CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks and variables applied in this research. The key variables explored are Merdeka curriculum, teacher creativity, professional development, and teacher burnout. Each section will provide a detailed description of these variables, including relevant theories and research findings.

A. Merdeka Curriculum

1. History of Merdeka Curriculum Changes

A nation's progress and the renewal of its talent often begin with improvements in education. Many countries understand this, and in the past few decades, there have been many inspiring educational reforms around the world. In Indonesia, there have been concerns about the quality of basic education in recent years. Educational reforms seem to have stalled, need a thorough review to identify the current situation and its root causes for better solutions. Additionally, there is a need for new and creative approaches to quickly bring energy and improvement to the large education system.[29]

The history of the Merdeka Curriculum shifts in Indonesia dates back to its emergence as an alternative curriculum during the pandemic, aiming to provide autonomous learning opportunities for students and educators.[30] This initiative came about due to the problems caused by school closures and the shift to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the two years of pandemic, in terms of students achieving their literacy and numeracy competencies, there has been a marked increase in learning loss (loss of learning).[31] The first-grade learning progress suffered significantly during the

[29] Claudia Wang et al., "Technology-driven education reform in Indonesia: a look into the crurrent status of the Merdeka Belajar Program," Monograph (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset dan Teknologi, 2023), https://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/30538/.
[30] Jaza Ana Albirru, "The Historical Relevance of the Indonesian National Movement in the Merdeka Curriculum," *JURNAL HISTORICA* 7, no. 1 (May 27, 2023): 30–41, https://doi.org/10.19184/jh.v7i1.39114.
[31] Matdio Siahaan, "Dampak Pandemi Covid-19 Terhadap Dunia Pendidikan," *Jurnal Kajian Ilmiah* 1, no. 1 (July 31, 2020): 73, https://doi.org/10.31599/jki.v1i1.265.

pandemic. A student's loss of learning in literacy is equal to six months of learning. As for numeracy, a student's learning loss is equivalent to five months of study.[32] This underscores the urgency of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum to address the existing issues.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) has introduced the Merdeka Curriculum was not just a response to the need for addressing learning loss. However, the launched of this curriculum is aimed as an essential part of efforts to recover long-standing educational challenges.[33] This includes a global context, learning outcome in primary and secondary education levels as evidenced by low Programmed for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores, the evaluation results of the 2013 curriculum, further highlighting the urgency of implementing this curriculum.

2. Factors Influencing the shifts of the Merdeka Curriculum

The shift to the Merdeka Curriculum has been driven by various factors that have shaped educational policy in Indonesia. These factors reflect both pre-existing conditions and responses to emerging challenges, leading to the need for reform in the education system. These factors are can be categorized as: a) Pre-pandemic; b) the pandemic; c) Emergency Curriculum and the positive outcomes; d) evaluations of Curriculum 13; and e) the alternative curriculum.[34]

2.1. Pre-Pandemic.

In global context, the learning outcomes for primary and secondary education are still unsatisfactory. According to the Programmed for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesian students' performance in 2018 indicates significant room for improvement. In the reading category, Indonesia ranked 74th out of 79 countries, while in mathematics and science, it ranked 73rd and 71st respectively out of 79

[32] Yogi Anggraena et al., "Kajian akademik kurikulum untuk pemulihan pembelajaran," Monograph (Jakarta: Pusat Kurikulum dan Pembelajaran, 2022), 13, https://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/24972/.
[33] "Kurikulum Merdeka," ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id, accessed May 2, 2025, https://ditpsd.kemdikbud.go.id/hal/103.124.137.101/hal/kurikulum-merdeka.
[34] Anggraena et al., "Kajian akademik kurikulum untuk pemulihan pembelajaran.", 14.

participating countries.[35] Indonesia's performance in the 2018 PISA test remained low with no significant improvement over an 18-year period.

Non-academic results, like attitude and behavior, also need improvement. Many Indonesian students report experiencing bullying, affecting their academic performance and emotional well-being. As many as 41% of Indonesian students are reported to be bullied at least several times a month.[36] Students who frequently experience bullying score 21 points lower in reading. They also feel sad, afraid, and dissatisfied with their lives. These students are more likely to be absent from school.

Regarding the growth mindset, there's also a need for change. Survey results show that only 29% of Indonesian students disagree with the statement "intelligence cannot be changed much". This means Indonesian students have a low growth mindset, as they don't see the need to improve themselves academically. Students with a growth mindset score 32 points higher in reading, aren't afraid of failure, are more motivated and ambitious, and consider education more important.

2.2. The pandemic.

At the beginning of 2020, the whole world, including Indonesia, faced the disaster of the COVID-19 pandemic. This worsens the learning crisis that was already occurring in Indonesia, as explained in section A. During the 2 years of the pandemic, there has been a significant increase in learning loss, as seen in students' literacy and numeracy competencies. Research indicates that before the pandemic, students made progress equivalent to 129 points in literacy and 78 points in numeracy over one year. However, during the pandemic, learning progress is significantly decreased. For literacy, students experienced a learning loss equivalent to

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[35] La Hewi and Muh Shaleh, "Refleksi Hasil PISA (The Programme for International Student Assesment): Upaya Perbaikan Bertumpu Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini)," *Jurnal Golden Age* 4, no. 01 (June 30, 2020): 30.

[36] Rachmawaty M. Noer et al., "Pencegahan Perilaku Bullying Pada Siswa Kelas Vii Di Mts Nahdhatul Wathan," *Community Development Journal: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 1, no. 3 (November 30, 2020): 523, https://doi.org/10.31004/cdj.v1i3.1452.

