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DEEP LEARNING-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL ADMINISTRATION MANAGEMENT BY PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS IN THE *MERDEKA CURRICULUM* AT SMK NEGERI 1 TEMBILAHAN

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Abstract

Implementing deep learning in the Merdeka Curriculum requires teachers to design teaching modules that go beyond format completeness and embed mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. Pre-service teachers, however, must prepare these documents within fixed formats while still developing their pedagogical judgement. Earlier studies of English teaching practicums have focused mainly on teaching strategies and general barriers, whereas the quality of the instructional documents that pre-service teachers prepare, and the mentoring that shapes them, has received little attention. This study aims to examine how pre-service English teachers integrate deep learning principles into their teaching modules, what challenges they face, and how mentor teachers and a university supervisor support them. This study employed a qualitative case study involving three pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum (PPL) at SMK Negeri 1 Tembilahan from September to December 2026. Data were collected through classroom observations, analysis of teaching modules using a scoring rubric, and semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers, mentor teachers, and the university supervisor, and were analyzed thematically with source and technique triangulation. All participants produced teaching modules with complete format components, yet only two of three (66.7%) showed strong integration of deep learning principles, while one (33.3%) remained limited to format compliance. Three challenges emerged: operationalizing the principles in a standardized format, designing assessments, and time pressure from administrative workload. Structured mentoring was associated with higher-quality modules, although the design does not support causal claims. The study concludes that format completeness is not a sufficient indicator of pedagogical quality. Scheduled coordination between mentor teachers and university supervisors, based on a shared rubric, is recommended to strengthen pre-service teachers' capacity.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of deep learning rests on a long-standing distinction between approaches to study that seek meaning and approaches that stop at surface-level memorisation (Marton & Säljö, 1976). In the discourse on pedagogical reform, Fullan and Langworthy (2014) describe deep learning as the outcome of new

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learning partnerships among students, teachers, and technology that enable students to discover and master knowledge that matters to their lives. In Indonesia, the idea is translated within the Merdeka Curriculum into three mutually reinforcing principles: mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning. Teachers are therefore expected to design experiences that build understanding, connect content to real situations, and foster positive learning experiences.

These principles can only materialize in the classroom if they are written into the document's teachers use every day. Instructional administration under the Merdeka Curriculum, which covers the teaching module (Modul Ajar), the annual program (Prota), the semester program (Promes), assessment instruments, and teaching records, thus works as an operational framework rather than a set of compliance files. For pre-service teachers, this framework is the first place where pedagogical ideas are tested against school realities. Among these documents, the teaching module is where the three principles are most directly operationalised, because it specifies objectives, learning activities, media, assessment, and reflection; it is therefore the focus of this study.

Pre-service teachers on a teaching practicum (*Praktik Pengalaman Lapangan,* PPL) are in a vulnerable position. They move from theoretical knowledge gained in coursework to practice that demands quick decisions, while the documents they must produce follow a fixed format. Prior work on the practicum of English education students has mapped barriers in program implementation (Surayawati et al., 2025), the challenges and possibilities of applying a deep learning approach in junior high school English learning (Olii et al., 2025), the use of deep learning strategies through the TPACK framework during teaching practice (Al-Karim et al., 2026), and the implementation of a deep learning curriculum in English teaching at a vocational school (Indahtriyani, 2026). These studies show that the topic is gaining attention, but their emphasis lies mainly on teaching strategies and general barriers rather than on the quality of the administrative documents that pre-service teachers prepare.

Evidence from Indragiri Hilir suggests that capacity in instructional documents and assessment is a real concern. The pedagogical competence of

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English teachers at SMPN 2 Tembilahan Hulu was recorded at 73.73%, in the good category (Ahmad & Iratna, 2018), but that study did not trace how pre-service teachers develop such competence. Teachers' beliefs about formative assessment are also varied (Salmiati et al., 2023), and strengthening competence through performance-based assessment increased understanding of assessment concepts by 87%, assessment practice skills by 82%, and motivation for self-development by 91% (Ahmad et al., 2025).

