

# THE PROBLEMATICS OF IMPLEMENTING THE “KURIKULUM MERDEKA” IN ENGLISH SUBJECTS AT SD INPRES 125 BAJENG

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Received: September 20, 2024; Accepted: November 23, 2024; Published: January 1, 2025

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research is to identify teachers' problems in the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” in English language subjects at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng in the 2023/2024 school year. In this research, researcher used a qualitative descriptive design. Researcher collected data through interviews with principals, homeroom teachers, and students in grades I, II, IV, and VI. The results of this research reveal that teachers lack understanding of learning models related to the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”, and teachers still need time to adapt to the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”. In addition, the teacher's English language skills are still lacking so the teacher states that there is a need for an English teacher with an English education background, the teacher also needs training related to the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”, and inadequate English learning facilities. Furthermore, some factors inhibit the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”, such as internal factors and external factors. Internal factors consist of some students who show disinterest when learning English subjects, students who have difficulty in understanding learning materials and find the learning process uninteresting, mostly due to dissatisfaction with learning methods. Therefore, the external factors that inhibit the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” consist of grade IV students who express their dissatisfaction with the English teaching methods used in their class and teachers' lack of understanding in using technological media which results in a less-than-optimal learning process.

**Keywords:** Problematics, implementation, *Kurikulum Merdeka*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education has an extensive impact on human development, shaping individuals in various aspects, including the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. Its dynamic nature enables it to adapt to changing needs, ensuring that individuals are adequately prepared for the future. This underscores the importance of education in shaping the lives of individuals and the world at large (Taufiq, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative for parents to provide their children with a well-rounded education that encompasses character development and comprehensive knowledge. Indonesia's education system has seen significant changes in its curriculum, which plays a crucial role in enhancing its overall quality. The curriculum serves as a guide for educators to conduct teaching and learning activities while developing the students' personalities in school. It is essential to have a relevant and up-to-date curriculum that aligns with the needs of students and society. The “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” was inaugurated on February 11, 2022. Compared to the previous curriculum program, the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is simpler, more in-depth, more independent, more relevant, and more interactive. Therefore, the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is expected to improve the

quality of education and educators have the flexibility to provide high-quality learning that suits the needs and learning environment of students (Kemdikbud, 2022).

The “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is a new curriculum that differs from its predecessor and implementing it may pose some challenges. It is essential for elementary school students to acclimatize themselves to the changes that come with this curriculum. They should understand the importance of active participation in the learning process, develop their metacognitive skills, and learn how to collaborate with their peers. These changes require sufficient time and support to ensure that students can adjust well. The various challenges that faced by schools regarding the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” are not an easy job. Based on preliminary observations made by researcher while participating in the “*Kampus Mengajar*” program, it shows that in the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng there are several problems related to the components of implementing the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng, English subjects are taught by homeroom teachers, as this school does not have teachers with an educational background majoring in English education and teachers' lack of understanding of learning models related to the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”.

This arrangement ensures that students receive learning from qualified individuals with the necessary skills to provide adequate support for their academic growth. Furthermore, the problems that teachers often encounter is that there are still many students in each class who cannot read or even write, so teachers have enough difficulty teaching English to students. Based on the problems previously stated, this research seeks to analyze the problematic implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” in English language subjects at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng, especially in grades I, II, IV, and IV.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. The Concept of “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”

The “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is a curriculum with diverse intracurricular learning where content will be optimized so that learners have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies. Projects to strengthen the achievement of the “*Profil Pelajar Pancasila*” project are developed based on specific themes determined by the government and teachers. The projects are not directed to achieve specific learning outcome targets, so they are not tied to subject content (Kemdikbud, 2022). The “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” was inaugurated on February 11, 2022. Compared to the previous program, the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is simpler, more in-depth, more independent, more relevant, and more interactive. Therefore, the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is expected to improve the quality of education and educators have the flexibility to provide high-quality learning that suits the needs and learning environment of students (Kemdikbud, 2022).