6 months of study, while for numeracy; the learning loss was equivalent to 5 months of study.

2.3. Emergency Curriculum and the positive outcomes.

At the end of August, when the pandemic was ongoing, the government issued a policy to mitigate learning loss due to the pandemic. This involved giving schools the option to use a simplified curriculum (emergency curriculum) to focus on strengthening character and fundamental competencies. Additionally, the government provided literacy and numeracy modules to assist teachers in implementing the curriculum, along with modules for parents to use at home.

The policy outlined in Minister of Education and Culture Decree No. 719/P/2020 allowed educational institutions to choose between fully implementing the 2013 curriculum, using the simplified emergency curriculum developed by the government, or creating their own simplified version of the 2013 curriculum.

During the pandemic, it was observed that students using the emergency curriculum had better learning outcomes compared to those following the full 2013 curriculum, regardless of their socio-economic background.[37] Indeed, the emergency curriculum has demonstrated positive impacts aligned with its implementation objectives.

2.4. Evaluation of K-13 Curriculum.

Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) evaluation found that students are burdened with too many subjects, and teachers misunderstand the concept of mastery learning under the Curriculum 2013. This leads to complaints about the heavy workload, especially during exams. Additionally, the centralized curriculum does not accommodate the diverse needs of schools and students, limiting flexibility and creativity in teaching.

[37] Anggraena et al., "Kajian akademik kurikulum untuk pemulihan pembelajaran.", 19.

To address these issues, a simpler and more flexible curriculum is needed. Teachers often focus on administrative tasks rather than effective teaching methods, and the current curriculum lacks flexibility to adapt to different learning environments, especially during and after the pandemic. Furthermore, it fails to accommodate the needs of students with special needs.

The Curriculum 2013 has several shortcomings, including overly broad competencies, rigid structures, and a lack of options for subjects and approaches. These issues have not been adequately addressed by emergency curriculum implementations.

2.5. The Needs of Alternative Curriculum.

The Indonesian government, through the MoECRT provides three options for curriculum: complete adoption of Curriculum 2013, an emergency curriculum, and the Merdeka Curriculum.

3. Merdeka Curriculum Key Changes.

The Merdeka Curriculum aims to promote creativity and flexibility among teachers, enabling them to adjust to the specific circumstances of their schools. This shift in curriculum will result in several alterations to Indonesia's educational framework. According to the Directorate of Junior High Schools (2022), there are least four key changes are anticipated in the curriculum:

3.1. More Flexible Curriculum Structure:

The 2013 Curriculum is considered inflexible and unable to adapt to the changes happening in the education sector and society.[38] The previous national curriculum did not give teachers much flexibility, especially regarding the number of hours per week. However, after shifting to the Merdeka Curriculum, teachers have the flexibility to conduct teaching at the appropriate level, accommodating students' abilities, as well as adjusting to the local context and content. The independent

[38] Gumgum Gumilar et al., "Urgensi Penggantian Kurikulum 2013 Menjadi Kurikulum Merdeka," *Jurnal Papeda: Jurnal Publikasi Pendidikan Dasar* 5, no. 2 (July 26, 2023): 149.

curriculum follows flexible principles, allowing educators to customize learning experiences according to students' capabilities and local contexts, in addition to their own proficiency.[39]

3.2. Focus on Essential Materials:

The focus on essential materials is aimed at providing sufficient time for in-depth learning of fundamental competencies such as literacy and numeracy.[40] In Merdeka Curriculum the curriculum content is being reduced. Learner-centered learning starts with how the curriculum is designed, not just with how teachers teach after its set. Everyone needs to reach a certain level of ability. Making sure students are strong in reading and math, especially in basic education, is a big part of designing a curriculum that focuses on skills.[41]

Essential materials are studied more freely and without rushing, allowing students to learn deeply. They explore a concept from various perspectives, see its connections to other concepts, apply newly learned ideas in different and real-life situations, and reflect on their understanding. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), such learning experiences enhance students' understanding of a concept more deeply and sustainably.[42]

3.3. Use of Diverse Teaching Tools:

Teachers have often felt limited by the lack of variety in available teaching materials. This has made it challenging to create engaging and relevant lessons. The upcoming curriculum changes aim to address this issue by giving teachers the flexibility to use a wide range of teaching tools that suit the needs and characteristics of their students.

3.4. Utilization of Digital Technology:

In the previous curriculum, the implementation did not fully take advantage of digital technology and applications. In implementing the new

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[39] Prof. Dr. H. E Mulyasa, *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka* (Bumi Aksara, 2023), 4.
[40] Mulyasa, 4.
[41] Anggraena et al., "Kajian akademik kurikulum untuk pemulihan pembelajaran.", 19.
[42] Anggraena et al., 19.

curriculum and its programs, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT) has made significant progress by creating an integrated technological ecosystem. A key initiative has been the development of tools like the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM).

The Platform Merdeka Mengajar (*PMM*) application is designed to facilitate teaching, student evaluation, and training to enhance educators' competencies. It also serves to inspire colleagues. With this platform, teachers can improve their performance through their own developed creativity.[43] PMM provides various references for teachers to develop their teaching in line with the Merdeka Curriculum.[44]

B. Teacher Creativity

1. The definition of Creative Teachers in EFL Context

Teaching and learning English at their best are dynamic, purposeful, and imaginatively enriching experiences for everyone involved. It helps develop learners' skills, confidence, and creativity, and build a positive attitude towards learning.[45] The National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE, 1999 as cited in Jeffrey 2010) defined creative teaching as using imaginative methods to make learning more interesting and effective. Teaching for creativity is defined as teaching methods aimed at developing young people's creative thinking and behavior.[46] Guilford (1967) emphasized that creativity is extremely important for education and for solving some of the biggest problems facing humanity. A creative approach of teaching English includes several important components that helps teachers decide both planning and interactions within the classroom.

