



# Learning community management in strengthening differentiated learning for teachers of Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari, Semarang City

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine learning community management in strengthening differentiated learning for teachers at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari, Semarang City. The background of this research is based on the urgency of improving teachers' pedagogical competence in responding to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in designing and implementing differentiated learning in accordance with students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles. The approach used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that learning community management in the school has been effectively implemented, including careful planning, participatory organization, consistent implementation, and reflective evaluation. Teachers are active in developing differentiated teaching modules, diagnostic assessment, and joint reflection. The learning community contributes significantly to improving teacher competence and transforming learning practices to be more adaptive, equitable, and learner-centered. This study concludes that effective learning community management is a key strategy in implementing differentiated learning and realizing Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools.



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## INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the national education system through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum is a strategic effort to improve the quality of learner-centered learning. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of learning that is differentiation, contextual, and in accordance with the characteristics and learning needs of students. One of the main approaches in the Merdeka Curriculum is differentiated learning, which is the teacher's effort to customize the learning process based on students' learning readiness, interests, and learning profiles (Mastawan et al., 2024). Differentiated learning demands the active role of the teacher as a facilitator who is able to design teaching strategies that are flexible and responsive to the diversity of learners.

However, challenges in the field show that not all teachers have adequate understanding and skills in implementing this approach. A study conducted by Santoso et al., (2024) shows that many teachers still have difficulties in formulating learning objectives, making diagnostic assessments, and developing differentiated teaching modules because they do not fully understand learning outcomes (CP), learning objectives (TP), and the flow of learning objectives (ATP) in the Merdeka Curriculum. To answer these challenges, the government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology encourages the formation of teacher learning communities as a collaborative forum for professional capacity building. The learning community is a forum that allows teachers to share good practices, discuss learning challenges, and reflect together on the teaching process. This community is also integrated in the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM), which is a digital learning media based on teacher needs.

Theoretically, the formation of learning communities stems from the concept of Professional Learning Community (PLC) introduced by Poolkrajang & Papanai (2024), which emphasizes the importance of collaborative work, continuous reflection, and commitment to student learning outcomes. In the school context, learning communities can also be understood as a form of school-based quality improvement management (MPMBS) implementation that focuses on teacher empowerment through a participatory approach and is oriented towards internal capacity building.

Research by Qorib (2024) revealed that systematically managed learning communities can improve teachers' skills in developing and implementing differentiated teaching modules. Meanwhile, Dlamini et al., (2024) confirmed that a clear organizational structure and planned activity management can strengthen the effectiveness of learning communities in improving teachers' pedagogical competence. Keumala et al., (2025) also showed that teachers' participation in learning communities has a positive impact on assessment analysis skills and the development of student needs-based learning.

However, the effectiveness of learning communities is largely determined by their management, from planning, organizing, implementing, to monitoring and evaluating. Unstructured learning community management often leads to low teacher participation, inaccurate focus of activities, and lack of output in the form of teaching tools or learning reflections. Therefore, an empirical study is needed that can describe how the learning community management process is carried out in schools, and the extent to which the community is able to support the implementation of differentiated learning.

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach, which in-depth examines the management of learning communities at the elementary school level, with a specific focus on Tambakrejo 01 Gayamsari Public Elementary School in Semarang City. This research offers a new perspective by systematically analyzing the entire process of learning community management—from planning, organizing, implementing, to evaluating—and its relationship to improving teacher competency in implementing differentiated learning. The approach used not only tests the effectiveness of learning communities as discussion forums but also evaluates their actual impact on the development of teaching modules, diagnostic assessments, and classroom learning practices. Another novel aspect is seen in the analysis of the integration of learning communities with the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) as a digital learning medium, which provides insights into the use of technology in teacher professional development.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine in depth how learning community management is implemented in order to strengthen differentiated learning at SD Negeri Tambakrejo 01 Gayamsari, Semarang City. This research is expected to make theoretical and practical contributions in developing an effective learning community model to improve the quality of Merdeka Curriculum implementation at the elementary school level.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of learning community management in strengthening differentiated learning at Tambakrejo 01 Elementary School, Gayamsari, Semarang City. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, processes, and social dynamics that take place naturally, by producing data in the form of verbal descriptions of observed activities, informant statements, and supporting documents (Putra, 2024). The research was conducted in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, from February to July 2025.

