruction practices in classroom learning.

Following the initial analysis, the service team prepared workshop materials, training modules, learning instruments, and evaluation questionnaires tailored to the participants' needs. The workshop implementation combined several interactive approaches, including lectures, discussions, collaborative reflection, classroom simulations, and practical lesson-planning exercises. During the workshop sessions, teachers were introduced to the principles of differentiated learning, student-centered instruction, classroom management strategies, and methods for adapting learning activities based on students' readiness and learning characteristics.

The implementation process also included mentoring and assistance activities to strengthen teachers' practical understanding of differentiated instruction. Participants were guided in designing learning scenarios, selecting appropriate instructional strategies, and developing classroom assessments aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. In addition, teachers participated in collaborative discussions and peer reflection activities to exchange ideas and experiences regarding classroom implementation challenges. These activities were designed to encourage active participation and improve teachers' confidence in applying differentiated learning practices effectively.

At the end of the program, an evaluation was conducted using pre- and post-workshop questionnaires to measure teachers' readiness and understanding after participating in the service activities. The collected data were analyzed descriptively using percentage scores and mean comparisons to identify changes in participants' readiness levels. Overall, the workshop activities demonstrated positive outcomes in improving teachers' pedagogical competence, understanding of differentiated learning, and readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in primary school classrooms.

B. Presentation of Quantitative Results

The quantitative evaluation was conducted to measure teachers' readiness before and after participating in the differentiated learning workshops at SD Humairoh. Data were collected using pre-test and post-test questionnaires distributed to 25 teachers. The questionnaire assessed several indicators of readiness, including understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum, differentiated learning strategies, lesson

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planning, classroom management, assessment practices, and confidence in implementation. The collected data were analyzed descriptively using mean scores and percentage improvements to determine the effectiveness of the community service program. Below are the statistical results of Teachers' Readiness Before and After the Workshop in table 1

Table 1. Teachers' Readiness Before and After the Workshop

No	Readiness Indicators	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Improvement (%)
1	Understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum	65.2	87.4	34.00%
2	Understanding of Differentiated Learning	61.8	88.6	43.40%
3	Ability to Design Differentiated Lesson Plans	63.5	85.7	35.00%
4	Classroom Management Skills	66.1	84.9	28.40%
5	Assessment and Evaluation Skills	62.9	83.8	33.20%
6	Confidence in Curriculum Implementation	69.4	89.1	28.40%
	Average Score	64.8	86.6	33.70%

The findings in Table 1 demonstrate that the differentiated learning workshops appeared to contribute positively to improving teachers' readiness for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. The average readiness score increased from 64.8 in the pre-test to 86.6 in the post-test, indicating a 33.7% improvement after the intervention. The highest improvement occurred in teachers' understanding of differentiated learning strategies, which increased by 43.4%. This finding suggests that workshop-based professional development may enhance teachers' conceptual understanding and pedagogical competence related to differentiated instruction. Similar findings were reported by [Witraguna et al. \(2024\)](#), who found that many elementary school teachers initially lacked sufficient understanding of differentiated learning due to limited training opportunities.

The improvement in teachers' confidence and lesson-planning ability suggests that practical workshop activities, simulations, and mentoring sessions supported participants in translating theoretical concepts into classroom practices. Teachers became more prepared to design student-centered learning activities aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum. Previous studies emphasized that teacher readiness is strongly influenced by professional development experiences, pedagogical support, and collaborative learning opportunities ([Ben Gurion & Nasir, 2024](#)). Furthermore, structured workshops and mentoring activities can strengthen teachers' self-efficacy and instructional adaptability during curriculum transition processes.

The results also revealed improvements in classroom management and assessment skills after the workshop activities. These findings indicate that teachers gained a better understanding of how to manage diverse student characteristics and conduct differentiated assessments in classroom learning. Differentiated instruction requires teachers to adapt teaching methods, learning materials, and assessment

strategies according to students' readiness and learning profiles. However, previous studies reported that teachers often experience challenges related to instructional time, classroom diversity, and assessment implementation in differentiated learning contexts (Sofiana et al., 2024; Puput et al., 2026). Therefore, continuous mentoring and follow-up training remain necessary to ensure sustainable implementation of differentiated learning practices in primary schools.

C. *Discussion with theory and previous studies*

The findings of this community service program indicate that differentiated learning workshops improved teachers' readiness to implement the Merdeka Curriculum. The increase in teachers' average readiness scores after the workshop demonstrates that structured professional development activities can strengthen teachers' pedagogical understanding, instructional confidence, and practical competence in classroom implementation. These findings align with theories of teacher readiness, which explains that readiness is influenced by teachers' knowledge, self-efficacy, pedagogical skills, and institutional support systems. Teachers who receive continuous training and mentoring tend to show higher adaptability toward curriculum reform and instructional innovation (Ben Gurion & Nasir, 2024).