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[43] Wang et al., "Technology-driven education reform in Indonesia.", 18.
[44] Mulyasa, *Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka, 39*.
[45] Teresa Cremin, *Teaching English Creatively*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2022), 1, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003055372.
[46] Bob Jeffrey * and Anna and Craft, "Teaching Creatively and Teaching for Creativity: Distinctions and Relationships," *Educational Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 77, https://doi.org/10.1080/0305569032000159750.

Guilford[47] emphasized that creativity is extremely important for education and for solving some of the biggest problems facing humanity. According to Guilford[48], there are three main things that are really important for being creative.

1.1. Fluency

Fluency is the ability to come up with many ideas or solutions within a particular situation or challenge. It's about being able to think quickly and produce a lot of different thoughts or answers related to a specific problem or topic.

1.2. Flexibility

Flexibility is the ability to change your way of thinking when you're faced with different challenges or situations. It means being able to look at things from different angles, try out different approaches, and adjust your strategies as needed to find the best solution.

1.3. Elaboration

Elaboration involves adding more details and expanding on ideas to make them richer and more complex. This helps to make creative outputs more interesting and original.

2. Merdeka Curriculum Changes towards Teacher Creativity.

The changes in the Indonesian curriculum, especially with the introduction of the Merdeka Curriculum, have brought about various effects on the creativity of EFL teachers. A study by Kurniawan and Purwandari found that using differentiated methods in science lessons improves students' creative thinking skills more than using uniform methods. This was true for indicators like fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.[49] These results show that teacher creativity is crucial for implementing differentiated learning in the classroom to enhance students' creative thinking abilities.

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[47] J.P. Guilford, *The Nature of Human Intelligence*, First Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967),13, https://gwern.net/doc/iq/1967-guilford-thenatureofhumanintelligence.pdf.
[48] Guilford, 62.
[49] Rini Kurniawan and Ristiana Purwandari, "The Effect of Differentiate Learning on Elementary School Student's Creative Thinking Ability," 2023, https://eudl.eu/doi/10.4108/eai.22-7-2023.2335160.

Teacher creativity in curriculum changes is also tested through the use of a new teaching platform, the Merdeka Mengajar Platform. This platform, created by the Ministry of Education and Culture, is designed to support the Merdeka Curriculum. It helps teachers find resources, get inspired, and improve their understanding and skills for applying this curriculum. It encourages collaboration and sharing among teachers. The platform is an effective way to boost teachers' skills, creativity, and innovation. It allows all teachers in Indonesia to continuously learn and grow their competencies, anytime and anywhere.[50]

Project-based learning can be considered as another method for evaluating teachers' innovativeness in implementing curriculum changes. In this approach, students are encouraged to be more engaged, with the teacher serving mainly as a facilitator. Teachers assess the students' work displayed as project results. Given this context, a study by Hastuti et al. was conducted to examine the impact of project-based learning on the subject of electric lighting installations. The study aims to enhance students' creativity and learning outcomes by applying project-based learning to the teaching of electric lighting installations.[51]

C. Professional Development

1. The definition of Professional Development in EFL Context.

Professional development is one of the key factors in improving a teacher's knowledge, attitudes, and skills.[52] It that helps teachers improves their teaching skills, update their knowledge of the subject matter, and stay informed about new teaching methodologies and technologies. With the presents of Merdeka Curriculum, teachers will

[50] Erik Hidayat and Muharizal Muharizal, "The Role of the Teacher in Improving the Quality of Learning Through the Teaching Freedom Platform," *Journal of Engineering Education and Pedagogy* 1, no. 1 (June 26, 2023): 9.
[51] Hastuti et al., "Project-Based Learning to Enhance Creativity and Learning Outcomes" (9th International Conference on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ICTVET 2022), Atlantis Press, 2023), 67, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-050-3_8.
[52] Syella Ardani et al., "The Roles of Teacher Supporting Group for Elementary School Teacher Professional Development," *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)* 7, no. 2 (March 12, 2024): 384.

focus more on presenting, reinforcing, and evaluating their teaching materials. Teachers also have numerous opportunities to engage in discussions and teach students in more interactive, collaborative, and practical ways that are aligned with the students' conditions. Therefore, the professional development of teachers is highly necessary to implement and develop various teaching tools for the Merdeka Curriculum, including creating modules and project-based learning models.[53]

2. Professional Development Program

One of the Management Information Systems (MIS) in educational institutions that functions in the development of continuous professional development is SIM-PKB. It is an online learning service for Teachers and Educational Personnel (*GTK*) in Indonesia. This service is organized by the Directorate General of GTK of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, in order to improve the quality of GTK in Indonesia. SIM PKB is one of the services used by the Ministry of Education and Culture to manage the professional development and sustainability of teachers and educational personnel under its jurisdiction.[54]

SIM-PKB designed aims to support the continuous professional development of teachers and educational personnel. This comprehensive system encompasses several key initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of education in Indonesia by providing structured development opportunities for educators. Here is an in-depth look at each of these initiatives that cited in competency test portal:[55]

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[53] Endah Yulia Rahayu, Nunung Nurjati, and Samsul Khabib, "Kesiapan Profesionalisme Guru Bahasa Inggris SMK Dalam Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka," *Seminar Nasional Hasil Riset Dan Pengabdian* 4 (June 1, 2022): 1475.