The research subjects consisted of principals and teachers who were actively involved in the learning community at the school. The selection of informants was done purposively, with criteria including active teachers teaching for at least one year, having participated in formal learning communities, and willing to be research participants. Data collection techniques were conducted through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The researcher acted as the main instrument (human instrument), assisted by observation sheets, interview guidelines, and document notes. Observations were made of learning community activities and the application of differentiated teaching modules in the classroom. Interviews were used to gather information about the managerial process, the role of the principal, and the challenges faced by teachers in implementing

differentiated learning. Documentation included a review of teaching modules, learning community activity reports and other administrative documents.

To ensure data validity, triangulation techniques were used, both method triangulation and data source triangulation. In addition, this study applied four criteria of data validity in qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model, which consists of four main stages, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024). The entire analysis process was carried out simultaneously from the beginning of data collection until the data reached the point of saturation. This approach allows researchers to thoroughly describe the dynamics of learning community management in supporting the implementation of differentiated learning in primary schools (Faishal & Ahmadi, 2025).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Results**

#### **1. Learning community management planning**

The results showed that the planning of learning community management at SD Negeri Tambakrejo 01 was carried out through a coordination forum between the principal and teachers. This process begins with an analysis of teachers' learning needs, especially in understanding differentiated learning and preparing teaching modules according to CP-TP-ATP (Kusumardi, 2024). The learning community work plan document presents a monthly agenda that includes themes, resource persons and implementation methods. These activities are designed as part of strengthening the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

#### **2. Organizing the Learning Community**

Organizing is carried out by forming a learning community team structure consisting of a coordinator, facilitator, notetaker, and documentation. Each member has a clear task and is evaluated regularly (Sugesti, 2025). The coordinator's duties include organizing the schedule of activities, facilitating discussions, and bridging communication with the school principal. The facilitator is in charge of directing the learning process among teachers. The learning community organizational structure document shows a proportional and participatory division of roles.

#### **3. Implementation of Learning Community Activities**

The implementation of activities is carried out three times a week, including small group discussions, training in making differentiated teaching modules, reflection on learning practices, and reviewing diagnostic assessments. Teachers are actively involved in the process. Observations showed that teachers' enthusiasm increased from meeting to meeting, especially after seeing concrete results in the form of teaching modules used in the classroom. Activities are carried out face-to-face and utilize sources from the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM).

#### **4. Evaluation and Supervision**

Evaluation of activities is carried out by the principal regularly through weekly reflections and written reports from each learning community session. In addition, the evaluation also touches on aspects of the products produced by teachers, such as the quality of teaching modules and assessment designs. Formative evaluation is used as feedback to improve the effectiveness of subsequent activities (Rangkuti & Albina, 2025). Supervision is done with a collaborative approach, not an instructive one, so that teachers feel comfortable and motivated.

#### **5. Impact on Teacher Competence in Differentiated Learning**

The impact of learning community activities is significant in improving teachers' competencies (Harlita & Ramadan, 2024). Teachers have a better understanding of the structure of CP, TP, ATP, and are more skillful in developing teaching modules that are in accordance with the characteristics and learning needs of students. Teachers' ability to develop diagnostic assessments has also improved. Interviews show that most teachers feel more confident in implementing differentiated learning after consistently participating in the learning community.

## Discussion

The findings of this study show that well-designed learning community management can be an effective strategy in strengthening differentiated learning. Systematic planning at SD Negeri Tambakrejo 01 is in line with the concept of Professional Learning Community (PLC) which emphasizes the importance of common goals, collaboration, and continuous learning (Khusna & Priyanti, 2023). Research by Alhapip et al., (2024) also supports that teacher needs-based planning is the foundation for the success of learning communities in the Merdeka Curriculum A clear organizational structure in the learning community allows for a high distribution of roles and accountability. This is in line with the findings of Yu & Chao (2023), which state that a strong community structure increases the effectiveness of professional discussions and teacher productivity in producing teaching tools The combo at SD Tambakrejo 01 also emphasizes collaboration between members, which is proven to improve the quality of professional interactions.

The implementation of regular learning community activities focused on differentiated learning practices encourages the improvement of teachers' pedagogical skills. The peer coaching approach and reflective practice used proved effective in improving teachers' skills, as also stated by Oktavia (2024) in the context of training for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum Continuous evaluation in a learning community is an important mechanism to ensure quality improvement. Academic supervision carried out by the principal in a participatory manner is in accordance with the concept of educational quality management which emphasizes the role of formative evaluation in teacher professional development (Laia et al., 2025). Research by Setiningsih & Fitriyah (2024) states that the evaluation of teacher community activities has a direct impact on improving the quality of student learning outcomes.

