

**The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in English
Subject at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh: Teachers' Perspective**

THESIS

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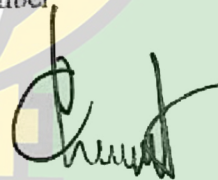
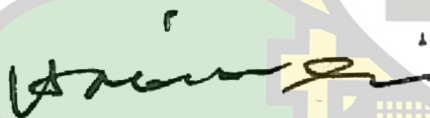


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Adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan didalam nya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggung jawab saya.

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ABSTRACT

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The Kurikulum Merdeka is a curriculum with intracurricular learning with diverse content so that students can optimise and have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. The research aimed to at exploring the teacher's perspective on implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English language subject discussing the challenges felt by four English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh. This research used a qualitative method by interviewing 4 English teachers and 1 co-head curriculum, and also observing 4 classrooms. The results of this research showed that there are seven challenges perceived by English teachers, namely; lack of knowledge in administration patterns, differentiated learning styles, creating teaching modules, misinterpretation of the concept of "Merdeka," problems related to the students environment, less-motivated of students' learning, and the last is facilities and infrastructure. The solutions in facing these challenges are to creating a discussion forum with another English teachers, presenting innovative and creative methods, exploring various references, providing regular insight to the students, building cooperation with parents, creating an enjoyable environment, and involving stakeholders to support facilities and infrastructure. Thus, based on the findings, it appeared that the structural process of activities has been carried out well, but there were still challenges that required solutions in its implementation to achieve the successful on Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh.

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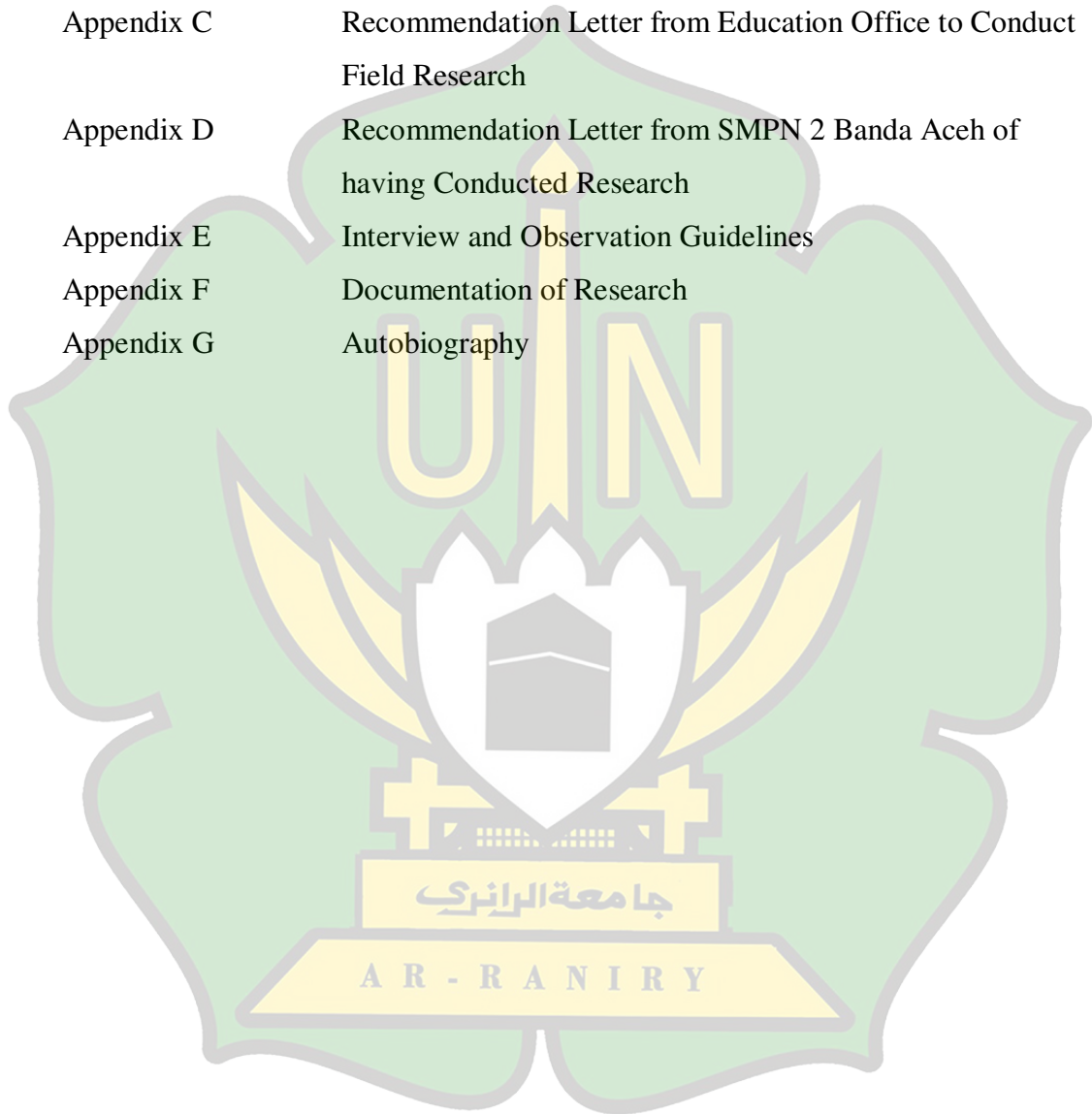
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, significances of the study, and terminology.

A. Background of Study

Education is an important aspect of the life of the world community, including in Indonesia. Pursuant to Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system, article 1 paragraph 1, education is a conscious, planned effort to create an atmosphere and learning process so that students can actively develop according to their potential. The creation of a great education cannot be separated from the best curriculum design. It is said that the curriculum is a forum that will determine the direction of education. Kennedy (2005) concluded that a curriculum which only focuses on key competencies of the world of paid employment is deficient. A good curriculum should include a full range of skills and competencies that are relevant throughout the life span of every human person. A wide view of competencies which we may term as 'capacities' such as good communication skills, civic participation, living in harmony, respecting and caring for other people, taking care of one's health and well-being are some of the content areas that a curriculum should also include (Reid, 2007).

According to Taba (1962), curriculum is considered as a plan of learning which means that the curriculum is something that is planned to be studied by students. Another definition of this term by the Indonesia Republic Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, the curriculum is a set of plans

and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and learning materials, as well as the methods used as guidelines for the implementation of learning activities to achieve certain educational goals.

Nadiem Anwar Makarim as the minister of education and culture, initiated and announced the new curriculum with the name "Free Learning Curriculum" in 2019 (Kemendikbud, 2019). According to Mustaghfiroh (2020), there are many aspects that encourage him to innovate the curriculum. One of them is the result of the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) research and the government's concentration is that Indonesian students are in the 6th lowest rank of 79 countries in the world in the field of literacy and numeracy. Different from the previous curriculum, Merdeka Learning focuses on developing the essential material, character development, and competencies of students.

Wisayastuti (2022) states that, through the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, it actually provides the latest breakthrough in improving the quality of education in our country. All aspects of the subject will be highly considered in order to create quality student outcomes, including English language education. This latest curriculum refers to project based learning that develops students' abilities. English learning materials will focus on the essentials, so the time to learn numeracy and literacy is much higher. More interestingly, teachers can carry out learning according to the creativity that they want to develop in students. The teacher is the one of the executors in developing this independent learning-based curriculum. Wisayastuti (2022) states, in the specification of the English subject, of course, the teacher will feel the real progress of the students' results. The teacher

will see firsthand what achievements have been achieved, and of course it doesn't stop there, at the time of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka there are real aspects or obstacles. How teachers and schools deal with the things that are beyond their control (Wisastuti, 2022).

The subject of English itself is the subject that is most concerned in creating students' language skills fluently. It is well known that educational English is given specifically to facilitate students to learn English in a more comprehensive and focused manner (Ariyanti, 2023). Several previous studies have investigated the use of the Kurikulum Merdeka in the elementary, middle and high school levels. Leny (2022) in her journal entitled "*Implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka untuk meningkatkan motivasi belajar pada Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan pusat keunggulan*" stated that the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is expected to increase students' learning motivation, because this curriculum is student-centered. The implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in increasing learning motivation in vocational subjects is marked by the implementation of a learning process in which the teacher becomes a facilitator and mediator as well as a motivator for students so that they are enthusiastic about learning.

Meanwhile, Sumarsih, Marliyani, Hermawan, Hadiansyah, and Prihantini (2022) studied the application of the Kurikulum Merdeka in *sekolah penggerak* of elementary school; from the results of the study, it was found that there was an Kurikulum Merdeka which was used as a reference in *sekolah penggerak*, which produced students who were noble, independent, critical reasoning, creative,

mutual cooperation, a sense of diversity. The school principal encourages various participatory, unique and many innovative programs and fosters collaboration with teachers who support school principals to participate in realizing *sekolah penggerak*.

Sumarsih, *et al*, (2022) in their writing entitled "Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum in Educational Institutions" state that there are three things that underlie the strategy of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, namely the Kurikulum Merdeka is a choice, curriculum implementation is a learning process, and support for implementing the curriculum is in a comprehensive manner. In addition, Susilowati (2022) conducted a research by analyzing teachers' views on the use of the Kurikulum Merdeka; the results of this study show that the application of the Kurikulum Merdeka still requires development; and some training for educators of its implementation are crucial.

Based on the preliminary observation of English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh, it was found that some teachers who use the Kurikulum Merdeka still feel overwhelmed. Honestly, the teachers still do not have a clear picture of the concept of “*Merdeka Belajar*” in kurikulum merdeka proclaimed by the government, and then teachers are not only required to be more creative in designing creative modules, but must to think about the methods and processes that suit the various students’ learning style such as; auditory, kinesthetic, and visuals. In addition, teachers are also required to create students with high integrity with predetermined competency standards and make students the centre of the learning process.

Many studies regarding the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka focus on the success of using the Kurikulum Merdeka as a whole, without looking at more specific directions or obstacles for educators in using this curriculum in depth. Apart from that, the author observes that research regarding the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in English subjects is still very limited; one of them is a research conducted by Anggila (2022), discussing teachers' views in the field of social sciences; another research was conducted by Nurhidayat., Prasetyo, et al, (2021) explaining the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum in PJOK lessons; meanwhile, the implementation of the independent curriculum in Islamic religious studies was explained clearly by Susilowati (2022).

It is important for researcher to conduct this research to find out the implementation and obstacles that influence learning activities and the achievements experienced by English teachers. Apart from that, we know that English is the foreign language in Aceh, with the newly published Kurikulum Merdeka, there must be significant challenges in the English teachers are required to be able to present material and ensure that students become the center of learning process in order to produce students who are competent and critical.

Based on the background above, the researcher interests in conduct this researc, its will focus on exploring the teacher's perspective on implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in the classroom, by discussing the challenges felt by the English teacher at SMPN 2, then analyzing how the teacher overcomes the challenges

B. Research Question

Based on the background of the study, the research questions of this study can be determined as follows:

1. How is the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject?
2. What are the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject?
3. What are solutions for challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject?

C. Research Aim

Based on the research questions above, the research aims of conducting this research are:

1. To investigate the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject.
2. To find out the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject.
3. To determine the solutions for challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject.

D. Significance of Study

The researcher expects that the result of this research is expected to bring benefits and advantages for various parties. This research should be beneficial both practical and theoretical.

1. Practical Significance
 - a. For the teachers

This study provides an overview of the teacher's opinion regarding the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in the field of English

Subject. The focus of this research is to look at the strategies used by teachers to apply the independent learning curriculum in the field of English, and how teachers can control changes in the curriculum. The results of this study is expected to assist other English teachers to overcome the problems when applying the Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject classroom. Thus, they can understand what aspect that must be considered by the teacher while applying the curriculum.

b. For the future researchers

Hopefully, the finding of this study can contribute to those who want to do a research in a similar topic. Then, it hopefully inspires them to conduct further research on teacher feedback. This research also can be as a reference to further research, especially about the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka based on English teacher experiences.

c. For curriculum designers

By knowing the perceptions of English teachers about the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in higher education, it can be a reference for curriculum designers about what needs to be developed and bring opportunities for teachers to relearn by receiving education and training.

2. Theoretical Significance

Academically, this research is expected to provide theoretical benefits as a reference that will facilitate further research, especially with regard to the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka based on the experiences of English teachers.

E. Research Terminologies

The discussion of this terminology is needed to explain briefly particular words to avoid unclear interpretations. Based on the title of this research, the terminologies that need to be discussed are as follows:

1. Kurikulum Merdeka

Quoted from the book *Guru Penggerak Merdeka* by Mulyasa (2021), the Merdeka Belajar stage shows what curriculum must be developed by the driving teacher in each school. Therefore, the Kurikulum Merdeka is a concept of independent learning, which aims to hone children's interests and talents from an early age by focusing on essential materials, character development, and student competencies. The Kurikulum Merdeka in this study refers to the learning method which refers to the aptitude and interest approach where learning content is arranged more optimally and focuses on the quality of learning, and the competence of students.

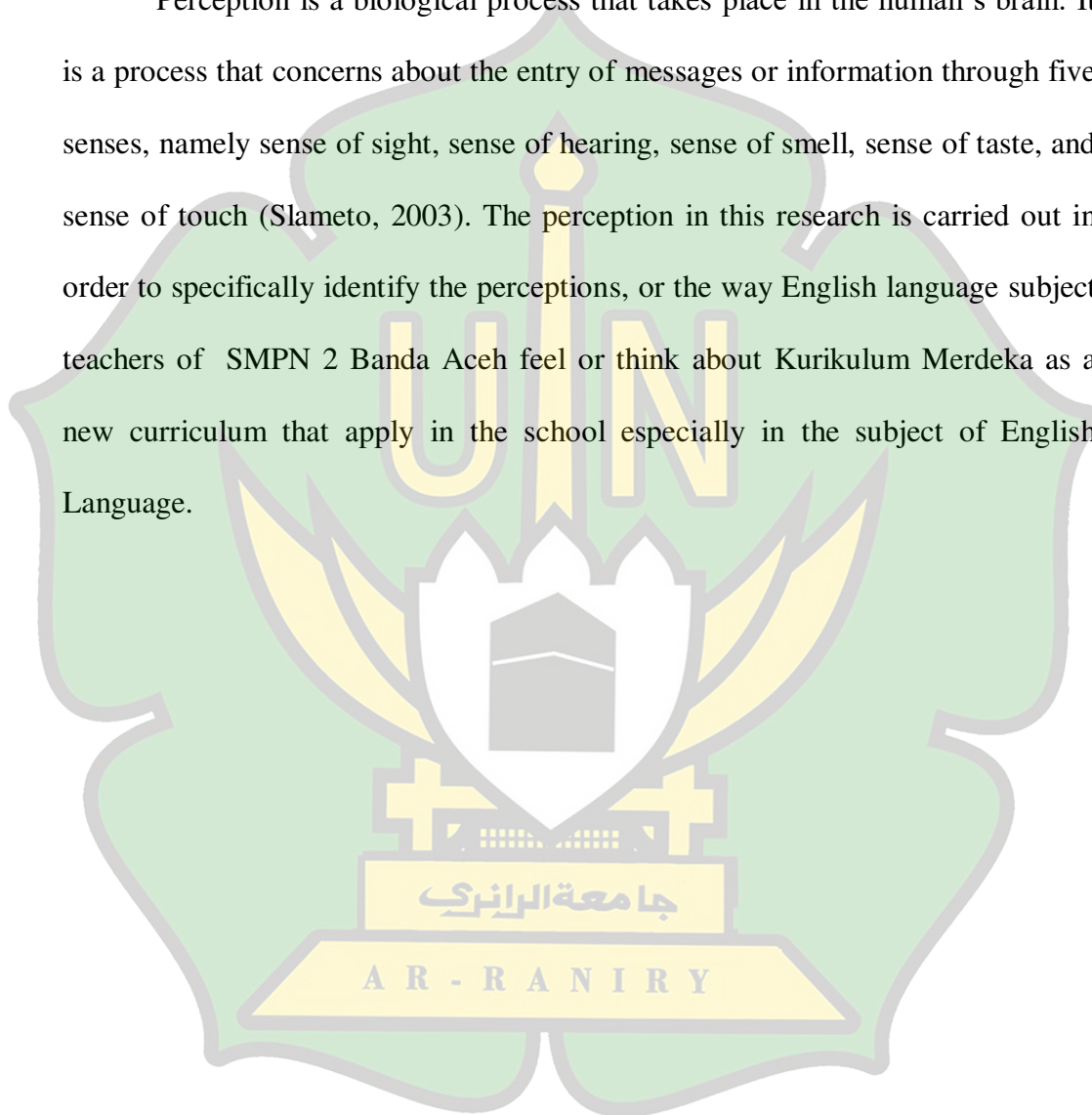
2. English Language Subject

Doff (2018) in her book writes that English Language Education (ELE) is a discipline that deals with the investigation of the what, who, how, and why of teaching and learning English as a second language. Meanwhile, Ardi (2012) explains that English Language Education is a program that provides practical training to prospective teachers, and a further understanding of the principles of teaching a language and provides them with up-to-date information on recent classroom teaching practices. In this research, English Language Subject refers to the educational program in an institution/school that provides theory and practice

about teaching and learning English as a foreign language that must be mastered with the methods and facilities available.

