

**AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN  
IMPLEMENTING THE MERDEKA CURRICULUM POLICY IN  
THE TEACHING PROCESS AT SDN 158 PALEMBANG**

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**Abstract**

*This study aims to analyze the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy in the teaching process at SDN 158 Palembang. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that teachers encounter various obstacles, including differences in understanding of the Merdeka Curriculum concepts, limited learning resources and technological facilities, increased workload, and the need for ongoing training and mentoring. Additionally, students' adaptation to the new learning approach and the lack of collaboration among teachers are also significant challenges. Support from the school administration is considered essential in ensuring the successful implementation of this curriculum. The study recommends enhancing practical training, providing adequate learning materials, strengthening digital literacy, and establishing a consistent mentoring system to ensure the effective implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at the elementary school level.*

**Keywords:** *Merdeka Curriculum, teacher challenges, curriculum implementation, elementary education, case study*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru dalam menerapkan kebijakan Kurikulum Merdeka pada proses pembelajaran di SDN 158 Palembang. Dengan pendekatan kualitatif jenis studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa guru menghadapi sejumlah kendala, antara lain perbedaan pemahaman terhadap konsep Kurikulum Merdeka, keterbatasan sumber belajar dan sarana teknologi, peningkatan beban kerja, serta kebutuhan akan pelatihan dan pendampingan yang berkelanjutan. Selain itu, adaptasi siswa terhadap pendekatan pembelajaran yang baru dan kurangnya kolaborasi antarguru juga menjadi tantangan yang signifikan. Dukungan dari pihak sekolah dinilai sangat krusial dalam menunjang keberhasilan implementasi kurikulum ini. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan peningkatan pelatihan praktis, penyediaan sumber belajar yang memadai, penguatan literasi digital, serta sistem pendampingan yang konsisten untuk memastikan efektivitas Kurikulum Merdeka di tingkat sekolah dasar.

**Kata Kunci:** Kurikulum Merdeka, tantangan guru, implementasi kurikulum, pendidikan dasar, studi kasus

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### **Introduction**

Education is a fundamental pillar in the development of a nation. Through education, the younger generation is prepared to face future challenges with knowledge, skills, and strong character values. According to Aqib (as cited in Astuti, 2024), education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning environment and process that actively empowers students to develop their potential in order to possess spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed for themselves, society, the nation, and the state.

Learning and curriculum are intrinsically interconnected. The curriculum serves as a guide in the learning process, outlining the objectives, content, methods, and assessments designed by the government or educational institutions to achieve educational goals (Wuwur, 2023). It acts as a roadmap for teachers in organizing structured teaching and learning activities. Given the rapid advancement of the times, curricula must remain dynamic and continuously adjusted to align with students' needs and global demands (Priyadi et al., 2024).

The Indonesian education system continues to evolve through various curriculum reforms, one of which is the Merdeka Curriculum. This curriculum was introduced as a response to the need for a more flexible, contextual, and competence-oriented education system that emphasizes character development. It offers autonomy for teachers and schools to design learning processes tailored to students' needs, abilities, and local context.

However, the quality of education in Indonesia still faces significant challenges, particularly regarding the equitable and effective implementation of curricula. Teachers play a pivotal role at the forefront of educational delivery. Their responsibilities go beyond transferring knowledge—they also shape students' character, instill moral values, and guide them toward achieving learning outcomes (Puspita & Purnomo, 2023).

The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes competency-based learning, differentiation, and character strengthening through the development of the Pancasila Student Profile. In practice, however, many teachers encounter obstacles such as a lack of understanding of the curriculum's principles, limited educational resources, and difficulties in adapting instructional methods to student characteristics.

The successful implementation of this policy greatly depends on the support of various stakeholders, including school principals, local government, and parents. Collaboration among educational elements is essential to ensure the effective realization of the curriculum's goals. Furthermore, the continuous development of teacher competencies through training and mentoring is crucial for the success of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Based on the above background, this study aims to: (1) identify the main challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 158 Palembang, (2) analyze teacher readiness in conducting curriculum-based learning, and (3) explore the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in elementary schools.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study method to explore in depth the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum policy at SDN 158 Palembang. This approach was chosen as it enables a contextual and holistic understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The subjects of this study were teachers at SDN 158 Palembang who are directly involved in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The object of the research focused on evaluating the obstacles they encountered in applying the curriculum policy within the teaching process.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly monitor the teaching and learning process; interviews were conducted to gather the teachers' subjective perspectives on the challenges they faced; and documentation was used to collect secondary data such as syllabi, lesson plans, and other relevant documents.

To ensure data validity, the researcher applied the data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction, (3) data display, and (4) conclusion drawing. After collecting the data, the researcher reduced the data by selecting and summarizing the most relevant information. The reduced data were then presented in narrative form to facilitate analysis, followed by drawing conclusions to address the research objectives.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Findings**

Observations conducted across various grade levels at SDN 158 Palembang revealed significant variation in teachers' understanding and application of the Merdeka Curriculum principles. Some teachers demonstrated enthusiasm and actively implemented differentiated instruction and formative assessment. Others were still in the adjustment phase and expressed the need for deeper understanding, particularly in constructing contextual Learning Objectives Flow (Alur Tujuan Pembelajaran/ATP) and conducting effective assessments.

A notable challenge was the lack of relevant learning resources tailored to the Merdeka Curriculum. Some teachers adapted existing materials, while others continued to search for appropriate content. Many complained about the absence of textbooks and teacher guides aligned with the curriculum and local Palembang context. Additionally, limited internet access and a lack of technological devices were identified as recurring obstacles.