## 2.2. Implementation of “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” in Elementary School

The implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” at the elementary school level promotes project-based learning to achieve the “*Profil Pelajar Pancasila*”. This is also highly pertinent to 21st century learning, which emphasizes not only knowledge but also character, literacy proficiency, skills, and technology. Learning in the autonomous curriculum will be redirected to the subject approach. Teachers can easily prepare their schedules because the split of time per week is based on subjects. This curriculum is prepared differently than the schedule in the “*Kurikulum 2013*”, which must consider the specifics of effective days and weeks (Inayati, 2022).

The “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” has four principles that were transformed into new policy directions, namely:

1. The National Standardized School Examination

The National Standardized School Examination has been replaced by an assessment exam, which assesses student competence in a written test or through other more extensive assessments such as assignments.

2. The National Exam

The National Exam was changed to a minimum competency assessment and character survey; this activity aims to encourage teachers and schools to improve the quality of learning and the student selection test to the next level cannot be used as a baseline. Minimum competency assessment to assess literacy, numeracy and character.

3. Learning Implementation Plan

The Learning Implementation Plan has been renamed to Learning Module in the current curriculum. This new approach gives teachers the necessary freedom to choose, create, and develop their own format for the Learning Module, while ensuring that it encompasses the three fundamental components of an effective learning environment: learning objectives, learning activities, and assessments.

4. Zoning New Student Admission Regulations

In the latest *Permendikbud* related to Zoning New Student Admission Regulations, the Central Government provides regional flexibility in determining the allocation for students to enter the school through zoning pathways, affirmation pathways, parent/guardian transfer pathways, or other pathways (can be achievement pathways).

## 2.3. Problematics of Implementing Curriculum

There are several problems that often occur during curriculum implementation in schools, especially when transitioning from the old curriculum to the new curriculum, namely:

1. Teachers' lack of understanding of the learning models that are based on the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”.
2. Teachers' lack of understanding in preparing and using “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” lesson plans. In accordance with the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” policy, it is required that lesson plans be succinctly presented on a single sheet,

encompassing learning objectives, an introduction to the situation, learning procedures, and assessment.

3. The teachers have not been able to foster the expected level of creativity in students.
4. Inadequate school facilities (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

Implementing the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is the newest innovation in Indonesia's education sector. The government and educators are working hard to innovate for the progress of education.

## 2.4. Factors Inhibiting Curriculum Implementation

The educational curriculum has undergone multiple revisions to bolster the quality of education and adapt to technological advancements and societal needs. Nevertheless, despite the changes and refinements, teachers and students often experience difficulties during the initial stages of implementation. The complexities of the curriculum, coupled with the diverse backgrounds and learning styles of students, can pose significant challenges for educators.

Factors inhibiting curriculum implementation can be grouped into two categories:

### 1. Internal factors

Internal factors are factors that come from students usually comes from student motivation, attitude and interest. These factors significantly influence the learning process and must be carefully considered in educational contexts. Student interest, if developed properly, can increase student learning motivation.

### 2. External factors

External factors pertain to the social and national environment that individuals are exposed to. These factors usually come from parental support, principal leadership, school facilities, learning systems, learning methods and teacher competence.

## 3. METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative design. Descriptive qualitative research was chosen by researchers to find out the facts and phenomena of problems faced by teachers and inhibiting factors in implementing the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” in elementary schools by collecting and interpreting basic information in the form of descriptions. Qualitative research methodologies are oriented towards developing understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of human lives and their social worlds (Roderick, 2017). The subjects in this research were the principal, homeroom teachers from grades I, II, IV and V, as well as several representatives of grade I, II, IV and V students of SD Inpres 125 Bajeng. Data collection in this research used the interview method. The interview is a communication process between the researcher and the participant to extract information and reveal the meaning

contained in the problem under study (Rukajat, 2018). In this qualitative field research, data analysis is conducted using the Miles and Huberman Model.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. The Teacher's Problem in Implementing the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" in English Language Subjects

There are several problems that often occur during curriculum implementation in schools, especially when transitioning from the old curriculum to the new curriculum, such as:

