

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter discusses relevant theories, beginning with the definitions and basic concepts of Merdeka Curriculum, followed by a comparison with previous curriculum, its key characteristics, and related studies.

#### **A. Merdeka Curriculum**

##### **1. Definition and Basic Concept of Merdeka Curriculum**

Merdeka Curriculum is designed to maximize intra-curricular learning, providing students with ample time to explore ideas and develop competencies (Maulana et al., 2023; W et al., 2023). This curriculum empowers teachers and students, providing flexibility in learning and emphasizing student-centered education (Reza et al., 2023; Riyan Rizaldi & Fatimah, 2022). Students are encouraged to explore learning, ask deep questions, and engage actively during the learning process. In this regard, it prepares students to become independent learners and develop optimally. In this case, it is in line with person-centered learning developed by Carl R. Rogers. Rogers & Freiberg (1994) said that learning will be more meaningful when students are given the freedom to determine their own learning direction, so that teachers here act as facilitators who create a comfortable and supportive learning environment.

Not merely a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the launch of the Merdeka Curriculum is also a strategic step toward a more visionary education system. This policy was enacted through Ministerial Decree No. 56/M/2022 under the leadership

of Nadiem Makarim. Schools that are ready can adopt Merdeka Curriculum, while those that are not yet prepared are still allowed to use 2013 Curriculum (W et al., 2023). With a broader focus, the Merdeka Curriculum is not just an update to the 2013 Curriculum, but also introduces 21st-century competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and practical skills, preparing students to face global challenges.

A key component of the Merdeka Curriculum is the principle of student-centered learning. In this context, students are encouraged to actively explore knowledge through various diverse and flexible learning approaches. This aligns with the three forms of learning activities promoted in Merdeka Curriculum, namely:

- 1) Intra-curricular, activities are conducted according to the educational academic calendar. The intra-curricular activities outlined in Merdeka Curriculum include Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran* - CP), which are the targets that students must achieve in both general and elective subjects they choose. (Pratama et al., 2023).
- 2) Co-curricular, activities serve to reinforce competencies from intra-curricular activities and are structured in accordance with curriculum guidelines. Co-curricular learning supports students' understanding of the subject matter while also shaping their character to reflect the values of Pancasila. (Kharimah et al., 2023). These activities are conducted individually or in groups to deepen academic understanding and instill the values of Pancasila.

- 3) Extracurricular, activities are those conducted outside the formal curriculum, tailored to students' interests beyond academic fields. These activities are also adapted to the environmental and cultural conditions surrounding the school. (Negro et al., 2024).

The three forms of learning activities in Merdeka Curriculum provide students with the opportunity to develop their potential holistically, encompassing both academic and character development. With a student-centered approach, this curriculum encourages active participation in intra-curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities, ensuring that students not only meet learning targets but also become virtuous, creative individuals ready to contribute to society.

## **2. Comparison with Previous Curriculum**

Merdeka Curriculum in the education system of Indonesia represents a step forward aimed at improving the previous curriculum. With an emphasis on learning materials that are relevant and related to the students' life context, it prepares students to face the educational challenges of the digital era. In this regard, it is important to compare Merdeka Curriculum with the previous curriculum to understand the significant differences in approach, flexibility, character integration, student engagement, and evaluation implemented.

Below is a table that illustrates the comparison between Merdeka Curriculum and the previous curriculum:

**Table 2. 1 Comparison between Merdeka Curriculum and the previous curriculum**

<b>The Difference</b>	<b>Curriculum 2013</b>	<b>Merdeka Curriculum</b>
Learning Approach	Applying the scientific method approach in every subject.	Using a differentiated approach to create a more personalized learning experience according to each student's needs.
Flexibility and adjustment.	The structure is more rigid, so customization is often limited by predetermined guidelines.	Allows teachers to adapt their teaching methods according to the needs and interests of students, providing space for them to learn in the most effective way.
Integration of character and values.	Emphasizes character education, with an approach that is more separate from the main subjects. Value cultivation is done through specialized learning, but is not always fully integrated into all learning activities.	Emphasizes the development of character and Pancasila values in every aspect of learning, making character education an integral part of the learning process. Students are encouraged to apply these values in their daily lives through various activities and projects.
Student engagement.	The teacher is still at the center of the teaching process and plays the main role in delivering the material, although the learning approach supports active student involvement. Students participate in group projects and discussions, but their involvement is often limited to tasks given by the teacher.	Students are at the center of the learning process, with greater autonomy to learn independently and exploratively. They actively participate through projects, research and activities tailored to their interests and needs in intracurricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities.
Evaluation and assessment.	Formative and summative assessments are conducted by educators to monitor progress, learning outcomes, and the need for continuous improvement. Authentic assessment is applied in each subject, focusing on aspects of attitude, knowledge, and skills.	Assessment is strengthened with a focus on formative and authentic evaluation, particularly in the Pancasila profile project. Assessment is conducted holistically, without strict separation between attitudes, knowledge, and skills, and the results are used to design

		learning according to student achievements.
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The table above shows the differences between 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum regarding how each curriculum has a different approach in the learning process.

Even though there are differences between 2013 Curriculum and Merdeka Curriculum, they also share several significant similarities. Both curricula have the same goals for the National Education System, focusing on improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Furthermore, both frameworks incorporate character education, although their approaches differ (Hasibuan & Agustina, 2023). 2013 Curriculum integrates it into the subjects, while Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes character development through separate projects. Lastly, both curricula use formative assessment to evaluate student progress, although Merdeka Curriculum places greater emphasis on reflective assessment tailored to individual learning needs.