A gap therefore remains: to the authors' knowledge, few studies have specifically examined how pre-service English teachers integrate deep learning principles into the teaching modules they prepare in a vocational school context. This study addresses that gap through three research questions: (1) How do pre-service English teachers integrate deep learning principles into their teaching modules? (2) What challenges do they face in doing so? (3) How do mentor teachers and the university supervisor support the development of this competence? The expected contribution is an empirical account of the distance between format compliance and depth of pedagogical integration, together with a basis for designing more coordinated practicum mentoring.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deep Learning in the Merdeka Curriculum

Deep learning is understood as an approach that encourages students to construct knowledge actively, link it to authentic experience, think critically, collaborate, and reflect on the meaning of learning (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014). Findings from the science of learning likewise show that development is optimal when learning is socially, emotionally, and cognitively meaningful (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). The three Indonesian principles, mindful, meaningful, and joyful, can be read as a translation of these ideas into classroom practice. Mindful emphasizes students' awareness of their goals and learning processes, meaningful emphasizes connection to life contexts, and joyful emphasizes a learning atmosphere that fosters engagement.

Instructional Administration and Assessment

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Instructional administration comprises the teaching module, annual and semester programs, and a sequence of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments. The quality of these documents determines whether a teaching plan can be defended pedagogically. In language education, principles of materials development call for opportunities to experience meaningful language use that also engages affect (Tomlinson, 2011), so module writing cannot be reduced to filling in columns. On assessment, a classic review shows that well-designed formative assessment can raise achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998), while in this region teachers' beliefs about formative assessment remain varied (Salmiati et al., 2023).

Earlier local studies report mentoring as a leverage factor. Training in preparing semester lesson plans (RPS) improved lecturers' ability to produce standard-compliant documents (Syafrizal & Ahmad, 2021), and the shift from traditional assessment to a more comprehensive evaluation system requires sustained mentoring and supporting infrastructure (Ahmad et al., 2025). Both bodies of evidence come from lecturers and education staff, so their application to pre-service teachers is analogical and needs testing.

Pre-Service Teachers and Mentoring

The practicum is a space where content knowledge, pedagogy, and context meet in teaching decisions (Shulman, 1987). Studies of the practicum have identified barriers among English education students in their later semesters (Surayawati et al., 2025), and the quality of mentoring depends on coordination between mentor teachers and university supervisors. When the two mentors work separately, feedback on students' documents may be inconsistent.

Conceptual Framework

This study positions deep learning principles and the Merdeka Curriculum as demands that pre-service teachers translate into instructional documents, with mentoring by mentor teachers and the university supervisor as a factor that shapes this process. The outputs analyzed are the level of deep learning integration in teaching modules and the challenges that emerge (Figure 1).

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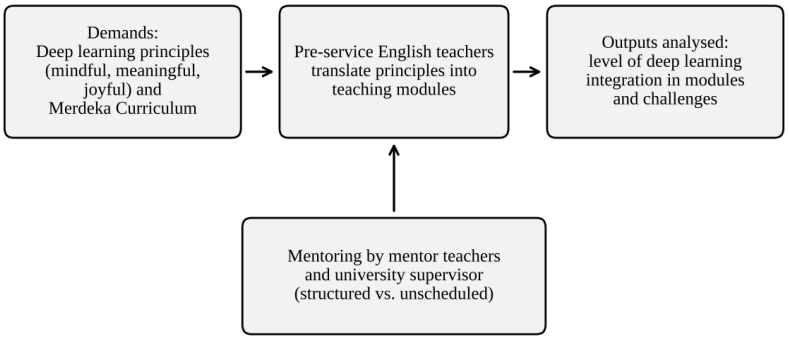


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of The Study

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative case study design because it sought to understand a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context with clear case boundaries (Yin, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case was limited to pre-service teachers of the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Islam Indragiri, who were placed at SMK Negeri 1 Tembilahan during the teaching practicum (PPL) from September to December 2026. The interviews reported in this article were conducted in October 2026.