3. Teachers' Perspective

Perception is a biological process that takes place in the human's brain. It is a process that concerns about the entry of messages or information through five senses, namely sense of sight, sense of hearing, sense of smell, sense of taste, and sense of touch (Slameto, 2003). The perception in this research is carried out in order to specifically identify the perceptions, or the way English language subject teachers of SMPN 2 Banda Aceh feel or think about Kurikulum Merdeka as a new curriculum that apply in the school especially in the subject of English Language.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a literature review which is related to the research. It discusses the general concept of curriculum, general concept of Kurikulum Merdeka, and general concept of perception.

A. General concept of curriculum

1. Definition of curriculum

Tinsae (2016) states that the term 'curriculum' comes from the Greek word "curare" which means "to run a course". The curriculum has varied definitions and this variation is due to the position or approach of scholars or the philosophical basis or understanding of the world in general. The term curriculum refers to the academic content and lessons taught in a school or educational institution or in a specific course or program. A curriculum is a set of standards-based experiences in which students practice and master information and skills (Mizan, 2022).

Dewey (1902) defines curriculum as a continuous reconstruction, moving from the learner's present experience out into that represented by the organized bodies of truth that we call studies the various studies are themselves experience—they are that of the race. The curriculum serves as a primary guide for all educators in terms of what is required for effective teaching and learning, ensuring that every student has access to challenging academic experiences. A curriculum's structure, organization, and concerns are designed to help students learn more effectively and efficiently. To effectively support instruction and learning, the curriculum must include the required goals, techniques, materials, and assessments.

According to the Armstrong (1989) curriculum is a master plan for selecting content and organizing learning experiences for the purpose of changing and developing learners' behaviors and insights. Meanwhile, the definition of the curriculum by Taba (1962) is all curricula, no matter what their particular design, are composed of certain elements. A curriculum usually contains a statement of aims and of specific objectives; it indicates some selection and organization of content; it either implies or manifests certain patterns of learning and teaching, whether because the objectives demand them or because the content organization requires them. Finally, it includes a program of evaluation of the outcomes.

On the other hand, according to the Hass (1980) the curriculum is all of the experiences that individual learners have in a program of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives, which is planned in terms of a framework of theory and research or past and present professional practice. Gagne (1967, p.23) mentioned that "curriculum is a sequence of content units arranged in such a way that the learning of each unit may be accomplished as a single act, provided the capabilities described by specified prior units (in the sequence) have already been mastered by the learner".

Thus, it can be concluded that the curriculum is a set of standards-based experiences in which students practice and master information and skills. The curriculum serves as the primary guide for all educators in terms of what is required for effective teaching and learning, ensuring that every student has access to a challenging academic experience.

2. History of curriculum in Indonesia

The implementation of the curriculum in Indonesia is always changing according to the need to find and become an effective way to achieve goals. Curriculum changes continue to occur as a result of advancements and changes in the world of education and work (Habiburrahim, 2021). However, curriculum development is not as easy and simple. In implementing and developing its components, curriculum developers must pay attention to its objectives, components, content, and evaluation. According to Wahyuni (2016), curriculum development in Indonesia has been carried out since 1947, which was followed by changes or improvements in the following years, namely: 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, and 2006.

Sukmadinata (2001) explained that if the 1975 curriculum is goal-oriented and adheres to an integrative approach, while the 1984 curriculum is oriented towards instructional goals with an “*Cara Belajar Siswa Aktif (CBSA)*” approach, followed by the 1994 curriculum which is more subject-oriented, but still adheres to the CBSA approach. Then in 2004 the KBK curriculum was born, where there was a difference in orientation from the previous curriculum, which focused on the ability to perform certain tasks in accordance with predetermined standards. Then the KTSP has the same orientation as the *Kurikulum Berbasis Kompetensi (KBK)*, but there are differences, namely schools are given full authority to prepare their education plans by referring to the standards that have been set, starting from the objectives, structure and content of the curriculum, educational calendar, to the development of the syllabus. Finally, the kurikulum 2013 (K-13)

which is oriented towards competency development is not only a cognitive domain, but also affective and psychomotor aspects needs to be developed comprehensively (Sukmadinata, 2001).

B. An overview of Kurikulum Merdeka

1. Definition of Kurikulum Merdeka

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) launched the Independent Curriculum. Mendikbudristek Nadiem Makarim said that since the 2021/2022 school year, the Independent Curriculum, previously known as the Prototype Curriculum, has been implemented in nearly 2,500 schools participating in the Driving School Program (PGP) and 901 Center for Excellence Vocational Schools (SMK PK) as part of the new learning paradigm. Starting in 2022, the Independent Curriculum can be applied to educational units even though it is not a driving school, starting from TK-B, SD and SDLB grades I and IV, SMP and SMPLB class VII, SMA and SMALB and SMK class X.

According to the Kemendikbud, the Kurikulum Merdeka is a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning where the content will be optimized so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Teachers have the flexibility to choose various teaching tools so that learning can be adapted to the learning needs and interests of students. Projects to strengthen the achievement of the Pancasila student profile were developed based on certain themes determined by the government. The project is not directed to achieve certain learning achievement targets, so it is not tied to subject content.

According to Makarim (2022), the core of the Kurikulum Merdeka is Merdeka Learning, which is a concept created so that students can explore their respective interests and talents. If previously in the Kurikulum 2013, students had to study all subjects (at the kindergarten to junior high school level) and would be promoted to science/IPS at the high school level, it was different with the Kurikulum Merdeka. In the Kurikulum Merdeka, students will no longer be 'forced' to study subjects that are not their main interest. Students can freely choose the material they want to study according to their respective interests. This is what is meant by the concept of Merdeka Belajar.

Based on this statement, Merdeka Belajar is a natural learning process for achieving independence. The feeling of independence, the feeling of not being independent yet, the narrowness of independence is still very attractive, so we need to learn about independence first. Prayoga (2021) clarified that the essence of Merdeka Belajar is that teachers and students innovate and explore their greatest potential to improve the quality of independent learning. Independent should not only follow the bureaucratic educational process, but true educational innovation.

Education is also responsible for educating students towards maturity, courage, independence and self-reliance. In this context, the main point is how to teach students the ability to think logically, rather than teaching them the positive knowledge that they take for granted. One thing that can be done is to give students independence so that they can be directly involved in the learning process

and knowledge transfer. In this case, the student is considered the main subject rather than the object of the educational process (langeveld, 2007).

According to Azmi (2021), in the concept of Merdeka Belajar, the subject of the learning system is between teacher and student. This means that teachers and students work together to move forward and seek truth, rather than students using teachers as a source of truth. This means that the teacher's position in the classroom is not to tell or standardize the truth in the teacher's view, but to explore truth, the power of reasoning, and the student's critical view of the world and phenomena. The Internet and technological development opportunities are the driving forces for learning to be self-reliant, because it can hack a strict or liberal education system. This includes reforming the workload of teachers and schools that over-handle administrative issues. The freedom to innovate, learn independently and be creative can therefore be exercised by educational units, teachers and students.

2. Characteristic and purpose of Kurikulum Merdeka

In the new academic year 2022/2023, schools can implement the Independent Curriculum in accordance with school readiness. In order to identify the implementation of an independent and humanistic education, education must have characteristics which Baharudin (2007) formulated as follows:

1. It is liberating, liberating which is defined as the process of liberating from all formalistic shackles which will instead produce generations unable to be critical of everything and unable to be creative in various situations.

2. Includes the spirit of partiality, the alignment in question is that education must be presented wholeheartedly, because education is the right of all human beings.
3. Participatory principles, which require synergy between schools, parents and the environment. It is intended that education becomes something that is relevant to what students need and also as a means of controlling student development.
4. Need-based curriculum, this point reinforces the previous point. However, a good system will produce good output too.
5. Upholding the principle of cooperation, the meaning is synergy between teachers and students to work together to create fun learning.
6. Evaluation is focused on students, because learning can be said to be successful if students are positioned as subjects who must continuously evaluate their development.
7. Confidence, it cannot be denied that self-confidence will greatly support the development of the potential of students in individual and social capacities (Baharudin, 2007).

In line with what was expressed by Baharudin, Ibn Khaldun also considers that "education is not only an activity that always puts forward thoughts and contemplations that are not touched from a pragmatic aspect at all, but rather it is formed from all conclusions born of phenomena that exist in society and development in a cultural cycle (Khaldun,2000, p. 523).

Based on the explanation above, we can state that the Kurikulum Merdeka has been developed to be more flexible and to focus on essential materials and the development of students' character and skills. Thus, education must contain characteristics that liberate, both from the point of view of schools, educators, students and their environment.

On the other hand, according to Azzat (2020), the characteristics of independent education must have a liberating character for students in the educational process, so that they can become enlightened individuals. He has the view that education that builds awareness will be more urgent when compared to a learning system that uses rote theory. Furthermore, education must have a goal that is able to implement the humanistic values themselves. He argues that there are at least six points of educational goals, namely (Arifin, 2000):

- a. To prepare someone in terms of religion
- b. To prepare someone in terms of character and morals.
- c. To prepare someone who understands social situations social.
- d. Bring up vocational potential according to one's potential. Enriching Intellectual Aspects.

In addition, it can be interpreted that education is not just to gain intellectual property, but also skills or expertise that will later be useful in the lives of students. The main goal of independent learning is to be able to create participants who have an independent spirit who are no longer constrained by the existence of rules and regulations in learning, so that students can always discover their potential and abilities in their own way. Khaldun (2000) provides a general

understanding of education that does not have a dichotomy between world affairs and religion. Apart from that, in the independent learning curriculum, a teacher must actively participate in professional networks and organizations to develop a career;

- a. Actively participate in various networking activities and professional organizations
- b. Exploring various learning experiences from activities
- c. Professional networks and organizations to develop careers.
- d. Producing work and/or providing meaningful services from networking activities and professional organizations to develop careers (Kemendikbud, 2019).

Another perception by Khairurrijal (2022), during the Covid-19 period, education in Indonesia became retarded and behind. The Kurikulum Merdeka Policy became solution to lagging education in Indonesia. According to Khoirurrijal (2022) in his book the purpose of the Kurikulum Merdeka is to answer the problems of previous education. There is this curriculum will direct in developing potential and student competency. This curriculum works For developing potential, one of which is the learning process designed to be relevant and interactive.

3. The Principles and Learning Process of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar

The learning process in the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar runs with its learning structure which is divided into 2, namely intra-curricular activities that refer to learning outcomes in each subject, as well as projects to strengthen the

profile of Pancasila students which refer to the graduate competency standards of each student. The Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar also changes the learning methods that were previously carried out in the classroom to learning outside the classroom, with the intention that students can discuss flexibly with educators (Hamdi, 2022).

With this learning process it is hoped that it can shape the character of students in expressing their opinions, as well as social skills in society. Students in the learning process of the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar are given the freedom to elaborate on their skills, so educators can create super active and productive learning (Safitri, 2022).

Alfaruki (2022) stated that, the learning process in the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar is made by prioritizing a pleasant learning atmosphere without causing trouble for educators or students. The learning process is expected to be more comfortable and efficient, so that it can make students discuss directly with educators, learn outside the classroom, by forming characters that are independent, brave, intelligent, sociable, civilized, polite, and competitive. This Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar was proclaimed to deal with technological developments or the digitalization era which requires students to be more competent, so that students will be the center of attention and students are also objects in the learning process. Students are taught to know how to collaborate both with their peers and with their educators. Educators can also make the learning process more meaningful, so that later students can apply their knowledge in their lives and are expected to be able to play an active role in their

social environment. That way educators must also determine learning media to support the learning process by collaborating technology with the learning process in order to form students who have skills in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creative (Kemendikbud, 2021).

In line with the opinion of the experts above, it can be concluded that the learning process in the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar is more focused on the material being studied so that learning is more in-depth, and the time used in the learning process is longer to develop the competence and character of students through independent or group learning.

4. The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka

According to the Samsudduha (2023), in Merdeka Belajar, the role of learning media, such as interactive learning, is needed by educators and students to achieve learning goals that are in accordance with the Kurikulum Merdeka. In addition, learning media can also support teaching and learning activities in schools. The presence of this Kurikulum Merdeka changed the learning process, which previously tended to be cognitive or rote in nature and at least touched on affective and psychomotor aspects. Now it is transformed into learning by applying interactive, simple, essential, and deep learning methods so that students can easily understand the subject matter delivered by the teacher at school.

Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka will be more focused on essential material and developing student competencies according to the phase. Therefore, with the presence of this Kurikulum Merdeka, it is hoped that the learning process will be more in-depth, less rushed, fun, and more meaningful. By implementing

interactive learning methods, it means that the learning medium used is reciprocity or interaction between teachers and students, so students can catch the subject matter easily. This interactive learning can be applied by being equipped with text, images, audio, and video displays, and then students are given the opportunity to comment or give opinions about the information in the pictures or videos (Samsudduha, 2023).

Samsudduha (2023) explained that, basically, the use of interactive learning media in the independent learning curriculum will help students understand and simplify the material. In addition, interactive learning can also stimulate students to think more critically so that they can increase their imagination, improve their abilities, and behave better. One example of the implementation of interactive learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka is through project activities and case studies, where students are given wider opportunities to play an active role in exploring all actual issues such as the environment, health, and others. Interactive learning will also be better when it is supported through the provision of teaching tools such as books, learning modules, and others as complementary means of learning (Baroah, 2020).