1. Teachers' lack of understanding of the learning models that are based on the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*". The engagement of students in learning activities relies heavily on tapping into the students' potential. Therefore, student engagement in the teaching and learning process is crucial for achieving learning objectives. Teachers, as professional facilitators, need to have a thorough understanding of the content being taught, provide clear instructions, use various assessments tailored to learning needs, and adapt to students' individual characteristics.
2. Teachers' lack of understanding in preparing and using "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" lesson plans. The Lesson Plan has been renamed to Learning Module in the current curriculum. This new approach gives teachers the necessary freedom to choose, create, and develop their own format for the Learning Module.
3. The teachers have not been able to foster the expected level of creativity of students. Creativity is the most important thing in developing material into something interesting, unique and useful. This requires an educator to be able to develop children's creativity in the learning process. Especially in this independent learning curriculum, teachers are required to be able to create a learning process that can arouse children's creativity through learning activities.
4. Inadequate school facilities. Throughout the course of the learning process, the availability of supportive media or tools is paramount in attaining learning objectives. In the absence of adequate facilities, individuals may encounter difficulties in executing activities that require supportive tools or media.

### 4.2. Factors that Inhibit the Implementation of the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" in English Language Subjects

1. Internal Factors. Internal factors are those that emanate from students themselves. They include elements such as motivation, attitude, and specific areas of interest. These factors significantly influence the learning process and must be carefully considered in educational contexts. Student interest, if developed properly, can increase student learning motivation. Learning motivation plays an important role in learning activities. However, if from the beginning there is no motivation to learn, then students will find it difficult to understand or digest the material being studied during the learning process.



2. External Factors. External factors pertain to the social and national environment that individuals are exposed to. These factors are usually comes from parental support, principal leadership, school facilities, learning systems, learning methods and teacher competence. As previously explained, the facilities at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng are still inadequate in supporting English language learning using the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Based on interviews conducted by researcher at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng, the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” has been starting in the 2022/2023 school year. Research shows that English language instruction is taught by homeroom teachers. However, teachers' understanding of the learning models associated with the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” is lacking. The results also show that the homeroom teacher of grade IV does not fully understand the learning model based on the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” and has never participated in training related to the Independent Curriculum. In addition, some teachers continue to rely on learning models from the previous curriculum, so they still need time to adapt to the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”. Based on the results of the interview, the researcher also found that teachers preferred English teachers with an English education background. English teachers with an English education background have a deep understanding of language structure, grammar, vocabulary, and other aspects of the English language. This enables teachers to effectively and accurately teach the material.

Many elementary school teachers lack specialized training or background in English language teaching. Without proper training, they may struggle to organize materials and use effective teaching methods. Research has shown that these teachers still lack necessary skills in English, which could hamper their ability to teach effectively and support students with diverse abilities. In the field of education, lesson plans are essential for teachers to prepare. The success of the learning process is closely tied to the teacher's ability and the quality of their planning and implementation. With effective and appropriate planning, positive outcomes can be expected (Rusmiati et al., 2023). Teacher should also allow sufficient room for students to foster creativity and independence. Additionally, teachers must develop innovative learning models to keep students engaged and interested in the learning process. In teaching, lesson plans are things that must exist and be prepared by educators. This is because success in the learning process is inseparable from the ability or quality of the teacher in developing and implementing it. Teachers frequently encounter challenges when creating lesson plans and teaching modules, particularly in defining clear learning outcomes and establishing a coherent progression of learning objectives.

Based on the interview results, to increase student creativity and motivation, teachers show learning videos and provide guess the picture games so that students are not bored, active and become more creative. In addition, teachers also give assignments in the form of making project-based displays. The

homeroom teacher emphasized the importance of enhancing students' creativity by identifying their interests and talents. They mentioned that students with a knack for sports should be directed to the sports teacher, while those with a passion for reading, such as poetry, should be encouraged to participate in competitions. This approach aims to nurture each student's individual talents.

After analyzing the research data using the Miles and Huberman model, the research conducted reveal that the the results of this research reveal that teachers lack of understanding of learning models related to the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" and teachers still need time to adapt to the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*". In addition, the teacher's English language skills are still lacking so the teacher states that there is a need for an English teacher with an English education background, the teacher also needs training related to the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*", and inadequate English learning facilities. The findings of this research are consistent with those identified by Johar Alimuddin. He determined that a significant challenge to the implementation of the curriculum is the insufficient understanding of the independent curriculum among teachers. This gap in knowledge is primarily attributed to the lack of training related to the Merdeka Curriculum offline (Alimuddin, 2023).

