

TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION CURRICULUM MERDEKA BY EFL TEACHERS' IN MTS N 1 LUBUKLINGGAU

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Abstract

The research aims to find out what challenges are faced by English teachers at MTs N 1 Lubuklinggau to implement the Merdeka Curriculum in learning activities. This study used an interview as the instrumentation. Techniques for gathering data include observation, literature review, and interviewing and analysing the data using descriptive qualitative methods. Research findings reveal what challenges teachers face, namely challenges in developing teaching modules, implementing Merdeka Curriculum, using media, classroom management, learning assessment, and Merdeka Curriculum training. Through this research, it is hoped that the findings can help English teachers cover the challenges in implementing the Curriculum Merdeka.

Keywords: *Classroom Management, Learning Assessment, Merdeka Curriculum, Teacher Challenges, Training and Development*

I. INTRODUCTION

The educational system in Indonesia has had significant transformations over the years, with the curriculum playing a central role in shaping the nation's academic and developmental objectives. The Indonesian curriculum has evolved to meet the diverse needs of its student population, reflecting changes in educational philosophy, economic demands, and global trends. Historically, the curriculum has transitioned from a rigid, teacher-centered approach to more dynamic, student-centered models, aiming to foster critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. Curriculum development in Indonesia occurs to recover and improve the quality of education in Indonesia by developing advanced science and technology. This statement is supported by an article that explains that the curriculum in Indonesia has an important aspect in creating and planning education as a set of systems about the goals/objectives. (wahyuni,2016)

Then, implementing a new curriculum, such as the Merdeka Curriculum, poses numerous problems and challenges for teachers. These issues span various aspects of their professional duties and impact their ability to teach and foster student learning effectively. Teachers accustomed to traditional, lecture-based methods may struggle to adopt student-centered, flexible teaching strategies. Many schools lack the necessary resources, such as up-to-date textbooks, teaching materials, and technological tools, to support the new curriculum. Teachers must find innovative ways to deliver the curriculum effectively despite these limitations, often relying on their creativity and personal investment (Gea, 2024). Teachers

and government (Noroniyah, A.2023) play an active role in the successful implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka as a new curriculum system in Indonesia. In the future, the teachers who teach using Curriculum Merdeka will face many challenges in implementing Curriculum Merdeka.

The implementation of the "Curriculum Merdeka" by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers at MTsN 1 Lubuklinggau presents several significant challenges. This curriculum also faces development technology in the era of revolution industry 4.0. (Fitria,S.,&Tiarina,Y. 2023) designed to foster greater flexibility and student-centered learning, requires substantial adjustments in both teaching methodologies and institutional support structures. EFL teachers at MTsN 1 Lubuklinggau, in particular, face the dual task of aligning their language instruction with the new curriculum's broader educational goals while also navigating the specific contextual challenges of their school environment. These include limited resources, varying levels of student proficiency, and the need for continuous professional development to stay abreast of innovative pedagogical strategies. Consequently, the successful implementation of Curriculum Merdeka demands a concerted effort to address these hurdles, ensuring that both teachers and students can fully benefit from the intended educational reforms.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Merdeka Curriculum represents a paradigm shift in Indonesian education, emphasizing learner autonomy, student-centered instruction, and authentic assessment. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, its implementation requires significant pedagogical adaptation, especially in designing lesson plans, utilizing flexible teaching strategies, and evaluating student performance. Early studies suggest that while the curriculum's philosophy aligns with contemporary educational goals, its practical application exposes gaps in teachers' preparedness and the support systems available within schools, particularly for language instruction (Reza, Rohmah, & Abdullah, 2023).

A primary challenge identified in multiple qualitative studies is the lack of teacher understanding and readiness to implement the curriculum's core components effectively. Research at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan reported that English teachers encountered difficulties in preparing lesson plans, managing classroom activities, selecting appropriate media, and administering assessments in line with Merdeka Curriculum expectations (Fitra & Tiarina, 2023). This mirrors findings from studies at junior high schools where teachers struggled with comprehending the curriculum's philosophical shift, which requires more autonomy and innovation compared to traditional instructional models.

Resource constraints further complicate implementation. EFL teachers often lack access to suitable teaching materials and supportive technologies, which inhibits flexibility in instructional methods. For instance, studies involving English teachers in different Indonesian contexts revealed that limitations in media,

materials, and school infrastructures significantly hinder the application of student-centered and project-based learning approaches required by the curriculum (Fitra & Tiarina, 2023; Muhtar, Masruddin, & Wisran, 2024). Limited professional development opportunities exacerbate these challenges, as many teachers report insufficient guidance on adapting to innovative teaching methods, further reducing their confidence in enacting curriculum changes.

