
Empowering Teachers Through A Workshop on Developing Local Wisdom-Based Learning Modules Using The Understanding by Design (UbD) Framework

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Abstract

Equitable access to quality education remains a major challenge in Indonesia, particularly in peripheral areas where learning facilities and infrastructure are limited. This condition is evident in schools across Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, where restricted internet connectivity and scarce digital learning resources hinder effective teaching and learning processes. Practical solutions are therefore needed to overcome these contextual constraints. This article reports the outcomes of a community service program that applied the Understanding by Design (UbD) approach in developing locally-based learning modules for Social Studies (IPS). The stages included needs analysis, activity planning, Phase I implementation, and Phase II implementation. The findings reveal that teachers have begun to grasp the core principles of UbD, emphasizing the formulation of learning objectives, assessment design, and the development of learning activities aimed at deep understanding. Most teachers demonstrated the ability to apply engaging instructional strategies, although many struggled to articulate these strategies explicitly within their modules. To address this issue, supplementary training was provided on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support the development of locally grounded UbD-based modules. Evaluation results indicate that 70% of participating teachers successfully developed modules aligned with UbD principles and local wisdom, while the remaining teachers still require further mentoring in utilizing AI effectively—particularly in crafting appropriate prompts for content generation.

Keywords: Understanding by Design, local wisdom, learning module, Social Studies, artificial intelligence

Abstrak

Pemerataan akses terhadap pendidikan berkualitas masih menjadi tantangan besar di Indonesia, terutama di wilayah pinggiran yang mengalami keterbatasan fasilitas dan infrastruktur pembelajaran. Kondisi ini terlihat pada sekolah-sekolah di Kabupaten Hulu Sungai Selatan, di mana keterbatasan konektivitas internet dan minimnya sumber belajar digital menghambat efektivitas proses pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan solusi praktis untuk mengatasi berbagai kendala kontekstual tersebut. Artikel ini merupakan luaran kegiatan pengabdian yang menerapkan pendekatan Understanding by Design (UbD) dalam pengembangan modul ajar berbasis kearifan lokal pada pembelajaran Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (IPS). Tahapan pelaksanaan meliputi analisis kebutuhan, perencanaan kegiatan, pelaksanaan tahap I, dan pelaksanaan tahap II. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru mulai memahami prinsip-prinsip utama UbD yang menekankan pada perumusan tujuan pembelajaran, perancangan asesmen, serta pengembangan kegiatan belajar yang berorientasi pada

pemahaman mendalam. Sebagian besar guru telah mampu menerapkan strategi pembelajaran yang menarik, namun masih mengalami kesulitan dalam menuangkan strategi tersebut secara rinci ke dalam modul ajar. Untuk mengatasi hal tersebut, diberikan pelatihan tambahan mengenai pemanfaatan kecerdasan buatan (AI) dalam pengembangan modul ajar berbasis kearifan lokal dengan pendekatan UbD. Hasil evaluasi menunjukkan bahwa 70% guru telah berhasil mengembangkan modul ajar yang sesuai dengan prinsip UbD dan nilai-nilai kearifan lokal, sementara sebagian lainnya masih memerlukan pendampingan lebih lanjut dalam pemanfaatan AI, khususnya dalam penyusunan prompt yang efektif untuk menghasilkan konten pembelajaran.

Kata Kunci: *Understanding by Design, kearifan lokal, modul ajar, IPS, kecerdasan buatan*

Preliminary

Education quality equity remains a pressing issue in Indonesia, particularly in remote or peripheral regions where infrastructure and teaching resources are limited. Education quality and equity are interdependent goals that require holistic, context-specific strategies to ensure all students can access and benefit from high-quality education (Baily & Holmarsdottir, 2015; Kyriakides et al., 2020). Many schools in such contexts struggle with inconsistent electricity supply, limited internet connectivity, and a shortage of digital teaching media. These constraints reduce opportunities for rich, student-centered learning and hinder the implementation of newer curriculum paradigms oriented toward deep understanding.