Participants were three pre-service teachers of the English Education Study Program, selected purposively because all of them completed the practicum at the same school during the same period. Their identities were anonymized as P1 to P3, and these codes are used consistently throughout this article. Each participant was accompanied by one mentor teacher from the school, so three mentor teachers (coded MT1 to MT3) were involved. All three participants were supervised by one university supervisor of the English Education Study Program (*Dosen Pembimbing Lapangan*, DPL; coded DPL1), who is also the first author of this article. In total, seven people were involved in the practicum mentoring: three participants, three mentor teachers, and one supervisor. Because the first author was both a supervisor and a researcher, the supervisor's account is treated as one perspective among several rather than as an independent observation. It was compared with the accounts of the mentor teachers and the participants and with

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the modules themselves, and the modules were also scored independently by a second author.

Table 1: Data Sources, Techniques, And Focus of Data Collection

Technique	Source/Object	Focus
Classroom observation	Teaching activities of three pre-service teachers: 2 observations per participant (6 in total), each lasting 45 minutes	Alignment between implementation and plan; indications of mindful, meaningful, and joyful principles
Document analysis	Teaching modules of three pre-service teachers: 2 modules per participant (6 in total)	Format completeness and depth of deep learning integration based on the rubric (Tables 2 and 3)
Semi-structured interviews	Three pre-service teachers, three mentor teachers, and one university supervisor (7 interviews in total); each lasting 30–45 minutes	Experience preparing documents, challenges, and forms of guidance received

Source: Research design (2026).

Data collection proceeded in three stages. First, two classroom observations were conducted for each participant (six observations in total), each lasting 45 minutes, using an observation guide that recorded whether the planned activities were enacted and whether indications of the three principals were visible. Second, two teaching modules per participant (six modules in total) were collected for analysis. Third, semi-structured interviews were held with the three participants, the three mentor teachers, and the university supervisor; each interview lasted 30–45 minutes, and the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian, and the excerpts quoted in this article were translated into English by the authors.

Document analysis was guided by a rubric derived from the principles of deep learning and the components of the teaching module. The rubric assessed five aspects using three categories: strong, adequate, and limited (Table 2). The rubric was reviewed by two English education lecturers before use.

Table 2: Rubric for Analyzing Teaching Modules

Aspects	Indicators	Example of evidence in documents
Format completeness	All components of the teaching module are filled in as required	Objectives, activities, media, assessment, reflection

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Aspects	Indicators	Example of evidence in documents
Mindful	Students are guided to be aware of goals and learning processes	Trigger questions, learning goal statements for students, self-reflection
Meaningful	Content is linked to the vocational context and real life	Tasks based on workplace or authentic communication situations
Joyful	Activities elicit engagement and a positive atmosphere	Variety of collaborative activities and language games
Assessment quality	Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments align with objectives	Assessment criteria, feedback, and follow-up

Note: Format completeness was treated as a prerequisite checklist; the other four aspects were scored using the descriptors in Table 3.

Table 3 sets out the indicators for each performance level. Format completeness was treated as a prerequisite: a module was considered complete when all required components (objectives, activities, media, assessment, and reflection) were filled in. The four remaining aspects (mindful, meaningful, joyful, and assessment quality) were each scored from 1 (limited) to 3 (strong), giving a total score between 4 and 12.