Assessment practices under the Merdeka Curriculum present additional barriers for EFL teachers. Unlike traditional test-centered evaluations, the curriculum promotes authentic assessment strategies that gauge students' language competencies through real-world tasks. Studies show that teachers find it difficult to design and implement such assessments effectively due to a lack of assessment literacy and support in developing appropriate instruments (Reza et al., 2023). These challenges reflect a broader need for professional training focused not only on understanding curriculum philosophy but also on acquiring practical skills for innovative assessment practices in English language classrooms.

Finally, contextual and systemic issues influence the success of implementation. In studies examining EFL teachers in Islamic educational settings, institutional support was identified as limited, and teachers highlighted the need for sustained mentoring, collaborative networks, and improved digital infrastructure to facilitate the curriculum transition (Restika & Maisarah, 2024). This suggests that overcoming challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum extends beyond individual teacher competence to include robust school leadership, continuous professional development programs, and access to necessary resources. These findings underscore the importance of holistic support systems that empower EFL teachers to align their instructional practices with the curriculum's innovative vision.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This research describes the challenges in implementing Curriculum Merdeka faced by English teachers in Mts 1 in Lubuklinggau. Through the analysis, descriptive research methods were employed in collecting the data. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research is a study to investigate and understand the meaning individuals or groups assume to be a social or a human problem and also explore the information from participants, and the result was in the form of words.

According to Mackey (2005), belongs to descriptive data that does not use statistical procedures. This study used an interview as the instrumentation. Techniques for gathering data include observation, literature review, and interviewing. The researcher intended to find out more information about the challenges in Merdeka curriculum implementation. The goal of the study is to examine the challenges of the English teacher's experience in VIII grade. The study was carried out with 5 English teachers from different classes. The researcher came

to the participant's schools to get data. The researcher met face-to-face with the participants to find out the challenges faced by the teachers.

IV. FINDING

The researchers have completed the research procedure through interviews. Researchers interviewed two English teachers MTs N 1 Lubuklinggau on May 21, 2024, and May 22, 2024. The teachers taught in classes 7 and 8. The interview was conducted to find out the challenges faced by English language teachers in implementing the Merdeka curriculum at MTs N 1 Lubuklinggau of the 22 questions we asked. Conclusion There are 6 key indicators in the interview namely, Teaching Module Development, Learning Implementation, Learning Media, Classroom Management, Assessment, and Teacher Training. The challenges faced by English teachers are:

1. Teacher's challenge in Teaching Module Development

Based on the results of the interviews, the researchers obtained some data on the challenge of designing a learning plan in the Curriculum Merdeka. The challenge is for teachers to figure out how far the students are going, and then adapt the appropriate material to be taught to the students.

Teacher A said that the challenge in the creation of the teaching module is to create material that matches the ability of the student, while the student has a different level of understanding. This makes it difficult to adapt the material to be taught. While a Curriculum Merdeka requires teachers to adapt the material to students' abilities. Teacher B also made the same statement. The teacher should create material that matches the ability of the student to understand the lesson or behavior according to the individual.

Of the two answers of the English teacher, the challenge faced by the English teacher in designing a learning plan is to create material that matches the ability of the student. Each class has different surgical properties. Sometimes there are students whose understanding is far beyond average, so these students' teachers have to pay more attention and give more understanding than the other students. Because teachers have to create teaching modules that can be tailored to class and student conditions.

2. Teacher's Challenge in Implementing Independent Curriculum Learning

The next challenge faced by English teachers after designing teaching modules is the implementation of learning. Researchers found challenges for teachers in implementing learning, namely that Curriculum Merdeka had not been implemented 100%. Even though there has been a lot of training for teachers, implementation is still only up to 60% in class

Teacher A stated that the obstacle in implementing Curriculum Merdeka was the teacher's lack of understanding of the curriculum concept. Even though they have attended various trainings, teachers feel that the material provided is not applicable enough to be applied in the classroom. Apart from that, teacher A also

said that time was needed to adapt Curriculum Merdeka so that its implementation could be carried out 100% at the MTs N 1 Lubuklinggau.

Meanwhile, Teacher B insinuated that the facilities and resources at the school did not fully support the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka. For example, access to information is still limited, Teacher B also mentioned that some students are still not used to the more independent and project-based learning methods as expected in Curriculum Merdeka.

By identifying these challenges, both from the perspective of Teacher A and Teacher B, it can be seen that the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka requires further support, both in the form of more applicable training, facilities that support learning, and more effective and adaptive learning strategies according to needs. students in class.