In the context of junior high schools in regions such as the Kabupaten Hulu Sungai Selatan, these structural and material limitations are acute, creating a demanding environment for teachers who must adapt their pedagogy under constrained conditions. The lack of robust, context-appropriate instructional modules means that much of teaching remains oriented toward superficial coverage of content rather than enabling students to engage in meaningful, integrated understanding. One of the main priority problems identified by the partner schools is a limited understanding among teachers of how to design teaching modules that align with the Kurikulum Merdeka, especially with the focus on students' deep understanding. While the curriculum emphasises the importance of understanding rather than rote memorisation, many educators are un- or under-prepared to translate this philosophy into module design and implementation.

Another priority issue is the lack of teacher understanding of how to develop modules based on local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*) using the Understanding by Design (UbD) approach. Understanding by Design (UbD) is a backward curriculum design approach that prioritizes learning outcomes by first identifying desired results, then determining assessment evidence, and finally planning instructional experiences. The UBD approach increases student activity and understanding in learning; based on a systematic review of 6 articles from 2010 to 2022 (Halimah & Dewi, 2023). Modules rooted in local cultural values and contexts have been shown to increase relevance, engagement, and meaningful learning for students. For example, modules designed on the basis of local wisdom have demonstrated positive effects on learning readiness, intrinsic motivation, and student understanding in Indonesian schools (Marwantika et al., 2022; Salmia & Bancong, 2024; Zainuddin, 2025).

However, despite this evidence, many teachers in remote areas lack both the capacity and resources to enact such locally-grounded module design. They may have minimal exposure to UbD or to the frameworks that link local wisdom, curriculum design, and student deep understanding. This gap represents a significant barrier to achieving the aspirations of the Kurikulum Merdeka. In addition, a third major challenge identified by the partner schools is the limited understanding and usage of artificial intelligence (AI) in supporting module design. Although AI holds great potential to assist teachers in generating content, scaffolding assessment design, adapting modules to local contexts, and enabling efficiency in module

preparation, many educators in peripheral regions remain unfamiliar, under-trained, or lack access to appropriate AI tools. Studies indicate that teacher readiness and training remain inadequate in this domain (Fauzi et al., 2025; Sukini et al., 2025).

The intersection of these three issues — module design aligned with Kurikulum Merdeka's deep understanding orientation, module grounding in local wisdom via UbD, and leveraging AI for module development — forms the rationale for the current community service initiative. By addressing all three, the program seeks to offer a practical, integrated solution rather than piecemeal interventions.

From a theoretical perspective, the UbD framework emphasises starting with desired results (*student understanding*), then designing assessments, and finally planning instructional activities that lead to those results. When combined with local wisdom, the module design becomes culturally relevant and contextually meaningful. Evidence suggests that local-wisdom-based modules positively influence student engagement and outcomes (Sulistiyorini et al., 2022). At the same time, the adoption of AI in instructional material development offers opportunities to alleviate teacher burden, enhance creativity, support differentiated learning, and embed adaptive features. In Indonesia's strategy for curriculum transformation, AI-integrated pedagogies have been identified as a forward-looking priority. (Diana et al., 2025; Fauzi et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, the convergence of these three aspects remains under-explored in Indonesian junior high school settings, especially in remote districts. Many programs focus either on local wisdom module development or on digital/AI capacity, but few integrate UbD, local wisdom, and AI coherently. This gap motivates the present service program: to enable teachers at the junior high school level in Hulu Sungai Selatan to design modules that are culturally grounded, aligned with the Kurikulum Merdeka's emphasis on deep understanding, and supported by AI tools. Finally, by equipping teachers with both conceptual understanding (UbD + local wisdom) and practical skills (AI-supported module design), the program aims to strengthen module development capacity, improve teaching practices, and ultimately enhance student learning experiences and outcomes in under-resourced areas. The expected outcome is that more teachers will be able to develop effective modules, thus contributing to narrowing the educational quality gap.

Method

This community service program employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, which emphasizes collaborative engagement between researchers and participants in identifying problems, planning actions, implementing interventions, and evaluating outcomes. The implementation process was designed to address the specific needs of junior high school teachers in developing Understanding by Design (UbD)-based learning modules grounded in local wisdom. The stages of implementation consisted of four sequential phases: needs analysis, activity planning, Phase I implementation, and Phase II implementation. Each stage was conducted collaboratively with the partner schools to ensure contextual relevance and sustainability of the outcomes.

