



## Challenges Faced by English Teacher in Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka at MTs Swasta Darul Makmur Sungai Cubadak Academic Year 2023/2024

Ari Saputra<sup>1\*</sup>, Julia Anugerah Putri<sup>2</sup>, Rianto<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi

Email: [arisaputragagah@mail.com](mailto:arisaputragagah@mail.com), [juliaanugerah@gmail.com](mailto:juliaanugerah@gmail.com), [rianto@gmail.com](mailto:rianto@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to discover the challenges English teachers face in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka at MTs S Darul Mkmur Sungai Cubadak academic year 2023/2024. The study used qualitative research by interviewing three English teachers at MTs S Darul Makmur Sungai Cubadak who are implementing Kurikulum Merdeka. The result showed that the teachers who had been interviewed had convincing evidence about the challenges they faced in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka during teaching and learning activities. The form Kurikulum Merdeka is a new thing for the teachers because they never got access to know and learn during their study. So that the change of Kurikulum 13 to Kurikulum Merdeka challenges the teacher. Almost all the respondents faced challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka, such as challenges in designing teaching modules, challenges in class management, challenges in learning projects, and doing assessments based on Kurikulum Merdeka.

**Keywords:** *Challenges, Curriculum Merdeka, Teaching*

### Article history

*Received:*  
29 January 2024

*Revised:*  
25 Maret 2024

*Accepted:*  
25 Juni 2024

*Published:*  
05 Maret 2025

### INTRODUCTION

The global pandemic of Covid-19 has posed numerous challenges to individuals worldwide. Many aspects in this world have been affected by that pandemic, the educational field is one of them. Covid-19 has already changed the educational aspect not only from students' psychology, teachers' psychology, and also the teaching and learning process. Many educational institutions were compelled to transition to online learning in reaction to the global pandemic as a way to adjust to the new environment. However, (Aswat, 2021) highlighted that Learning loss is a phenomenon that has emerged as a result of the substantial changes made to the traditional classroom setting by the shift to online learning. This phenomenon describes the unfavorable outcomes that students have faced as a result of switching to online instruction. Besides, the term "learning loss" describes the occurrence of learners' educational progress experiencing setbacks when compared to previous academic years. This situation arises when learners experience barriers or setbacks in their attempts to pick up new skills or knowledge (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Engzell et al., 2021)

In Indonesia, the nation's pre-existing problems have been made worse by the ongoing epidemic, especially in terms of learning loss. The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) performed research which demonstrated that 70% of children under the age of 15 had difficulties in reading and math, indicating a serious learning crisis (PISA, 2018). This observation implies that Indonesia is facing a serious educational difficulty at the moment. Based on that problem, Nadim Makarim, as the Minister of Education and Culture, introduced a model of teaching and learning activities known as *Kurikulum Darurat* and moving forward into *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This curriculum can be regarded as a streamlined iteration of the existing Kurikulum 2013. Based on the data presented by the Minister, it can be observed that the implementation of Kurikulum Darurat resulted in a reduction of learning loss by a duration of one month, whereas the implementation of Kurikulum 2013 led to a reduction of learning loss by a duration of six months. The Minister was inspired to start creating the Kurikulum Merdeka curriculum by the aforementioned result.

The concept of Kurikulum Merdeka (KM), a new curriculum, encounters a variety of educational obstacles. Among them is the preparedness of teachers. To address the issues of education in light of changing circumstances, self-reflection is essential in KM policy. Changes to the curriculum should be implemented by teachers who are prepared to do so (Mulyasa, 2021). According to (Irdawati, 2021), it was said that several modifications to the curriculum make it challenging for educators to create new curricula because of both internal and external considerations. One external factor is that teachers are accustomed to being preoccupied with their books and those of their students. As a result, they must be imaginative and creative when creating lesson plans. One external factor is that teachers are accustomed to being obsessed with their own and their students' books. As a result, they must be imaginative and inventive when creating lesson plans. Teachers struggle to create integrated teaching modules due to an internal factor: a lack of knowledge of knowledge management (KM) in the concepts and procedures for generating teaching modules.