Table 3: Scoring Descriptors for Each Performance Level

Aspect	Strong (score 3)	Adequate (score 2)	Limited (score 1)
Mindful	Objectives are student-oriented and name the expected thinking process; activities include explicit goal sharing and reflection prompts	Objectives are specific, but goal-awareness or reflection activities are occasional or generic	Objectives are vague or content-only; no activity builds awareness of goals or learning process
Meaningful	Tasks are anchored in vocational or local contexts and require authentic language use	Context is mentioned, but tasks remain largely textbook-based	Topic is named without any link to students' context
Joyful	A variety of collaborative and interactive activities and media are planned across the lesson phases	Some interactive activities are planned, but variety is limited or confined to one phase	Teacher-centered activities of a single type; no engagement strategy
Assessment quality	Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments align with objectives, with explicit criteria, feedback, and follow-up	Assessments are present and mostly aligned, but criteria or follow-up are incomplete	Assessments are generic, not aligned with objectives, and lack criteria or follow-up

Source: Research design (2026).

The final category was determined from the total score and the profile of aspect scores. A module was categorized as strong when its total score was 10 to

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12 and no aspect scored 1, and as limited when its total score was 4 to 6, that is, when it met format completeness but the principles appeared mainly as terms rather than as planned actions. All other profiles (total scores of 7 to 9, or higher totals with one aspect scored 1) were categorized as adequate. Each module was scored independently by the first and second authors, and disagreements were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Interrater agreement was calculated using Cohen's kappa, yielding a value of 0.81, indicating strong agreement.

Data were analyzed through six-phase thematic analysis: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reduction, display, and conclusion drawing followed the interactive model of qualitative data analysis (Miles et al., 2014). Credibility was maintained through technique and source triangulation, while transferability and dependability were supported by detailed contextual description and an audit trail of the analytic process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants gave written informed consent, and all data were anonymized. Interview excerpts are labelled with informant codes (P1 to P3 for pre-service teachers, MT1 to MT3 for mentor teachers, and DPL1 for the university supervisor).

Triangulation was carried out in three steps. First, observation notes were compared with the activities planned in each module to check whether the principles written in the document were enacted in the classroom. Second, interview statements from the pre-service teachers were compared with the content of their modules to verify the difficulties they reported. Third, statements from mentor teachers and the university supervisor were compared with the participants' accounts and with the modules to examine the mentoring received. A finding was retained when it was supported by at least two sources, and discrepancies between sources were recorded and discussed.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Deep Learning Integration in Teaching Modules

Document analysis showed that all three participants produced teaching modules with complete format components. The difference lay in the depth of deep learning integration. Two of three participants (66.7%) were categorized as strong, whereas one (33.3%) remained limited to format compliance. No module fell into the adequate category (Figure 2 and Table 4). Document completeness therefore cannot be used as a sole indicator of pedagogical quality.

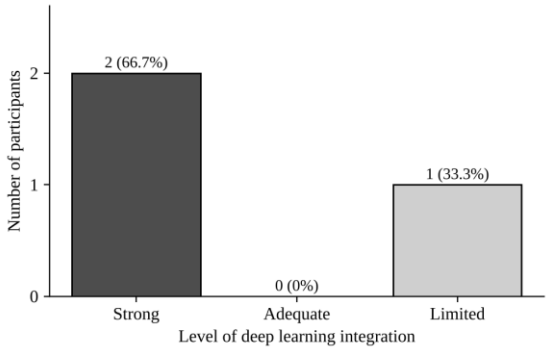


Figure 2: Distribution of Deep Learning Integration Levels in Participants' Documents (n = 3)

Table 4 shows the category assigned to each participant, together with the total rubric score and the mentoring pattern received (see Section 4.3). The grouping reflects the quality of the module each participant produced, as scored with the rubric in Tables 2 and 3; it is not a prior measurement of individual ability. Background indicators, such as micro-teaching scores or GPA, were not formally collected or compared between the two groups; therefore, no claims are made regarding prior ability differences.