### **3. Characteristics of Merdeka Curriculum**

Understanding the characteristics of Merdeka Curriculum is very crucial. This aims to gain a deeper understanding of how this new approach reshapes the learning experience for students. It emphasizes on meeting the diverse and evolving needs of students and facilitates more flexible, adaptive, and student-centered education. It not only focuses on academic achievements but also emphasizes more holistic

development, such as character skills and important values that align with *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Muashomah et al., 2024).

One of the most prominent features emphasized in Merdeka Curriculum is Project-Based Learning (PJBL). Merdeka Curriculum uses project-based learning to integrate various competencies while providing a flexible structure that meets the needs of each school (Rizaldi & Ziadatul, 2022). In this regard, such as collaboration, communication, and problem-solving, it deepens their understanding of the subject matter through experiential learning. With these projects, students have the opportunity to develop character and embody Pancasila values. Ultimately, Project-Based Learning teaches students to think critically, solve problems, and reflect on their roles in society.

Another characteristic of Merdeka Curriculum is its focus on essential material. The goal is to provide enough time to study fundamental skills such as literacy and numeracy in depth (Rahmawati & Kusumaningtyas, 2024). This approach differs from the previous curriculum, which seemed to burden students with a variety of topics, leaving little time for in-depth exploration. By sorting through important material focus, Merdeka Curriculum ensures that students have enough time to fully understand and practice what they are learning, rather than rushing through the material without a deep understanding. It is this in-depth learning that can better equip students, which is crucial for academic activities both inside and outside of school.

In addition, the Merdeka Curriculum also offers flexibility, which is very important in education. Considering the diversity of students, both in terms of

socio-economic background, cultural context, and individual learning needs, teachers are given the autonomy to use teaching methods that are appropriate for the characteristics and needs of their students (Muashomah et al., 2024). This differentiated learning allows educators to adjust their lessons, materials, and assessments to accommodate the various paces and learning styles of students (Fajri et al., 2023). Starting with adjusting the difficulty level, providing enrichment, and additional support as needed to accommodate student needs. For teachers, flexibility allows them not to rely solely on textbooks, but also to incorporate a wider range of educational tools, including digital platforms and creative media, to enhance student understanding and engagement.

#### **4. The Strengths of Merdeka Curriculum**

The strength of Merdeka Curriculum lies on its student-centered approach, focusing on how education is delivered and experienced. The most prominent strength in this regard is differentiated learning. It is a well-established educational approach that allows students to learn in their own ways and styles, ultimately helping them reach their full potential and achieve successful outcomes (Hidayati & Sujarwati, 2023). This ensures that students can progress at their own pace and receive the enrichment and improvements they need. By focusing on the unique characteristics of students, they are expected to become independent learners while developing critical thinking and creativity.

Another significant advantage is the use of comprehensive assessment, which not only focuses on formative and summative assessments. Merdeka Curriculum also emphasizes diagnostic assessments conducted before the learning process,

which help identify students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing teachers to gather accurate information about students' initial abilities (Pertiwi & Rustam, 2024). This allows teachers to create more targeted lesson plans and ensures students' gradual progress. Additionally, it minimizes learning gaps among students and provides fairer and more equitable learning outcomes.

Apart from diagnostic assessments, Merdeka Curriculum also incorporates a much broader use of technology than the previous curriculum, utilizing tools and various digital platforms to support learning. With technology, students can experience a more interactive and engaging learning experience through multimedia resources, virtual collaboration, and online assessments. The use of technology facilitates personalized learning, allowing students to progress at their own pace and receive targeted support, thus helping to address learning gaps (Sukmawati & Tarmizi, 2022).

Furthermore, the main advantage of Merdeka Curriculum is its focus on empowering teachers. Teachers are given the autonomy to adapt the curriculum based on the specific needs of students and the local community. This flexibility provides a platform for teachers to innovate with their teaching methods, ensuring that learning is relevant and responsive to the real world. The curriculum also encourages professional collaboration among teachers to share ideas for improving and enhancing education, including the learning process.

## **B. Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum**

### **1. Merdeka Curriculum Implementation Options**



The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum is designed to provide each educational unit with the freedom to determine the steps that are most appropriate to their circumstances and readiness. This allows schools to adopt a more flexible and adaptive approach to learning while still considering the conditions and needs of students and teachers. There are three categories of options for implementing Merdeka Curriculum:

1) Independent Learning (*Mandiri Belajar*)

Educational units utilize the structure of 2013 Curriculum to develop their internal curriculum while integrating some principles of Merdeka Curriculum into the learning and assessment processes.

2) Independent Change (*Mandiri Berubah*)

Educational units apply the structure of Merdeka Curriculum in the development of their internal curriculum and adopt the principles of Merdeka Curriculum in the implementation of learning and assessment.

3) Independent Sharing (*Mandiri Berbagi*)

Educational units apply the structure of Merdeka Curriculum in the development of their internal curriculum, adopt the principles of Merdeka Curriculum in learning and assessment, and commit to sharing best practices with other educational units.

Through the three categories of implementation Independent Learning, Independent Change, and Independent Sharing each educational unit has the opportunity to apply Merdeka Curriculum according to their abilities and

commitments. This approach not only supports the development of a more contextual and relevant curriculum but also encourages collaboration and the sharing of best practices among schools, thereby enabling a higher quality and more inclusive education at various levels.

## **2. Factors Influencing Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum**

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia is influenced by various factors that can facilitate or hinder its effectiveness. It is crucial to understand these factors. First, teacher readiness and professional development are essential aspects (Yunitasari et al., 2023). It is important for teachers to have a deep understanding of Merdeka Curriculum and the approaches used to create an active and student-centered learning environment. Without ongoing and adequate training, teachers are likely to struggle to implement methods that align with the principles and goals of Merdeka Curriculum, which can adversely affect students' learning processes.