[54] Samsul Ma'arif, Muhammad Nuril Huda, and Dwi Khismailah, "Sistem Informasi Manajemen Pengembangan Keprofesian Berkelanjutan (SIM PKB) Dalam Pengembangan Keprofesian Guru Di SMP Nurul Islam Lumajang Dan SMP Al-Maliki Lumajang," *Jurnal Kependidikan Islam* 13, no. 1 (February 15, 2023): 77, https://doi.org/10.15642/jkpi.2023.13.1.76-83.

[55] "Portal Uji Kompetensi," accessed 2024, https://ujikompetensi.kemdikbud.go.id/.

a) Competency Tests (Uji Kompetensi):

Competency tests are administered to evaluate the knowledge, skills, and abilities of teachers. These tests are crucial for identifying areas where educators need further development and training. The results help in designing professional development programs that address specific needs and improve overall teaching effectiveness. Competency tests ensure that teachers have the necessary skills to meet educational standards and provide high-quality education to students.

b) Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG - Pendidikan Profesi Guru):

The Teacher Professional Education program (PPG) is a structured program designed to certify teachers who have met certain professional standards. PPG provides rigorous training that includes both theoretical and practical components, preparing teachers to handle various classroom scenarios effectively. This program aims to produce highly competent and qualified teachers who are well-versed in modern educational practices and methodologies.

c) *Guru Penggerak* and *Sekolah Penggerak*:

Sekolah Penggerak focuses on transforming selected schools into centers of excellence that drive educational improvements. These schools serve as models for others by implementing innovative teaching practices, fostering a positive school culture, and engaging the community. The initiative aims to accelerate educational reforms and ensure that successful strategies are replicated across other schools in the region.

Guru Penggerak is a program aimed at developing teachers into leaders and agents of change within their schools and communities. The program selects and trains teachers to become role models who can inspire and drive educational improvements. These teachers are equipped with leadership skills, innovative teaching methods, and the ability to foster a positive school culture. The ultimate goal of this program is to create a

network of skilled educators who can contribute significantly to the advancement of education in Indonesia.

d) Training Programs:

Various training programs are offered through the SIM-PKB platform to provide continuous learning opportunities for educators. These programs cover a wide range of topics, from pedagogical techniques to the integration of technology in the classroom. The training sessions are designed to be interactive and practical, allowing teachers to immediately apply what they have learned in their teaching practice.

e) Upskilling and Reskilling Efforts:

Upskilling and reskilling initiatives are essential components of the SIM PKB platform, ensuring that educators can adapt to changing educational demands and technological advancements. Upskilling focuses on enhancing existing skills, while reskilling provides opportunities for teachers to learn new competencies that may be required due to shifts in the educational landscape. These efforts ensure that educators remain relevant and effective in their roles, ultimately improving student outcomes.

Together, these initiatives under the SIM PKB platform form a comprehensive approach to professional development for educators in Indonesia. By continuously assessing and addressing the needs of teachers, the platform helps ensure that the education system can meet contemporary challenges and provide high-quality education to all students. The ultimate goal is to foster a dynamic and capable educational workforce that can contribute significantly to the nation's development.

3. Professional Development influences on Merdeka Curriculum Change

Professional development in Indonesia also has been influenced by the changes of curriculum, especially for EFL teachers. A study conducted by Avillanova & Kuswandono revealed that The Department of Education and Culture in Cilacap Regency provides various programs to develop teacher professionalism. These include technical training,

workshops, and ongoing professional development supported by teacher networks. These programs focus on improving professional development and teacher competency. They use full online learning and blended learning approaches to ensure continuous growth and development for teachers.[56]

A study by Mardhiah et al.[57] emphasizes the significance of the Professional Teacher Education Program (PPG) in promoting teacher professional development. The research shows that the PPG method greatly improves teacher professionalism, supports outcomes-based teaching and evaluation, and cultivates essential skills and abilities for future educators.

Study done by Retnowati et al, stated that it is essential for English teachers to participate in *Guru Penggerak* to advance their continuous professional growth. Following enrollment in the program, English teachers enhanced three aspects of their professional development: Self-development, academic publications, and innovative projects. The initiative primarily focused on improving teachers' pedagogical skills in English, although less emphasis was placed on enhancing their overall language proficiency. Nevertheless, *Guru Penggerak* motivated English teachers to actively strive for individual improvement in their English proficiency.[58]

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[56] Anchieta Ave Avillanova and Paulus Kuswandono, "English Teacher Professional Development In Indonesia: The Challenges and Opportunities," *ENGLISH REVIEW: Journal of English Education* 8, no. 1 (January 12, 2019): 44, https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v8i1.1972.

[57] Mardhiah Mardhiah, Awaliah Musgamy, and Mukhlis Lubis, "Teacher Professional Development through the Teacher Education Program (PPG) at Islamic Education Institutions," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 22, no. 11 (November 26, 2023), 80, https://ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/article/view/8986.

[58] Lusiana Dian Retnowati, Ismail Petrus, and Rita Inderawati, "Guru Penggerak and Continuous Professional Development: A Case Study of English Teachers in Palembang," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 16, no. 2 (March 30, 2024): 1771, https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i4.3751.

D. Teacher Burnout

1. The definition of Teacher Burnout in EFL Context

Teacher burnout refers to a psychological syndrome that results from prolonged exposure to emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job, particularly in the teaching profession. It is commonly characterized by three major dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (a sense of detachment or cynicism towards students), and reduced personal accomplishment (a decline in feelings of competence and achievement at work). This concept was first introduced by Maslach and Jackson[59] and is widely used in educational research to understand the mental health and professional sustainability of teachers.