During the needs analysis stage, researchers and teachers jointly identified gaps in module design skills, particularly concerning the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, local wisdom integration, and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. The activity planning stage involved developing workshop materials, learning resources, and assessment tools tailored to the participants' needs. Phase I implementation focused on introducing the UbD framework and facilitating hands-on activities for designing local wisdom-based modules. Phase II implementation provided advanced training sessions on the integration of AI to enhance module quality and efficiency. Throughout both phases, continuous mentoring, reflection sessions, and

feedback discussions were conducted to ensure that participants could internalize the UbD principles and effectively apply them in their teaching practices.

Results and Discussion

The workshop and mentoring program on developing local wisdom-based teaching modules using the Understanding by Design (UbD) approach was implemented through interactive discussions and collaborative sharing sessions. This participatory format was selected to foster mutual learning and reflection among teachers while ensuring that the content and activities remained responsive to their contextual needs. Throughout the process, the implementation team worked closely with the partner schools to ensure that the program addressed both pedagogical and practical challenges encountered in the classroom (Subiyakto et al., 2024).

An adjustment in the mentoring process was required when the partner institution recommended expanding the scope of participants. Initially, the workshop was designed for a specific school; however, based on the partners' feedback, it was deemed necessary to involve a wider group of teachers across the region. This modification aimed to maximize the program's impact and respond to the shared difficulties faced by junior high school teachers in module development under the new curriculum framework.

The workshop consisted of four major stages: initial observation and needs analysis, material preparation and roadmap formulation, online workshop delivery, and guided module development. These sequential steps ensured a coherent process that moved from problem identification to solution implementation, allowing continuous reflection and refinement along the way. The process also aligned with the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR), emphasizing collaboration, participation, and empowerment of teachers as active agents of change (Muliasari et al., 2025).

The initial observation and needs analysis phase served as a crucial foundation for understanding the teachers' real conditions and challenges. The observation was conducted to obtain a factual picture of classroom practices and instructional constraints. This stage aimed not only to document the surface-level issues but also to uncover the root causes of difficulties faced by teachers in module development. The analysis revealed that many teachers struggled to design teaching modules that met diverse student needs, particularly due to variations in learner characteristics and the limited access to technology in remote areas such as Loksado.

Figure 1. School Condition



Based on the identified needs, the implementation team formulated a targeted intervention: organizing a workshop on local wisdom-based module development using the UbD framework (Tiono et al., 2025). This approach was chosen because it allows teachers to start with the desired learning outcomes and design backward, ensuring that every instructional activity contributes to deep understanding. Integrating local wisdom further grounds the modules in students' sociocultural realities, making learning more relevant and meaningful.

The next stage involved material preparation and roadmap design. During this phase, the implementation team developed detailed workshop content, including guidelines on UbD principles, examples of local wisdom integration, and templates for module development. A formal proposal and activity roadmap were also drafted. Coordination meetings were held with the partner schools to finalize schedules and participant lists. Following discussions, the partners recommended extending the program to include all Social Studies (IPS) teachers across junior high schools in Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency (Fatimah et al., 2025).

In response to this recommendation, the implementation team adjusted the scope and structure of the workshop (Safitri et al., 2025). Given the team's expertise in Social Studies education, the focus was narrowed to IPS teachers, ensuring alignment between the facilitators' specialization and the participants' professional needs. To manage the increased scale, the program was divided into two phases. This adjustment allowed for deeper engagement and more effective mentoring in each stage of the workshop.

Phase I was conducted in a blended format combining online and offline activities. The main agenda included delivering conceptual materials, facilitating discussions, and forming peer tutor groups. The workshop took place at SMPN 6 Kandangan and was attended by Social Studies teachers from across the regency. Due to logistical constraints, the facilitators joined virtually via Zoom. The sessions focused on identifying the potential of South Kalimantan's local wisdom as a resource for Social Studies learning. Participants were also introduced to the UbD approach, particularly in analyzing learner needs and designing learning experiences aligned with deep understanding.