At the end of the learning process, it is very necessary to make reflections at the end of each lesson. This learning reflection is one of the most important things in the Kurikulum Merdeka as a means of evaluating teachers and students so they can improve in subsequent learning. With this learning reflection, students can measure the abilities they gain after completing their learning. So that students can find out what material understanding abilities must be maintained and which

parts of the material have not been mastered. This reflection can be used as reference material for further learning. Thus, in the next learning process, students will get better results than before (Alfi, 2023).

Adapting to the new curriculum that is implemented according to the policy requires the role of a teacher. Teachers play a very important role in the success of the implemented curriculum. The discipline of the school, both teachers and principals, in carrying out the curriculum has contributed to the smooth implementation of the curriculum. Teachers must be able to enforce the curriculum so that students will also easily go through the learning process every day (Alfi, 2023).

Mulyasa (2020) argues that the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar puts forward a learning process that is able to foster student creativity through approaches and methods that can train students' thinking skills. The methods used are scientific, problem-based learning, project-based learning, inquiry, observation, question-and-answer, and percentages. The effectiveness of these approaches and methods of learning is largely determined by the teacher. Teachers can become the forerunners of driving teachers, who initiate the spread of driving teacher innovations from one teacher to another, from one school to another, and so on (Aditya,2023).

Based on the argues of Elevri (2022), it is these driving teachers who are the forerunners of changing the pattern of independent thinking in learning at school. Freedom of learning needs to be guided by driving teachers and supported by various parties. Teachers who promote independent learning are also not only

responsible for providing learning material but also must be able to develop morals, ethics, integrity, and character. The independent learning driving teacher is not only to prepare and personally develop students in three aspects of attitudes, knowledge, and skills but also to prepare policies to build society and civilization so that they become an effective nation in avoiding three social ills, namely poverty, ignorance, and civilization underdevelopment.

In addition, with the contents of the speech of the Minister of Education and Culture, Makarim , who stated that driving teachers are teachers who are accustomed to carrying out innovative and creative actions, without being asked or ordered, to provide the best for students, freedom to learn implies and demands teachers, especially those who are able to become driving teachers, who mobilize various components of the education system in order to provide the best service to students in accordance with the vision and mission of their respective schools and regions. The government's policy on teachers driving independent learning aims to improve the character of teachers in carrying out their duties as spearheads of learning, as well as build a fun paradigm for improving services to students and the quality of education in general.

The main goal of Merdeka Belajar driving teachers is to empower teachers to be creative in an innovative way to develop competencies for students in accordance with environmental conditions (Supriyatna, 2023). The application of Merdeka Belajar requires teachers and principals to constantly develop and enrich themselves by learning and seeking new information related to learning and improving the quality of education in general. By becoming accustomed to

reading, they can obtain information and make changes in schools according to changes in society and the times (Supriyatna, 2023).

According to Mulyasa (2020), teachers who promote independence in learning need to master the latest developments from the outside world themselves. Therefore, teachers need to own and operate various technologies or sources of information. In addition, teachers who promote independent learning must be flexible in dealing with various student characteristics. In this case, the teacher must be prepared for various situations and conditions, as well as challenges that can come at any time and under any circumstances. The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar driving teacher demands the support of a skilled and qualified workforce in order to generate more productive work motivation, empower local regional authorities, streamline the system, and eliminate overlapping bureaucracy (Sulkipli, 2022).

Therefore, school independence and creativity are demanded in managing education and learning (Murianto, 2020). Behind its autonomy, the school must also be able to pay attention to the diverse needs of students, the wishes of different staff, the diverse environmental conditions, the expectations of the community who entrust their children to school so that they can be independent, as well as the demands of the world of work to obtain a productive, potential, and quality workforce. Even so, this concept cannot be fully used to solve all educational problems, but it gives a more significant meaning to improving education (Apriyadi, 2014).

In addition, Makarim (2019) has made a policy of reforming the Indonesian education system through merdeka belajar. The aim is to explore the greatest potential of teachers and students and improve the quality of learning, by giving teachers the freedom to choose a way of delivering the curriculum or a way of teaching that is in accordance with the competence of their students (Kemendikbud, 2020). Merdeka belajar is a policy to restore the essence of assessment. The concept of Freedom to Learn to return education to the essence of the law to give schools the independence to understand the basic competencies of the curriculum is their assessment (Kusumaryono, 2020).

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Sintia, 2021), merdeka belajar gives freedom and autonomy to educational institutions and independence from bureaucratization. The core of Merdeka Belajar is that schools, teachers and students have the freedom to innovate and are free to learn independently and creatively (GTK, 2019). The Policy of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar according to the Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia has four major new policies, especially in the field of education.

- 1) National Examination will be replaced by Minimum Competency Assessment and Character Survey. This assessment emphasizes literacy and numerals based on PISA test best practices. Unlike the national exam, which is administered at the end of the school year, this assessment is administered in her 4th, 8th and 11th grades.
- 2) The National Standard School Examination will be presented to the school. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, schools are

free to choose the form of assessment, such as portfolios, written assignments or other forms of assignments.

3) Simplification of learning implementation plans. According to Nadiem Makarim, doing RPP is enough 1 page only. It is hoped that simplification of administration will allow teachers' time spent on administrative processes to be redirected to learning activities and skill development.

4) With the acceptance of new students, we will expand the zone system excluding the 3T area. Students progressing through the verification and achievement paths receive more opportunities from the PPDB (*peserta didik baru*) system. Local governments are given the technical authority to define these zones (Kemendikbud, 2019).

Based on the above explanation of the "freedom to learn" policy proclaimed by Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim, there are similarities between the concept of "freedom to learn" and the concept of education according to *John Dewey's Progressive Philosophy* (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Both concepts emphasize the independence and flexibility of an institution that maximizes the abilities and potential of its inherently diverse students. Both have the same meaning when the two concepts are formulated. Teachers must be able to lead and be good facilitators. Educational institutions must become educational laboratories for student change. Educational and home activities should be interoperable (Mustaghfiroh, 2020).

There are four guidelines for independent learning in the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar presented by Nadiem Makarim in Kemendikbud (2020).

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, self-directed learning is necessary to change children's attitudes towards education (Supriyatna, 2022).

The difference can be seen as part below:

1) Stereotypes

A child's abilities are absolute and cannot be changed. There are smart and fools who are measured only by their academic ability. Intelligence is inherited. Achievements are symbolized by numbers (Supriyatna, 2022).

2) Growth Spirit

According to the (Supriyatna, 2022), everyone has potential. This potential can always be developed through the ability to think critically and creatively about real-world problems, underpinned by "lifelong learning skills." Forms of fixed mindset errors that occur include:

- a. Memorize a theory or concept;
- b. Learning is too deductive (only conveys theory and concepts).
- c. Evaluation too vertical (negative horizontal).
- d. "Teacher-centered learning" does not motivate children to learn.
- e. Mathematics/Science is difficult and social studies is routine.

Based on the explanation above, it can be understood that, in Merdeka Belajar, the role of learning media, such as interactive learning, is crucial for educators and students to achieve learning goals in accordance with the Kurikulum Merdeka. This approach transforms the learning process from cognitive to interactive, simple, essential, and deep learning methods, allowing students to easily understand subject matter. The implementation of interactive

learning methods involves reciprocity between teachers and students, allowing them to catch the subject matter easily (Mitrawalida, 2018).

This approach can be enhanced through project activities, case studies, and the provision of teaching tools like books and modules. Reflections at the end of each lesson are essential for evaluating teachers and students, helping them improve their understanding abilities and identify areas that need improvement. This reflection serves as a reference material for further learning, ensuring better results in the next learning process. The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar driving teacher demands the support of a skilled and qualified workforce in order to generate more productive work motivation, empower local regional authorities, streamline the system, and eliminate overlapping bureaucracy (Sulkipli, 2022).

5. The Challenges in the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka

The terms "problem" and "challenge" are often used interchangeably, but they have slightly different connotations. A problem is generally seen as something negative or undesirable that needs to be overcome or completed. On the other hand, a challenge is often seen as a positive or exciting opportunity for growth or development. It implies that there is a task or goal to be accomplished, but it does not necessarily have a negative connotation. In summary, a problem is something that needs to be addressed, while a challenge is something that needs to be accomplished and solved.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the term "challenge" is defined as a situation being faced with something that necessitates significant mental and physical effort in order to be done successfully and thus puts a person's skill and

ability to the test. Malone (1981) approaches the concept of challenge as a “task” that requires effort and in whose outcome success is not guaranteed. Meanwhile, the term of “problems” is generally seen as something negative or unwanted that needs to be addressed.

The meaning of challenges in this study is the challenges encountered by teachers in applying Kurikulum Merdeka in English subject. In general, the term "teacher" refers to a professional educator whose main responsibility is to educate, teach, guide, direct, train, assess, and evaluate students. Teaching is not an easy thing to do. Teachers will be faced with various kinds of problems before and during learning activities, what is meant by challenges in this study are the challenges faced by teachers in using the Kurikulum Merdeka programme in English classes. However, this research will investigate the challenges that may occur when implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English by the educators.

Teachers are required to be able to balance both the technology used in education and the learning system, because along with the rapid development of technology, teachers must provide innovations related to ancient or classic learning methods in favor of more modern learning methods. Of course, it is not an easy thing to combine learning methods with existing technology, but this is a challenge for teachers to be able to introduce students to education and this technology that must go hand in hand to face the times (Siregar, 2020).

Arviansyah (2022) stated that, the term teacher as a driver of Merdeka Belajar refers to a teacher who is required to be active and enthusiastic, creative, innovative, and skilled in order to become a facilitator driving change in schools.

The teacher, as a driver of independent learning, must not only be able to master and teach effectively in class but also be able to create a good environment by building closeness with students. Then teachers are also required to be able to take advantage of various existing technologies as an improvement in teaching methods. Then the teacher also has to practice correcting mistakes and deficiencies during teaching and learning activities .

Through updates related to the Freedom to Learn policy, all educators need to measure and introspect themselves so that they can adjust to the current developments. This is done so that the teacher does not lose out in terms of information and the use of technology by his students, but besides that, the teacher who drives Merdeka Belajar must be able to instill good values in the midst of rampant changes that can occur quickly due to easy access and the use of technology, which is getting easier to use (Mulyasa, 2021).

Rantelimbong (2021) added, in the Merdeka Belajar program, the figure of the teacher will appear as a driving force. Here the key, then a sense of independence must always be attached. Nadiem said that without the competence of educators at all levels and the transition of core competencies and the existing curriculum, there would never be learning (Evi Hasim, 2020).

In addition, according to Afifah (2022), challenge is a matter that requires solving the problem. The existence of challenges in learning or education will hinder the achievement of goals to the fullest. Therefore, we need a solution to solve the challenges. In learning, there are several possible problems that can occur, including:

a. Problems related to students

Students are the subject of all educational and teaching activities. Students have their own position in the learning process because the teacher only acts as a motivator and facilitator. Internal student factors include intelligence, attention, interest, talent, and readiness. Every student has a problem, so teachers are required to know the nature and characteristics of students and have skills in guiding them (Suardi, 2018).

b. Problems related to educators

Pianda (2018) added, educators in the learning process are the main subjects. In the hands of educators lies the possibility of success in achieving learning objectives. Problems related to educators include:

i. The problem of the teacher's mastery of the material

The knowledge and abilities of a teacher are influenced by the education obtained beforehand, so whatever is given to students is really in accordance with the expertise they have. As a teacher, they must master the material that will be taught, in the sense of increasing their ability in terms of knowledge (Pianda, 2018).

ii. The problem of teacher mastery in class management

Managing a class is a skill that must be owned by teachers to create and condition learning optimally and solve it when there is a disturbance in the teaching and learning process; in other words, it is an activity to create optimal conditions in the learning process. In his role as a learning manager, the teacher must be able to manage the

class because the class is a learning environment and one aspect of an organized school environment (Uzer Usman, 2016).

c. Problems related to the evaluation of learning

Evaluation or assessment functions are used to find out whether or not the teaching objectives have been achieved and to determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process that has been carried out by the teacher. Without any evaluation, the teacher will not know the learning outcomes achieved by students, cannot assess his teaching actions, and will not take action to improve them (Hidayat, 2012).

According to the Chahyanti (2021), the main abilities in education 4.0 are communicating, collaborating, thinking critically and thinking creatively. First, the implementation of Merdeka Belajar is not limited by space and time. Second, based on the project, by applying the skills you already have. Third, experience in the field with collaboration between the world of education and industry, students are directed to go into the field to apply soft skills and hard skills. Fourth, personalized learning. At this stage, learning is adjusted to the abilities of students, and learning activities are not done equally. Fifth, data interpretation. Big data to support the educational process and is used as a central solution to problems and adapted to needs. Based on the advantages of implementing Merdeka Belajar, the teacher becomes a facilitator who motivates students to "free learn", and provides activities for students to explore themselves so that each student has experience in independent learning (Sahnan, 2023).

In spite of, in the realization the Merdeka Belajar program is not perfect yet. There are several obstacles or challenges that must be faced. The following are five (5) challenges of the Merdeka Belajar program for teachers, including: a) Getting out of the Comfortable Learning System Zone; b) Do not have experience in the Freedom to Learn Program; c) Limited References; d) Teaching Skills; e) Minimal Facilities and Teacher Quality (Supini, 2020).

In the “*Buku Saku Tanya Jawab Kurikulum Merdeka*” published by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), it is explained that the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar focuses on optimizing content so that students have enough time to explore concepts and develop their potential. The advantages of the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar are also mentioned in the book, including the following:

1. Simpler and more in-depth Focus on essential material and develop students' competencies according to their developmental stages.
2. More relevant and interactive Learning in project activities provides the widest possible opportunity for students to actively explore current issues in order to support the development of the personality and competency profile of Pancasila Students.
3. More freedom : The teacher teaches according to the stages of achievement and development of the participants educate and schools have the authority to develop and manage curriculum; and determine appropriate learning with the characteristics of educational units and students (Khairurijal, 2022).

According to the researcher, to achieve Merdeka Belajar without constraints, teachers need support from all parties, from parents, students, schools, government to the wider community. The form of support from the government is by conducting training or learning for teachers to improve teacher competence.

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that, along with the development of science and technology, it is increasingly widespread. Because it is seen from the world of education that it is true that roles and challenges are very closely related, these roles and challenges will also change over time. So it is important for us to be able to improve the quality of human resources so that we can keep up with the development of science and technology itself and also the fulfillment of the objectives in learning which will later influence the results in the end of learning. The higher the level of teacher competence, the more clearly directed the learning will be, the goals and achievements to be achieved in the end can be optimally fulfilled, but of course it is not easy to create an effective and optimal learning atmosphere when looking at the role of the teacher which is increasingly complex and the reaction of students when receiving learning is also one of the important factors for realizing high achievements in learning. It is not surprising that with the development of the times, the world of education itself must be able to adapt to the developments that are increasingly prevalent as it is today (Istiqomah, 2016).

Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the basic aspects and as a guide or guideline for a teacher, namely the curriculum, will experience various changes in order to adapt to existing developments. This is what makes an independent

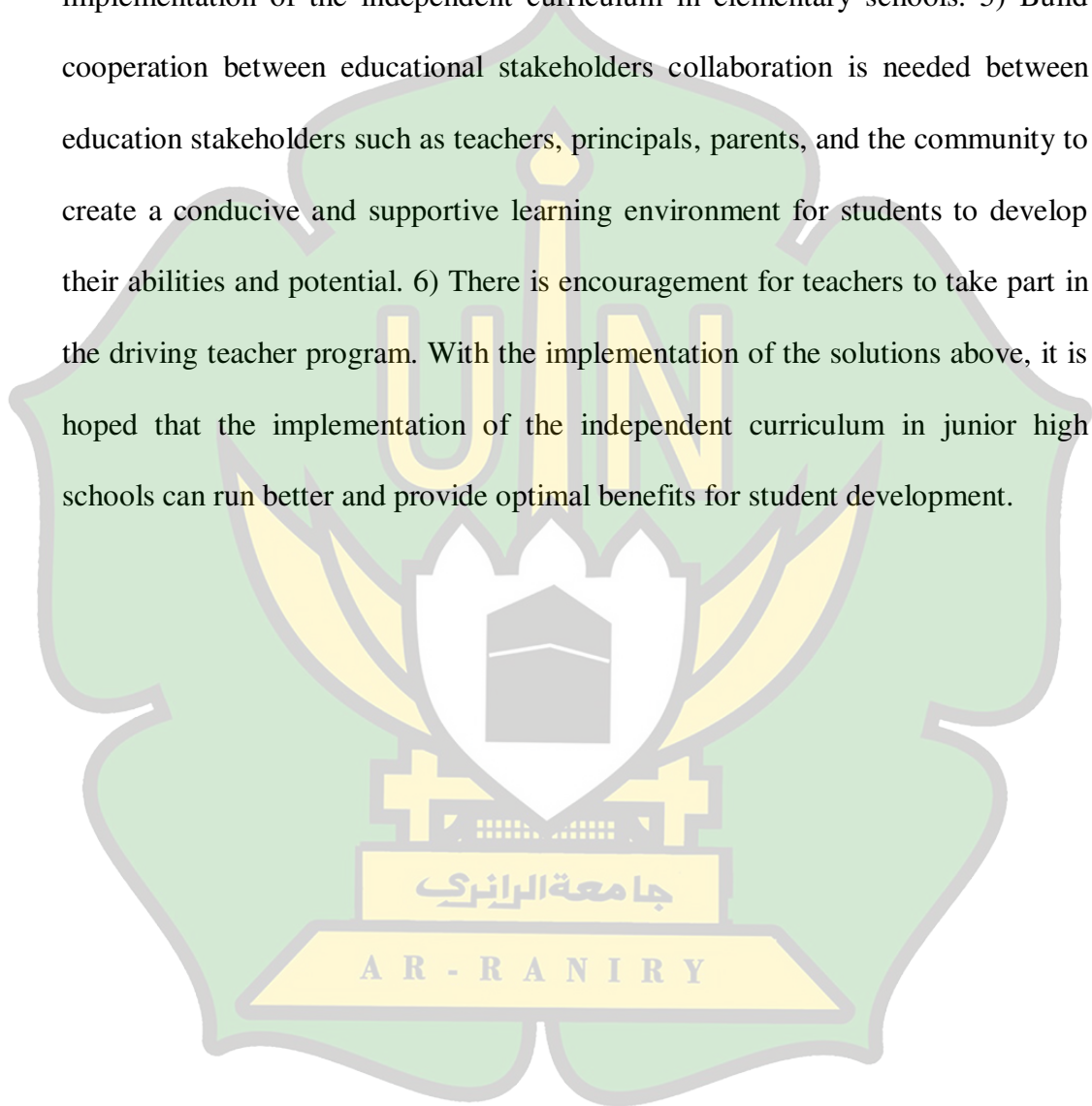
learning curriculum in which the focus of curriculum development is not only on the teacher but also influences all existing elements, especially for the academic field. Independent learning also has a representative value in which students are given activeness and freedom to learn, as the name implies, namely the Kurikulum Merdeka (Nadhiroh, 2023).

6. The Solutions for Challenges of Kurikulum Merdeka

The definition of a solution is a way of solving problems without pressure, its like when we do it with the scientific method, we formulate problems and make hypotheses, and that conclusion is the solution (Wibowo, 2015). Without pressure, we follow the existing rules and not our own arguments, because even if our arguments are forced, if what happens doesn't match our arguments, it will still happen as long as we don't argue ourselves (Wibowo, 2015). According to the Indonesian Dictionary (2005), what is meant by a solution is a settlement, a solution, or a way out.

According to Wuwur (2023), with the many challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in junior high schools, there are several solutions that can be used by the teachers, among others: 1) Training and competency development for teachers and education staff improving the ability of teachers and education staff to apply creative and innovative learning methods. 2) Increased support from parents and the community. The role of parents and society is very important in supporting the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in junior high schools. 3) Improvement of facilities and infrastructure efforts to improve facilities and infrastructure, such as classrooms, laboratory

facilities, libraries, and textbooks, will assist in creating a more conducive and supportive learning environment for students. 4) Increased supervision and monitoring efforts are needed to increase supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the independent curriculum in elementary schools. 5) Build cooperation between educational stakeholders collaboration is needed between education stakeholders such as teachers, principals, parents, and the community to create a conducive and supportive learning environment for students to develop their abilities and potential. 6) There is encouragement for teachers to take part in the driving teacher program. With the implementation of the solutions above, it is hoped that the implementation of the independent curriculum in junior high schools can run better and provide optimal benefits for student development.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides research design, research location, research participants, technique of data collection, research instruments, and technique of data analysis.

A. Research Design

This study used qualitative research methods. Several forms or stages can be used in qualitative research, including displaying, analyzing, and interpreting data (Creswell, 2012). The definition of qualitative research, according to Strauss and Corbin (2003), is a type of research whose findings are not obtained through statistical procedures or other forms of calculation. Meanwhile, according to Mulyana (2016, p.150), quoted from his book *Qualitative Research Methodology*, namely: "Qualitative research methods in the sense of qualitative research do not rely on evidence based on mathematical logic, numerical principles, or statistical methods. Qualitative research aims to maintain the form and content of human behaviour and analyse its qualities, rather than converting into quantitative entities".

This qualitative research aimed to examine and learn more about social events or phenomena; give a deeper meaning to something that comes from existing activities, events, or situations, and understand the dimensions of social life (Leavy, 2020). Therefore, the researcher used this method because the researcher wants to know the perception of the teachers who implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in English Language Subject.

B. Research Location

The research took place at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh which is located on Jln. Ayah Ghani, Bandar Baru, Kec. Kuta Alam, Banda Aceh. The reason for choosing this location is because it is one of the school applying the Kurikulum Merdeka. This school is also labeled as sekolah penggerak because it meets the standards set by the local education office.

C. Research Participants

Samples are needed to facilitate researchers in concluding research. Braun and Clarke (2013) stated that there is no rule for the number of samples in qualitative research, however, it tends to has smaller samples than in quantitative. In this study, the sample were five (5) participants which from 4 English teachers in grade one (1), grade two(2), Grade three (3) and 1 co-head curriculum. teacher The samples chosen needs to meet the predetermined criteria.

The technique of sampling use in this study was purposive sampling. According to Braun and Clarke (2013), purposive sampling aims to search for the samples who are expected to provide the appropriate information related to the research. The participants were 4 English teachers. The participants were chosen because of several reasons:

1. The teachers have attended training the Kurikulum Merdeka;
2. The participants are currently used the Kurikulum Merdeka;
3. The participants are accessible because all of them are English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh.

D. Technique of Data Collection

Data collection is the process of gathering, analyzing data and measuring information related to the variables (Kabir, 2016). The characteristic of data collection and research instrument will implicate the quality of the results (Sugiyono, 2021). The methods of data collection used in this study are interview and observation.

1. Interview

According to Griffe (2012), an interview is a one-on-one conversation to obtain a meaningful data to be collected, analyzed, and validated. Interviews are conducted when researchers obtain specific and in-depth information about participants' thoughts, knowledge, opinions, beliefs, and feelings about upcoming topics; answers will be written down and recorded (Creswell, 2012). Meanwhile, Braun and Clarke (2013) stated that there are three types of interviews namely structured interview, semi-structured interview, and unstructured interview.

In this study the researcher was going to use the semi-structured interviews. Interviews would be conducted in directly; Interviews be conducted using supporting devices such as recorders. Direct interviews with the help of recorders are believed to make it easier for the author to process data properly and obtain it with a transcript stage that will be used after the interview process is complete. The researcher conducted interviews with selected participants one by one, with a duration of 20-30 minutes. The interviews were carried out using the Indonesian language, because it made it easier for the teachers to answer the questions.

2. *Observation*

According to Arikunto (2002) observation is a technique of collecting data with conducting conscientious research, and systematically recording. It is a more global type of observation than the systematic, structured observation used in quantitative research. The qualitative researcher's goal is a complete description of behavior in a specific setting rather than a numeric summary of occurrence or duration of observed behaviors. Flick (2009) stated that doing observation enables the researcher to find out how something factually works or occurs.

In conducting observations, the researcher made direct observations at the location, namely SMPN 2 Banda Aceh, by observing the 4 classrooms of each participating teachers. There are 15 important aspects observed, based on the observation sheets that have been made. This observation was carried out to strengthen the research results obtained from the interview process as well as evidence of the answers that were conveyed through interviews (Appendix E).

E. Research Instrument

Research Instruments are scientific and systematic tools which are designed in order to help the researcher to collect data on his/her topic of interest, for instance, questionnaire, interview focus group or any device used by the researcher to collect the information in measuring a given phenomenon can be considered as a research instrument. Takona (2002, p.73) described research instruments as “essential tools to measure such variables as opinion, attitudes,

concepts, composition and so on". From here we can notice that these tools might be utilized mutually or in a mixture as they supplement the work of each other to come up with an effective result.

The research instrument created by the researcher is an interview guide with open questions and an observation sheet. This research instrument will answer the questions in the study as a whole. The number of interview questions are 10 questions; while the observation process were carried out in the classroom and the researcher filled the information by checking list the observation sheet (appendix E).

F. Technique of Data Analysis

According to Bogdan (1984) data analysis is the process of searching and compiling systematically the data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials, so that it can be easily understood, and the findings can be informed to others. The data collected were analyzed by using Thematic Analysis (TA). According to Braun and Clarke (2013), thematic analysis is the most commonly used to analyze data in qualitative approach. According to Braun and Clarke (2013) there are six stages in thematic analysis. The first is reading and taking note of the interesting point and becoming familiar to the data where the data collected. The second is generate initial codes. The third is looking for themes, themes are patterns that capture something significant or interesting from the data. The fourth stage is reviewing the themes and the next stage is creating thematic maps or labelling the themes, and the final stage is writing the final analysis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the findings which is a series of facts obtained during the research in the form of interview and observation. The information obtained from this research provided answers to challenges regarding the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in English subject from the insight of the English teachers.

A. Findings

This section discusses findings that answer research questions regarding the implementation, challenges, and solutions of the Kurikulum Merdeka in English subject from the insight of English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh. The data collection process in this research took for 8 days, started from 26 September to 04 October 2023. The research data collection was carried out by interviewing 5 respondents and each respondents took about 20-30 minutes to answer the questions. Respondents in this research were referred as Educator-1, Educator -2, Educator-3, Educator-4, and Educator-5.

Below are the findings obtained from the insights of English teachers regarding the Implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in terms of experiences, challenges, and solutions;

1. Teacher perceptions in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka

Perception is the key to knowing how good and bad the quality of a product is because perception is a clear statement from the person who makes or uses the product so that it becomes a reference for producers in developing their products in the future and becomes a reference for potential users of the

product. The results of research on the perceptions of English teachers in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka are as follows:

a. Teachers' understanding of the concept of Kurikulum Merdeka

The curriculum is essentially a plan that guides the educational process. A good curriculum is one that is appropriate for its time, and continues to be developed according to the context and characteristics of students in order to build competencies according to their current and future needs. The Merdeka learning initiated by Nadiem Makarim, which according to him is a breakthrough that can produce students who are not only academically proficient, but also produce students with morals and character.

This statement is in line with the sentence presented by the Co-Head of Curriculum (Educator-5) of SMPN 2 Banda Aceh, she said;

“Kurikulum Merdeka is a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning. Where learning content will be optimised so that learners have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies”-(FH, Interview 26 September 2023).

The statement above was presented exactly the same by Educator-2, who elaborated that:

“The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that gives freedom and flexibility to educators and students in the teaching and learning process. The purpose of the Merdeka Curriculum itself is the same as Nadiem Makarim's statement, this curriculum was launched to improve the previous curriculum, this curriculum will make it easier for educators to apply learning models and class learning flows without being burdened by pursuing teaching targets, more or less like that the purpose of the Merdeka Curriculum as I understand it”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Apart from the assertions of Educator-5 and Educator-2, in another place Educator-4 said the understanding of the concept of Kurikulum Merdeka, that:

“The Kurikulum Merdeka is an educational approach that gives students the freedom to explore their potential and interests more broadly. In this curriculum, not only academic aspects are emphasised, but also the development of students' social, emotional and spiritual skills”-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

Based on the results of the interview above, the researcher can conclude that English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh understand well the concept of the Kurikulum Merdeka and the objectives of the kurikulum merdeka program. This is in line with concept of exposure explained by the Minister of Education and Culture in his social activities, he said that;

“The Merdeka Curriculum allows teachers to focus and explore the curriculum, real basic concepts that are really important. The Merdeka Curriculum aims to simplify the previous curriculum which seemed complicated and could not fulfil the competency achievements of students”-(Makariem, Interview 12 February 2022 by Liputan6.com).

He also added another point, which sounded:

“Another goal of launching the Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that is much more concise, simple and more flexible to be able to support learning loss”-(Makariem, Interview 12 February 2022 by Liputan6.com).

b. Teacher Impression in Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar

The release of the Kurikulum Merdeka provides a goal where it is hoped that the world of education will be better and more directed. After the launch of their curriculum, there are several activities in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka that must be carried out by English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh, including:

1) English teachers' readiness to apply Kurikulum Merdeka;

Before implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in the learning process, English teachers first prepare the materials needed for learning. Starting from learning tools, facilities and preparation of teachers and students to start the learning process, especially the knowledge of English teachers about the concept of independent program. This is important to note because in the learning process of how to do this program there are some changes from the previous program. English teacher preparation includes:

a) Participating in training and mentoring

In preparation for the implementation of the independent curriculum, English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh on several occasions participated in training and mentoring held by the government and schools. This is implemented so that teachers can understand the concept of independent curriculum both theoretically and technically. As conveyed by Educator-5 as Co-Head Curriculum as follows:

“For the initial planning itself, we maximised attending trainings or workshops related to this independent learning curriculum. Because at the beginning it was really newly implemented so it really needed direction and sharing from others. Therefore, the teachers at AlFalah Junior High School are invited to participate in workshops together for the sake of progress and increasing teachers' understanding of the independent curriculum”-(Initial, Interview 26 September 2023).

Another point is also clarified by Educator-1's expression as an English teacher, as follows:

“Teachers are given training and coaching in advance from the school. Teachers are mentored and given training by resource persons who understand the Merdeka Curriculum”- (KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

The statements from Educator-1 and Educator-5 are also similar to other educators, for instance Educator-2 has mentioned:

“We get coaching and training on the Merdeka Curriculum directly from resource persons at the centre, the coaching is given by resource persons who understand the Kurikulum Merdeka themselves”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

b) Developing learning instruments

In addition to participating in the training and mentoring expressed above, what SMPN 2 Banda Aceh English teachers do in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka is by preparing learning tools. This includes preparing textbooks, making teaching modules and project modules to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students, preparing Learning Outcomes named as CP, and others. This arrangement is carried out so that the learning process or activities can be structured and more directed, making it easier for English teachers to achieve learning objectives.

