

**TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
KURIKULUM MERDEKA AT MTsN 4 ACEH TENGAH**

THESIS

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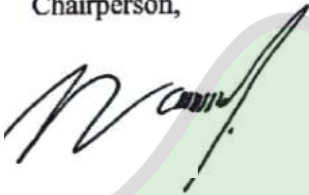
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at MTsN 4 Aceh Tengah**

adalah benar-benar karya saya, kecuali semua kutipan dan referensi yang disebutkan sumbernya. Apabila terdapat kesalahan dan kekeliruan di dalamnya, maka akan sepenuhnya menjadi tanggungjawab saya. Demikianlah surat pernyataan ini saya buat dengan sesungguhnya.

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ABSTRACT

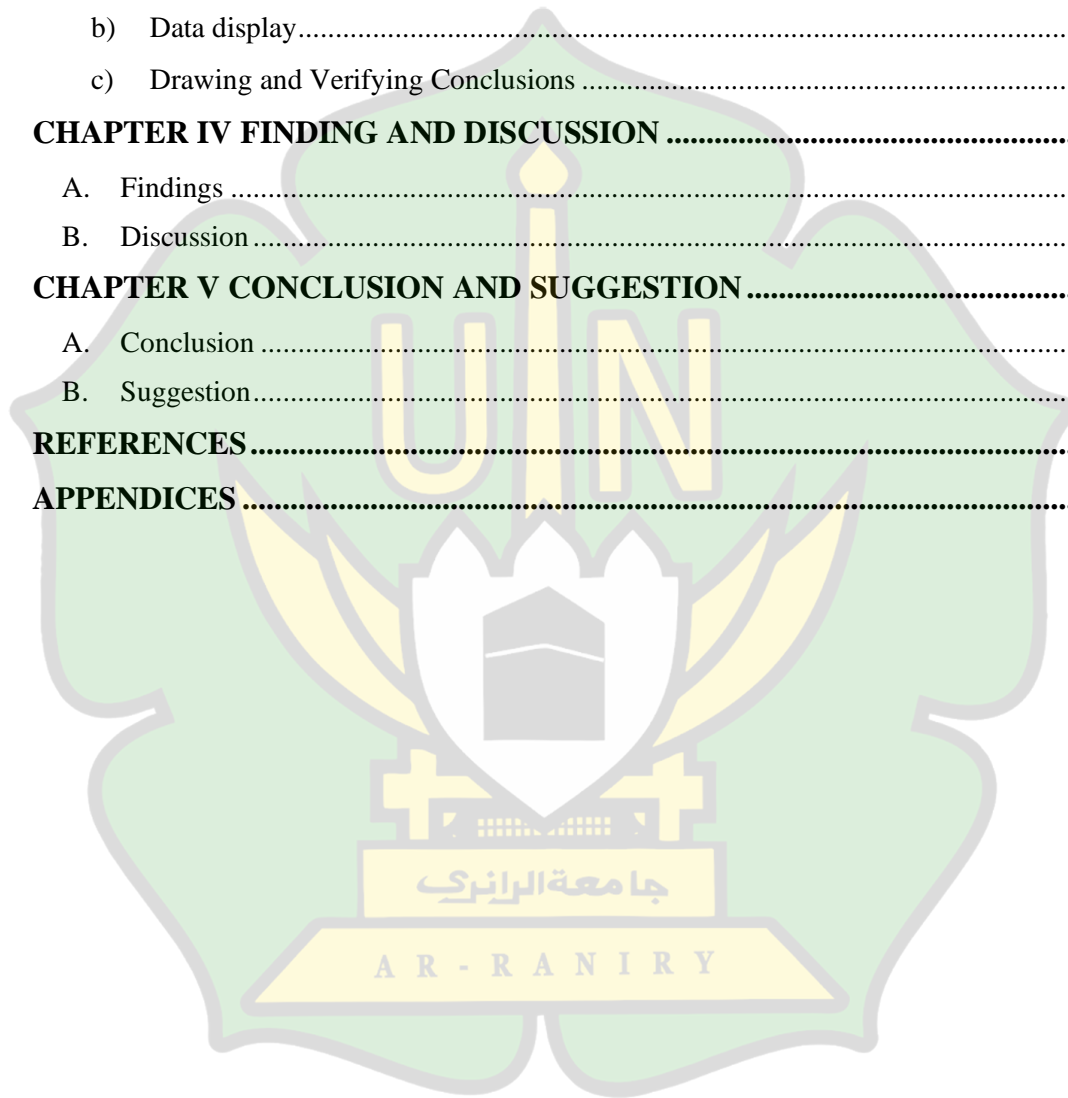
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Kurikulum Merdeka is an educational policy that provides freedom and flexibility for schools and teachers to design and implement learning according to students' needs and potential as well as local conditions, with a focus on developing basic competencies, character, and the use of technology. This research aimed to explore teachers' perceptions on the Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at MTsN 4 Aceh Tengah. This research used a qualitative approach. The participants of this research were two English teachers. Furthermore, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and the sample used in this study was selected using the purposive sampling method. The result of this research showed that there are five challenges in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*: teacher readiness, insufficient knowledge about the curriculum, the need for specialized training in technology, inadequate facilities, infrastructure, and instructional materials, and issues related to the student environment. The solutions identified to address these challenges include: engaging with students, facilitating discussions among teachers and stakeholders, providing teacher training specific to *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and involving stakeholders to support the curriculum.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	vii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background of Study.....	1
B. Research Questions	5
C. Aims of the study	5
D. Significance of Study	5
E. Research Terminologies	6
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	8
A. Theory of Perceptions	8
1. Definition of Perceptions.....	8
B. Generic Curriculum.....	10
1. Definition of Curriculum.....	10
2. Curriculum Development	11
C. Kurikulum Merdeka	12
1. Definition of <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i>	12
2. Characteristics, and Purpose of <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i>	13
3. The implementation of <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i> in English language learning.....	15
4. The advantages of <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i>	18
5. The challenges in the implementation of <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i>	20
6. The approaches to mitigating <i>Kurikulum Merdeka</i>	22
D. Previous Studies	24
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
A. Research Design.....	29
B. Research Participants	30
1. Population	30