3. Teacher's Challenge in Learning Media

In this curriculum, teachers and students are required to be able to use media in each lesson. The challenge that researchers encountered in the use of media during the implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka was the lack of learning media that teachers could use to support learning. These are the results of interviews with the two teachers.

Teacher A said that as we know we have been using this curriculum for one year. The media used is still relatively simple, like the objects in class. that often the media available in the classroom is inadequate to support more interactive and project-based learning methods by Curriculum Merdeka.

Additional information from this statement can be seen from teacher B's answer, which states that the more pronounced challenge in using this media is the lack of technological facilities that can be used as learning media such as InFocus, laptops, speakers, and other devices. The lack of adequate technological facilities and learning media is the main obstacle, which requires attention and solutions so that curriculum implementation can run more effectively and optimally.

4. Teacher's Challenges in Classroom Management

Based on the interview results, the challenge faced by English teachers in classroom management is the difference in student participation in following class lessons. This is shown by the teacher's answer. Teacher A stated that her biggest challenge was getting all students to be active in class lessons. Some students are very active and quick to grasp the material, but there are also those who tend to be passive and need more motivation to participate in class lessons.

Teacher B also gave an opinion related to Teacher A with a slightly different delivery. Teacher B said "The challenge I face is how to create a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to all students. Each student has different characteristics and understanding. Some understand the material quickly, but some need to be given more attention.

It can be concluded that Teacher A and Teacher B face challenges in ensuring that all students are active and involved in learning. Differences in levels

of student participation and student understanding can be a major challenge in classroom management under Curriculum Merdeka.

5. Teacher's Challenges in Learning Assessment

The following are the results of interviews with English teachers regarding learning assessment. Assessment in Curriculum Merdeka is not only based on final results but also the student learning process. Teachers need to adapt more flexible and varied assessment methods to accommodate the different types of skills and understanding that students have.

Teacher A explained that one of the main challenges in assessment is assessing the learning process as a whole. Teachers must see how students process, interact, and apply their knowledge. This requires more flexible assessment methods and in-depth observation. Sometimes teacher A also finds it difficult to assess students' learning processes because assessing students one by one is a challenge in the assessment method.

Teacher B also said something similar by emphasizing the importance of variation in assessment methods. This requires more time and energy to design and implement a proper assessment. Apart from that, teacher B mentioned that another challenge was that all students' grades were required to be above the KKM, even though the students' abilities arguably did not meet the requirements for that grade. This is a challenge in itself for teachers to carry out repeated training so that students can achieve a grade of seven.

It can be seen from the teacher's second statement that there are challenges in assessing learning in Curriculum Merdeka using various assessment methods and providing useful feedback. Teachers need to develop effective strategies to face these challenges and ensure that assessments comprehensively reflect students' abilities and progress.

6. Teacher's Challenges in Training Curriculum Merdeka

The challenge in curriculum Merdeka training is the lack of time to participate in training. As stated by Teacher A, Curriculum Merdeka training time disrupted teaching hours so that teachers could not participate in training. Apart from that, teacher B also said that even though there had been several workshops and training, many teachers felt that the material provided was still not deep enough or applicable. So teachers do not understand the concept of a Curriculum Merdeka.

From the statement above, teachers can choose free time to take part in training, such as evening training, which at that time does not interfere with learning activities. Apart from that, teachers must also continue to participate in training to improve understanding of Curriculum Merdeka.

V. DISCUSSION

1. Teachers' Challenge in Teaching Module Development

A study by Ningsih and Adnan (2023) aligned with the findings, specifically the teaching module in the Merdeka Curriculum, indicating that English pre-service

teachers had difficulty understanding new terms, significantly affecting their preparation time. In developing teaching modules, most teachers still modify the teaching modules provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture and adjust them to the needs of students. Although modifying existing teaching modules can make teachers' tasks easier, these modifications are not always to the needs and abilities of students in the classroom especially if the number of students in the class is quite large and has different needs and abilities (Nurzen, 2022).

One of the challenges for English teachers at MTS N 1 Lubuklinggau is creating teaching modules. Teachers A and B explained that their problem was creating teaching modules that suited the abilities of the students in the class. In every class, there are bound to be students whose abilities exceed the other students in the class. So teachers must create balanced teaching modules for students in class. To overcome these problems specifically in developing the ability to create their teaching modules, teachers can read references about the preparation of teaching modules, or collaborate with other teachers to share experiences and knowledge. Besides that, teachers can also take several actions, such as using available resources, training, or workshops on the preparation of teaching modules, or using teaching materials that are already available online. In addition, teachers also need to pay attention to student involvement in the process of developing teaching modules to ensure that the modules developed are truly following the needs and abilities of students.