Figure.2 training materials



At the end of Phase I, participants were tasked with conducting student needs analyses and material mapping exercises as the foundation for their module development. The formation of peer tutor groups was an essential component of this stage, designed to sustain collaboration and peer feedback during the module-writing process (Hadi et al., 2025). This structure enabled teachers to continue working collectively beyond the formal workshop sessions, fostering a community of practice among participants (Triyono, Ilhami, et al., 2025).

Phase II was conducted face-to-face at SMPN 1 Padang Batung. This stage focused on content reinforcement, guided module development, and evaluation of the overall program.

The facilitators provided in-depth sessions on key aspects of module design under the Kurikulum Merdeka, emphasizing deep learning, local wisdom integration, and the application of UbD principles. Participants received additional instruction on leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance module quality and efficiency, such as using AI tools to generate ideas, examples, and assessment items aligned with learning objectives (Nur'aini et al., 2025).

Figure 3 discussion about UbD approach



During the mentoring process, teachers actively developed their own modules, drawing on prior needs analyses and incorporating local wisdom themes relevant to their students. The implementation team provided individualized guidance and feedback, addressing teachers' difficulties and clarifying misunderstandings about UbD and AI integration. Regular reflection sessions enabled participants to discuss progress, share experiences, and collaboratively solve emerging problems.

The final reflection and evaluation stage revealed promising outcomes. All participating teachers reported improved understanding of UbD principles and the significance of local wisdom in contextualizing Social Studies learning. Approximately 70% of participants successfully developed local wisdom-based learning modules aligned with UbD principles. The remaining participants indicated a need for further assistance, particularly in effectively using AI tools. Many teachers required more practice in crafting effective prompts to obtain useful references and content from AI systems (Syarifuddin et al., 2025).

Overall, the workshop and mentoring program demonstrated that capacity-building initiatives grounded in collaborative learning and contextualized pedagogy can significantly enhance teachers' instructional design skills. The integration of UbD, local wisdom, and AI-based innovation provides a sustainable pathway toward empowering teachers in rural contexts to design meaningful, culturally relevant, and technology-supported learning materials (Muliasari et al., 2025).

Discussion

The integration of the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework into teacher module development constitutes a pivotal strategy for promoting deep learning outcomes. Multiple studies provide strong evidence supporting this claim (Alhamisi et al., 2015; Namus et al., 2024; Newell et al., 2024). The framework's "backward design" approach focuses on identifying desired learning outcomes first, then designing assessments and learning experiences (Roth, 2007). UbD emphasises beginning with the end in mind—defining desired

results, determining acceptable evidence, and planning learning experiences and instruction accordingly. For example, Sumandya, Widana, Suryawan, Handayani, & Mukminin (2023) found that teachers who understood UbD concepts showed greater independence and creativity in designing assessments in inclusive mathematics settings (Sumandya & Widana, 2022). In the present programme, the initial phase of needs-analysis allowed participating teachers to reflect on their current practice and identify the gap between their existing modules and the UbD-ideal of deep understanding (Jumriani et al., 2025).

The next notable dimension in this programme was the grounding of modules in local wisdom (*kearifan lokal*). Research from Indonesian contexts indicates that modules rooted in local cultural realities can enhance both students' cognitive and affective outcomes. For instance, Karmini, et.al (2024) demonstrated a significant improvement in student outcomes when local-wisdom-based modules were used in the independent curriculum context (Karmini et al., 2024). By aligning module design with local cultural knowledge, teachers in the study were better positioned to craft meaningful, contextually relevant learning tasks – thereby improving both relevance and student engagement (Triyono, Abbas, et al., 2025).

The programme design also responded to the partner recommendation to broaden the participant base. By expanding from a single school to several junior high schools (SMP) in the region and focusing on Social Studies teachers (IPS), the implementation gained scale and relevance. This expansion aligns with literature indicating that professional development efforts are more effective when they reach a critical mass of teachers rather than isolated participants. The broadening thus strengthens the capacity-building potential of the intervention. Research spanning various subjects—including science, religious education, and literacy—consistently shows these modules enhance student understanding, character development, and cultural connection. Rasyid et al., 2023 reported excellent student performance, with module testing yielding an average score of 84.54. Initial assessments show positive student responses and increased engagement (Nurhayani et al., 2024).