Second, infrastructure and resources are very important. This includes the availability of resources and digital readiness needed for the effective delivery of Merdeka Curriculum. Schools lacking adequate facilities and resources are likely to face difficulties in fully implementing the curriculum (Haq, 2024). Schools that invest in modern educational tools, such as computers, internet access, and learning software, tend to achieve good results (Kharimah et al., 2023). This is because the learning environment is more conducive, allowing for more varied teaching methods. Support for teachers' professional development in utilizing technology is

also necessary so that they can integrate innovative teaching methods in accordance with the principles of Merdeka Curriculum.

Third, government support is crucial for the successful implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. Clear guidelines and directions from educational authorities are essential to help schools navigate curriculum changes effectively. Additionally, funding and resource allocation play an important role, as schools need these to develop their curriculum, acquire teaching materials, and fully support teacher training. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation by the government are considered very important to assess the progress of curriculum implementation. Routine assessments help identify deficiencies and challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the improvement and realization of Merdeka Curriculum's goals.

### **C. Teaching Strategies in Merdeka Curriculum**

#### **1. Methods used in Merdeka Curriculum**

Merdeka Curriculum adopts several approaches designed to enhance the quality of learning and support the holistic development of students. Here are some of the main methods used in Merdeka Curriculum according to Arsyad and Fahira (2023):

##### **1) Genre-Based Approach (GBA)**

Therefore, in line with Sunarti et al. (2019) for English lessons, it is recommended to use this teaching approach. The stages in Genre-Based Approach follow the framework of Feez and Joyce (1998), as quote in Richards ( 2006). Consist of five main steps:

- a. Building Knowledge of the Field (BKoF), at this stage, students are introduced to the context and content relevant to the text that will be studied. The teacher will provide background knowledge that helps students understand the subject matter, which will serve as a foundation for further learning.
- b. Modeling of the Text (MoT), at this stage, the teacher demonstrates how to create a text by analyzing its structure and features. Here, the teacher provides clear examples and guidance on how students can create their own texts, ensuring that their understanding of language use and composition is strong.
- c. Joint Construction of the Text (JCoT), at this stage is a collaborative phase where students work with their classmates in groups. At this stage, they are required to actively participate to apply their knowledge and provide feedback to each other.
- d. Independent Construction of the Text (ICoT), at this stage, students independently create their own texts by applying the knowledge they gained in the previous stages. Students are trained to be independent and confident in their creative writing abilities.
- e. Linking to related text, at this stage, connect the text being studied with other texts. Students can compare texts, look at differences between spoken and written language, or examine how language is used in other contexts. However, its implementation in Indonesia is optional and rarely used due to time constraints.

The Genre-Based Approach is designed not only to improve students' writing skills but also to equip them with the necessary skills for effective communication in various contexts by understanding the interaction between language, purpose, and audience.

## 2) Project-Based Learning (PJBL)

Project-Based Learning is a teaching model that encourages students to develop or create products or works, either individually or in groups (Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2024). This approach empowers students to be more independent and motivated. In line with *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*, project-based learning aims to enhance character development and competencies such as collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, integrating educational outcomes with national values (Maulana et al., 2023).

One of the key elements of Project-Based Learning is collaboration. In this case, encouraging teamwork among students as they work together to solve problems and create projects, which not only develops social skills but also enriches peer learning. Project-Based Learning helps students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through activities that involve identifying problems, planning, researching, and presenting their findings skills that are essential for future careers.

## 3) Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Problem-Based Learning plays an important role in Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes problem-solving as a core component of learning. This pedagogical approach not only enhances students' critical thinking skills but

also supports the curriculum's goals of fostering autonomy and active engagement. PBL presents authentic problems that require investigation and resolution, making learning more relevant and practical, while encouraging students to apply their knowledge in real-life situations, thus enhancing engagement and the meaning of learning (Muhamad & Hindun, 2023).

Moreover, Problem-Based Learning process promotes cooperation, communication, and understanding among students. With clear steps from problem identification to reflection, PBL guides students in facing challenges. Merdeka Curriculum integrates technology, enhancing digital skills and problem-solving. The goal of PBL is not only academic success but also the development of critical thinking and collaboration skills. Engagement with real-world problems boosts student motivation and creates a dynamic learning environment. PBL also supports character development and civic responsibility, in line with the values of *Profil Pelajar Pancasila*.

#### 4) Discovery Learning

Discovery Learning is an educational model that prioritizes student involvement through exploration and research. This approach encourages students to develop their understanding and knowledge by actively participating in the learning process. Essentially, discovery learning focuses on students, urging them to engage actively by exploring concepts, both independently and in groups, allowing them to take ownership of their learning experiences (Retnaningrum et al., 2023). Students engage in practical activities, experiments, and problem-solving tasks that encourage them to investigate and

discover principles or solutions on their own, thereby enhancing their critical and analytical thinking skills.

In Discovery Learning, the teacher acts as a facilitator who provides support and guidance while allowing students the freedom to explore (Retnaningrum et al., 2023). The process includes stimulating interest, formulating problems, collecting data, and discussing results. This approach enhances critical thinking, motivation, and student engagement by encouraging them to analyze situations and find solutions on their own.

In addition to improving conceptual understanding and academic performance, discovery learning also supports character development, ethics, and social responsibility, preparing students for lifelong learning.