The use of technology in the classroom also varied. While some teachers had begun integrating digital tools to enrich learning, others were hindered by limited technical skills or insufficient infrastructure. Observations showed that student engagement tended to increase in classrooms using interactive learning strategies such as group discussions and project-based tasks. However, this more open learning approach required improved classroom management skills.

Teachers reported that their workload had increased with the Merdeka Curriculum, especially in terms of more detailed lesson planning, diverse material development, and continuous assessment. While some had participated in training, many felt that the sessions were too theoretical and did not adequately meet practical needs. They expressed the need for more intensive and ongoing mentoring.

Moreover, some students were still adjusting to the student-centered learning model that emphasizes character development and competencies. Teachers also emphasized the importance of collaboration among colleagues for planning and executing effective instruction. However, time constraints and a lack of structured mechanisms for collaboration hindered these efforts.

School support, particularly in providing facilities, training, and learning tools, played a key role in the implementation process. Some teachers reported receiving adequate support, while others hoped for further improvements, especially in the provision of resources and professional development opportunities.

In summary, the main challenges faced by teachers at SDN 158 Palembang in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum include: varied levels of curriculum understanding, limited learning and technological resources, increased workload, insufficient training and mentoring, student adjustment difficulties, suboptimal teacher collaboration, and the need for stronger institutional support.

## **Discussion**

The variations in teachers' understanding and implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum align with Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory, which explains that individuals respond to educational innovations differently based on their readiness, personal characteristics, and environmental support (Farid et al., 2022). Teachers who quickly adopted differentiated instruction and formative assessments represent early adopters, while those still struggling indicate the need for targeted training and mentoring to ease the transition.

The curriculum's emphasis on contextualized Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) and formative assessment reflects constructivist learning theory, which advocates for learning to be based on students' real-life experiences (In'am, n.d.). Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) further reinforces this, emphasizing that students can achieve higher understanding with proper guidance (Salsabila & Muqowim, 2024). Therefore, teachers lacking in-depth knowledge of these concepts are less likely to implement the curriculum effectively.

The availability of appropriate learning materials is crucial. Teachers at SDN 158 Palembang reported difficulty in sourcing content aligned with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, including flexibility, project-based learning, and differentiation (Redana & Suprpta, 2023). Although some attempted to modify existing materials, not all had the time, skills, or understanding to do so effectively (Taridala & Anwar, 2023).

In addition, the absence of culturally contextualized resources—such as local language, cultural references, and environmental relevance—further limited meaningful learning (Wero, Laksana, & Lawe, 2021). While digital platforms such as *Platform Merdeka Mengajar* are available, poor internet connectivity, lack of devices, and low digital literacy hinder their optimal use. Addressing these requires improved digital infrastructure and teacher training (Triwahyuni et al., 2025).

Some teachers successfully integrated digital media into their instruction, enhancing student engagement. Interactive methods like group discussions and projects were effective, though they required stronger classroom management (Apriliani, Putri, & Unzzila, 2024). Teachers also faced heavier workloads in planning, delivering, and assessing under the new curriculum, especially those unaccustomed to its demands (Aliyah, Sari, & Warlizasusi, 2024).

While professional development programs were offered, many teachers found them insufficiently practical and lacking in real-life classroom strategies. They expressed the need for more in-depth, hands-on training, with follow-up mentoring and opportunities for consultation.

The shift to student-centered learning promotes autonomy, character, and competency (Wahyuni, 2022), but this pedagogical change requires time for both teachers and students to adapt. Younger students, in particular, needed more guidance. Teachers acknowledged the value of collaboration in curriculum planning, but structural limitations made such cooperation difficult.

School leadership was a key determinant of implementation success. Support through facilities, internet, learning media, and teacher recognition significantly affected outcomes (Nurrochman, Darsinah, & Wafroaturrohman, 2023). While some teachers appreciated the support provided, others sought greater investment in professional development and infrastructure.

In conclusion, the challenges identified in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 158 Palembang are rooted in human capacity and infrastructure limitations. Addressing these issues requires focused investment in teacher training,

enhanced peer collaboration, and comprehensive school-level support to ensure the curriculum's goals are realized.

## **Conclusion**

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum at SDN 158 Palembang has encountered a variety of significant challenges. Among the most prominent are the inconsistent understanding of curriculum concepts among teachers, limited access to relevant learning resources and technological infrastructure, and an increased workload associated with more detailed planning and assessment processes. While some teachers have demonstrated the ability to adapt effectively to the new curriculum, many still require intensive and continuous guidance to implement it optimally.

Other obstacles include restricted internet connectivity, low levels of digital literacy, and the absence of learning materials that are contextually relevant to the local culture and student needs in Palembang. Furthermore, students themselves are in the process of adjusting to the more student-centered and competency-based learning approaches promoted by the Merdeka Curriculum.

The success of this curriculum policy depends heavily on fostering collaborative teaching practices and providing comprehensive institutional support. Strengthening collaboration among teachers can help in sharing best practices, developing instructional materials, and addressing common challenges. At the same time, strong leadership from the school administration, particularly in terms of providing infrastructure, resources, and motivation, is crucial for sustainable implementation.

To address these challenges, it is essential to prioritize practical, hands-on teacher training, ensure the availability of adequate and localized teaching materials, and establish an ongoing system of mentoring and professional support. These elements are key to ensuring that the Merdeka Curriculum can be implemented effectively in primary schools and truly contribute to enhancing the quality and relevance of education in Indonesia.

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