As expressed by Educator-5 as Co-Head Kurikulum, as follows:

“Providing information in preparing or making teaching modules is very useful for educators, where the teaching module is a strong grip of the educator in the process of learning and teaching in the classroom. The teaching module cannot be separated from the educator”-(FH, Interview 26 September 2023).

Educator-3 as the English teacher also clarified the same thing:

“In making learning tools, the government has actually provided examples of teaching modules. As teachers, we are given the freedom to create our own, we as teachers are also given the freedom to adapt teaching modules in the previous curriculum, and develop or use teaching modules provided by the government according to the Merdeka Curriculum format. In this case, I use teaching modules provided by the government, but developed with interesting and structured proportions”-(DI, Interview 26 September 2023).

It is important to develop and prepare teaching modules to apply the Kurikulum Merdeka, as explained by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, that the purpose of writing teaching modules is to guide educators to carry out the learning process. This teaching module allows for the reinforcement of multiple intelligences, recognizing and capitalizing on each student's uniqueness in learning.

Nadiem Makarim's statement was also agreed by Educator-2, she explained:

“In the Kurikulum Merdeka, the teaching module has a very important role because this teaching tool acts as a teacher's guide to carry out learning activities. In addition, teaching modules also aim to develop 21st century skills which include critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and digital literacy”- (YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

2) The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka

The next thing that English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh do is to apply the independent curriculum in the English learning process or known as PBM (Proses Belajar Mengajar). In this learning process, what English teachers do are:

a) Initial or opening activity

Before starting learning, English teachers first invite students to associate things they know or experience with what they will learn (apperception), besides that English teachers also provide motivation and preparation of learning materials by teachers and students. The results of the interview with Educator-3 English teacher related to the initial activities are as follows:

“Before starting the lesson, I start with apperception and then motivation. We throw sparking questions that are relevant to the material to be taught. In addition, students will also prepare learning materials as well as I will prepare media, and other necessary needs. This is done so that students can focus on learning”-(DI, Interview 26 September 2023).

Educator-3 also added another statement::

“When in class PBM (Proses Belajar Mengajar) activities will definitely be in accordance with the teaching module that the teacher has made beforehand, doing apperception, motivation as the first step in the opening of the teaching and learning process, although I rarely use media, but the medium I apply is out of the box media, considering that teachers must think critically and creatively in carrying out the teaching process in class”-(DI-Interview 26 September 2023).

Educator-3's statement is also in line with Educator-1 and Educator -2, they argue; Educator-1:

“Teaching and Learning Process activities in the classroom must be in accordance with the teaching module that has been made, which begins with initial activities, namely praying, motivating students, asking sparking questions that are relevant to the material to be taught. Followed by core activities by carrying out the teaching and learning process according to the method that has been made until finally in the final or closing activity students are able to conclude the material they learned that day”-(KW,30 September 2023).

Educator-2 ;

“The initial activity is certainly by preparing the class, providing motivation. Asking triggering questions related to the material to be taught. Presenting the stimulus at the beginning is very necessary because this helps the teacher in explaining the material in the next core activity.”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

As a result of the observation activities carried out by researchers, the activities carried out by English teachers are in accordance with the structure of learning activities in the Merdeka Curriculum. The initial activity begins with prayer, filling in the attendance list of students,

motivating students and conducting initial assessments in the form of asking students triggering questions related to the material to be learned.

b) Core activity

In core learning, the English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh have done a good job. This includes giving freedom to students so that they do not feel pressured, and delivering material with certain methods. However, the application of differentiated learning is still not optimal in its application. As explained by Educator-2:

“In the Core Activities of the teaching and learning process, I usually use media that is not so complicated, sometimes the media is myself. I use the teaching method of explaining or asking students to analyse what they find in the material and if they find things they don't understand I ask them to ask me. Considering the concept of differentiated learning itself, the activities that are carried out should not differentiate the treatment given to students, it must be the same but still pay attention to their learning characters, so sometimes I provide ice breaking, listening to the music and others. Teacher creativity is very much demanded in solving the differentiation of learning”- (YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-2's contention was confirmed by Educator-3, who explained:

“For the core activities themselves, I make the model and flow of the teaching and learning process more collaborative and innovative without ignoring the learning characters possessed by students, usually the flow is more out of the box without being structured at the beginning. This activity plays a very active role in the process of absorbing material from teachers to students. In the teaching module version of the Kurikulum Merdeka, we as English teachers must make it structured to become a guide and step of the teaching and learning process”-(DI, Interview 26 September 2023).

Additionally, Educator-4 offered her opinion on the core activities that she conducted:

“In my perspective, core activities are the heart of a learning process, this is because in this activity the process of transferring material is carried out by educators to students in a structured manner. In the core activities, I usually carry out the teaching and learning process by utilize the interesting media”-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

In the observation activities carried out by researcher, students carried out all the learning process activities listed in the teaching modules they had. In the core activity stage, the educators apply it accordingly and in line with the learning model they have set before. the core activity applied by the English Teacher who has been interviewed by the researcher is a learning activity that aims to form student experiences (learning experiences) which are divided into three stages, namely exploration, elaboration, and confirmation.

Certainly this finding is in line with the opinion of Saefuddin (2014) which explains that, core activities are a learning process to achieve goals that are carried out interactively, inspiring, fun, challenging, motivating students to actively seek information, and providing sufficient space for initiative, creativity and independence according to the talents and interests of students.

c) Closing activity

At the end of the lesson, the teachers always summarise the overall learning outcomes both from the discussion results and the students' individual work. The English teacher will give directions to the students regarding the material to be learnt at the next meeting at the end of the lesson. As expressed by Educator-2:

“At the end of the lesson I will invite students to provide conclusions from what was learnt in the lesson at that time. And I will help summarise the outline. This aims to train students to express their opinions”(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-2's statement was also confirmed by Educator-4:

“In my opinion, the effort to close the lesson is intended to provide a comprehensive overview of what students have learnt, to determine the level of student achievement and the level of teacher success in the teaching and learning process”-(WT, 03 October 2023).

In the observation activities carried out by the researcher, the researcher found that each English teacher had a different way of closing the class, some did it by presenting a learning reflection process, some did it by giving homework to students, and the most interesting thing was found that the teacher did closing activities by doing both, namely reflection and giving homework to students. The effect of the teacher's class-closing skills is that it raises students' attention and motivation to face the tasks that will be done. Similarly, opening and closing activities will determine the success of a learning process.

3) Merdeka curriculum learning assessment

Another thing that English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh do in the context of implementing an independent curriculum is evaluating the learning process and its assessment. In the independent curriculum, the assessment is to conduct reflection and assessment on each teaching module, identify what results have been achieved and what needs to be improved, follow up by modifying the next teaching module.

In this case, the English teacher at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh conducts an evaluation at the end of each material by asking questions related to the

level of understanding of students cognitively, so that the next meeting can be improved on things that are not optimal. As expressed by Educator-3:

“In fact, the final assessment evaluation process has not been carried out because we are implementing an independent curriculum that is not even one year old, usually I evaluate learning at the end after the teaching and learning process is completed at the meeting, I will review a little material learned and ask questions and find out the level of understanding of students whether it is sufficiently understood or not for the discussion of material that day”-(DI-Interview 26 September 2023).

The assertion of Educator-3 was supported by Educator-2 and Educator-1.

Educator-1 adds its two arguments, which contain :

“As for the P5 assessment, it is usually done collaboratively in each school, if I myself do it not every week I do a block system, with activities given workshops about health, such as building jiwaraga. Sometimes we provide socialisation about health by inviting the community health centre to the school or related resource persons regarding the cultivation of the Pancasila Profile” -(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Whereas Educator-2 declared her opinions, which that :

“Before entering the material, as an English teacher, I make an assessment at the beginning, which is called a diagnostic assessment such as a trigger question, the strongest is summative and formative assessment which contains questions to measure the academic achievement of students”. Making assessments is an important point in preparation for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

In contrast to the other educators, Educator-4 talked in general about the objectives and types of assessments in the Kurikulum Merdeka, she explained:

“Assessment aims to provide an overview of the extent to which students have achieved the competencies set out in the curriculum. Assessment in the independent curriculum has three forms that I always apply, namely; initial assessment (diagnostic), summative and formative assessment”-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

4) English teacher preferences (Kurikulum Merdeka or previous curriculum)

The Researcher also analyzed English teachers' preferences between the 2013 curriculum and Kurikulum Merdeka. The interview results show that 3 out of 4 English teachers prefer to use the Kurikulum Merdeka. This is evidenced by Educator-3:

“I prefer to use the Merdeka Curriculum rather than the 2013 Curriculum, this is because in the independent curriculum students are free to learn and master the material they want without having to be chased by targets like in the 2013 curriculum, in the 2013 curriculum students must achieve material targets that must be achieved within 1 year, as teachers we seem to be in a hurry to provide material to students”-(DI, Interview 26 September 2023).

The interpretation of Educator-3 is also in line with the opinion of Educator-1:

“In general, I feel that the Merdeka Curriculum is easier to apply than the 2013 curriculum, because the teaching materials are more focused and structured. The material in the 2013 curriculum is less focused and students are less enthusiastic about the curriculum. In terms of the 2013 curriculum book, there is no explanation of a material in general, and there is no specific summary of the material”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Educator-2 also gave the same opinions. She also clarified that :

“To be honest, if you asked me which one is better between the 2013 Curriculum and the Kurikulum Merdeka, I will firmly answer that I choose the Kurikulum Merdeka because this curriculum is more flexible and this curriculum does not burden teachers with having to achieve learning targets, unlike the 2013 curriculum, where we are required to complete all material in a certain period of time, while in the Kurikulum Merdeka it does not have to be all sub-units of material taught because the important thing is that students understand even if it is only 2-3 materials”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Even though three English teachers I interviewed preferred to use the Kurikulum Merdeka, there are one teacher who was still more comfortable in using the 2013 Curriculum. Educator-4 elaborated on her opinion on why she chose the 2013 curriculum, she commented:

“Actually, I prefer to use the 2013 Curriculum, this is because I understand the curriculum better and I feel that the Merdeka Curriculum is still very new and not very comfortable for me, in fact, in class I still often use a learning model based on the 2013 Curriculum rather than the Merdeka Curriculum”- (WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

Based on the results of the interviews above, the researcher concluded that 3 out of 4 teachers were able and ready to accept the Kurikulum Merdeka. Furthermore, the researcher understands that there are still English Teachers who prefer the 2013 Curriculum because, according to the researcher's analysis, the teacher is still stuck in their comfort zone in the 2013 Curriculum, even though the teacher is required to apply the Kurikulum Merdeka in the teaching and learning process.

2. The challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English subject

Based on the data analysis, the researcher found that English teachers face a number of challenges when implementing Kurikulum Merdeka, including some aspects that will be explained in more detail below:

a. Lack of knowledge in administration pattern

Learning Outcomes or often abbreviated as CP is a term in the Kurikulum Merdeka which means learning competencies that students must achieve at each phase of development. These learning outcomes

consist of a set of competencies and scope of material comprehensively arranged in narrative form. For instance, the learning outcome in Mathematics is that students can describe the characteristics of various shapes of flat shapes. For example, the Learning Outcome in the English subject is that students can explain the present continues tense. The term learning outcomes in Kurikulum Merdeka is the same as the terms KI and KD in the 2013 Curriculum.

Meanwhile, the flow of learning objectives (ATP) is a series of learning objectives that are arranged systematically and logically in the phase as a whole and according to the learning sequence from the beginning to the end of a phase. The ATP has the same function as the syllabus, which is to guide learning planning. The most significant challenge perceived by the English teachers seen in the interview process was the translation of CP to ATP, as described by Educator-3;

“At first we were troubled when we made the learning module, we were confused when determining and organising the cp and atp sections, we felt quite heavy and confused at first when lowering the CP to ATP, while in the 2013 curriculum the burden was when determining indicators and operational verbs in the lesson plan” (DI, Interview 26 September 2023).

The Difficulties in creating the teaching module were also explained by the Educator-1 :

“I also feel that in translating CP into ATP, this is something that is very challenging for me, because the Kurikulum Merdeka is new to the world of education, especially for teachers, I must pay attention to determining the ATP itself how students can capture the material well”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Not only that, Educator-1 added her reasoning towards the translation of CP to ATP in the interview such as:

“Honestly, I feel the challenge of reducing CP to ATP is very significant because I myself am still in my first year of using the independent curriculum, while other English teachers are already in their second and third years. So, the challenges that I feel are still quite obvious”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Elsewhere, Educator-2 added a view on the translation of CPs to ATPs that felt to be a challenge, she said:

“The impression of the 2013 Curriculum is quite embedded in the teacher's head, such as determining indicators, determining KD to the stage of determining Operational Verbs (KKO), so that when the Merdeka Curriculum was launched, there were changes in several names in it such as the flow path of determining CP to ATP, or naming CP and ATP itself, which seemed complicated and the CP provided by the government in the Merdeka Curriculum was more general, compared to the 2013 Curriculum which had been divided in such a way”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

The Educator-4 also presented her opinion :

“I feel if teacher's problematics in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka in planning, implementing and assessing learning is the difficulty in analysing CP, formulating TP and compiling ATP and Teaching Modules, determining learning methods and strategies”-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

From the observation activities, the researcher can conclude that English teachers initially still do not understand the essence of learning tools in each component such as CP, TP, and ATP, so that it is difficult to describe the TP from the CP that has been determined in the Kurikulum Merdeka design and compile ATP from TP.

b. Differentiated learning styles

In the Kurikulum Merdeka, the government does not ask teachers to make students directly involved in the learning process, and requires

teachers to follow each student's learning style or what is known as the differentiated learning model. However, teachers find it quite difficult to realize this, because teachers must be able to teach refers to the interests, learning style and needs of students. This was conveyed by the Educator-3:

“The challenge that is seen when the teacher has to think about how to control the class by paying attention to the differentiated learning models of students in that class”-(DI-26 September 2023).

She also added the information :

“The government asks indirectly that teachers can get children involved and asked to follow students' learning styles. To be honest, that's something I really pay attention to as a teacher, because teachers have to think extra critically and creatively in determining the right and suitable learning styles that will be used later. by in the learning process”-(DI-26 September 2023).

