



UHAMKA PRESS

p-ISSN: 2477-3859 e-ISSN: 2477-3581  
**JURNAL INOVASI PENDIDIKAN DASAR**  
The Journal of Innovation in Elementary Education  
<http://jipd.uhamka.ac.id>



Volume 9 • Nomor 1 • June 2024 • 36-43

## Development of Teaching Modules Based on The Merdeka Curriculum Oriented Towards Local Cultural Values in Strengthening the Character of the Nation's Learners in Rural Areas

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Received: October 22, 2023

Accepted: June 10, 2024

Published: June 10, 2024

### Abstract

This study aims to develop a teaching module based on the Merdeka Curriculum that is oriented towards local cultural values in strengthening the character of the nation's learners in rural areas. The research uses the Research and Development (R&D) method. The results show that the teaching module successfully improves students' understanding of local cultural values, integrates them into learning activities, and enhances students' character literacy.

**Keywords:** Teaching Module, Local Culture, Learners' Character

## *Pengembangan Modul Ajar Kurikulum Merdeka Berorientasi Nilai-Nilai Budaya Lokal Dalam Penguatan Karakter Bangsa Peserta Didik di Daerah Pedesaan*

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan mengembangkan modul ajar berbasis Kurikulum Merdeka yang berorientasi pada nilai-nilai budaya lokal dalam penguatan karakter bangsa peserta didik di daerah pedesaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian dan pengembangan (Research and Development). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa modul ajar berhasil meningkatkan pemahaman peserta didik terhadap nilai budaya lokal, mengintegrasikannya dalam pembelajaran sehingga dapat meningkatkan literasi karakter peserta didik.

**Kata kunci:** Modul Ajar, Budaya Lokal, Karakter peserta didik.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Recently, there have been many cases in the news about delinquency committed by children, both as perpetrators and as victims. Indonesian people feel uneasy regarding this matter, especially those who live in big cities (Raihana, 2016). In Indonesia, child or adolescent delinquency has reached a level that is disturbing society so we must realize that delinquency is a social problem that must be faced by every level of society. Acts of delinquency committed by children and teenagers often lead to acts that are against the law, including fighting, theft, drinking alcohol, and so on.

Child or adolescent delinquency is not something that only originates from biological or psychological factors, but the social environment in which children live can also influence child delinquency. One of the social environments that influences children's delinquency is their social environment (peer group). Child delinquency occurs more often in big cities due to several factors as stated by (Walter, 2016), including the wave of urbanization from villages to cities, the existence of conflicts between traditional rural customary norms and new norms that are growing in the process of rapid social shift in big cities, the fading of personality patterns linked to traditional social control, and global changes in science and technology. Not only in cities, character degradation also occurs in rural areas. As time goes by, students' character experiences a decline (Puspita, 2019). These problems occur due to several causes both internal and external to students.

One concrete step to overcome problems occurring in rural areas is through the use of independent curriculum teaching modules. According to (Akbar, 2013), learning in schools is currently experiencing problems in the independent curriculum teaching modules that are used to regulate the course of learning. Some of these problems include (1) the indicators and learning objectives formulated by teachers still tend to be at a low level of ability, be it cognitive, attitudes, or skills, (2) some of the teaching materials used by teachers are knowledge only, not yet leading to attitudinal competence. and skills, (3) the learning model is still conventional, so learning is not student-centered, (4) the evaluation instruments developed by teachers are not optimal, because the questions are not tested for validity, reliability, level of difficulty, and differentiability. Therefore, it can be concluded that the quality of the independent curriculum teaching modules prepared by teachers will influence students' activities and learning outcomes. Apart from that, good learning management will produce meaningful learning outcomes and will develop character for students.

It is very important to give character education to students from an early age. The joints that support a nation are the character and mentality of its people, and character must be formed from an early age. The collapse of a nation is marked by the erosion of the nation's values and character, even though physically the nation still stands tall. (Wening, 2012) states that environmental factors shape the formation of a person's character. Good character education is character education that comes from the cultural values of the Indonesian nation. The existence of culture and the diversity of noble cultural values possessed by the Indonesian people are a means of building the character of citizens, both private character and public character (Yunus, 2013). Building national character through national culture can be done by transforming local cultural values as a means of national character. One means of building national character is by transforming local Javanese cultural values. Based on the problems described above, the PKM-RSH TEAM took the research title, namely the development of Independent Curriculum teaching modules oriented towards local cultural values in strengthening the national character of students in rural areas.

**METHOD**

**1. Research Design**

The research design used in this study is Research and Development (R&D) adopting the Borg and Gall research model (2003). The research and development procedure consists of 10 steps: (1) Research and information gathering stage, (2) Planning, (3) Initial draft development, (4) Expert validation, (5) Expert validation revision, (6) Limited trial, (7) Refinement of limited trial results, (8) Field trial, (9) Refinement of final trial results, (10) Dissemination and Implementation.