The real impact of learning community activities is an increase in teachers' understanding and skills in implementing differentiated learning (Fatimah et al., 2025). This shows that the learning community is not only a discussion forum, but also an agent of professional change for teachers. Research by Saragih et al., (2024) confirms that a well-managed learning community will improve teacher competence in the preparation of teaching modules and assessments that are in accordance with learner profiles.

The pedagogical skills developed among teachers as a result of learning communities encompass various aspects that significantly improve the quality of teaching (Haryono et al., 2025). First, teachers become more skilled at designing teaching modules tailored to students' needs and characteristics. Through discussion and collaboration within learning communities, teachers can share effective ideas and strategies, enabling them to create more relevant and engaging learning materials for students. Second, skills in conducting diagnostic assessments also improve. Teachers learn to develop more diverse and inclusive assessment tools, enabling them to more accurately identify students' learning needs. With a better understanding of students' learning profiles, teachers can tailor their teaching approaches to meet different learning styles and ability levels. Third, learning communities encourage teachers to adopt more innovative and responsive teaching methods. Through reflective practice and peer feedback, teachers can explore various teaching strategies, including the use of technology in learning, which can increase student engagement. This also creates a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. Fourth, teachers' collaborative skills also develop, as they learn to work together as a team, share responsibilities, and support each other in professional development. This collaboration not only enhances individual skills but also strengthens the learning community as a whole, creating a culture of continuous learning.

Overall, the pedagogical skills developed among teachers as a result of learning communities not only enhance their teaching abilities but also contribute to improving the quality of learning, making it more differentiated and adaptive, thus meeting the needs of all students more effectively. These results and discussions demonstrate that strengthening learning community management directly contributes to the implementation of the Independent Curriculum, particularly in terms of differentiated learning. With careful planning, participatory organization, reflective implementation, and ongoing evaluation, learning communities can become strategic spaces for developing teacher professionalism at the elementary education level.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the management of learning communities in SD Negeri Tambakrejo 01 Gayamsari, Semarang City has been effectively implemented in supporting the strengthening of differentiated learning. In the planning aspect, learning community activities are systematically designed through the stages of needs identification, problem analysis, target setting, and program formulation along with budgeting. This planning is not only administrative, but also responsive to the real needs of teachers in the field, so that differentiated learning strategies can really be implemented in a meaningful way. On the organizing aspect, the learning community shows a clear and collaborative division of roles, actively involving teachers, principals and supervisors. The organizational structure allows for regular coordination and periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of members' roles and involvement, ultimately creating a learning ecosystem that is adaptive and responsive to students' needs. In its implementation, the learning community is not only a discussion forum, but develops into a professional learning space that includes directing activities, providing motivation, developing programs, and monitoring implementation. Teachers are encouraged to actively reflect, share good practices, and develop teaching modules and differentiated assessments based on the results of discussions and mentoring. Supervision of the learning community is carried out in a planned and quality improvement-oriented manner. Evaluation of activities is carried out using clear benchmarks, accompanied by a concrete follow-up process, so that learning community activities do not stagnate, but continue to develop dynamically. The principal's commitment to conducting constructive academic supervision is an important factor in ensuring the sustainability and success of differentiated learning implementation. Overall, learning community management in this school has acted as a driving force for the transformation of differentiated learning. Learning community activities are no longer a formality routine, but have become a professional tool that has a direct impact on improving teacher competence and the quality of learning that is more equitable, adaptive and meaningful for all learners.

This study has several limitations, including the limited number of respondents and the focus on only one school, namely Tambakrejo 01 Public Elementary School. This may affect the generalizability of the research results, so they may not fully reflect conditions in other schools or the broader context. Furthermore, this study did not explore the long-term impact of learning community management on student learning outcomes, which is a crucial aspect in assessing the effectiveness of differentiated learning. It is recommended that future research involve more schools with diverse backgrounds to gain a more comprehensive perspective. Research could also explore more in-depth evaluation methods to measure the long-term impact of differentiated learning on student achievement. Furthermore, it is important to continue developing training programs for teachers so they are better prepared to implement effective differentiated learning. Developing a network of learning communities between schools can also be a strategic step to share good practices and experiences in implementing differentiated learning.

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