According to Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter[60], burnout develops gradually and is particularly prevalent in helping professions like teaching, where emotional demands are high. In the context of education, teacher burnout not only affects the well-being of educators but also has a direct impact on instructional quality, student outcomes, and teacher retention.

In any profession, individuals may experience periods of feeling overwhelmed by their workload. This is particularly true for teachers, who often face numerous responsibilities and challenges in their role. According to Maslach and Leiter[61], they defined Burnout as a psychological condition that happens when someone feels worn out from long-term stress at work. It has three main parts: feeling extremely tired, becoming cynical or distant from work, and feeling like you're not achieving anything. This model shows that burnout is not just about personal feelings—it's also affected by the social environment and how someone sees themselves and others.

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[59] Christina Maslach and Susan E. Jackson, "The Measurement of Experienced Burnout," *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 2, no. 2 (1981): 99–113, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030020205.
[60] Christina Maslach, Wilmar B. Schaufeli, and Michael P. Leiter, "Job Burnout," *Annual Review of Psychology* 52, no. Volume 52, 2001 (February 1, 2001): 397–422, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397.
[61] Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter, "Understanding the Burnout Experience: Recent Research and Its Implications for Psychiatry," *World Psychiatry* 15, no. 2 (June 2016): 103, https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20311.

The findings from Aeria et al.[62] and Hastings and Bham[63] suggest that teacher burnout is mainly influenced by three factors: workload, administrative duties, and student behavior. Aeria et al. found that too much workload, such as teaching duties and school programs, was the strongest cause of emotional exhaustion among teachers in Malaysia. They also found that tasks like filling out reports and doing clerical work added to the stress. These duties often take time away from teaching and make teachers feel tired and less effective. Meanwhile, Hastings and Bham showed that students' negative behavior, like being disrespectful or not paying attention, was closely linked to teacher burnout, especially emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. When students were not friendly or supportive, teachers also felt less successful in their jobs. These findings suggest that burnout comes from a mix of heavy workload, too many non-teaching duties, and difficult student behavior. Without proper support, these pressures can seriously contribute to teachers' well-being and motivation.

2. Teacher Burnout influences on Merdeka Curriculum Changes

In the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, EFL teachers are expected to be more creative in their teaching approach. In the Merdeka Curriculum, there are simplified curriculum and lesson plan (*RPP*) formats that provide benefits to teachers. The curriculum, previously used for learning activities, is now simplified to stay relevant and match students' skills with current needs. This adjustment helps teachers save time when preparing RPPs.[64]

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[62] Lawrence Aeria et al., "Burnout among Malaysian Teachers in Implementing Curricular Changes," *The New Educational Review* 51, no. 1 (March 31, 2018): 209–20, https://doi.org/10.15804/tner.2018.51.1.17.

[63] Richard P. Hastings and Mohammed S. Bham, "The Relationship between Student Behaviour Patterns and Teacher Burnout," *School Psychology International* 24, no. 1 (February 1, 2003): 115–27, https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034303024001905.

[64] Tuti Marlina, "Urgensi Dan Implikasi Pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka Pada Sekolah Dasar/Madrasah Ibtidaiyah," *PROSIDING SEMINAR NASIONAL PENDIDIKAN EKONOMI* 1, no. 1 (June 15, 2022): 70.

While teaching responsibilities might appear less intense without the pressure to rush through curriculum content, the heavy administrative workload can still be exhausting. Teachers encounter challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in planning, executing, and assessing learning. These challenges include analyzing Learning Outcomes (*CP*), formulating Learning Objectives (*TP*), and compiling Learning Objectives Flow (*ATP*) and Teaching Modules. They also struggle with selecting learning methods and strategies, limited proficiency in using technology and educational media, managing extensive teaching materials, and deciding on classroom projects.[65]

The findings of Syabilla et al.[66] revealed that negative student behavior is a significant contributor to stress and potential burnout among Indonesian EFL teachers across educational levels. Teachers reported frequent challenges in managing uncooperative, unfocused, stubborn, and disruptive students, especially in primary and middle schools.

The implementation of curriculum changes often requires intensive adjustment for teachers, including the development of new teaching materials, training related to the new curriculum, and adaptation to changes in teaching methods. This process can increase workload and stress for teachers, especially if they do not receive sufficient support from the school or government.

E. Previous Studies

Previous studies are essential parts of scientific research plans as it is considered as the second part related to the theoretical framework. It provides fruitful information for those interested in understanding all aspects of the problem or hypothesis being investigated.[67] Understanding prior research will

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[65] Windayanti Windayanti et al., "Problematika Guru Dalam Menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka" 6, no. 1 (June 5, 2023): 2056, https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v6i1.3197.

[66] Zalsa Febrina Syabilla et al., "UNCOVERING THE RESILIENCE AND STRESS FACTORS OF EFL TEACHERS: A NARRATIVE STUDY," *English Review: Journal of English Education* 12, no. 1 (January 31, 2024): 231–44, https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v12i1.8934.

[67] E Emtyiaz, "What Are the Previous Studies in Scientific Research (Docx) - Course Sidekick," accessed May 27, 2024, https://www.coursesidekick.com/psychology/698591.

help in interpreting the study outcomes by comparing the results with previous findings to see if the align or differ. If it differs, the researcher can explain why by highlighting differences between the study and others. If it aligns, the researcher can propose next steps and further studies.[68]

Numerous studies have been conducted on Merdeka Curriculum Changes as it became sought after issue in Indonesia education realm. This section will delve deeper into the previous studies that serve as the basis for the correct study.