2. Teachers' Challenge in Implementing Curriculum Merdeka Learning

Implementing Merdeka Curriculum Merdeka in Junior High School has presented several obstacles. One of the most significant obstacles is instructors' lack of curriculum comprehension (Yuhastina et al., 2020). Due to a lack of structural explanations regarding the differences between the old and Curriculum Merdeka, it may be difficult for instructors to transition to the new curriculum. Another difficulty associated with implementing Curriculum Merdeka is the lack of familiarity among instructors, schools, and students (Yatim et al., 2023). Understanding and interpreting the curriculum's implementation in a student-centered learning process requires teachers to be knowledgeable and prepared.

To implement Curriculum Merdeka learning, teachers A and B expressed their opinion that implementing Curriculum Merdeka in the classroom was not yet 100% complete due to the lack of applicability and the need for time to be able to 100% implement Curriculum Merdeka and also the lack of facilities that support Curriculum Merdeka learning from schools so that This is what hinders teachers from implementing Curriculum Merdeka following the expectations of Curriculum Merdeka. To be able to fully implement Curriculum Merdeka, there must be school support in terms of facilities, and training for teachers and teachers must think of strategies that suit students so that Curriculum Merdeka learning runs by Curriculum Merdeka.

3. Teachers' Challenges in Using Media

The teaching tools in Curriculum Merdeka use textbooks, non-text books, teaching modules, and project modules to strengthen the Pancasila student profile and educational unit operational curriculum platforms. Therefore the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka certainly requires supporting facilities and infrastructure (Arifa, 2022). At this time many media can be used by teachers to teach in class both online and offline. According to teachers A and B, the use of media is still simple, such as objects in the class, and lacks technology-based learning media such as InFocus, laptops, speakers, and so on. To overcome this, the school must provide media that supports teachers in teaching in class using Curriculum Merdeka.

4. Teachers' Challenge in Classroom Management

Based on interviews with teacher A and teacher B, it can be concluded that the teacher's challenge in managing the class is that not all students in the class actively participate during learning and some students are active and quickly grasp all the material given, some are inactive and tend to be passive when learning. So, in the classroom, the teacher must be able to motivate students not to leave the classroom during class hours.

In Curriculum Merdeka, there is a change in the function of educators, who were originally taught with a uniform or one-size-fits-all approach, to become someone who can create students as lifelong independent learners. In this case, teachers must be mentors, facilitators, or coaches in project-based active learning activities (Marisa, 2021). Teachers must encourage students to ask questions and express opinions or provide opinions and adapt the lesson material to the student's learning speed and abilities. The interview results show that the challenge for teachers in management classes is to motivate students to want to follow the learning to completion.

5. Teachers' Challenge in Learning Assessment

Based on interviews with teachers A and B, it can be concluded that there are challenges in assessing learning in Curriculum Merdeka, namely that teachers must assess students as a whole based on how the students process, interact, and apply their knowledge in learning English and also teachers must meet student scores above the KKM. requires teachers to carry out retraining so that students score above the KKM. According to Usman (2019), the challenge in the learning assessment consists of teachers' difficulty in covering all aspects of assessment. Other sources show that the challenge for English teachers in conducting learning assessments is in the processing value and also having to recognize the abilities of each student with limited time for English subjects. (Marisa, M. (2021).

6. Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Independent Curriculum Training

Based on interviews with teacher A and teacher B, it was explained that the time given sometimes interfered with learning hours and the material provided was not in-depth or applicable enough so many teachers did not understand the concept

of a Curriculum Merdeka. According to Priantini et al. (2022), school administrators must assist in the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka by offering training, teaching resources, and learning aids on their own. According to Rahayuningsih & Iskandar (2022), it is the responsibility of the school principal to develop new forms of literacy in the classroom, one of which is becoming familiar with digital literacy to meet the demands of the fourth industrial revolution. To overcome this, it is hoped that there will be flexible training with teacher teaching time and providing in-depth material so that teachers can fully understand Curriculum Merdeka.

VI. CONCLUSION

Curriculum Merdeka is a curriculum that provides opportunities for students to show their natural talents and this curriculum focuses on students so that teachers only act as observers and intermediaries. However, in implementing the Merdeka curriculum there are challenges, especially for English teachers at MTs N 1 Lubuklinggau. The challenges are: Teachers' challenge in teaching module, Teachers' challenge in implementing Merdeka curriculum learning, Teachers' challenge in using media, teachers' challenge in classroom management, teachers' challenge in Learning Assessment And, teachers' challenge in implementing independent curriculum training.

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