#### 5) Inquiry-Based Learning

Suari et al. (2023) as cited in Garner et al. (2018) states that Inquiry-Based Learning is a learning model that encourages students to actively ask questions, conduct research studies, and develop knowledge through exploration. Students learn by investigating and exploring topics that they are interested in and have relevance to the material they are learning. With this, students are expected to be more critical in sorting out reliable information and evidence. The teacher's role here is as a facilitator who helps students during their learning process, providing resources and giving feedback. Through this approach, students will be more active and independent because the learning is indeed student-centered which involves all students' abilities to investigate methodically, critically, logically and analytically. (Cahya & Katemba, 2023).

## **2. Learning Media Used in Merdeka Curriculum**

Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia emphasizes on the use of innovative and diverse learning media to enhance student engagement and improve learning outcomes (Waziana & Andewi, 2024). Digital learning media play a crucial role, especially in subjects like English, by making the presentation of material more efficient and engaging. Digital tools, such as multimedia presentations, educational applications, and online platforms, not only provide easy access to information but also promote digital literacy. Game-based learning platforms like Kahoot and Quizizz further enhance student interest, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork through interactive experiences.

In addition, the curriculum encourages the use of interactive simulations and multimedia resources to simplify complex concepts, providing students with hands-on learning experiences (Muhammad & Zaitun, 2023). These tools help students visualize and experiment, making abstract ideas more tangible. Additionally, by integrating this technology, students can connect with peers across regions, broadening their perspectives and fostering a global mindset. Through various learning media, Merdeka Curriculum ensures a dynamic, interactive, and inclusive learning environment that supports the holistic development of students.

## **3. Learning Evaluation Used in Merdeka Curriculum**

Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia incorporates a comprehensive assessment system to effectively evaluate student learning outcomes. This system includes



various types of assessments, each providing a holistic view of student performance. Here are the types of assessment in Merdeka Curriculum:

1) Diagnostic Assessment

Conducted at the beginning of the learning process, diagnostic assessment helps determine students' prior knowledge and readiness for new material. This allows teachers to gather accurate information about students' initial abilities, enabling them to design learning strategies that cater to the individual needs of each student (Pertiwi & Rustam, 2024).

2) Formative Assessment

Assessments conducted continuously during the learning process serve to monitor students' progress and understanding. Formative assessment can include quizzes, class discussions, and projects, allowing teachers to adjust their teaching strategies as needed.

3) Summative Assessment

Summative assessment at the end of a unit or semester measures students' understanding and mastery of the material, typically through tests or final projects, to evaluate their achievements according to curriculum standards.

This curriculum emphasizes on the development of academic and character skills, with evaluations that include competencies such as critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical reasoning in accordance with *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Muhammad & Zaitun, 2023). Assessment is integrated into learning to provide continuous feedback and support a growth mindset. The use of digital tools makes assessments more interactive and increases student participation. Student results

are documented in reports that include academic achievements, skills, and attitudes, providing a comprehensive overview of progress and areas that need improvement.

#### **D. Challenges in the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum**

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum in Indonesia presents several challenges in classroom management that affect both teachers and students as they adjust to the new educational framework. According to Brown (2000); Astuti et al. (2024); and Maulana et al. (2024) some of the challenges in classroom management are as follows:

##### **1) Students are passive during learning**

In relation to the characteristics of Merdeka Curriculum that prioritizes student-centered learning, the challenge that often arises is the lack of student involvement during the learning process. They tend to be passive and prefer the lecture method by the teacher, this is due to the transformation from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. That way, they just sit and listen without thinking more. If teachers do not try to increase students' active involvement in the classroom, then the ability to think critically and collaborate among students will be compromised.

##### **2) Infrastructure and internet connectivity**

Merdeka Curriculum recognizes the great support for the integration of technology in classroom learning activities. Technology can enhance the learning experience in this modern era. In this case, infrastructure such as LCDs, speakers, curtains for lighting and even internet networks are needed so

that learning is not interrupted. Not all students have a personal quota, if the school does not provide an internet network, technology-based learning cannot run well.

### 3) Student disorderly behavior

This disorderly behavior refers to behavior that can disrupt the ongoing learning process. In this case, Merdeka Curriculum that encourages the use of technology can also cause its own challenges. Students' disorderly behavior on the use of mobile phones. They do not use mobile phones wisely when learning. Instead of looking for relevant material and doing the tasks they get from the teacher, they play social media or games. It is also not uncommon for them to cheat during technology-based examinations. This disorderly behavior eventually becomes a big challenge for teachers.

### 4) Differences in intelligence levels of students in class

In a classroom, there is often a wide range of proficiency levels among students. This presents a challenge for teachers to adapt the material to accommodate these differences. Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes differentiated learning, where teaching is tailored to students' abilities and learning styles. However, in practice, teachers often face numerous challenges. It requires more time and complex planning, and students may sometimes feel confused by the variety of learning activities. Additionally, students with lower abilities may still struggle with assignments, even when the material has been adjusted. In group activities, systematic randomization is usually applied, but this can lead to students with higher abilities feeling burdened to work harder

to assist their peers. Without their support, students with lower abilities may find it difficult to contribute effectively.

#### 5) Seating Arrangements

In learning activities, seating arrangements significantly influence student interaction, focus, and the overall effectiveness of the lesson. Students sitting at the back often pay less attention, tend to be less focused, and more passive. Meanwhile, those seated at the front or in the middle tend to dominate the classroom dynamics. Furthermore, if seating is not properly managed, teachers may find it challenging to monitor student behavior during the lesson. It is not uncommon for students to engage in activities that disrupt not only their focus but also that of their peers. If such issues are not addressed, the learning process may not proceed effectively.