The improvement in teachers' understanding of differentiated learning reflects the importance of constructivist and student-centered learning theories within the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Differentiated learning emphasizes that instruction should accommodate students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles through adjustments in content, process, product, and learning environment. According to Tomlinson's differentiated instruction theory, effective learning occurs when teachers are able to provide flexible and responsive instruction for diverse learners. The workshop activities in this program, including collaborative discussions, classroom simulations, and lesson-planning practices, enabled teachers to better understand how differentiated instruction can be implemented in real classroom contexts. Previous studies also found that many Indonesian teachers still experience conceptual confusion regarding differentiated learning due to limited training opportunities and lack of practical guidance (Witraguna et al., 2024).

The findings also suggest that mentoring and collaborative reflection activities appeared to contribute positively to teachers' confidence and classroom management skills. This result is consistent with professional development theory, which states that effective teacher training should involve active participation, reflective practice, and sustained assistance rather than one-time seminars. Teachers require opportunities to practice instructional strategies, receive feedback, and collaboratively solve classroom problems. Research by Desimone and Garet emphasized that collaborative professional learning can improve instructional quality and teacher self-efficacy in implementing educational reforms. Similarly, the mentoring process in this community service activity helped teachers translate theoretical understanding into practical classroom applications aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum.

Another important finding is the improvement in teachers' assessment and lesson-planning abilities after participating in the workshop. Differentiated instruction

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requires teachers to design adaptive learning activities and authentic assessments that accommodate diverse student characteristics. However, previous studies reported that teachers frequently face difficulties in conducting differentiated assessments because of administrative burdens, time limitations, and heterogeneous classroom conditions (Sianturi, 2025). The workshop activities addressed these challenges by providing practical examples, collaborative lesson design sessions, and classroom simulation practices. As a result, teachers became more capable of developing student-centered instructional strategies and flexible learning assessments.

The positive outcomes of this community service activity are consistent with previous research showing that differentiated learning training programs can improve teacher competence and readiness in curriculum implementation. Suryani et al. (2025) reported that differentiated instruction training significantly increased teachers' pre-test and post-test scores, indicating improved understanding and pedagogical competence after workshop participation. Likewise, Sofiana et al. (2024) emphasized that continuous professional development and institutional support are essential factors in strengthening teachers' readiness to implement differentiated learning effectively. Therefore, sustainable mentoring, collaborative learning communities, and follow-up training programs are necessary to maintain the long-term effectiveness of differentiated learning implementation in primary schools.

Conclusion

The community service program entitled Strengthening Teachers' Readiness for the Merdeka Curriculum through Differentiated Learning Workshops: A Quantitative Survey-Based Evaluation demonstrated positive results in improving teachers' pedagogical readiness at SD Humairoh. The workshop activities contributed to increasing teachers' understanding of differentiated learning concepts and their confidence in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. Quantitative evaluation results showed improvements in teachers' readiness scores across several indicators, including instructional planning, classroom management, assessment strategies, and differentiated learning practices.

The findings indicate that differentiated learning workshops can serve as a promising professional development strategy for supporting curriculum implementation in primary schools. Through participatory and practice-oriented activities, teachers were able to translate theoretical concepts into applicable classroom practices aligned with student-centered learning principles. Therefore, sustainable mentoring programs, continuous professional development, and collaborative teacher learning communities are recommended to maintain and strengthen the long-term implementation of differentiated learning within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this community service program, several recommendations can be proposed to support the sustainable implementation of the

Merdeka Curriculum through differentiated learning practices. First, schools are encouraged to conduct continuous professional development programs for teachers, particularly through workshops, mentoring activities, and collaborative learning communities. Continuous training is important to strengthen teachers' pedagogical competence, instructional creativity, and confidence in implementing differentiated instruction effectively in diverse classroom settings.

Second, educational institutions and school administrators should provide stronger institutional support by facilitating access to teaching resources, differentiated learning modules, and classroom assessment tools aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum. Adequate support systems can help teachers overcome challenges related to lesson planning, classroom management, and differentiated assessment implementation.

Third, future community service programs are recommended to involve longer mentoring periods and classroom-based follow-up evaluations to examine the sustainability of teachers' instructional practices after training activities. In addition, future studies may expand the number of participants and involve different educational levels to obtain broader findings regarding teachers' readiness for differentiated learning implementation. Finally, collaboration among universities, schools, and educational stakeholders should be strengthened to create sustainable professional development programs that support the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in primary education.

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