However, teachers felt it was too challenge to treat students differently in the same time, the Educator-1 clarified :

“The differentiation of existing learning models such as kinesthetic, auditory and visual is clearly different for each student. So... this is homework for teachers, because teachers must be able to prepare a medium that suits the needs of the children in class. Teachers must be able to generalize that the media or method used can at least be a successful introduction to the material that will be conveyed from the teacher to the students”- (YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-2 also contributed her views, where :

“In fact, the differentiation of learning styles is the most visible challenge, as I said before, teachers are asked to be able to make teaching modules by following the characters of students, even though it cannot be realised properly, because these students mostly have kinesthetic learning characters, more want to have moving activities, well again the treatment used does not need to be differentiated, just generalise what is important is that the material is conveyed properly”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-2 and Educator-3's statements were in line with those of Educator-1, who also felt that :

“We as teachers are asked in one teaching module to make modules that are in accordance with the learning styles of students, this is a challenge for me, because teachers must fully understand the types of learning styles according to the character of students, and in fact to this day I still have not made such a teaching module. I still generalize the methods used in the classroom without considering learning styles according to the character of the students”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Educator-1 also added:

“I don't deny that there may be some young teachers who make teaching modules according to the learning styles of the students' characters, but I have not made a teaching module which divides learning activities according to the learning styles and characters of the students. But for example, during learning activities I see that there are students who are less focused in learning activities, I will try to divert learning activities with more attractive, in that case the kinesthetic activity pattern is running, more out of the box teaching rhythm that I use”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

From the interview and observation activities it can be concluded that, differentiated learning arises from the fact that learners have various differences, both in ability, personality, experience, interest, talent, language, culture, and learning style. So it is unfair to make the same assessment for all students. Educators must pay attention to these differences. In addition, to realize this, teachers need to struggle and work hard. The researcher also saw that the teachers' misinterpretation in understanding the concept of process differentiation makes teachers are not optimal in implementing it.

c. Create teaching module

Teaching modules are a number of media tools or means, methods, instructions, and guidelines that are systematically and attractively designed. The teaching module is the implementation of the flow of learning objectives developed from the learning outcomes with the Pancasila Learner Profile as the target. According to the statement of Educator-1, she said :

"For the teaching module itself, I actually feel that there are no significant differences between the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka Curriculum, there are several tools that must be made by the teacher in the teaching module in the Merdeka Curriculum version such as the Pancasila student profile, Meaningful Understanding, and explaining the learning pattern from the initial activities to the final activities per each meeting, so I may find it a little difficult to determine the explanation in the learning method that will be applied, other than that there is nothing"-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Similarly, Educator- 4 also found it quite a challenge to create a teaching module:

"For the teaching module, I find it a little difficult because of the many changes in the names of the teaching module tools in the Kurikulum Merdeka. So, if for example, this ATP used to be the Core Competencies in the 2013 Curriculum, well, that's what I have to learn, the names of the terms in the Kurikulum Merdeka teaching module"-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

From the results of the interviews, it can be inferred that 2 out of 4 teachers find it difficult to make teaching modules that are in accordance with the Kurikulum Merdeka pattern due to lack of competence in understanding learning tools in the Kurikulum Merdeka, such as differences in names or the emergence of other terms that ultimately make teachers confused in making teaching modules, even though they see

references from the 2013 Curriculum, the terms used make it a little difficult for teachers to make good teaching modules according to the standard pattern owned by the Kurikulum Merdeka.

d. Misinterpretation of the concept "Merdeka" in Kurikulum Merdeka

Merdeka Belajar is a program initiated by the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Nadiem Anwar Makarim as an effort to realize independence in learning. Freedom in learning means that students have the freedom to think and express themselves. However, the concept of "independence" in learning is misinterpreted by students, which ultimately makes teachers feel that this is also a challenge for teachers, because teachers must be able to straighten out what "freedom" really means in Kurikulum Merdeka. As expressed by Educator-2:

"It is quite fatal in understanding the meaning of " freedom " by students. Students misunderstand the meaning of " freedom of learning" in the Merdeka curriculum, they think that the meaning of the word " freedom" itself is their unlimited freedom in the classroom teaching process, without following the flow and model applied by the teacher"- (YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-2's statement is in line with the opinions given by Educator-4 and Educator-1, they explained their opinions separately:

"Many students feel that they are very free about learning. I as a teacher certainly cannot lie if they think that this independent curriculum is very free for students, they assume that freedom itself is if students are free to participate or not in the learning process, in class students are free to show their talents such as playing the guitar, even though this will interfere with the learning process for students who really want to study knowledge"- (KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Meanwhile, the Educator-4 stated that:

“The word "Merdeka" which is considered a freedom and makes students interpret that the independent curriculum provides free conditions to students, students can relax freely in accepting material or not without any demands as well as other things that are free in learning and must achieve targets or not”-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

From the results of the interview, it can be concluded that the word "Merdeka" which is interpreted differently has finally led to a "misguided" understanding of the independent curriculum policy by students. The word "merdeka" which always means freedom makes students think about something that has no demands and rules in the classroom while process of learning and teaching by the teachers.

e. Problems related to the students environment

The environment is one of the most influential factors for education. The environment affects the development of a child's character. If children grow and develop in an environment that is good, polite, and religiously observant, they will be moulded into a good person. But on the contrary, bad influences from the environment are also contagious habits, therefore parents must really pay attention to the influence of the environment on children's education.

For teachers and students, the environment is an effective learning component. The environment can be utilised as a learning resource for students. Learning resources can be used in learning activities separately or in combination.

Educator-1, clarified that:

“The parents of students should also be able to build communication and co-operate with the school, especially the teachers. However, I do not deny that there are some parents who want to cooperate or build communication in order to find out the shortcomings and achievements of their children, but it is still a very small population”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Educator-1 added another opinion where the Acehnese people's views on education programs are still not accepted, as she argued:

“The readiness of students in implementing the independent curriculum itself is actually quite abstract when it is said to be a challenge, actually it is not only students who are not ready but from the perspective of the cultural views of the people in Aceh, where public awareness in supporting education is very lacking, this is evident when schools and teachers want to make a programme, usually parents of students do not accept the program”-(KW-Interview 30 September 2023).

Based on these interview activities, it can be concluded that the influence of the students' environment is very strong in making the Kurikulum Merdeka success, but parents' low understanding of the Kurikulum Merdeka makes them less active and less interested in participating in helping to make the Kurikulum Merdeka successful.

f. Less-motivated of students' learning

Learning motivation means encouragement from students to achieve learning goals, such as understanding material or learning development. With motivation, students will always be eager to continue learning without coercion from any party. The definition of learning motivation according to Sardiman (2018) is the overall driving force within students that gives rise to learning activities, which ensures the continuity of learning activities and provides direction to learning activities, so that the goals desired by the learning subject can be achieved.

In implementing Kurikulum Merdeka, another challenge perceived by English Teachers is the very low readiness and motivation of students to learn, as said by Educator-2:

“Based on my analysis, current students are very lacking in motivation in learning, they want to play more than learn, not only that, the learning preparation they prepare themselves is also lower, they just come, sit and go home without feeling burdened if they don't get knowledge in their class”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

She also mentioned:

“The children of today only expect from the teacher, without any encouragement or desire to learn from within themselves, so that academic achievement at the end of the learning period is still not optimal”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

It can be concluded that, there are still many students who have low motivation to learn, this happens due to several factors where students do not like the subject, or students still do not understand the teaching method of the teachers.

g. Facilities and infrastructure

Educational facilities and infrastructure can be useful to support the implementation of the teaching and learning process to achieve educational goals. In addition, in applying the Kurikulum Merdeka, English teachers explained that there is still a lack of facilities and infrastructure that support the successful implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka as described by Educator-1:

“There are still classes that do not have infocus cables, or the availability of infocus is minimal, when I want to use it sometimes it is preceded by other classes, so video media cannot be used in class”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Educator-1's explanation was added to by Educator-2:

“Actually, the facilities and infrastructure in terms of supporting technology are still lacking, because some classes still lack infocus equipment, the availability of these supporting tools is still lacking, so the success of the Merdeka Curriculum in the field of technology is still not perfect”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Therefore, it can be concluded that the facilities and infrastructure at SMPN 2 are still less supportive, the availability of infocus tools are still felt to be inadequate to be used by all language teachers. In addition to the results of the interview, that the supporting factor in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka is the existence of facilities and infrastructure that can support the success of the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka, while for inhibiting factors, namely that there are still teachers who do not understand the platform provided by the government.

3. The solutions to the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English subject

The solutions to answer the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum will be explained further below:

a. Creating a discussion forum with another English teachers

English teachers who have challenges in outlining the flow of learning tools will create a discussion forum among English teachers, as stated by Educator-1;

“Usually, for things that I don't understand related to the description of CP to ATP, I will ask the driving teachers, and learn from the Merdeka Teaching Platform (PMM). I also asked the colleagues who, in my opinion, already understood the Merdeka Curriculum quite well, which was my effort in overcoming problems related to the administrative part”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

The Educator-1 statement has similarities with Educator-2 where Educator-2 believes that solutions by discussing with other teachers are needed, she explained in the interview session:

"I am responsible for understanding the concepts of CP and ATP by discussing with other English teachers, this can solve problems related to not understanding the description of CP to ATP"- (YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-4 expressed another opinion in support of Educator-2 and Educator-1's answers;

"Learning on the Independent Curriculum Teaching Media Platform can also be a solution for me in helping me understand the preparation of learning tools in the Independent Curriculum, I also often look at educational YouTube, and ask directly to sources such as the deputy head of the curriculum, in addition to discussing with other English Teachers, what I have mentioned can be a good solution"- (WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

b. Presenting innovative and creative methods

The challenge of determining a learning method that suits the character of students is very important, English teachers provide several solutions that can be done, such as from the opinion of Educator-1;

"Regarding the challenge of differentiating learning styles, it is true that I generalise the teaching methods and styles for the class, but another breakthrough that I do is by not bringing the class into monotony, I will make the class in my own style, with more attractive, and fun"- (KW, 30 September 2023).

Educator-2 also argues:

"Actually getting closer to children who need more attention can also be a solution to this differentiated learning, for example there are students who do not make assignments, we approach and provide special coaching for them. In addition to making the class more enthusiastic by providing media that makes them happy, such as ice-breaking, board games and also directing students to find their own learning themes after seeing the media that I use"- (YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Educator-2 also added another opinion which is the best solution in her view;

"In this process I provide teaching materials that vary. The variety of teaching materials provided is in the form of power points which are designed with many pictures and given audio explanations to facilitate visual and auditory type learners, while direct explanations in class by playing roles to make it easier for students to be given to students, namely giving freedom in compiling tasks according to the theme determined by the kinesthetic type"-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Elsewhere, Educator-3 gave her opinion;

"In differentiated learning, teachers need to understand, the initial stage may be quite complicated and not easy. So it needs teacher creativity to create a learning atmosphere like differentiated learning. The way I do in grouping students according to their character is by applying the inquiry method or others then students provide conclusions from the results of the discussion as well as practice with other students observing"-(DI, Interview 26 September 2023).

Another solutions to the problem of low student motivation were presented by several English teachers, as Educator-4 said;

"Like we are watching television, of course we will get bored if we only watch one TV channel. We tend to change TV channels to choose interesting programs. The same applies to the learning process. Students would be bored if the methods and activities we do in the learning and teaching process are monotonous or just that. Smart teachers must use a variety of methods and activities so that the learning process can take place more interestingly"-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

c. Exploring various references

In the Merdeka curriculum, another challenge experienced by English teachers is creating teaching modules. Therefore, Educator-3 chose to make teaching modules with reference to the previous curriculum. She delivered:

“While adapted teaching modules available in the 2013 curriculum or from others can be a solution to create a good teaching module, keep in mind that as teachers we must be more selective in choosing other people's teaching modules, it must be adjusted to the needs of the class. Modifying the teaching module well is my effort to learn to make a module”-(DI, Interview, 26 September 2023).

Educator-3's statement was also supported by Educator-1, who explained that the solution in modifying the teaching module is a solution that can encourage teachers to be able to make teaching modules according to the Kurikulum Merdeka category:

“In terms of my own teaching module, I modified it from someone else's. Because not all methods can be used even though the material taught is the same. I will modify the teaching module by considering the appropriate learning style for the characteristics of my students. Not only adapting from others, adapting from the 2013 curriculum is also a solution to create the teaching module”-(KW, 30 September 2023).

In addition, aside from Educator-1 who agreed with Educator-3's opinion, other English teachers such as Educator-2 also gave the same opinion, she mentioned;

“Referring to the learning module in Curriculum 2013, there are some things that are the same as the Kurikulum Merdeka, it's just that I think the name is better modified. Therefore, I usually often refer to the teaching modules in Curriculum 2013 and also adapt the teaching modules in other sources by modifying them to the needs of my class”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

d. Providing regular insights to students

The differences in learning experiences experienced by students allow students to have a wrong understanding of an Independent Curriculum concept, the solution to this challenge is presented by Educator-1, she explained;

“I often explain and share information related to what exactly the Merdeka Curriculum is, which is said to be truly "freedom"”-(KW, Interview 30 September 2023).

Her opinion is exactly the same as Educator-2;

“I often ask them what they know about the Merdeka Curriculum, because honestly, in this era of technology, they are free to access and read anything on the Internet. If there are errors in the concept of the Kurikulum Merdeka that they present, I will clear up and straighten out these misconceptions”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

e. Building cooperation with parents

The cooperation of teachers and parents is the key to success in shaping students' discipline character. Without the co-operation of parents and teachers, the character of discipline cannot be formed in a student. Another challenge is the low relationship between teachers and parents that has been established so far, the solution that can be provided by Educator-2 is;

“As a teacher, the step that I can provide is that teachers can try to involve parents in planning student character education, the involvement of parents in character education planning is by supporting and carrying out the commitments made by parents and teachers in shaping student character, such as accompanying children to study at home by optimize their study hours”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

Other solutions declared by Educator-4, she conveyed:

“The solution that can be done is to form a Parents and Teachers Association using Whatsapp, with the existence of an association of parents of students and teachers, schools can be able to hold regular meetings to discuss educational problems that still have many mistakes made by parents. With the association of parents and teachers, it can help smooth the course of teaching at school”-(WT, Interview 03 October 2023).

Educator-1 also added another solution, namely;

“As a teacher, I can submit a letter requesting that a socialisation related to the Merdeka Curriculum be made by the school which will be attended by parents. Because it should be noted that the success of the Merdeka Curriculum does not only depend on teachers and schools, but the role of parents is also needed”-(KW, Interview 30 September

It can be concluded that it is very necessary to build relationships between schools and parents, which are expected to provide positive things for monitoring children's educational development.

f. Creating a enjoyable environment

A comfortable classroom environment is also very important to encourage students' motivation to participate. The activities provided in the classroom may not meet the expectation of the students as each of them is unique, but a good interaction with the students can encourage them to give a responsive action in learning process which, then, affect their speaking practice and improve their fluency (Dahlia, 2019). However, the solutions to the problem of low student motivation in learning were presented by Educator-2, she said that:

"Students can learn better when they are in a pleasant atmosphere, feel safe, free from tension. Smart Teachers can break the tense atmosphere in learning by providing jokes in the middle of the teaching that is being given. In addition, Smart Teachers must give equal attention to all students, so that every student has the same opportunity to actualize themselves in our online classroom”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

g. Involving stakeholders to support facilities and infrastructure

When school facilities and infrastructure are inadequate, it will result in the problem of lack of education, due to the limited school facilities and

inadequate learning at this time. Solutions that can be provided by Educator-2, she added the solution for this challenges :

“In my point of view, we can involve all education stakeholders, such as principals, teachers, students, parents, school committees, education offices and other related parties in the decision-making process, monitoring and evaluation related to school facilities and infrastructure. This can increase the sense of responsibility, involvement and openness between all parties”-(YS, Interview 02 October 2023).

4. The Observation Findings

In the result of observation activities carried out by researchers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh show the fact that English teachers have implemented the independent curriculum for students in addition to the learning objectives that have been designed previously. The English Teachers also shows that the activity structure activities designed according to the Kurikulum Merdeka guidelines have been implemented properly. The activity begins with opening by providing apperception and motivation to students, followed by core activities which contain the learning process taking place with the stages of using the project-based learning method, until it ends with closing activities such as providing feedback or reviewing the material that has been learned that day.