In response to inquiries about students' interest in learning English, the researcher conducted interviews with 12 students from classes I, II, IV, and V. Following the interviews, the researcher found that 10 out of 12 students exhibited a strong interest in learning English. In contrast, the other students showed less enthusiasm for learning English because they found it difficult. Some students still have difficulties in learning English especially because English is their second language, and they are still having difficulties in understanding English learning. Meanwhile, students in grade II have difficulties in English pronunciation and difficulties in understanding the lesson. The pronunciation habits developed in their native language can influence how students articulate words in English. Therefore, it is essential for students to engage in ample practice to enhance their English language skills.

The researcher discovered that the students were dissatisfied with the teacher's approach to teaching English. They expressed that the teacher's explanations were inadequate, leading to a lack of comprehension of the subject matter. While the students of grade V said that the difficulties they experienced when learning English were the pronunciation of the letters and the language. On the question of factors that inhibit the implementation of the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*", The principal stressed the importance of technological knowledge, laptops, and sufficient network funding. Typically covered by the school's operational assistance fund, some still choose to use personal funds. In cases where the allocated funds are insufficient, additional support becomes necessary. Based on the results of interviews, grade IV students revealed their dissatisfaction with the English teaching methods used in their class. They felt that the teacher seldom explained the learning material and simply instructed them to transcribe the material from the textbook. This approach does not

accommodate the diverse backgrounds and abilities of the students, and thus, some students may feel excluded or unengaged. Failing to adapt teaching methods to individual needs may result in some students not comprehending or not being interested in the material.

The researcher identified that teachers have yet to fully master the learning material. The suboptimal classroom management has contributed to ineffective teaching practices. In addition, there is a lack of teachers' understanding regarding the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" and their lack of understanding in using technological media, resulting in a suboptimal learning process due to their ongoing adaptation to curriculum changes. According to research conducted by Nur Wulandari, students who utilize learning animation media demonstrate superior learning outcomes compared to those who solely engage with traditional textbook and blackboard materials. This evidence highlights the effectiveness of incorporating animated resources into educational practices (Nur Wulandari, 2016).

Research conducted by Linda Cahya demonstrates that a teacher's instructional approach has a positive impact on student learning motivation. This finding suggests that an effective teaching style can significantly enhance students' motivation to learn (Cahya, 2020). In line with some of the research above, Pelita Bayhaqi Al Ansor et al showed that a teacher's teaching style can have a significant impact on students' eagerness to learn and academic achievement. A teacher should develop an effective teaching style that encourages students' desire to learn and provides challenges to increase students' motivation to learn (Ansor et al., 2024). Another research was conducted by Syasya Khoirin Nisa' et al, which showed obstacles in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. These obstacles generally come from four aspects, which are related to facilities or infrastructure, the condition of HR (Human Resources) owned by teachers and educators, conditions and support from students, school and family environment, and and related to government policies (Khoirin et al., 2023)

## 6. CONCLUSION

After describing and analyzing the data, the researcher draws a conclusion which answers the problem statement based on the results of the research related to the problematic implementation of the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" in English language subjects at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng. Research shows that English language instruction is taught by homeroom teachers. Problems that occur in implementing the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng, such as firstly, Research shows that English language instruction is taught by homeroom teachers. Problems that occur in implementing the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" at SD Inpres 125 Bajeng, such as teachers lack understanding of learning models related to the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*" and teachers still need time to adapt to the "*Kurikulum Merdeka*". In addition, the teacher's English language skills are still lacking so the teacher states that there is a need for an English teacher with an English education background, the teacher also needs



training related to the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”, and inadequate English learning facilities. Furthermore, some factors inhibit the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*”, such as internal factors and external factors. Internal factors consist of some students who show disinterest when learning English subjects, students who have difficulty in understanding learning materials and find the learning process uninteresting, mostly due to dissatisfaction with learning methods. Therefore, the external factors that inhibit the implementation of the “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” consist of grade IV students who express their dissatisfaction with the English teaching methods used in their class and teachers’ lack of understanding in using technological media which results in a less-than-optimal learning process.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The researchers would like to express the deepest thanks to all of those who had helped, supported, and suggested them during the process of writing.

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