2. Sample.....	30
C. Data Collection	31
D. Data Analysis	33
a) Data Reduction.....	33
b) Data display.....	33
c) Drawing and Verifying Conclusions	33
CHAPTER IV FINDING AND DISCUSSION	35
A. Findings	35
B. Discussion	48
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	54
A. Conclusion	54
B. Suggestion.....	55
REFERENCES	57
APPENDICES	62



LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A	Appointment Letter of Supervisor
Appendix B	Recommendation Letter from The Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan to Conduct Field Research
Appendix C	Recommendation Letter from MTsN 4 Aceh Tengah of having Conducted Research
Appendix D	Interview Protocol
Appendix E	Autobiography



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Curriculum development was an idea or renewal undertaken by the government in the national education sector to provide solutions for various cases or problems. Curriculums in the educational system were dynamic and had to be continuously modified and developed to keep up with the changes and challenges of the times, especially in the development of technology and science in Indonesia. According to Insani (2019: 61), the national educational curriculum had been modified twelve times since 1945. These changes occurred in 1947, 1952, 1964, 1968, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1994, 1999, 2004, 2006, and 2013. Any changes to the curriculum were aimed at repairing the previous curricula. The change in curriculum was also a policy of the parties responsible for education in Indonesia.

Kurikulum Merdeka was a component of a self-directed learning program released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology on Friday, February 11, 2022, with the 15th episode. The primary reason for the establishment of *Kurikulum Merdeka* was to address learning loss and the learning gap even before the COVID-19 pandemic (Badan Standar, Kurikulum, and Asesmen Pendidikan Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, 2021). According to Nadiem Makarim, the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* served as a subsequent measure to

enhance the existing curriculum of 2013, while also serving as a proactive solution to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The stakeholders involved in these gatherings included families, educators, educational institutions, industry, and society.

The concept of *Kurikulum Merdeka* played a role in restoring learning loss by focusing on vital content and students' core competencies and creating changes in students' character and perspective. Furthermore, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* promoted soft skills and met the needs of the global community (Permendikbud 22 of 2020: 55). *Kurikulum Merdeka* was also a flexible learning process for teachers to choose various learning tools so that the learning process followed the interests and talents of students. It emphasized student-centered learning, in which students participated more actively in teaching and learning activities in the classroom based on their needs and abilities. Another feature of *Kurikulum Merdeka* was a new learning paradigm in which the learning practice was student-centered and the learning framework was in the form of a continuous cycle beginning with the foundation phase and ending with phase F. Another feature of *Kurikulum Merdeka* was project-based learning for soft skills and character development based on Pancasila students' profiles. According to Kemendikbudristek (2021), this meant that Pancasila students' profiles were a guiding policy direction for learning and assessment in both intra-curricular learning and initiatives to strengthen Pancasila students' profiles.

All subjects taught at the school were designed to develop future independence in students. The process of becoming an independent person required

classroom preparation through autonomous study. The concept of independent learning was fundamental to the study and practice of education. Autonomous learning, self-directed learning, independent study, and self-regulated learning all referred to the same concept as independent learning. In general, there was broad consensus regarding the varying interpretations of each term. However, these terms all referred to a concept in which students were actively engaged in their learning process (Morrison, 2011: 3).

The concept of independent learning should have been promoted at the junior high school level. According to Thomas (1993), the age bracket of 10-13 presented an opportune period for introducing independent learning. This approach could potentially enhance learners' capacity for active participation and decision-making, positively influencing their developmental progress. Similarly, incorporating autonomous study into the educational curriculum for middle-grade children yielded two advantageous outcomes. To begin with, individuals in the early adolescent stage had attained a level of cognitive development that enabled them to employ advanced learning strategies and independently engage in various learning activities. Furthermore, implementing instructional strategies aimed at fostering prompt and independent learning was prevalent in most middle-grade educational settings. According to Thomas (1993), educational institutions had a significant societal role.