Table 4: Participant Codes, Document-Quality Category, and Mentoring Pattern

Participant	Category (rubric)	Total score (4–12)	Mentoring pattern received
P1	Strong	11	Structured
P2	Limited	5	Unscheduled
P3	Strong	10	Structured

Source: Analysis of research data (2026). Two participants (P1 and P3) were categorised as strong and one (P2) as limited.

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To clarify the difference between the two groups, the learning objectives are compared first. In the strong category, P1 formulated an objective that explicitly integrated critical thinking and real-life context: "Students will be able to analyse local environmental issues and propose evidence-based solutions collaboratively." In contrast, P2, a participant in the limited category, wrote a vague and content-only objective: "Students will understand the material about the environment." Objectives alone, however, cannot represent the quality of an entire document. Table 5 therefore compares further components of the strong and limited modules.

Table 5: Comparison of Module Components Between Strong and Limited Documents

Component (principle)	Strong module (P1)	Limited module (P2)
Learning objectives (mindful)	"Students will be able to analyse local environmental issues and propose evidence-based solutions collaboratively." (P1)	"Students will understand the material about the environment." (P2)
Learning activities (meaningful, joyful)	"In groups of four, students investigate a local waste-management problem at the school workshop, interview a technician, and present a solution poster using English." (P1)	"Students read a text about the environment and answer comprehension questions individually." (P2)
Media and resources (joyful)	"Authentic waste-management report from the school, interview guide, poster paper, and a gallery-walk session." (P1)	"Textbook passage and worksheet." (P2)
Assessment (assessment quality)	"Formative checklist with three criteria (content accuracy, collaboration, language use); peer feedback session; follow-up task for students scoring below criteria." (P1)	"Five multiple-choice questions at the end of the lesson; no rubric or follow-up." (P2)
Reflection (mindful)	"Students complete a 'two stars and a wish' reflection on their group's solution and on their own contribution." (P1)	"Teacher asks, 'Do you understand?' at the end of class." (P2)

Source: Analysis of research data (2026).

As Table 5 shows, the difference between the two groups extends beyond the objectives. In the strong modules, the principles were translated into concrete planned actions across components. For instance, P1 designed a group investigation activity in which students interviewed a school technician about waste management, presented a poster, and took part in a gallery walk

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(meaningful and joyful). The assessment task included a three-criterion formative checklist with peer feedback and a follow-up task (assessment quality). In the limited module, the same components were present but described generic, teacher-led tasks. For example, P2 planned a lesson in which students read a textbook passage and answered five multiple-choice questions individually, with no rubric, no collaborative activity, and no reflection prompt. The contrast indicates that a complete format can hold very different levels of pedagogical thinking. Table 6 summarizes the findings for each research question.

Table 6: Summary of Findings by Research Question

Research Question	Main Finding	Data Source
RQ1: Integration of deep learning principles in teaching modules	All participants produced complete teaching modules; 2 showed strong integration, 1 was limited to format compliance	Document analysis, observation
RQ2: Challenges	Operationalising principles in a standardised format; assessment design; time limits from administrative workload	Interviews, documents
RQ3: Support from mentor teachers and supervisor	Structured guidance was associated with higher-quality modules (association only); quality of support varied	Interviews, documents

Source: Analysis of research data (2026).

Challenges in Integrating Deep Learning Principles into Teaching Modules

Three main challenges emerged from the analysis (Table 7). First, participants found it hard to translate the mindful, meaningful, and joyful principles into the fixed teaching module format, so the principles tended to remain as terms. As P3 explained:

> "I understand the concepts of mindful, meaningful, and joyful, but when I wrote the module, I was confused about which column to put them in. In the end I only wrote the terms in the learning objectives, while the classroom activities stayed as usual. The format is complete, but I feel the content is not really different." (P3, interview)

A similar difficulty was expressed by P2, who noted:

> "In the module template the columns are already provided. But sometimes I am not sure whether the activity I write is really 'joyful' or whether it is just because I wrote 'students discuss'. In fact the discussion was short and for the rest I lectured." (P2, interview)