The blended format of Workshop Phase I – combining online delivery of conceptual content with in-person sessions and peer tutor groups – facilitated collaborative learning and peer support. The formation of peer tutor groups is consistent with the community-of-practice literature, where teachers share expertise and support each other's module design efforts. This collaborative structure may have contributed to the reported outcome that approximately 70% of teachers succeeded in developing UbD-aligned, local-wisdom-based modules. Such peer-supported frameworks merit further investigation in under-resourced settings.

In Workshop Phase II, the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support module development marks an important innovation. Although the use of AI in teacher professional development remains emergent, research has revealed moderate positive relationships between AI-based training and teacher skill improvement (Shezad et al., 2025). In the current context, the mentors guided teachers to explore prompt design, content-generation tools, and integration of AI-generated material into culturally-grounded modules, thereby extending the envelope of traditional module-writing support.

Nevertheless, integrating AI into module development invites challenges—especially in remote or peripheral schools. Haetami (2025) pointed out that many Indonesian teachers still lack digital literacy and institutional support for effective AI adoption. In our programme, while 70% of teachers successfully developed modules, the remaining 30% reported needing further assistance in crafting effective prompts and leveraging AI reference material (Haetami, 2025). This suggests that teacher readiness and scaffolded support are critical factors in AI integration success.

In terms of outcomes and implications, the combination of UbD-based design, local wisdom integration, and AI-enabled module development appears promising. Learners in other studies with local-wisdom-based modules showed improved motivation, relevance, and

learning outcomes (Karmini et al., 2024). The present findings extend that evidence by showing that when teachers are supported through structured workshops and mentoring, they can translate these frameworks into practice. This triple-innovation (UbD + local wisdom + AI) may serve as a model for other under-resourced regions striving for equitable quality education.

However, the discussion must also acknowledge limitations and areas for further investigation. The success rate of 70 percent is encouraging, but the persistent need for further mentoring highlights that a one-off workshop may not suffice for full teacher capacity development. Longitudinal research is needed to examine whether the modules remain effective over time, how student learning outcomes evolve, and how teacher autonomy in module revision develops. Moreover, the cultural specificity of local wisdom means that scalability across diverse Indonesian contexts must consider cultural variation, teacher profiles, and infrastructural constraints.

Conclusion

This community service program successfully enhanced teachers' understanding and capacity in developing local wisdom-based teaching modules using the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework. The workshop and mentoring sessions allowed participants to explore essential aspects of backward design—such as clarifying learning goals, designing authentic assessments, and constructing meaningful learning activities oriented toward deep understanding. The incorporation of local wisdom was particularly effective in contextualizing learning materials, thereby fostering cultural relevance and student engagement. Findings revealed that teachers demonstrated significant progress in applying the UbD approach and integrating elements of South Kalimantan's local wisdom into their teaching modules. Approximately 70% of participating teachers were able to produce high-quality instructional modules that aligned with both the Merdeka Curriculum and the UbD principles. However, a smaller proportion of participants still required further guidance, particularly in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support module development.

The integration of AI proved to be a valuable tool for assisting teachers in generating ideas, structuring content, and enhancing digital literacy. Nevertheless, teachers needed more exposure to effective prompt design and critical evaluation of AI-generated content to ensure pedagogical accuracy and contextual appropriateness. This indicates that sustainable capacity-building programs should be continued, combining pedagogical innovation, cultural grounding, and technological literacy. In conclusion, the workshop demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative and participatory training models in bridging gaps in teachers' pedagogical competence, curriculum literacy, and technology adoption. The combination of the UbD framework, local wisdom integration, and AI utilization offers a promising pathway toward developing high-quality, contextually grounded learning resources for Indonesian schools, especially in rural areas with limited access to digital infrastructure.

This program highlights the need for continuous teacher development focused on mastering the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework and integrating local wisdom into instructional materials. Future initiatives should provide sustained mentoring through peer learning communities, while education authorities are encouraged to institutionalize the use of local wisdom in curriculum design. Additionally, teachers require ongoing training in the ethical and effective use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for instructional development, particularly in prompt formulation and critical content evaluation. Strengthening collaboration between schools, universities, and local communities will ensure the sustainability and scalability of culturally grounded, technology-supported learning innovations across Indonesian schools.

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