In the process of observation activities, researcher also found other things contained in the teaching module at classroom, one of which was that the teacher was the only centre when learning activities, the main identity of the module and other components were in accordance with the standards set out in the Kurikulum Merdeka tool. Procedures in

implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka are made by including several components, namely core, general, and supporting attachments. The core components are learning objectives, critical thinking, in-depth understanding, structured questions, exercises, and enrichment. The general components are module identity, initial competence, supporting facilities, student outcomes, methods, and learning media.

Other observational findings found by researchers are the structural process of activities has been carried out well and sequentially, but in other aspects it still needs to be improved where students are still not the centre of learning. Teachers are still more dominant in controlling the class and the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Given that the Kurikulum Merdeka was released in order to perfect the previous curriculum, where students are the centre of learning. This is still considered less effective and there needs to be another breakthrough from English teachers to be able to encourage and make students the centre of learning. In addition, the researcher also found that the use of technology and technology-based media is still minimally applied to the teaching and learning process, English teachers more often use the old method of presenting material traditionally and asking students to do tasks with the concept of group or individual without using technology. English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh have their own reasons for not often using technology, this is because school facilities and infrastructure do not support teachers to be able to use modern-based technology in the

classroom during the teaching and learning process. Last but not least, in the observation activities conducted by the researcher, it was discovered that the learning models used by the English teachers in the classroom were quite varied according to the needs. Each of the English teachers at SMPN 2, used Project Based Learning, Discovery Learning, Cooperative learning and Inquiry Based Learning models. In the case of the discovery learning model, students are asked to identify and observe a picture that is in line with the Descriptive Text material. English Teachers have abandoned the conventional learning model which does not include media in the learning process.

From the results of the observation and interview data that have been presented, it is clear that the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh still has to be improved in various ways. This is considered very essential to increase the success of the Kurikulum Merdeka in the teaching and learning process in order to achieve better learning goals and outcomes for students, and the results of these observations and interviews are expected to be real evaluation material and can be used as a good step to create a learning system that is in accordance with the principles of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

B. Discussion

Based on the results of the data presentation that has been presented, the researcher will then analyze the data that has been obtained. The method used is qualitative descriptive method. This research emphasizes

English teachers' views on the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka. This research investigates three research questions; the first research question is "How is the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject?", the second research question is "What are the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject?", and the third research question is "What are solutions for challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Subject?". This research focuses on English teachers' experiences in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka, the challenges they face, and the solutions they use.

According to the results of interviews and observations, the researcher found that English teachers actually knew the concept and purpose of the Kurikulum Merdeka. However, overall, the respondents already knew and understood the basic concepts of the Kurikulum Merdeka and its scope. This can be seen from their explanation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. They clearly and eloquently explained that Kurikulum Merdeka is a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning. Where learning content will be optimized so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. They also clearly explained that the concept of the Kurikulum Merdeka is a curriculum that provides flexibility to educators and students in carrying out learning that suits their needs and learning environment.

According to Azmi (2021), in the concept of Kurikulum Merdeka, the subject of the learning system is between teacher and student. This means

that teachers and students work together to move forward and seek truth, rather than students using teachers as a source of truth. This means that the teacher's position in the classroom is not to tell or standardize the truth in the teacher's view, but to explore truth, the power of reasoning, and the student's critical view of the world and phenomena.

In the process of implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, English teachers initially felt confused when they had to adapt and find out about the new curriculum. Referring to the experience of English teachers in using the Kurikulum Merdeka, they began with being given training and guidance in getting to know and exploring everything in the concept of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Furthermore, English teachers at SMPN 2 explained that there were different experiences in implementing methods in the core activity sub-unit. The assessment method described by English teachers at SMPN 2 is quite complete and in accordance with the assessment regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture in this new curriculum. The assessment begins with the diagnostic type and is carried out at the end in the formative and summative types. Clear evidence of the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh, seen from the explanation and results of researcher observations where 3 out of 4 English teachers chose the Kurikulum Merdeka and admitted to being more flexible in using this curriculum, they stated that the flexibility of the independent curriculum is seen from the achievement of material that is not required to be fully fulfilled by the teacher to students. The Kurikulum

Merdeka emphasises students' understanding of each and every material without having to seem rushed in classroom exposure by educators..

Despite being initially confused and overwhelmed in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, in the end, the teachers said that the Kurikulum Merdeka also had an impact on educators, not just students. Teachers believe that with the release of the Kurikulum Merdeka, this can help them to improve their teaching performance where teachers become more updated. Teachers are required to be more creative in delivering material, create a learning style that is not monotonous, try to find interesting learning references, so that students can be more enthusiastic about learning.

The discussion related to the second research question, teachers also face several challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, which researchers classify into seven points, one of which is that teachers still do not understand about making learning tools, here the teachers agree that the difficulty is felt when teachers describe CP and ATP. Teachers feel that translating CP into ATP is quite difficult because teachers must determine the flow of learning objectives that are in accordance with the material being taught. The elaboration of CP and ATP also affects the making of teaching modules.

In addition to the confusion in implementing the program, the researcher also found that English teachers at SMPN 2 lacked knowledge in creating teaching modules in accordance with Kurikulum Merdeka.

Teaching modules are one of the most important things in a learning process. English teachers at SMPN 2 often modify or teaching modules from the previous curriculum, because they feel that adapting teaching modules to the previous curriculum can help them in making a teaching module that is suitable for the curriculum.

In addition to the changes in the teaching module, English teachers at SMPN 2 are also faced with another significant challenge, namely the differentiated learning styles of the learners. Teachers are required to be able to determine the appropriate treatment for these three types of characters. According to Yusra (2023), differentiated learning is a learning approach that allows teachers to meet the individual needs of each student in the classroom. In practice, teachers will present materials and activities that are tailored to each student's level of understanding and learning style. Differentiated learning is a way or effort made by teachers to fulfill students' needs and expectations.

The perception of Yusra (2023) is in line with Tomlinson's (2000) opinion, differentiated learning is an attempt to adjust the learning process in the classroom to meet the individual learning needs of each student, rather than giving different tasks to each child. Differentiated learning is also not a chaotic learning process. Tomlinson emphasises that the key to successful differentiated learning lies in the process aspect that is tailored to the needs of the students. In other words, process differentiation will determine outcome differentiation. However, English teachers at SMPN 2

argue that implementing differentiated learning is not necessarily easy. The differentiated learning approach requires a lot of resources, different processes, and the implementation of appropriate strategies.

Furthermore, based on the results of the study, researchers also discovered other challenges felt by other English teachers, namely that English teachers said there was a misinterpretation of the concept of "merdeka" of learning understood by students. The misinterpretation of the word "merdeka" in this curriculum ultimately makes teachers feel that this is also a challenge for teachers, because teachers must be able to straighten out what "merdeka" really means in the Kurikulum Merdeka. The word "merdeka" which always means freedom makes students think about something that has no demands and rules, even though in an independent curriculum there are still references and programs that must be done so that teachers do not provide material freely without rules.

In addition, there are also challenges in terms of the learner's environment. The influence of the learner's environment is believed to determine the results of the successful achievement of learner competencies in the Kurikulum Merdeka. But in fact, there is still a lack of role from the learners' environment such as parents who are indifferent to their children's education. SMPN 2 Banda Aceh English teachers believe that if there is collaboration and a strong relationship between parents teachers and the school, the success of the Merdeka Kurikulum can go well. The role of parents in learning both at home and at school is as a

motivator, facilitator, mediator, evaluator, partner, supervisor. According to the English teachers at SMPN 2, the communication between student guardians and schools must be intense. By utilising technology, at least with social media, messaging applications and others, basically something that is obtained at school, parents must know. Although educational institutions play an active role in creating children's character, the success of education is also determined by all educational personnel including parents. As the final determinant, parents must change their paradigm of thinking that schools are not daycare centres where all roles are taken by teachers without being involved in school activities.

Besides the challenge of low collaboration from the student environment and communication between parents and teachers, there is also the challenge of low student motivation. This occurs due to several factors where students do not like the subject, or students still do not understand the teacher's teaching methods and models. According to the English teacher at SMPN 2, there is a very strong relationship if there is an increase in student learning motivation with the implementation of an independent learning curriculum. This is in line with research conducted by Setiawati (2022) if students are able to increase learning motivation well in the implementation of an independent curriculum, the level of student learning motivation will increase well. Conversely, if learners are not able to increase their learning motivation well in the

implementation of the independent curriculum, then the level of learning motivation decreases.

The last challenge in the findings of this research is the lack of facilities and infrastructure at SMPN 2, English teachers argue that in each class there are still many do not have infocus, LCD projectors, even if there are very limited numbers there are only two pieces while teachers who will use a lot, this has an impact on teacher performance in teaching (Mawati, 2023). This condition results in teachers still dominantly using the lecture method in the classroom learning process. This is in line with the opinion of Jojor (2022) who said that educational facilities and infrastructure can be interpreted as educational facilities, while educational facilities are all goods or tools in the teaching and learning process, both movable and non-movable. teaching and learning process, both moving and non-moving items. Everything is intended to support the educational process to run smoothly, well, regularly and efficiently.

Although there are several challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, this is also accompanied by solutions to overcome these challenges. Then to answer the third research question related to solutions to challenges in implementing this program, the first solution is to create a discussion forum with English teachers who understand the Kurikulum Merdeka, present innovative and creative methods, explore various references in making teaching modules, provide regular insights to students regarding misunderstandings about the interpretation of the

Kurikulum Merdeka, then build cooperation between teachers and parents, improve the quality of teacher teaching, and the last solution is to discuss with the principal regarding facilities and infrastructure.

The explanation of the solution above is in line with previous research; according to Wuwur (2023) there are several solutions that can be applied in facing challenges when implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka, namely: 1) providing training and developing the competence to the teacher, 2) enhancing support from parents and the community. The role of parents and the community is very important in supporting the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka, 3) Improving facilities and infrastructure, which will help create a more conducive and supportive learning environment for students, the last one is 4) presenting diverse learning methods and models.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter provides conclusions and suggestions based on finding and discussion. The researcher describes numerous conclusions based on the finding of the research. Then, provides some suggestions that might be useful for the teachers, policy maker in education, future researchers, and also for the readers.

A. Conclusions

Based on the results of the research and data analysis that has been done, this research could draw the following conclusions to answer research question 1, 2, and 3:

1. The English teachers' experience in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka was very confusing for them, especially at the beginning. English teachers at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh initially felt overwhelmed in applying it in the classroom. The English teachers showed that the activity structure activities designed according to the Kurikulum Merdeka guidelines have been implemented properly. The activity begins with opening by providing apperception and motivation to students, followed by core activities which contain the learning process taking place with the stages of using the project-based learning method, until it ends with closing activities such as providing feedback or reviewing the material that has been learned that day. In addition, the learning activity that has been carried out by English teachers at SMPN 2 are in accordance with the

predetermined guidelines, namely by starting with opening activities, continuing with core activities and closing with final activities.

The process of assessment in the Kurikulum Merdeka are divided into three, namely diagnosti, summative assessment and formative assessment. On the other hand, the results implementation of the findings show that from the flexibility of the Kurikulum Merdeka, not all English teachers choose this curriculum, 3 out of 4 teachers prefer to apply the Kurikulum Merdeka than 2013 curriculum.

2. The challenges faced by four English teachers at SMPN 2 in applying the Kurikulum Merdeka are seven challenges, namely; lack of knowledge in administration patterns, differentiated learning styles, create teaching module, misinterpretation of the concept of "Merdeka" in the Kurikulum Merdeka, problems related to the students environment, less-motivated of students' learning, and the last is facilities and infrastructure.
3. The solution that appeared to overcome these challenges are, such as; creating a discussion forum with English teachers, presenting innovative and creative methods, exploring various references, providing regular insights to students, building cooperation between parents, creating an enjoyable environment, involving stakeholders to support facilities and infrastructure. The solutions apply by the English teachers to solve the challenges that perceived by themselves.

B. Suggestions

This study presents a new topic that can have a beneficial impact on various stakeholders, such as English teachers, educational policymakers, researchers, readers, and students. For the researcher, this is also an advantage: she can explore more deeply about the Kurikulum Merdeka and pass it on to others through writing.

This study presents in depth the perspectives of English teachers on the Kurikulum Merdeka, thus this study provides insight into the perceptions and experiences that English teachers in SMPN 2 Banda Aceh face when implementing Kurikulum Merdeka program was obtained through interview and observation data techniques collected and supported by data from the literature.

This research presents a rather extensive discussion on the implementation, challenges and solutions faced by English teachers in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh. Therefore, the analysis of this study was not in-depth due to time constraints and lack of accessibility as the researchers used a semi-structured interviews do not go deeper and only observe during a single meeting. This study also included all English teachers in SMPN 2 Banda Aceh. Thus, this research can later be used as a general phenomenon because teachers' perceptions are more or less the same and tridaterally dependent on their level of experience and geographical location.

The researcher also provided some suggestions or input to various parties, as follows:

1. For the teachers, it is hoped that they can carry out the programme well, increase motivation and competence, especially in understanding administration in the Kurikulum Merdeka and teaching methodology, so that teachers can find out the learning styles and needs of students, and be able to overcome challenges in implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka.
2. For the education policy maker, it is very crucial to provide a definite and directed format and technical instructions related to the Kurikulum Merdeka to make it easier for teachers, hold intensive and choose the best narasumber to provide the information about the Kurikulum Merdeka, which is useful for improving teachers' comprehend and competence, and conduct regular monitoring and evaluation, so that they can see what the development of the Kurikulum Merdeka is in the field.
3. For future researchers, the researcher expect that there will be more research related to the Kurikulum Merdeka, considering that this topic is also a new thing that is still warmly discussed. The researcher hope other studies can dig deeper into this theme as a whole, so that it can help teachers to know the challenges faced and the solutions presented in solving the challenges that exist in the Kurikulum Merdeka.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Appointment Letter of Supervisor


SURAT KEPUTUSAN DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH
Nomor : B - 10848/Un.08/FTK/KP.07.6/09/2023

TENTANG
PENYEMPURNAAN SURAT KEPUTUSAN DEKAN NOMOR Un.08/DT/TL.00/5970/2015 TENTANG
PENGANGKATAN PEMBIMBING SKRIPSI MAHASISWA FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

DEKAN FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN UIN AR-RANIRY BANDA ACEH

Menimbang : a. bahwa untuk kelancaran bimbingan skripsi dan ujian munaqasyah mahasiswa pada Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, maka dipandang perlu meninjau kembali dan menyempurnakan keputusan Dekan Nomor: **B-2268/Un.08/FTK/KP.07.6/1/2023** tentang pengangkatan pembimbing skripsi mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh.
b. bahwa saudara yang tersebut namanya dalam surat keputusan ini dipandang cakap dan memenuhi syarat untuk diangkat sebagai pembimbing skripsi.