### **E. Solution to Overcome Challenges in the Implementation of Merdeka Curriculum**

The implementation of Merdeka Curriculum presents its own challenges in classroom management that educators must face to create an optimal learning environment. To address these challenges, according to Brown (2000); Astuti et al. (2024); and Maulana et al. (2024) are as follows:

#### 1) Students are passive during learning

To handle this, teachers can make learning more interactive. Teachers can provide a choice of topics or methods according to students' interests.

Collaboration techniques with group discussions can also be an effective solution. Teachers should pay attention to each student as much as possible, especially to passive students. The teacher can provide direct encouragement perhaps by pointing at them and giving positive feedback. Providing competition challenges through games or quizzes can also increase active student engagement and fun.

## 2) Infrastructure and internet connectivity

In overcoming the challenges of limited internet infrastructure and networks, schools are expected to improve their existing facilities. Schools are expected to have an adequate wi-fi network for the needs of their students. If, for example, in the middle of learning, internet connectivity is disrupted, teachers should be on guard to download materials and presentations that will be used for learning. Teachers as much as possible to back up all possibilities that occur during the learning process.

## 3) Student disorderly behavior

To tackle the challenges of unruly and unwise behavior regarding the use of mobile phones in the classroom, it is better for teachers to set clear policies regarding their use during the learning process. Mobile phones may be used only for relevant learning purposes. Especially during exams, teachers must be smart in monitoring, it can also be tricked by the use of time-limited platforms or randomization of questions to minimize cheating. Implementing consequences for offenders can also help reduce the misuse of mobile phones.

With this, it is hoped that students can use mobile phones wisely and responsibly.

#### 4) Differences in intelligence levels of students in class

In accordance with students' abilities, teachers can assign tasks with varying levels of difficulty to address the diversity of skills in the classroom. To help students understand the material better, teachers can also provide temporary assistance or guidance. Clear instructions can reduce confusion. Students can be encouraged to learn together by organizing adaptable study groups, such as those with similar or mixed abilities. High-achieving students may not feel burdened with a peer mentoring program where roles are clearly defined. To meet the unique needs of each student, learning technology can also be used. Regular assessments help teachers adjust their teaching approach. Utilizing additional support, such as teaching assistants, and teaching students to collaborate can create a comfortable and effective learning environment for all students.

#### 5) Seating Arrangements

To address challenges in seating arrangements and enhance participation, teachers can implement periodic seat rotations. To foster interaction and collaboration, forming flexible groups can be a helpful. Utilizing seating designs such as U-shapes, semicircles, or full circles can also facilitate better supervision and active monitoring of the entire classroom. Additionally, repositioning students, when necessary, such as when they struggle to focus or disturb their peers, can be an effective strategy. This can be agreed upon as part

of classroom rules to create a more balanced and conducive learning environment.

#### 6) Best Practice

In dealing with the challenges of classroom management in implementing Merdeka Curriculum, some practices have been proven effective in improving student participation and learning outcomes. Best practices in education can be interpreted as ways or methods that have demonstrated success and are widely recognized in the world of education (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Based on research conducted by Hattie (2008), some of the strategies with the most significant impact include reciprocal teaching, providing specific and timely feedback, problem-solving-based learning, and implementing metacognitive strategies. These strategies encourage students to be more active in reflecting on their thought processes and understanding learning more deeply.

Hattie also highlights the significance of the educator's role in creating a clear learning experience where students are aware of the learning objectives and standards of success and the teacher continually adjusts strategies based on student responses and needs. The atmosphere in the classroom should provide opportunities for students to make mistakes and learn from the experience, without feeling anxious. This method is in line with the principles of Merdeka Curriculum, which requires learning that is student-centered, flexible and responsive to variations in learning needs.

By adopting these practices, teachers are not only able to manage the classroom more effectively, but also create a learning atmosphere that supports

students' cognitive, affective and social development in a more balanced and sustainable manner.

## **F. Previous Studies**

There are several previous studies that have the same topic as this research, namely related to the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum. These previous researches aim to support and become a basis for consideration of the research to be carried out. The following are some previous studies of this research:

The first previous research is from Lestari (2023), this research focuses on exploring the perspectives and challenges faced by English language teachers in curriculum implementation. The research method used was descriptive qualitative with a case study approach. The data collection techniques include interviews and observations, supported by note recording techniques. The data analysis process involved data reduction, classification based on data types, data validation, and finally, data interpretation. Meanwhile, the research subjects are English teachers from various school levels who are actively involved in implementing Merdeka Curriculum. The results of this study state that Merdeka Curriculum has advantages through its flexibility, so that teachers are free to determine the material according to the needs of their students, student-centered learning, and emphasis on student understanding rather than just pursuing material targets. Besides the challenges faced by teachers are the diverse characteristics of students and the lack of active involvement from students during learning, and it is contrary to student-centered learning.



The second research is from Anisah & Qamariah (2023), this research focuses on the role of teachers in implementing the curriculum, emphasizing learning planning and innovative strategies. This research is qualitative research with library research method. The data collection technique is through several articles and research relevant to the topic under study through google scholar with the keywords of the teacher's role in Merdeka Curriculum and the implementation of an independent curriculum in English classes. The process of analyzing the data begins with determining the objectives to be achieved, defining important concepts, specializing the items analyzed, searching for data relevant to the topic under study, presenting the data by connecting the concepts and data obtained. The results of this study state that teachers play an important role in implementing Merdeka Curriculum. Teachers act as figures who are actively engaged in the teacher learning community, become agents of change, create space for discussion and collaboration, create interactive and not boring learning, continue to develop themselves, and become motivators for their students. Teachers must implement innovative strategies to make students more active, such as role playing, jigsaw, and open discussions and debates.