**2. Research Stages**

The research stages using the Borg and Gall research model can be presented in the following diagram. The procedure in Research and Development includes (1) Preliminary Study, which involves the Research and Information Gathering stage. (2) Planning, which includes needs analysis, learner characteristics analysis, learning environment analysis, and learning objectives identification. (3) Initial Draft Development, where the researcher develops the initial product by organizing concept maps and material networks, aiming to enhance students' creative writing skills. (4) Expert Review and Revision, conducted to validate the teaching materials in terms of content, media, and language before use. (5) Limited and Field Trials. The limited trial is conducted in one school in a rural area. Improvements are made to ensure that the teaching materials are well received by students, facilitate their learning, and enhance their creative writing skills. Meanwhile, the field trial was conducted in two schools in rural areas to gather responses, feedback, and input from teachers and students based on distributed questionnaires. (6) Effectiveness Testing of Teaching Materials and Socialization. Product testing is a stage to determine the effectiveness and efficacy of the developed teaching materials.

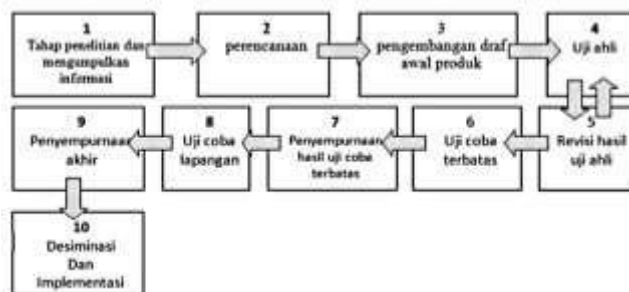


Figure 1. Research Steps

**3. Object or Research Variables**

The variables in this research are the Merdeka curriculum teaching module, local culture, and national character.

**4. Sources and Data Collection Techniques**

The data sources in this research include questionnaires, interview guidelines, and tests. Observation sheets are structured based on the theory of national character, and questionnaires (expert, student response, and practitioner response) aim to determine responses, attitudes, challenges, and difficulties in using teaching materials. Data collection techniques use non-test methods such as observation sheets and questionnaires.

## 5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques in this research include quantitative data analysis techniques and qualitative data analysis techniques. Quantitative data analysis techniques are used to test the effectiveness of the developed teaching module and to test the suitability of the learning with the material. Meanwhile, the qualitative data analysis technique used is qualitative description analysis, which aims to process data information from questionnaire results in the form of criticisms and suggestions by experts, teachers, and students. This technique is used to obtain information and categorize information from qualitative data, including responses, criticisms, improvement suggestions, and teaching module revisions.

## 6. Research Results

The research results consist of the product of the Merdeka Curriculum teaching module oriented towards local cultural values. In the feasibility test aspect, it falls under the category of "very good". The research explains that the Merdeka Curriculum teaching module oriented towards local cultural values can form a good understanding of various learning activities adapted to cultural history, norms, values, and the environment where children live in underdeveloped areas. Based on these issues, the researcher was interested in developing a teaching module based on the Merdeka curriculum to enhance the creative writing skills of students in rural areas.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education is a fundamental pillar in shaping the character and development of learners. In rural contexts, unique challenges often arise, requiring approaches that can accommodate local cultural diversity and support the strengthening of national character. This research explores the impact of developing teaching modules based on the Merdeka Curriculum that are oriented towards local cultural values on the character of students in rural areas. By outlining the results and discussions of this research, we can gain a deeper understanding of how these modules can be a vital instrument in achieving stimulating, relevant, and effective learning goals to encourage positive development among students in rural environments.

According to (Ferdianto, 2018), the developed teaching modules successfully increased students' understanding of local cultural values. Integrating these values into the learning context allows students to delve deeper into and appreciate their cultural heritage. Meanwhile, according to (Daviena, 2018), the teaching modules successfully strengthened students' character literacy. Through engaging and contextual approaches, students not only gain academic knowledge but also develop important skills and character values.

Both experts' opinions lead to the conclusion that the development and implementation of these teaching modules show potential for a positive impact in strengthening the character of students in rural areas. The continuity of module implementation and sustained community involvement can be key factors in improving education in these environments.

The research titled "Development of Teaching Modules Based on the Merdeka Curriculum Oriented Towards Local Cultural Values in Strengthening the Character of Nation's Learners in Rural Areas" aims to develop teaching modules that integrate Merdeka Curriculum principles with local cultural values, specifically in rural areas. The results achieved from the developed teaching modules include a well-organized structure that encompasses elements of the Merdeka Curriculum. The modules are designed considering the understanding level and needs of students in rural areas.