In addition, according to (Suhardi, 2022), talk about the difficulties teachers have with the Kurikulum Merdeka. The findings indicate that KM has an impact on teachers' roles and necessitates that they inculcate a certain level of self-competence to promote learning with KM. Many obstacles come with implementing KM in schools. Teachers who work with KM policies need to be proficient in creating lesson plans that lessen the workload associated with KM. Besides, specifies that before creating instructional modules, a teacher must classify students' conditions using psychological and cognitive categories to do a diagnostic examination (Maulida,

2022). This requirement makes it difficult for the teacher to plan the lesson based on the characteristics of the students. Many educators are still unable to create effective KM lesson plans.

It is extremely important that teachers actively participate in and use this curriculum, especially those who specialize in English education. As mentioned before, the Kurikulum Merdeka gives a lot of weight to helping students improve their skills in line with the Pancasila student profile. English teachers who have embraced the Kurikulum Merdeka must ensure that their students' academic pursuits integrate the moral precepts of Pancasila. Moreover, in MTs S Darul Makmur also had *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* P5 project. The primary goals of the Pancasila Students Profile are to uphold the nation's high moral standards and values, prepare people to become global citizens, model social fairness, and acquire 21st-century skills (Nugrohadi & Anwar, 2022; Rizki & Fahkrunisa, 2022). Besides, teachers should consider the suitability of the instruction materials for *Capaian Pembelajaran* (CP), *Tujuan Pembelajaran* (TP), and *Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran* (ATP) when delivering their instruction to the students.

According to (Zulaiha, 2022), the Kurikulum Merdeka noted poses a significant challenge for teachers in schools that have recently adopted it. This challenge lies in correctly identifying the Core Principles (CP) provided by the central authority and then transferring them into Teaching Plans (TP) and Assessment Tools and Practices (ATP). It means there are a lot of things that teachers must be prepared and mastered to create an acceptable teaching and learning process.

There are many studies have been conducted related to the challenges in Kurikulum Merdeka faced by teacher such as teachers' difficulties in understanding the Curriculum (Aulia, 2021; Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021; Marlina, 2022, Salim, et al., 2022) difficulties in understanding CP, TP, and ATP conducted by (Damayanti & Muhroji, 2022; Marlina, 2022; Rindayati, et al., 2022; Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023, Zulaiha et al., 2022) challenges in creating the instructional module (Effendi, et al., 2023, Mustika, 2022) challenges in teacher readiness (Correos & Huelma, 2022; Nurzen, 2022; Solikhah & Purnomo, 2022; Yuhastina, et al., 2020; Tricahyati & Zaim, 2023). The previous studies have shown that the challenges presented by the teachers in general. The present study provides the specific problems faced by English teachers where English becomes a Second Language.

## **METHOD**

To complete this study, the researcher used a qualitative method. Qualitative research is a study that looks into and comprehends what people or groups believe to be a social or human problem. It also explores participant information, with the end product being words (Creswell, 2012). There are 3 English teachers as informants in this research who teach English in MTs S

Darul Makmur Sungai Cubadak and apply Kurikulum Merdeka. The purpose of the research is to describe the challenges faced by the English teacher in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka at MTs S Darul Makmur Sungai Cubadak Academic year 2023/2024. In obtaining the data, the researcher followed some techniques, such as observation, and an interview.

The data was analyzed by using Miles and Huberman's quantitative data analysis technique, using three steps: Condensation of Data, Information Display, and Drawing and Verifying the Conclusion.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

First of all, an English teacher needs to adjust to the new approach introduced by Kurikulum Merdeka. These changes include a deep understanding of the mandated core competencies, as well as adjustments to learning methods to achieve these goals. In this case, it takes time and effort to get used to the changes and integrate them into daily learning practices. Teachers say they still don't get much information and training related to the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, while teachers were not taught about the use and development of the Kurikulum Merdeka during their studies. Although there are so many platforms available to gain knowledge and information related to Kurikulum Merdeka, teachers still think that learning directly is easy to learn.