The third study is from Sari & Muamaroh (2024), this research focuses on the teaching strategies used by English teachers in implementing Merdeka Curriculum in Senior High Schools. The strategies include CERIA (Choose, Explore, Resume, Inform, Apply) technique, Quiz using different tasks, and jigsaw method for collaborative learning. This research uses a case study approach with descriptive analysis. The data collection techniques were observation, interview

and documents. The results of the data were then transcribed and analyzed qualitatively. The subjects of this study were three teachers who were graduates of English education. The results of this study state that, in implementing Merdeka Curriculum, teachers use CERIA (Choose, Explore, Resume, Inform, Apply), Quiz, and jigsaw techniques. This is done with the aim that students can develop critical thinking skills, create collaborative learning, and deep understanding of the material being studied. Challenges experienced include differentiated learning which may not be familiar to some teachers and limited resources. Using technology and contextualizing the material can be an effective solution. The findings above illustrate the curriculum's emphasis on student-centered learning and meeting the needs of diverse students.

Several similarities between this study and previous research have been identified. All studies focus on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching and use qualitative research methods to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular issue or phenomenon. In terms of data collection techniques, this study shares similarities with research by Lestari (2023) and Sari & Muamaroh (2024), both of which used interviews and observations. Additionally, all studies involved English teachers as research subjects in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum.

However, this study differs significantly from previous research. Specifically, this study focuses on teaching strategies, challenges, and solutions faced by English teachers in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. In contrast, Lestari (2023) explores general challenges and teachers' perspectives at

various school levels, Anisah & Qamariah (2023) emphasized the role of teachers in lesson planning and innovative strategies through a literature review, and Sari & Muamaroh (2024) analyzed specific teaching strategies such as CERIA (Choose, Explore, Resume, Inform, Apply), quizzes, and jigsaw techniques at the high school level.

This research fills a gap in previous studies by integrating teaching strategies, challenges, and solutions into a comprehensive approach. Unlike previous studies that tend to focus on a single aspect such as challenges or strategies without comprehensively linking them, this study directly addresses teachers' experiences in implementing teaching strategies, managing classroom challenges, and applying solutions to overcome them.

The novelty of this study lies in its in-depth focus on the authentic experiences of teachers in the real-world context of the Merdeka Curriculum. This study not only describes the strategies and challenges faced but also presents concrete solutions directly implemented by teachers in the classroom. By combining observational data and direct interviews at two different schools, this study provides a deeper, more contextual, and more practical understanding compared to previous research, which tends to be more general or theoretical. Additionally, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a practical guide for English teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in a more adaptive and innovative manner in their classrooms.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

In this chapter, describes the research methods employed this study. This chapter consists of research design, setting and subject of the study, research instruments, data collection, data analysis, and triangulation.

#### **A. Research Design**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, which aims to capture and describe in depth the insights from the participants' experiences in the context of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The qualitative approach in research focuses on subjective assessments of individuals' attitudes, opinions, and behaviors based on the researcher's insights, using techniques such as semi-structured interviews to explore local experiences and perspectives in depth, especially when the topic or phenomenon is still poorly understood and has the potential to generate new hypotheses or theories (Johnson & Christensen, 2019; Kothari, 1990). According to Sugiyono (2023), qualitative research based on post-positivist philosophy observes objects in their natural conditions with the researcher as the primary tool, data collection using triangulation, inductive analysis, and results emphasizing understanding of meaning rather than generalization.

In this approach, case studies are used to explore a phenomenon in depth in a real-life context, particularly in the field of education. Case studies enable

researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of how an event or process occurs in a specific setting and within its original context (Yin, 2003). The primary focus of this approach is on gaining a deep contextual understanding of the strategies, challenges, and solutions faced by the research subjects, especially when researchers do not have direct control over the events being studied (Yin, 2003). Additionally, Yin (2003) also mentions that case study research begins with identifying the topic and formulating exploratory research questions such as “how” or “why,” followed by selecting cases that align with clear contextual characteristics and limitations.

Through this approach, researchers can explore how teaching strategies are applied by English teachers in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, as well as the obstacles they face in the field. The analysis process in the case study considers various data sources, including interviews, observations, and documents, to build a strong interpretation through triangulation. As a result, this study is able to produce a comprehensive and contextual illustration of learning practices, as well as contribute to the development of more adaptive and innovative education.

## **B. Setting and Subject of The Study**

In qualitative research, especially with a case study approach, the selection of participants is carried out purposively, namely selecting individuals who are considered capable of providing in-depth and relevant information because they have direct experience of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012). In this study, the subjects were three English teachers at MAN 1 Kota Kediri and MAN 2

Kota Kediri who had actively implemented the Merdeka Curriculum in their classrooms for at least one to two years.

The selected teachers have also attended seminars or workshops related to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, so it can be ensured that they have an adequate understanding of the principles and objectives of the curriculum. These criteria were chosen so that the participants would truly have the ability to provide rich and meaningful data about their practices in the field.

**Table 3. 1 Participants Profile**

Participant	Gender	Teaching Experience in implementing Merdeka Curriculum	Professional Training Related to Merdeka Curriculum
T1	Female	1 year	<i>MOOC Pintar Kemenag</i>
T2	Female	3 years	<i>MOOC Pintar Kemenag</i>
T3	Female	3 years	<i>Pelatihan Bahasa Inggris Angkatan I, MOOC Pintar Kemenag</i>

\*MOOC Pintar: an online training service platform based on Massive Open Online Course

### C. Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools that are specifically made to collect data in research (Fraenkel et al., 2011). Instruments enable systematic observation, measurement, and analysis that ultimately help in understanding and interpreting the information provided by participants. Since this is a case study, the researcher is the main instrument. In collecting the data, tools such as observation checklist, interview guide, recorder are employed to help.