Second, participants had difficulty designing assessments consistent with deep learning objectives. MT2, the mentor teacher of P2, confirmed this during

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the interview:

> "When I checked the module, the assessment was still ordinary multiple-choice questions. I asked, 'What are the criteria?' and the answer was confused. So indeed the understanding of formative assessment is still lacking." (MT2, interview)

Third, administrative workload consumed time that should have been spent thinking through classroom activity design. P1 (strong category) shared a contrasting experience of how this pressure was managed:

> "I was stressed because I had to fill in a lot of administrative documents, but my mentor teacher (MT1) said, 'Focus on the module first, the rest can follow along the way.' So I could concentrate more on designing activities that truly involve the students." (P1, interview)

Table 7: Challenges, Their Manifestation, And Implications for Mentoring

Challenge	Manifestation in the data	Implications for mentoring
Operationalising principles in a fixed format	Principles are mentioned but not yet visible in activity design	Annotated sample modules and workshops on translating principles
Assessment design	Assessment not fully aligned with learning objectives and principles	Assessment item bank and joint review sessions with mentor teachers
Administrative burden and time	Document preparation competes with lesson preparation	Concise templates and an agreed priority of documents

Source: Analysis of research data (2026); the implications column is the researchers' interpretation.

Mentoring Support from Mentor Teachers and the Supervisor

Mentoring was provided by two groups of informants and followed a cycle of design, implementation, observation, and reflection. Mentor teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Tembilahan, one for each participant, gave daily guidance on practical and administrative matters, namely the teaching module, classroom management, and administrative records. The university supervisor (DPL1), who supervised all three participants, gave academic and reflective guidance through supervision visits and feedback on the documents. The mentoring design also planned weekly coordination between mentor teachers and the supervisor. Two mentoring patterns were identified (Table 4). Mentoring was classified as structured when guidance was scheduled in advance and focused on specific components of the module, and as unscheduled when guidance occurred only on request or incidentally. In practice, structured mentoring followed the planned weekly coordination for P1

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and P3 and covered objectives, learning activities, and assessment design, whereas unscheduled mentoring took place only twice, on request, for P2.

> MT1, the mentor teacher of P1, described the structured mentoring process:
> "Every Friday we evaluate next week's module. I ask P1 to bring a draft, and then we discuss whether the learning objectives are operational, whether the activities encourage critical thinking, and whether the assessment has a rubric. If not, we revise together on the spot." (MT1, interview)

The quality of modules differed between the two patterns. Participants who received structured guidance produced higher-quality documents than the participant whose guidance was unscheduled. For example, P1, who received structured mentoring, revised the assessment criteria from a generic checklist to a three-criterion formative checklist (content accuracy, collaboration, and language use) after feedback from the mentor teacher and the supervisor. In contrast, the module of P2, whose mentoring was unscheduled, retained a simple multiple-choice assessment without any follow-up or alignment to the learning objectives. The university supervisor explained the inconsistency:

> "The mentor teachers and I had actually agreed on weekly coordination, but the school schedule often clashed. When coordination ran, we could discuss the module specifically, for example the assessment criteria or activities that really push students to think. When it was not scheduled, our feedback became separate and sometimes out of sync." (DPL1, interview)
> DPL1 also specifically noted the case of P2:
> "P2 is actually diligent, but because we rarely met, my feedback on the module was only through chat and not in depth. In the end P2 repeated the same pattern from the previous module." (DPL1, interview)
> P3 (strong category) confirmed the benefit of the structured pattern:
> "When there is a clear consultation schedule, I know what to fix. For example, DPL1 said, 'Don't write "understand" in the objective, write "analyse".' That helped a lot." (P3, interview)

These patterns should be read as an association rather than as evidence that mentoring caused the differences. The study did not control for participants' prior competence, the number of participants in each mentoring pattern is very small, and other factors, such as workload or class characteristics, may also have contributed. Nevertheless, the interview accounts suggest that differences in document quality do not stem solely from individual ability, but may also reflect the mentoring conditions participants experienced.