A deep understanding of core competencies is essential in guiding the learning process. English teachers must have a strong understanding of the competency standards and indicators mandated by the Merdeka Curriculum. This requires an in-depth analysis of each element of the curriculum, so that teaching can be directed according to the desired learning focus. Teachers said that the terms used in Kurikulum Merdeka are different, such as the term KI becomes CP and so on. So that sometimes we are a little confused in preparing learning plans.

Integrating technology is another challenge faced by English teachers. The Merdeka curriculum encourages the use of technology as a learning tool, requiring teachers to master not only learning materials but also digital tools and resources. Selecting and integrating technology effectively to enhance English language learning requires customization and enhancement of digital skills. According to teachers, the challenges in the use of technology are not a problem for the teachers, but the problem comes from the students' side. Sometimes students who live in a dormitory did not have access to technology, such as a phone, and so on.

Diversification of teaching methods is also a crucial aspect. English teachers need to find diverse teaching methods to meet students' different learning needs. This involves creativity in structuring learning activities to motivate students and create a dynamic learning atmosphere.

Ability-based assessment is a major focus in the Merdeka Curriculum. English teachers are faced with the challenge of developing assessments that can assess students' abilities in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Assessments that are in line with the Merdeka Curriculum approach require creativity in designing tasks and exams that reflect students' true abilities. In addition, significant challenges arise in adjusting to the diverse needs of students. English teachers must be able to create learning that can be tailored to students' individual needs and interests. This involves a deep understanding of students' characteristics and learning styles.

In the face of these challenges, parental involvement is an important element. English teachers need to communicate with parents to explain changes in learning approaches, gain their support and build synergy between school and home.

Based on the statements of 3 English teachers as informants in this study, the researcher found several challenges faced by English teachers in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka during the teaching and learning process in MTs S Darul Makmur Sungai Cubadak. Based on the findings that the researcher collected, the challenges can be classified as follows:

1. Challenges in designing a Teaching model

The Kurikulum Merdeka presented obstacles for student instructors when creating their lesson plans. Since this instructional module is different from the previous one. The findings are supported by Maulida's (2022) results, which show that teachers are still unable to fully produce teaching modules because a large number of teachers are still unfamiliar with the methods involved in assembling and creating teaching modules for this curriculum. Student teachers are unable to build ATP (flow of learning objectives) from TP because they do not know how to transfer CP into learning objectives.

Student instructors have few resources to resort to while creating teaching modules based on the Kurikulum Merdeka. The results aligned with the findings of Damawisware et al. (2022), which showed that the challenges faced by student instructors while creating lesson plans are reflected in their inability to locate resources and modify classroom supplies, media, and infrastructure.

2. Challenges in class management

Student teachers encountered difficulties implementing differentiated learning because they lacked prior knowledge of the Kurikulum Merdeka. The variety of students presents challenges for varied learning implementation in addition to the student teacher's knowledge and abilities. The discrepancies amongst pupils in the class can be attributed to their learning methods, reasoning abilities, and comprehension levels.

Selecting the right assessment and learning model to employ presented difficulties for student instructors. And the restrictions placed on the use of learning models by teachers that support varied instruction. Finding different reference sources with examples of varied instruction proved to be difficult for student instructors. Student instructors are also faced with the difficulty of limited school-owned facilities and infrastructure.

Differentiated learning had to be used by educators under Kurikulum Merdeka. Differentiation is a great and ideal notion, but it can be difficult for teachers to come up with original teaching strategies. Students' potential is developed through that learning by their requirements, traits, and accomplishment level. However, for students to grasp that idea, the instructor has to work hard to develop into a trustworthy facilitator. The diverse qualities of the kids must be known by the student teachers. Designing learning is based on the student teacher's understanding of the conditions surrounding student variety. Thus, at the start of the learning process, student teachers must create diagnostic and formative tests based on the current level of variety of these students.