A thesis by Hermiati[69], titled *"The Influence of Curriculum Change Implementation on the Professional Competence of Educators at SMK Negeri 2 Pekanbaru"*, investigates how curriculum changes affect the professional competence of teachers. The study found a correlation value of 0.634, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between the implementation of curriculum changes and teachers' professional competence. Since this value is higher than the critical value of 0.236, it suggests that the relationship is statistically significant and unlikely to have occurred by chance. Additionally, the coefficient of determination (R Square) was 0.402, meaning that 40.2% of the variation in teacher competence could be explained by curriculum changes, while the remaining 59.8% was influenced by other factors not examined in the study. This research connects with the current study in its shared focus on how curriculum reforms impact teachers, especially in terms of their professional growth and performance.

A thesis by Edi Sanjaya[70], titled *"Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar dalam Meningkatkan Kreativitas Guru dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar Mata Pelajaran PAI di SMAN 7 Kota Kediri pada Tahun Ajaran*

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[68] L. R. Gay, Geoffrey E. Mills, and Peter W. Airasian, *Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Applications* (Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 2006), 29.

[69] - HERMIATI, "Pengaruh Implementasi Perubahan Kurikulum Terhadap Kompetensi Profesional Tenaga Pendidik Di SMK Negeri 2 Pekanbaru" (skripsi, UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI SULTAN SYARIF KASIM RIAU, 2023), https://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/76317/.

[70] Edi Sanjaya, "Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Dalam Meningkatkan Kreativitas Guru Dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar Mata Pelajaran PAI Di SMAN 7 Kota Kediri Pada Tahun Ajaran 2022/2023" (undergraduate, IAIN Kediri, 2023), https://etheses.iainkediri.ac.id/10862/.

2022/2023", explores how the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum influences teacher creativity. The findings indicate a significant increase in teachers' creativity, as evidenced by their ability to create, select, and apply various teaching methods tailored to lesson themes, student needs, and learning characteristics. The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum has had a notable impact in several areas: (1) teachers have become more creative in selecting appropriate teaching strategies, (2) they demonstrate greater creativity in choosing and using instructional media, and (3) they show improved creativity in managing classrooms during lessons. This research is interconnected with the current study through its shared focus on how curriculum changes contribute to teacher creativity. Both studies highlight the importance of understanding the ways in which curriculum reforms influence teacher effectiveness and professional well-being in the classroom context.

A journal article by Farah Verniati, Dicky Iranto, and Suparno[71], titled *"Pengaruh Kompetensi Profesional Guru dan Kreativitas Guru terhadap Inovasi Pembelajaran pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar"*, investigates the influence of teachers' professional competence and creativity on learning innovation within the context of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum. The findings reveal a significant and positive effect of both professional competence and teacher creativity on the development of innovative teaching practices. Furthermore, the study identifies a strong correlation between professional competence and creativity, indicating that teachers who are more skilled and creative are more likely to implement innovative approaches in their classrooms. This research is closely connected to the current study through its shared focus on how curriculum changes influence teacher performance, particularly in terms of creativity and professional development. Both studies underscore the importance of supporting teachers' growth in order to enhance the effectiveness and innovation of the learning process.

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[71] Farah Verniati, Dicky Iranto, and Suparno Suparno, "Pengaruh Kompetensi Profesional Guru Dan Kreativitas Guru Terhadap Inovasi Pembelajaran Pada Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 7, no. 2 (August 29, 2023): 18521–27, https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v7i2.9304.

The findings of Syabilla et al.[72] revealed that negative student behaviour is a significant contributor to stress and potential burnout among Indonesian EFL teachers across educational levels. Teachers reported frequent challenges in managing uncooperative, unfocused, stubborn, and disruptive students, especially in primary and middle schools. These behaviours often disrupted instructional flow and created emotional strain for teachers, leading to a sense of exhaustion and frustration. For instance, the primary school teacher experienced difficulty in maintaining classroom discipline and student engagement, while the middle school teacher faced emotional stress due to students' low motivation and learning difficulties. At the high school level, teachers struggled with student absenteeism and resistance to academic expectations. The study highlights that such persistent behavioural issues, when not supported with adequate training and institutional support, can lead to emotional fatigue and decreased teaching effectiveness, thereby increasing the risk of teacher burnout. The interconnection between this study and the current research lies in their shared concern with teacher well-being and the factors that influence burnout. While Syabilla et al. emphasize the role of student behaviour as a stressor, the current study complements this by examining how curriculum changes—combined with internal classroom dynamics—contribute to teacher burnout, particularly in EFL settings.

Numerous studies have explored Merdeka curriculum changes, teacher creativity, professional development, and teacher burnout using both quantitative and qualitative study. Whether correlating Merdeka curriculum changes with teacher creativity alone or including professional development, as mentioned in several previous studies above. However, to date, no studies have examined all four variables together in a single study or employed a structural equation model (SEM) to analyze the data.

[72] Syabilla et al., “UNCOVERING THE RESILIENCE AND STRESS FACTORS OF EFL TEACHERS.”

F. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING

1. Definition of Structural Equation Modeling

Structural Equation Modeling, referred as SEM is an important framework within social sciences that encompasses a variety of statistical models. In its simplest form, path analysis enables the investigation of relationships between observed or manifest variables, including mediation and moderation effects. However, researchers often focus on unobserved or latent variables in their analyses.[73]

Factor analysis provides a statistical method for determining the relationships between manifest and latent variables by specifying a measurement model. Additionally, a structural model can be formulated to hypothesize causal relationships between multiple latent variables. Moreover, a hierarchical or multilevel structure can be employed when studying latent variables across multiple groups, such as countries or classes, or over time. Consequently, SEM serves as an exceptionally powerful toolkit that enables researchers to translate various substantive theories into statistical models and estimate the relevant parameters accurately.