## 1. The Researcher

The researcher serves as the main tool directly involved in data collection and understanding. The researcher listened to the participants, explored their experiences, and established a positive relationship during the interviews. The researcher also conducted self-evaluation to be aware of her personal opinions and influences throughout the research process, so that the research results remained accurate and trustworthy.

## 2. Observation Checklist

The observation instrument is used to obtain data directly on teacher learning practices in the classroom, especially in the context of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum. This instrument helps researchers capture the real behavior, strategies, and dynamics that occur during the learning process, which may not be fully revealed through interviews.

In this study, the observation checklist is compiled based on three main aspects that are in accordance with the research focus, namely: learning strategies, challenges in classroom management, and solutions implemented by teachers. Each aspect is broken down into several observation indicators, so that the observation process becomes more systematic and directed. Details of the indicators of each aspect can be seen in the following blueprint:

**Table 3. 2 Blueprint of Observation Checklist**

No	Aspect	Indicator
1	Teaching Strategies in implementing Merdeka Curriculum	
	Approaches to English Language Learning	Teachers use student-centered learning approaches (e.g. project-based learning, inquiry-based learning).

		The subject matter is aligned with Merdeka Curriculum principles.
		Use of different approaches for different ability levels.
	Encourage Active Student Participation	Group work or collaborative learning activities are conducted.
		Students are given the opportunity to express opinions and ideas.
	Use of Learning Media	Multimedia media (video, audio, digital presentations) are used.
		Physical learning aids (cards, posters, etc.) are utilized.
		Online platforms or applications are used to support learning.
	Differentiated Instruction	Teaching strategies are adjusted based on student needs.
		Tasks and activities vary to accommodate different learning styles.
		Additional support or challenges are provided when necessary.
	Evaluation of Teaching Strategies	Formative assessments (quizzes, reflections, peer reviews) are used regularly.
		Summative assessments align with learning objectives.
		Feedback provided to students is constructive and timely.
2	Challenges in classroom management	
	<b>Challenges Faced</b>	The teacher identifies specific challenges related to Merdeka Curriculum implementation.
		Classroom management challenges are described (e.g., diverse learning needs, student engagement issues).
	Impact of Student Behavior	Behavioral issues that disrupt the class are addressed promptly.
		Positive behavior is acknowledged and reinforced.
	Maintaining Attention and Engagement	The teacher uses engaging teaching methods to sustain attention.
		Classroom routines and transitions are smooth and efficient.
		The teacher uses questions to help direct and deepen students' understanding.
3	Solutions implemented by teachers	
	Classroom Management Strategies	The teacher applies proactive classroom management techniques.
		Behavioral expectations and consequences are clearly communicated.
	Dealing with Problem Students	Specific strategies are employed to support students with behavioral issues.
		Individual support plans are in place when needed.
	Student Involvement in Classroom Management	Students participate in setting classroom rules.
		Collaborative problem-solving methods are used for behavior issues.



	Alternative Solutions	The teacher reflects on the effectiveness of applied strategies.
		Adjustments to strategies are made based on outcomes.

*(Adapted from: the thesis of Amalia, 2023. Cited from Anggraena et. al., (2022)*

### 3. Interview Guide

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that researchers still have guidelines, but remain flexible in exploring participants' answers further. Interview guide consists of 17 core questions covering three main focuses, namely: teaching strategies according to Merdeka Curriculum, challenges faced by teachers and solutions applied in the context of classroom management.

If there are answers that are unclear or lack depth, the researcher asks follow-up questions to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Thus, interviews are an important tool in obtaining relevant and in-depth data in accordance with research objectives. Details of the indicators of each aspect can be seen in the following blueprint:

**Table 3. 3 Blueprint of interview Guideline**

Components	Indicators	Number
Teaching Strategies in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum	To know teaching strategies used in the implementation of Merdeka Curriculum	1,2,3,4,5,6
Classroom Management Challenges in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum	To know what are the classroom management challenges in implementing Merdeka Curriculum	7,8,9,10
Solutions Implemented to Overcome Challenges	To know how solutions implemented to overcome challenges	10,11,12,13,14, 15, 16, 17

*(Adapted from: the thesis of Amalia, 2023. Cited from Anggraena et. al., (2022)*

#### **4. Recorder**

Digital voice recorder was used to fully and accurately document the interviews. The use of this recorder was aimed at ensuring that no important information was missed during the interviews and also to facilitate the researcher in transcribing and analyzing the data. Prior to recording, the researcher obtained permission from the informants and explained that the recordings would only be used for research purposes and would be kept confidential.

#### **D. Data Collection**

Data collection in this study was conducted thoroughly by focusing on teachers' direct experiences in implementing Merdeka Curriculum, especially in facing and managing challenges in the classroom. To support this process, researchers prepared several data collection, namely observation, interview, and documentation. These steps are designed to explore in-depth information about the strategies, challenges, and solutions that teachers use in the learning context.

##### **a. Observation**

Observation is an important way to collect data, as the information is obtained directly through one's own observations without the influence of others or written documents (Yin, 2016). As stated by Kothari (1990), the main advantage of observation as an instrument is its ability to reduce subjective bias if done carefully, capture events directly as they happen, and does not depend on the active cooperation of participants. The researcher conducted non-participatory observation, where the researcher was directly present in the

classroom to observe the learning process from beginning to end. In its implementation, the researcher used an observation checklist that had been compiled based on several main aspects relevant to the research focus. This study was conducted in two locations, namely MAN 1 Kota Kediri and MAN 2 Kota Kediri, involving three English teachers as participants. The observation process took place from April 11 to April 16, 2025, with the duration of observation following the entire learning process from start to finish in each class.