To ascertain the diversity of students, a diagnostic assessment is conducted. Students' achievement levels are established at the outset of learning through the formative evaluation. Student teachers must employ multiple sources, multiple media, and multiple methods. Multiple learning outcomes for students—including those with visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles—can be accommodated by utilizing a variety of techniques, media, and learning materials. Thus, as inexperienced teachers, student teachers face many challenges.

Time management and allocation are the most common responses to the question regarding the difficulties instructors have when adopting Kurikulum Merdeka. They pointed out that: "It is difficult for teachers to maximize learning, considering the various activity elements that need to be covered, such as reading, listening, speaking, writing, and others, because they only receive two teaching hours per week." If teaching is not necessary for at least thirty hours a week, then the hours are excessive. Late afternoon commutes are challenging for students, particularly in the highland area with erratic weather. "Teachers' attention is diverted from teaching in the classroom by the volume of administrative tasks that take up their time." "Inadequate distribution of educational hours."

In conclusion, whether it has to do with managing or allocating time, teachers face a great difficulty when putting the curriculum into practice. Some teachers struggle because there aren't enough instructional hours to cover every necessary English component for their pupils, while others deal with overly long teaching hours that interfere with students' commute times. When it comes to time management, a lot of instructors find it difficult to strike a balance between their

administrative and instructional duties, like designing learning modules and making resources that are specifically tailored to the needs of different student populations. Kurikulum Merdeka's new administrative requirements take up a large amount of instructors' time.

### 3. Challenges in learning project

Kurikulum Merdeka includes project-based learning as one of its features. All schools are required to use the Pancasila student profile, or P5. After that, it becomes difficult for teachers to apply Kurikulum Merdeka, in which the instructor creates a project for the class to finish. The students are difficult for the teachers to manage as well. Even though this endeavor is a crucial component of learning based on the Kurikulum Merdeka, many students also opt not to attend class. This curriculum is a great way for students who have a strong desire to learn and a good level of comprehension to learn about many professions and acquire a wide range of experiences and knowledge.

However, this program will feel burdensome to kids who lack motivation. Cross-subject assignments will make students uneasy, and they might not even want to do them. Its implementation in classrooms has been less successful and less useful because many students are not paying attention to their assignments. Furthermore, because student instructors execute project-based learning in the classroom by its principles rather than just their subject matter, they must possess wide perspectives in addition to subject-specific knowledge.

The student teacher is still unable to fully comprehend the P5. Because student instructors occasionally do not teach by the subject matter when teaching a project.

Like the challenge that was previously mentioned, this problem does not represent the teacher's skill level. Rather, the lack of sufficient resources and support facilities hinders teachers from carrying out the program. They pointed out that: "limited material printed out available in school, especially for English", "lack of learning resources/books to support teaching and learning process", "lack of LCD facilities in classroom and WiFi access to students", "Teachers also have the difficulty of finding a variety of learning resources"

The responses that educators submitted in response to the open-ended question indicated that a significant proportion of schools still struggle with a lack of technical resources and instructional materials, which makes it more difficult for them to fulfill the curriculum's requirements. In addition, the curriculum requires teachers to demonstrate independence in their teaching strategies, which creates an extra challenge in finding relevant materials that meet the needs of the students and correspond with the subject matter. The careful evaluation and balancing of multiple aspects is necessary for the Kurikulum Merdeka to be implemented effectively. These factors are important in determining how effective the curriculum is.

#### 4. Challenges in Assessment

The problem with the Kurikulum Merdeka formative and summative assessments is that each item must have value because speaking, listening, and reading are all required. Formative and summative assessments created by student teachers are included in the one-week teaching modules in the Kurikulum Merdeka. Therefore, any material that is processed will include a large number of values. Formative assessment is a daily value that is reported to pupils every two months.

Therefore, processing a large amount of data is a hurdle. Additionally, student teachers lack comprehension of Kurikulum Merdeka formative assessment procedures. Assessments that are formative, summative, and diagnostic are unfamiliar to student instructors. Before commencing any new lesson plan, the instructor should do an assessment. The teacher paradigm, which states that they only require a preliminary assessment at the start of the school year, is to blame for this. The outcomes are applicable for the entire academic year.