SEM is described as a statistical modeling technique that is highly versatile, allowing for both cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses. It can handle linear and non-linear relationships, making it a powerful tool for analyzing complex relationships among variables. Another definition of SEM describes it as a general and highly versatile multivariate analysis technique. It encompasses various other analytical methods as special cases, making it a comprehensive tool for analyzing complex relationships among variables. SEM also defines as a statistical technique used to build and test statistical models, usually in the form of causal models. SEM is actually a hybrid

[73] Sara van Erp, *Bayesian Structural Equation Modeling: The Power of the Prior* (Tilburg: Tilburg University, 2020),5, https://pure.uvt.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/41207262/van_Erp_Bayesian_11_09_2020.pdf.

technique that includes the confirmatory aspects of factor analysis, path analysis and regression which can be considered as special cases within SEM.[74]

Another opinion by Chin (1998), Gefen et al. (2000), Kirby and Bollen (2009), Priouz (2006) as cited by Latan (2013) states that Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a second-generation multivariate analysis technique that combines factor analysis and path analysis. This integration allows researchers to simultaneously test and estimate the relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables with multiple indicators.[75]

2. Basic Concepts of Structural Equation Modeling

2.1. SEM Variables

2.1.1 Latent Variables

There are two major types of variables in SEM: latent variables and observed variables. Latent variables, also known as constructs or factors, are variables that are not directly observable or measured. Instead, they are inferred from a set of observed variables, which are directly measured using tests, surveys, and similar methods.

Variables, whether observed or latent, can also be categorized as independent variables or dependent variables. An independent variable is a variable that is not influenced by any other variable in the model. It is typically the variable that is manipulated or controlled by the researcher and is assumed to have a causal effect on other variables. On the other hand, a dependent variable is a variable that is influenced by another variable in the model. It is the variable that is hypothesized to be affected by changes in the independent variable(s) and is the outcome or response variable of interest in the study. [76]

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[74] Yonathan Sarwono, "Pengertian Dasar Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)," *Ilmiah Manajemen Bisnis*, 2010, 173. https://ejournal.ukrida.ac.id/index.php/IMB/article/view/576.

[75] Zulkifli Musannip Efendi Siregar et al., *Structural Equation Modeling, Konsep dan Implementasinya Pada Kajian Ilmu Manajemen Dengan Menggunakan Amos*, 1st ed. (DeePublish, 2021), 42.

[76] Randall E. Schumacker and Richard G. Lomax, *A Beginner's Guide to Structural Equation Modeling: Third Edition* (Routledge, 2012), 2-3.

There are two types of latent variables: exogenous variables (independent) and endogenous variables (dependent). These two types of variables are distinguished based on their position as dependent or independent variables within a structural equation model. Exogenous variables are represented in Greek letters with "ξ" while endogenous variables are represented with "η." In graphical representation, exogenous variables are depicted as the target of lines with two arrows or correlation/covariance relationships, whereas endogenous variables are the target of at least one arrow or regression relationship.

2.1.2. Observed Variables

In Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis, variables that can be directly measured or observed are referred to as manifest variables or observed variables. Observed variables are those that can be measured directly or variables that explain unobserved variables for measurement. Manifest variables are empirically observable or measurable variables. Manifest variables, which are effects or measures of latent variables, are often referred to as indicators.[77]

2.2. SEM Models

According to Schumacker & Lomax discovered the following checklists in developing SEM research, which will be detailed below:

a. Theoretical Model & Data Preparation

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) study starts by outlining the rationale and purpose of the study, followed by establishing a strong theoretical basis for both the measurement model and the structural model. Including a discussion of the latent variables and their definitions. The hypothesis should involve testing the structural model and/or comparing different models.

[77] Siswono Haryono, *Metode SEM untuk Penelitian Manajemen dengan AMOS LISREL PLS* (PT. Intermedia Personalia Utama, 2016), 34.

b. Model Specification

Model specification involves determining every relationship and parameter in the model that is of interest to the researcher. The goal is to create a theoretical model that accurately represents the sample data. If the model is incorrectly specified, it can lead to incorrect estimates of the parameters, which is known as specification error.

According to Ghozali[78], there are two essential steps in structural modeling: constructing the structural model by linking latent constructs, both endogenous and exogenous, and specifying the model by linking endogenous or exogenous constructs with indicator or manifest variables.

c. Model Identification

Model identification in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is the process of checking whether the model can be properly estimated.[79] It involves counting the number of parameters to be estimated and comparing them with the amount of information available from the data, such as variances and covariances. Based on this comparison, a model can be classified into three types: *underidentified* (not enough information to estimate the model), *just-identified* (the number of parameters equals the available information), and *overidentified* (more information than parameters, which allows both estimation and model testing). Ideally, a model should be overidentified so that it can be properly tested and evaluated.

d. Model Estimation

In model estimation, selecting the appropriate technique is crucial for estimating the parameters in both the measurement and structural models. These estimates represent the population parameters based on the sample data. For example, if the data meets specific criteria such as having no missing data, outliers, and following a normal distribution, *maximum likelihood estimation* (ML) may be suitable. ML estimates, along with standard errors

[78] Imam Ghozali, *Aplikasi Analisis Multivariete Dengan Program IBM SPSS 23*, 10th ed. (Badan Penerbit Universitas Diponegoro, 2021), 60.
[79] Schumacker and Lomax, *A Beginner's Guide to Structural Equation Modeling*, 2012.

and chi-square tests, are appropriate for interval-scaled variables that are normally distributed.