Mengingat : 1. Undang Undang Nomor 20 tahun 2003, Tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional;
2. Undang Undang Nomor 14 Tahun 2005, Tentang Guru dan Dosen;
3. Undang Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2012, Tentang Pendidikan Tinggi;
4. Peraturan Presiden RI Nomor 64 Tahun 2013, tentang Perubahan Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh menjadi Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
5. Peraturan Menteri Keuangan RI, Nomor: 190/PMK.05/2012, tentang Tata Cara Pembayaran dalam rangka Pelaksanaan APBN;
6. Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 12 Tahun 2014, tentang Organisasi & Tata Kerja UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
7. Keputusan Menteri Agama Nomor 492 Tahun 2003, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang Pengangkatan, Pemindahan, dan Pemberhentian PNS di Lingkungan Depag RI
8. Peraturan Menteri Agama RI Nomor 21 Tahun 2015, tentang Statuta UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
9. Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Nomor 02 tahun 2016, tentang Pendelegasian Wewenang kepada Dekan dan Direktur Pascasarjana di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
10. Keputusan Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry Nomor 28 tahun 2019, tentang Satuan Biaya Khusus Tahun Anggaran 2020 di Lingkungan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh;
11. Peraturan Kementerian Keuangan (PMK) Republik Indonesia Nomor: 72/PMK.02/2020, tentang Perubahan atas Peraturan Menteri Keuangan Nomor: 78/PMK.02/2020 tentang Standar Biaya Masukan Tahun Anggaran 2020.

Memperhatikan : Keputusan Seminar Proposal Skripsi Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Tanggal 03 Januari 2023

MEMUTUSKAN

Menetapkan :
PERTAMA : Mencabut Surat Keputusan Dekan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor: **Nomor: B-2268/Un.08/FTK/KP.07.6/1/2023** tanggal **30 Januari 2023**

KEDUA : Menunjuk Saudara:
1. Syarifah Dahliana, Ph.D. Sebagai Pembimbing Pertama
2. Siti Khasinah, S.Ag., M.Pd. Sebagai Pembimbing Kedua
Untuk membimbing Skripsi :
Nama : Rizki Amalia
NIM : 190203155
Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Judul Skripsi : **The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in English Subject at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh: Teachers' Perspective**

KETIGA : Pembiayaan honorarium pembimbing pertama dan kedua tersebut diatas dibebankan pada DIPA UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh tahun 2023 dengan Nomor: 025.04.2.423925/2022 tanggal 17 November 2021;
KEEMPAT : Surat keputusan ini berlaku sampai akhir semester Ganjil Tahun 2023
KELIMA : Surat Keputusan ini berlaku sejak tanggal ditetapkan dengan ketentuan segala sesuatu akan diubah dan diperbaiki kembali sebagaimana mestinya apabila kemudian hari ternyata terdapat kekeliruan dalam penetapan ini.

Ditetapkan di: Banda Aceh
Pada Tanggal: 27 September 2023

Dekan

Saiful Huluk

Tembusan

1. Rektor UIN Ar-Raniry (sebagai laporan);
2. Ketua Prodi PBI Fak. Tarbiyah dan Keguruan;
3. Pembimbing yang bersangkutan untuk dimaklumi dan dilaksanakan;
4. Mahasiswa yang bersangkutan;
5. Arsip

Appendix B Recommendation Letter from The Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan to Conduct Field Research



**KEMENTERIAN AGAMA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI AR-RANIRY
FAKULTAS TARBİYAH DAN KEGURUAN**

Jl. Syekh Abdur Rauf Kopelma Darussalam Banda Aceh
Telepon : [0651-7557321](tel:0651-7557321), Email : uin@ar-raniry.ac.id

Nomor : B-9918/Un.08/FTK.1/PP.00.9/08/2023
Lamp : -
Hal : **Penelitian Ilmiah Mahasiswa**

Kepada Yth,
Kepala Sekolah SMPN 2 Banda Aceh
Assalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.
Pimpinan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry dengan ini menerangkan bahwa:

Nama/NIM : **RIZKI AMALIA / 190203155**
Semester/Jurusan : / Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris
Alamat sekarang : Jln. Tgk Dihaji, Lr. Nyaksyam, No.226, Lamdingin

Saudara yang tersebut namanya diatas benar mahasiswa Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan bermaksud melakukan penelitian ilmiah di lembaga yang Bapak/Ibu pimpin dalam rangka penulisan Skripsi dengan judul *The Implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in English subject at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh*

Demikian surat ini kami sampaikan atas perhatian dan kerjasama yang baik, kami mengucapkan terimakasih.

Banda Aceh, 31 Agustus 2023
an. Dekan
Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan
Kelembagaan,



Berlaku sampai : 02 Oktober
2023

Prof. Habiburrahim, S.Ag., M.Com., Ph.D.

Appendix C Recommendation Letter from Education Office to Conduct Field Research



DINAS PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN
 JALAN. P. NYAK MAKAM NO. 23 GP. KOTA BARU TEL. (0651) 7555136
 E-mail: dikbud@bandacehkota.go.id Website: www.dikbud.bandacehkota.go.id Kode Pos : 23125

SURAT IZIN
 NOMOR: 074/A4/4886
 TENTANG
 IZIN PENGUMPULAN DATA

Dasar : Surat dari Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh Nomor: B-9918/Un.08/FTK.1/PP.00.9/08/2023 tanggal 15 September 2023, perihal Penelitian Ilmiah Mahasiswa.

MEMBERI IZIN

Kepada :
 Nama : **RIZKI AMALIA**
 NIM : 190203155
 Prodi/Jurusan : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris.
 Untuk : Melakukan penelitian ilmiah pada SMP Negeri 2 Banda Aceh dalam rangka penyusunan skripsi yang berjudul:

"THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR IN ENGLISH SUBJECT AT SMPN 2 BANDA ACEH".

Dengan ketentuan sebagai berikut :

1. Harus berkonsultasi langsung dengan Kepala Sekolah yang bersangkutan dan sepanjang tidak mengganggu proses belajar mengajar.
2. Bagi yang bersangkutan supaya menyampaikan fotokopi hasil pengumpulan data sebanyak 1 (satu) eksemplar kepada pihak sekolah.
3. Surat ini berlaku sejak tanggal 18 September s.d 18 Oktober 2023.
4. Diharapkan kepada yang bersangkutan agar dapat menyelesaikan pengumpulan data pada waktu yang telah ditetapkan.
5. Kepala sekolah dibenarkan mengeluarkan surat keterangan hanya untuk pengumpulan data yang benar-benar telah melakukan pengumpulan data.

Demikian untuk dimaklumi dan terima kasih.

Banda Aceh, 18 September 2023 M
 2 Rabi'ul Awal 1444 H

a.n. KEPALA DINAS PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN KOTA BANDA ACEH
 KEABID PEMBINAAN SMP,


LEVI SUSANTI, S. Pd, M. Si
 Rombing
 NIP. 19760113 200604 2 003

AR - R

Tembusan :

1. Wakil Dekan Bidang Akademik dan Kelembagaan Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Ar-Raniry.
2. Koordinator Pengawas Sekolah Banda Aceh.
3. Kepala SMP Negeri 2 Kota Banda Aceh.

Appendix D Recommendation Letter from SMPN 2 Banda Aceh of having Conducted Research

 PEMERINTAH KOTA BANDA ACEH
DINAS PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN
SEKOLAH MENENGAH PERTAMA NEGERI 2
Jl. Ayah Gani 1 Gampong Bandar Baru Kec. Kuta Alam 23126
Pos-el: smpn2bina@gmail.com - Laman: <https://smpn2bna.sch.id>

SURAT KETERANGAN
No.074 /600/2023

Kepala Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) Negeri 2 Banda Aceh Kecamatan Kuta Alam Kota Banda Aceh, dengan ini menerangkan :

Nama	: Rizki Amalia
NIM	: 190203155
Jurusan/Prodi	: S 1 Pendidika Bahasa Inggris

Telah mengadakan Penelitian/mengumpulkan data pada SMP Negeri 2 Banda Aceh pada tanggal 26 September s.d. 4 Oktober 2023, sesuai dengan Surat Kepala Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Kota Banda Aceh No.074/A.4/4886 tanggal 18 September 2023 untuk keperluan Penyusunan Skripsi yang berjudul " **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR IN ENGLISH SUBJECT AT SMPN 2 BANDA ACEH.**" dan pelaksanaannya berjalan dengan baik.

Demikian Surat keterangan penelitian ini dibuat untuk dapat dipergunakan seperlunya.

25 Oktober 2023


Kepala

Arlis M. S.Pd.,M.Pd.
Pembina Utama Muda
NIP. 196704301994121003

AR - RANIRY

Appendix E Interview and Observation Guidelines

OBSERVATION SHEET**THE IMPLEMENTATION OF KURIKULUM MERDEKA;****AN INSIGHT FROM ENGLISH TEACHERS**

Name/Initial :

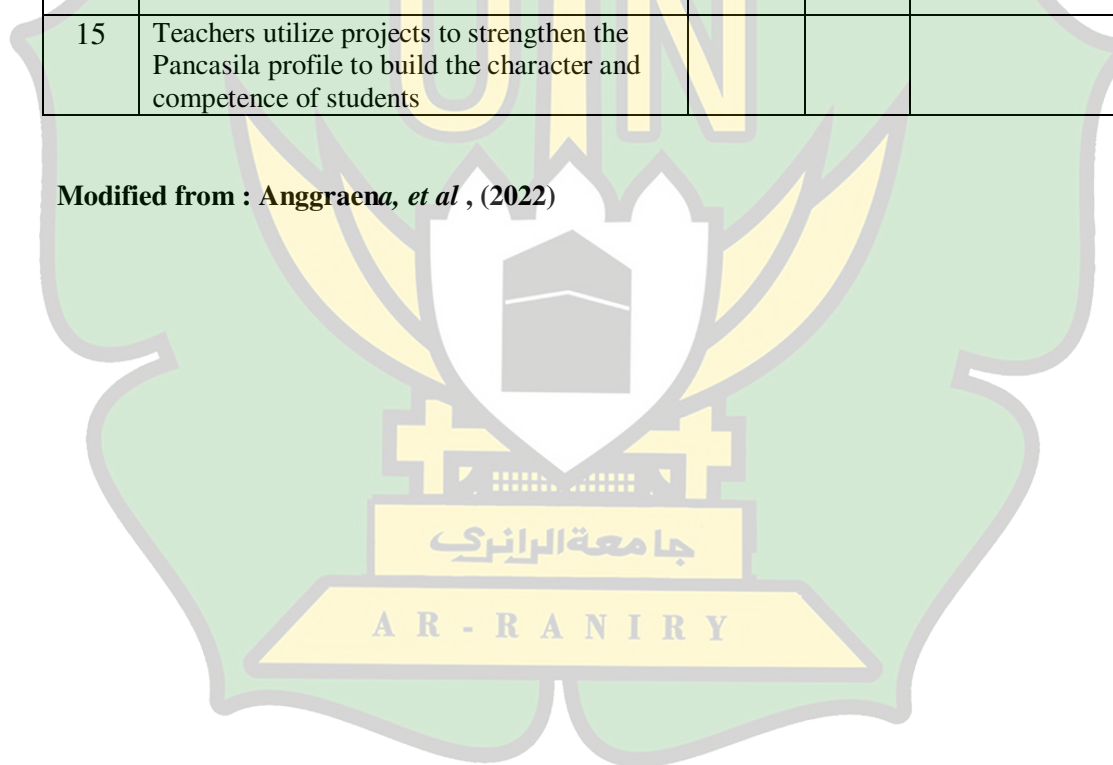
Code :

Gender :

No	Observed aspect	Appearance of Observation Results		Description
		Yes	No	
1	The Kurikulum Merdeka is implemented in the classroom			
2	The teacher conditioned the class to start learning preparation			
3	The teacher encourages students to carry out preliminary activities (orientation and apperception)			
4	Teachers provide stimulus and literacy activities that can encourage students' ability to continue learning and exploring knowledge (main activities)			
5	Teachers motivate students to participate actively to develop an independent learner attitude			
6	Students become student-centered in the learning process			
7	Using innovative learning media in the learning process			
8	Project based learning			

9	Using technology in the learning process			
10	The teacher guides and directs students in carrying out the conclusion (verification) process			
11	The teacher gives Homework to find out students' understanding of the material (Generalization)			
12	Students give each other feedback on the results of the learning evaluation that has been achieved (Closing)			
13	The teacher gives motivation and closes the class by praying together.			
14	Using standardized teaching modules of the Kurikulum Merdeka			
15	Teachers utilize projects to strengthen the Pancasila profile to build the character and competence of students			

Modified from : Anggraena, *et al* , (2022)



INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF *KURIKULUM MERDEKA BELAJAR* IN ENGLISH SUBJECT AT SMPN 2 BANDA ACEH: TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

I. Interview Descriptions

1. This interview was conducted to obtain information about the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka; insights from English teachers. Therefore, the participation of respondents is expected to provide complete and clear information.
2. This interview is not intended to test or assess respondents, the results of this interview are only used for the benefit of the researcher's thesis research.
3. The results of this interview will not contain negative things about the respondent, and the identity of the respondent will be kept confidential by research principles as a form of research ethics. Therefore, it is expected that cooperation can answer all interview questions properly and seriously.

II. Identity of Respondent

Day/Date	: .....	/	.....	.....	2023
Time	:	until	.....	.....	.....
Location	: .....	.....	.....	.....	.....

Name/initial :

جامعة الرانيري

Code :

AR - RANIRY

Gender :

- I. The implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar in English Subject
 1. What do you think about the definition of Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar? (Bagaimana pendapat anda mengenai Kurikulum Merdeka?)
 2. How is the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka at SMPN 2 Banda Aceh especially in English Subject?

(Bagaimana implementasi dari Kurikulum Merdeka khususnya di pelajaran Bahasa Inggris?)

3. What do you think about the implementation of policies related to the Kurikulum Merdeka?

(Bagaimana menurut anda tentang pengimplementasian kebijakan-kebijakan yang berkaitan dengan Kurikulum Merdeka?)

4. What are your experiences regarding to implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka?

(Bagaimana pengalaman anda terkait pengimplementasian Kurikulum Merdeka?)

5. What are the differences you experienced on teaching English in Kurikulum Merdeka and the previous curriculum? Which one do you prefer?

(Bagaimana dengan perbedaan yang anda alami mengajar dengan Kurikulum Merdeka dan Kurikulum Sebelumnya? Anda lebih menyukai yang mana?)

II. The Challenges in Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar

1. What are the challenges faced by the teacher due to the transformation of K-13 toward implementing the Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar?

(Apa tantangan yang dihadapi oleh transformasi K-13 menuju implementasi Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar oleh guru?)

2. Regarding students, what challenges do you think you faced in implementing Kurmer?

(Berkaitan dengan siswa, menurut anda tantangan apa yang anda hadapi dalam pengimplementasian Kurmer?)

III. The Solutions to the Challenges in Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar

1. What are the solutions to the challenges related to Kurikulum Merdeka?

(Apa solusi dari tantangan terkait Kurikulum Merdeka?)

2. After using the solutions, how do you think the learning process in your class?

(Setelah menggunakan solusi tersebut, bagaimana menurut Anda proses pembelajaran di kelas Anda?)

3. What are the suggestion that you can give related to the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka?

(Apa saran yang dapat anda berikan terkait dengan pengimplementasian Kurikulum Merdeka?)

Appendix F Documentation of Research

1. Interview and Observation activities with Educator-1:



2. Interview and Observation activities with Educator-2:



3. Interview and Observation activities with Educator-3 :



4. Interview and Observation activities with Educator-4 :