As for the results of implementing the teaching modules in two elementary schools in the Trenggalek district, namely SDN 1 Surondakan and SDN 1 Ngantru, they are as follows:

Table 1. Before Program Implementation

Number	Evaluation Indicators	Score (1-50)
1	Relevance of the Merdeka Curriculum	3
2	Integrity of Local Cultural Values	2
3	Teacher Participation	4
4	Strengthening National Character	2
5	Local Community Support	3

Table 2. After Program Implementation

Number	Evaluation Indicators	Score (1-50)
1	Relevance of the Merdeka Curriculum	5
2	Integrity of Local Cultural Values	4
3	Teacher Participation	5
4	Strengthening National Character	4
5	Local Community Support	5

From the table above, it can be analyzed that:

- Curriculum Merdeka Relevance  
Before: Low evaluation due to lack of connection with local needs.  
After: High evaluation due to adaptation and focus on local wisdom.
- Integration of Local Cultural Values  
Before: Low integration, does not reflect local cultural values.  
After: High integration, modules significantly cover local cultural values.
- Teacher Participation  
Before: Limited participation, lack of understanding of the modules.  
After: Active participation, teachers involved in development and implementation.
- Strengthening National Character  
Before: Low, lack of focus on national character aspects.  
After: High, positive changes in character strengthening.
- Support from Local Communities  
Before: Low, minimal support and participation from local communities.  
After: High, active involvement and support from local communities.

The above tables reflect positive changes in the evaluation of specific indicators after the implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka Development Program Oriented to Local Cultural Values in Rural Areas. Higher scores indicate an improvement in the quality and impact of the program.

Data analysis was conducted by detailing the main findings that emerged during the research, as outlined in the following table.

Table 3. Successful Problem Solving

Number	Problem	Problem Solving
1	Lack of understanding of local cultural values among students	Development of teaching modules using an interactive approach that integrates local cultural values in every lesson.

2	Lack of teacher involvement in teaching local culture	Active involvement of teachers in developing teaching modules to enhance relevance and acceptance among students.
3	Lack of national character among students	Modules are designed to strengthen character literacy, such as honesty, responsibility, and cooperation, through learning activities that are contextual to local culture.

From the table above, we can see that the developed teaching modules successfully enhanced students' understanding of local cultural values. Integrated into learning activities, these modules help students to better understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. Furthermore, the teaching modules successfully increased students' character literacy. Through an engaging and culturally relevant approach, students actively participate in activities that build character, creating a learning environment that supports the development of positive character traits.

The results of the analysis indicate that the development of teaching modules using the Merdeka Curriculum approach and local cultural values can effectively strengthen students' character in rural areas. Through the involvement of the village community and the implementation of contextual learning strategies, these modules can be a relevant solution to improve the quality of education in rural environments.

#### Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretès	48.2093	43	3.40558	.51935
	postès	59.7442	43	3.38831	.51671

#### Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	pretès & postès	43	.407	.007

#### Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	pretès - postès	-11.53488	3.69909	.56411	-12.67330	-10.39647	-20.448	.000

#### Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	pretès	39.4444	18	5.31615	1.25303
	postès	50.2222	18	2.77712	.65457

#### Paired Samples Test

Paired Differences		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper		
Pair 1	pretès - postès	-10.7778	5.31615	1.25303	-13.2834	-8.2722	-8.598	.000

				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1pretes	--	5.64181	1.32979	-13.58339	-7.97217	-8.105	17	.000
postes	10.77778							

Based on the pretest and posttest results conducted at SDN 1 Surondakan, it is proven that the implemented teaching modules have influenced the improvement of students' national character.

**CONCLUSION**

This research successfully obtained data that underpinned the condition of national character among third-grade students at SDN 1 Surondakan Elementary School in Trenggalek Regency. Data analysis provided a deep understanding of the challenges and potential in shaping students' character. The design of the Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules oriented towards local cultural values was developed in response to the findings on students' character conditions. This design includes the integration of local cultural values into the curriculum to enrich learning and strengthen the formation of national character. The process of developing the Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules oriented towards local cultural values has resulted in practical modules that meet the contextual needs of students in rural areas. These modules are expected to serve as a relevant learning resource and stimulate development. Data from the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules oriented towards local cultural values provide insights into how these modules are applied in the school environment. Data collection involved observations, interviews, and documentation of module implementation in third-grade classrooms. Effectiveness tests of the modules were conducted to evaluate their impact on improving students' national character. The test data included student responses, learning achievements, and indicators of module effectiveness in shaping national character.

This research comprehensively demonstrates that the development of the Merdeka Curriculum teaching modules oriented towards local cultural values can make a positive contribution to shaping students' national character in rural areas. The implementation of these modules is expected to enhance understanding, appreciation, and application of local cultural values as an integral part of students' character. The effectiveness test results provide a strong basis for understanding the positive impact of these modules on the development of students' national character at the elementary school level.

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