#### **b. Interview**

Interview method involved presenting questions or statements verbally and eliciting answers through verbal responses. The researcher can explore more in-depth information through flexible interviews, while participants are given space to respond and express their experiences, which will support the development of research questions. According to Kothari (1990), For interviewing methods to be effective interviewers must be carefully selected, trained and directed. They should be honest, objective, experienced and technically skilled.

The type of interview used in this research is a semi-structured interview and the questions are tailored to the data needed. Semi-structured interview is an interview method that has a list of basic questions and allows the researcher to explore more in-depth questions according to the participant's response (Kallio et al., 2016). This approach allows researchers to explore information in greater depth and flexibility, while remaining focused on the core research topic.

The main interviews focused on exploring the strategies implemented by English teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, the obstacles they faced in the process, and the efforts made to overcome these challenges. The interviews were conducted at two schools, namely MAN 1 Kota Kediri and MAN 2 Kota Kediri, involving three English teachers as informants. The activity was carried out between April 11 and 16, 2025, with each session lasting one meeting with each teacher, following their availability and convenience.

### **c. Documentation**

According to Sugiyono (2021), documentation is a record of events that have occurred and can be in the form of writings, pictures, or the work of a person that serves as a complement to the observation and interview methods in qualitative research. In his book entitled *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, Creswell (2012) stated several advantages of using documentation in research. Documentation allows researchers to obtain language and words directly from participants, provides authenticity to the data, and can be accessed at any time without interruption. Data in documents reflects careful thought. By using documents as supporting data, researchers can understand the issue under study from multiple perspectives and confirm research findings for more in-depth results.

In this study, researchers collected documentation relevant to the results of observations and activities that took place. This documentation includes the photos of learning process in the classroom as well as various activities related to the teaching strategies applied, *modul ajar*, and KOM (*Kurikulum*

*Operasional Sekolah*). All documentation supporting evidence to strengthen the results obtained from observations and interviews. The collection of documentation is based on real events that occur at an Islamic High Schools in Kediri, so that it can provide a richer and deeper context for the analysis conducted.

## **E. Data Analysis**

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), to conduct thematic analysis in qualitative research, it is necessary to perform the following six steps:

### **1. Familiarization with the data**

The researcher reread the interview transcripts to understand the context and details of participants' experiences in implementing English language teaching strategies in Merdeka Curriculum.

### **2. Coding process**

Researchers gave relevant labels according to the initial themes set, such as passive students during the learning process, inadequate infrastructure and internet, differences in intelligence levels between students. This process was conducted openly to identify each element that appeared in the participants' experience.

### **3. Theme search**

The researcher grouped the coding results into larger themes that described patterns of the participants' teaching experiences. For example, challenges of Merdeka Curriculum implementation.

#### 4. Theme review

The researcher revisited the themes found to ensure compatibility between the data and the predetermined themes.

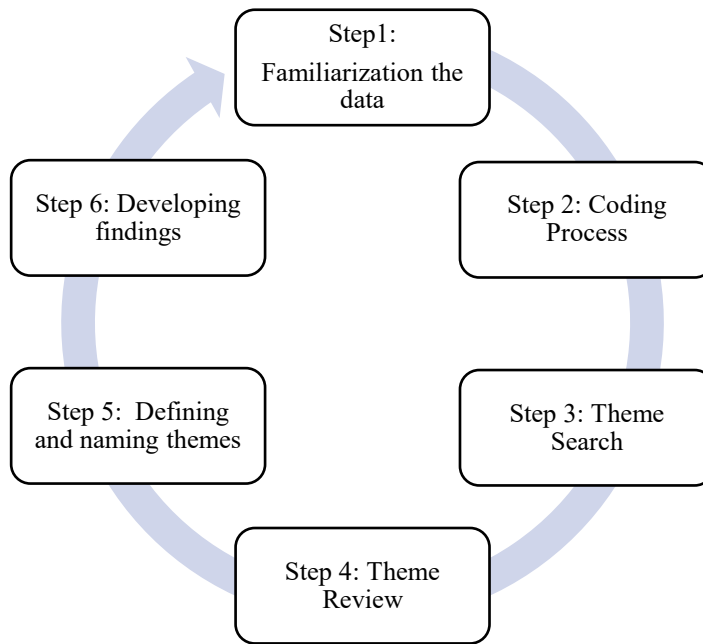
#### 5. Defining and naming themes

The researcher gave each theme a name and a clear description to represent the participant's experience, such as the challenges of implementing Merdeka Curriculum are defined as the obstacles experienced by teachers in implementing Merdeka Curriculum including passive students during the learning process and inadequate infrastructure and internet.

#### 6. Developing of findings

Researchers developed findings to describe each theme in the context of participants' experiences. This finding was developed by linking the themes with supporting theories, resulting in an in-depth understanding of the implementation of teaching strategies.

**Figure 3. 1 Stages of Thematic Analysis**



Through the combination of these two theories, data analysis can provide an in-depth illustration of how English teachers implement teaching strategies, the challenges faced, and the solutions used in the context of Merdeka Curriculum.

#### **F. Triangulation**

Given (2008) in his book stated, triangulation is a multi-method approach to data collection and analysis that aims to understand phenomena in more depth through a combination of research methods, and is used to test the validity of findings. Triangulation has 4 types, namely triangulation of methods, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and triangulation of data sources. In this study, the researcher chose data sources triangulation as a method of testing data validity. In Given's book (2008), it is explained that data sources triangulation is a method

to increase the credibility of qualitative research by collecting data from various supporting sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents. With this, researchers ensure that the existing data avoids bias and is tested for credibility.