The finding that all documents were complete, yet one of the three remained

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limited to format compliance, indicates that administrative compliance and principal integration are separate matters. This pattern supports the view that implementing deep learning requires a change in how teachers design, not merely the addition of terms to documents (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014). When the format is fixed, pre-service teachers may fall back on the safe strategy of filling in columns, because translating principles demands pedagogical judgement they have not yet developed. This aligns with the notion that pedagogical knowledge is formed through decision-making in practice (Shulman, 1987).

The three principles appeared in different ways in the participants' documents. Mindful learning was visible only where the module made the expected thinking explicit to students. The objective of P1 (strong) names the cognitive operations students are to perform (analysing and proposing solutions), which gives learners a clear target against which to monitor their own progress (Table 5). An objective phrased as "understand the material", by contrast, tells students neither what to do nor how to check their understanding, and it invites the surface orientation that Marton and Säljö (1976) distinguished from a meaning-seeking approach. In the limited module, mindfulness therefore remained a term rather than a design feature, which corresponds to the first challenge reported in Section 4.2. This is further supported by the reflection prompts: the strong module included a "two stars and a wish" activity, which requires students to monitor their own contribution and their group's solution, whereas the limited module ended with the question "Do you understand?" (Table 5). In the interview, P1 stated:

> "I deliberately asked students to write reflections because otherwise they are not aware of what they have learned." (P1, interview)

Meaningful learning followed a similar pattern. The objective of P1 (strong) ties the topic to local environmental issues that students can investigate, so that language use serves an authentic purpose, a condition emphasised in materials development (Tomlinson, 2011) and in research on the science of learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). In the limited module of P2, the topic area (the environment) was named but not connected to students' vocational context or community, so the content stayed generic. In contrast, P1 anchored the task in an

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authentic school and workplace scenario by asking students to investigate the school's waste-management problem and interview a technician (Table 5). P1 explained:

> "I chose the waste topic because it is a real problem at school. Students then have a reason to communicate in English, not just do exercises." (P1, interview)

This suggests that a relevant topic does not by itself make learning meaningful; the link must be built into the tasks students perform.

The joyful principle was the hardest to judge from documents alone, because engagement is realized mainly in classroom interaction. Document evidence was limited to the variety of planned activities and media: the strong modules included collaborative group investigations, a gallery walk, and poster presentations, whereas the limited module relied on individual reading and answering comprehension questions. Observation data were used to check whether these plans were enacted: the observed lessons for P1 and P3 confirmed that the planned collaborative activities were implemented, with students actively engaged in group discussions and presentations, while the observed lessons for P2 followed a teacher-centred pattern with minimal student interaction. P2 admitted in the interview:

> "I actually wanted to make group activities, but I was afraid there would not be enough time. So I chose to just lecture." (P2, interview)

This is consistent with the view of deep learning as arising from partnerships between students and teachers rather than from labels attached to activities (Fullan & Langworthy, 2014). Taken together, meaningful learning was the most evident principle across the documents, while joyful learning was the least evident from document analysis alone and required observational confirmation.

Difficulty in assessment design is consistent with evidence that teachers' beliefs and capacity regarding formative assessment remain varied (Salmiati et al., 2023), and with the review that places formative assessment as a key element of improved learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). In this study, P3 admitted:

> "All I knew about assessment was tests or questions at the end. As for rubrics and feedback, I have never made them." (P3, interview)

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Because assessment misaligned with objectives weakens the meaningful and mindful principles, weakness in this component can lower the quality of the whole document.