According to Bollen[80], MLE has several key features and works best with large samples because its properties become more accurate as the sample size increases. In the estimation stage of the SEM model, the output provides detailed information that helps researchers understand the relationships between variables. The key results include regression weights, which show the strength and direction of the relationship between variables; direct effects, which indicate the immediate influence one variable has on another; and indirect effects, which reflect the influence of one variable on another through one or more mediating variables. Together, these results help explain how the variables in the model are connected and whether the hypotheses proposed in the study are supported by the data.

f. Model Testing

In this step, the model's adequacy is evaluated through an examination of various Goodness-of-Fit criteria. Prerequisite testing is used to determine if the structural model meets the assumptions required by SEM, using the AMOS 26 application to establish the model's adequacy based on specific goodness-of-fit criteria. According to Ghozali[81], there are three types of goodness-of-fit measures:

1. absolute fit measures,
2. incremental fit measures,
3. parsimonious fit measures

This study will use the first type, which is absolute fit measures, because they can assess the overall fit of both the structural and measurement models together. Some tests of model adequacy using absolute fit measures are as follows:

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[80] Kenneth A. Bollen, *Structural Equations with Latent Variables*, 1st edition (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1989).
[81] Ghozali, *Model Persamaan Struktural, Konsep Dan Aplikasi Dengan Program AMOS 24, 63-66*.

1. *Likelihood Chi-square Test:*

The Likelihood chi-square test is used to develop and test if the model being examined fits the estimated model. A high Chi-square value relative to the degree of freedom indicates that the observed covariance or correlation matrix differs significantly from the predicted matrix, resulting in a probability level smaller than the significance level. Conversely, a low Chi-square value will result in a probability level greater than the significance level, indicating that the observed and predicted covariance or correlation matrices do not differ significantly. Empirical data is considered a good fit to the theory or model, or highly significant, if the Chi-square probability value is greater than the significance level (α) and the Chi-square value is less than or equal to the critical value ($\chi^2\alpha;df$). In other words, a small Chi-square value and a high p-value ($p > 0.05$) suggest that the model fits the data well. However, it is important to note that the Chi-square statistic is highly sensitive to sample size[82]. In large samples, even minor differences between the model and the data can result in a statistically significant Chi-square value ($p < 0.05$), making it appear that the model does not fit well, despite the differences being trivial. Therefore, researchers are advised to interpret the Chi-square value alongside other model fit indices such as CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR for a more comprehensive evaluation.

2. *CMIN/DF Test:*

The CMIN/DF test is the chi-square value divided by the degree of freedom. Some studies recommend using this ratio as a measure of fit. According to Wheaton et al., a ratio value of 5 or less is considered a reasonable fit.[83]

3. *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA):*

This test is a measure that attempts to improve the tendency of the chi-square statistic to reject the model with a large sample size. If RMSEA ≤ 0.05,

[82] Rex B. Kline, *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling*, 4th ed. (The Guilford Press, 2015). 269
[83] Ghozali, 64.

it indicates a Close Fit. An RMSEA between 0.05 and 0.08 suggests a Margin Fit, and an RMSEA ≥ 0.09 indicates a Poor Fit.

4. *Goodness of Fit Index (GFI):*

The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), developed by Jöreskog and Sörbom, is a non-statistical measure used to evaluate how well a model fits the empirical data.[84] If the GFI is ≥ 0.90, it indicates a Good Fit. A GFI between 0.80 and 0.90 suggests a Margin Fit, while a GFI < 0.80 indicates a Poor Fit.

5. *Tucker Lewis Index (TLI):*

The Tucker Lewis Index, also known as the non-normed fit Index (NNFI), combines parsimony into the comparison index between the proposed model and the null model. TLI is an incremental fit index that compares the tested model with the baseline. A TLI ≥ 0.90 is considered a Good Fit, 0.80 ≤ TLI < 0.90 indicates a Margin Fit, and a TLI < 0.80 means the model is Not Fit.

6. *Normed Fit Index (NFI):*

The Normed Fit Index is a measure of comparison between the proposed model and the null model. If the NFI is ≥ 0.90, it indicates a Good Fit. An NFI between 0.80 and 0.90 suggests a Margin Fit, while an NFI < 0.80 indicates a Not Fit model.

7. *Comparative Fit Index (CFI):*

The Comparative Fit Index is an incremental fit index. This index is relatively insensitive to sample size and is less influenced by model complexity. If the CFI is ≥ 0.90, it indicates a Good Fit. A CFI between 0.80 and 0.90 suggests a Margin Fit, while a CFI < 0.80 indicates a Not Fit model.

g. Model Modification

In SEM-based research, if the model's estimation results show a poor Goodness of Fit (GoF), re-specification is required. Modifying the model will affect the initial estimation results. Re-specification refers to altering the model using information from the modification indices in the AMOS analysis. The goal

[84] Ghozali, 65.

of this process is to improve the overall model fit, such as reducing the chi-square value. Model modification involves changing the initial estimated model to improve fit, particularly the GoF index. If the chi-square value exceeds 10, covariance between error terms may need to be added to lower the value. However, this should be done carefully and aligned with the theory. For example, covariances may be added between the error terms of related latent variables. Any changes should be supported by a strong theoretical foundation. Without clear theoretical justification, modifications might improve statistical fit but can weaken the model's theoretical meaning and validity.