Several studies which are related to the *Kurikulum Merdeka* have been conducted before. One of them was conducted by Wardani, H.K et al., (2024), They analyzed English Teachers' Perceptions Towards the Implementation of 'Kurikulum

Merdeka' at SMA Assa'adah Bungah Gresik. The second research related to *Kurikulum Merdeka* was conducted by Widyaningsih and Romadona (2023). They analyzed the Implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in the Study of English at the Senior High School Informatika Tanah Merah Bangkalan. The third research was conducted by Anggaira, A. S. (2023). They analyzed Perceptions of English Teachers in Metro-Lampung on the Implementation of the "Kurikulum Merdeka". The fourth research was conducted by Lutfi, M. M et al., (2023), They analyzed EFL teachers' perception on the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka: a case study at SMAN 2 pare in Kediri. The last research related to *Kurikulum Merdeka* was conducted by Muslim and Sumarni (2023). They analyzed A Review on the Design and Characteristics of English Language Learning and Teaching in a Standard-Based Curriculum: Kurikulum Merdeka.

The previous studies mentioned above inspired the researcher to analyze *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Therefore, this research aims to investigate and describe teachers' perceptions on the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at MTsN 4 Aceh Tengah. Research steps will be directed toward understanding its implementation and impact on learning. The study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation at MTsN 4 Aceh Tengah, focusing on the challenges and the solutions of using *Kurikulum Merdeka* and understanding its impact on the learning process. By identifying the challenges faced by students, teachers can develop effective solutions to enhance students' enthusiasm for learning English. In

the context of English language instruction, this study is expected to have a positive impact, particularly in understanding and implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background, the researcher formulates a problem as follows:

1. What are the challenges faced by teachers when implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English learning?
2. What strategies do teachers use to overcome the challenges of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English learning?

C. Aims of the study

About the previous research question, the aim of the study is:

1. To identify and analyze the challenges encountered by teachers during the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English language learning.
2. To explore effective strategies for overcoming teachers' challenges in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English language learning.

D. Significance of Study

a. To Students

The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* encourages students to learn more independently, enabling them to develop lifelong learning skills, better decision-making, and creativity. A comfortable curricular approach can make learning

English more exciting and enjoyable, increasing students' motivation and interest in language learning.

b. To Teachers

This study will help teachers improve their teaching methods by adopting the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. They will be able to act as learning facilitators who guide students in exploration and problem-solving. Teaching with an innovative, *Kurikulum Merdeka* can provide teachers a more satisfactory teaching experience. This can reduce classroom routines and improve teacher-student interaction.

c. To School Staff

This study will assist teachers and administrators in contributing to the overall development of school education quality. They contribute to the improvement of the learning environment. The faculty can evaluate the positive and negative effects of the curriculum on the administration process and identify methods to enhance it.

d. For Researchers

This study will assist researchers in enhancing the efficacy of their research and acquiring a more comprehensive comprehension of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, leading to a subsequent increase in future research.

E. Research Terminologies

1. Perception of English teacher

Perception is how living beings use their senses to understand and arrange information, forming a meaningful perspective (Pickens, 2005). English teachers'

perceptions of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at MTsN 4 Aceh Tengah refer to how they view and interpret this curriculum. This encompasses their perspectives, opinions, and attitudes regarding the curriculum's implementation and effectiveness in teaching English.

2. Kurikulum Merdeka

The Minister of Education and Culture (Nadiem Makarim) pushed for curriculum changes in Indonesia with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Pananrangi & SH, 2017)—student-oriented education. The curriculum for individual learning is consistent with Ki Hadjar Dewantara's goals, which are to regard education as a process of altering values and conveying knowledge while maintaining a balance between creativity, taste, and intention (Arifudin & Rosyad, 2021).

According to some opinions (Ainia, 2020; Kurniawan et al., 2020; Noventari, 2020); Wahdani & Burhanuddin, 2020), The notion of self-directed learning aligns with Ki Hajar Dewantara's principles, emphasizing the freedom to pursue creative and self-reliant learning, fostering the development of an independent individual. This approach encourages both students and teachers to explore knowledge within their environment.

3. Challenge

According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2023), a challenge is a situation that demands mental, physical, and skill readiness to test one's abilities. In this research, the challenge observed is the use of EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) by

teachers in their teaching. Implementing EMI in some schools is still uncommon, causing teachers to encounter numerous challenges in the classroom during the teaching process.

The challenge in this research relates to addressing the various problems associated with implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This includes the difficulties teachers face in adapting their teaching methods, the lack of adequate training and resources, and the resistance from students who are not proficient in English. Additionally, the challenge involves overcoming institutional barriers and ensuring that both teachers and students can effectively navigate and benefit from *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