The role of mentoring is addressed in the third finding, although the evidence shows an association rather than a causal effect. Evidence from RPS-writing training for lecturers (Syafrizal & Ahmad, 2021) and from strengthening performance-based assessment for education staff (Ahmad et al., 2025) shows that documents and assessment practice improve when targeted mentoring is available. This study extends that pattern to pre-service teachers, with the caveat that the comparison is analogical because populations and designs differ (Figure 3). The indicators in Figure 3 are presented as local context references, not as direct comparators for the qualitative findings of this study. The university supervisor reflected:

> "If we (the supervisor and the mentor teachers) are not on the same frequency, the pre-service teachers are the ones who get confused. Sometimes a mentor teacher says 'the module is already good', but I see the assessment is still weak. This is what we must improve going forward." (DPL1, interview)

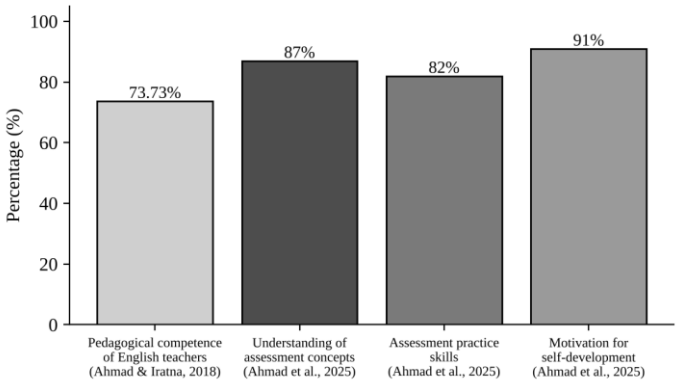


Figure 3: Achievement Indicators from Earlier Studies in Indragiri Hilir and Universitas Islam Indragiri

Student engagement shaped by instructional design, as reported in the online learning context (Ahmad et al., 2021), gives an additional reason why document quality matters: a meaningful design is more likely to yield a better learning experience. However, this study did not measure student engagement, so that link remains to be demonstrated. Table 8 positions this study relative to the earlier

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work discussed above.

Table 8: Positioning of This Study Relative to Earlier Studies

Earlier studies	Focus	Contribution of this study
Surayawati et al. (2025); Olii et al. (2025)	Practicum barriers; challenges of applying deep learning in English learning	Shifts attention to the quality of teaching modules
Al-Karim et al. (2026); Indahtriyani (2026)	Deep learning strategies and implementation in teaching practice and vocational school curriculum	Examines the teaching modules that serve as the operational framework of these principles
Ahmad & Iratna (2018); Salmiati et al. (2023)	Teachers' pedagogical competence and assessment beliefs	Traces how competence is formed in pre-service teachers
Syafrizal & Ahmad (2021); Ahmad et al. (2025)	Mentoring in document and assessment preparation	Tests the relevance of mentoring for practicum students

Source: Authors' synthesis of the literature cited.

Practically, the findings point to scheduled mentor coordination using a shared rubric (for example, the rubric in Tables 2 and 3), annotated sample modules, and concise templates to reduce administrative burden. Theoretically, the study suggests that format completeness and pedagogical depth should be assessed as two separate dimensions.

CONCLUSION

Pre-service English teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Tembilahan were able to complete teaching modules fully, but the integration of deep learning principles varied: two of the three participants were strong and one was limited to format compliance. The main challenges were operationalizing the principles in a fixed format, assessment design, and time limits. Structured guidance from mentor teachers and the university supervisor was associated with better document quality, although this association should not be read as causal; coordination between the two groups of mentors nevertheless needs strengthening.

The study is limited by a small number of participants, a single school, a short practicum period (September to December 2026), and the analysis of teaching modules only; annual and semester programs and assessment instruments were not analyzed as separate documents. The first author's dual role as

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supervisor and researcher is a further limitation. The findings on mentoring also indicate association rather than causation, and they are not intended for statistical generalization. Future research could broaden participants across study programs and schools, analyses the full set of instructional documents, measure effects on student engagement, and test a collaborative mentoring model through action research or a quasi-experimental design.

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