The second challenge is pondering on how to help pupils identify their strengths and areas in which they still need to grow. Because the instructor hasn't been able to recognize, interpret, and wrap up the application of the learned material, the teacher still hasn't thought about this. Furthermore, this is not something the teacher is accustomed to doing after each lesson. Performing a formative evaluation of every assessment currently in use is the third obstacle. Teachers lack the knowledge necessary to conduct formative assessments.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research conducted above, the challenges faced by the English teacher in MTs S Darul Makmur consist of problems: Challenges in designing the Teaching model, class management, challenges in the learning project, and assessment. And its hoped that the teacher can overcome those challenges to make sure a learning goal could be achieved.

#### **REFERENCES**

- Aswat, H., Sari, E. R., Aprilia, R., Fadli, A., & Milda, M. (2021). Implikasi distance learning di masa pandemi COVID 19 terhadap kecerdasan emosional anak di sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 5(2), 761–771.
- Correos, C. T. C., & Huelma, N. M. D. (2022). Challenges encountered by teachers in the delivery of curriculum and instruction through modular distance learning, 5(1), 356-366. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7294487>

- Effendi, M. M., Ummah, S. K., & Cahyono, H. (2023). Teacher perspective and performance in curriculum prototype implementation through the development of innovative project466 based learning modules. *Mosharafa: Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika*, 12(1), 47-58.
- Indarwati, N. (2021). Pelaksanaan Workshop untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Guru dalam Membimbing Kegiatan Ekstrakurikuler Tulis dan Baca Puisi Kepada Siswa Melalui Teknik Asosiasi dan Fantasi. *JIRA: Jurnal Inovasi Dan Riset Akademik*, 2(6), 782–791. <https://doi.org/10.47387/jira.v2i6.160>. *Jurnal Educatio FKIP UNMA*, 7(3), 1075–1090. <https://doi.org/10.31949/educatio.v7i3.127>
- Kuhfeld, M., Soland, J., Tarasawa, B., Johnson, A., Ruzek, E., & Liu, J. (2020). Projecting the potential impact of COVID-19 school closures on academic achievement. *Educational Researcher*, 49(8), 549–565. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X20965918>
- Marlina, T. (2022). Urgensi dan implikasi pelaksanaan Kurikulum Merdeka pada sekolah dasar/madrasah ibtidaiyah. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Ekonomi*, 1 (1), 67-72
- Nugrohadi, S., & Anwar, M. T. (2022). Pelatihan assembler edu untuk meningkatkan keterampilan guru merancang project-based learning sesuai Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Media Penelitian Pendidikan: Jurnal Penelitian dalam Bidang Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 16(1), 77-80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.26877/mpp.v16i1.11953>
- Pertiwi, A. K., & Pusparini, R. (2021). Vocational high school English teachers' perspectives on "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(5), 1982-1992.
- Rindayati, E., Putri, C. A. D., & Damariswara, R. (2022). Kesulitan Calon pendidik dalam mengembangkan perangkat pembelajaran pada kurikulum merdeka. *PTK: Jurnal Tindakan Kelas*, 3(1), 18-27.
- Saleh, M. (2020). Merdeka belajar di tengah pandemi COVID-19. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Hardiknas*, 1(1), 51-56.
- Salim, A., Rochmadi, T., Kurniasari, Y., Sujono, R. I., Fajri, R. N., Kusumawardani, N., & Mustakim, M. (2022). Lecturers' and students' responses toward the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at Alma Ata University. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(3), 3793-3806.
- Tricahyati, S., & Zaim, M. (2023). English teachers' readiness in the implementation of 'Merdeka Belajar' curriculum in teaching English at junior high school in Padang. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 12(1), 97-105

- Yuhastina, Y., Parahita, B. N., Astutik, D., Ghufronudin, G., & Purwanto, D. (2020). Sociology teachers' opportunities and challenges in facing "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0). *Society*, 8(2), 732-753.
- Zulaiha, S., Meisin, M., & Meldina, T. (2022). Problematika guru dalam menerapkan Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar. *Terampil Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Dasar*, 9(2), 163-177