

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 *Kurikulum Merdeka*

2.1.1.1 Defenition of *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a new approach developed by the government and focuses more on developing students in its essential content as well as intra-curricular and extracurricular learning in accordance with the profile of Pancasila students. Another opinion about the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is that the new curriculum is implemented, this of course requires adjustments and of course there are obstacles in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Suryani et al., 2023). The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is an implementation or plan that has been prepared in such a way that it includes certain activities to achieve certain goals. The purpose of the Merdeka curriculum is to provide flexibility and make it easier for teachers to carry out more in-depth learning according to the needs of students and focus on strengthening character. Planning, implementation, and assessment are part of the concept of learning implementation.

This curriculum is designed to strengthen national character, culture, and adapt to the times. The implementation of this curriculum requires readiness from various parties, including teachers as direct implementers in schools. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Maulinda, 2022), has several important things in the context of education in Indonesia, including, first, developing national character. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* aims to develop strong national character and character, so that students have quality and are ready to face future challenges. Second, improving the quality of learning. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* offers more innovative and fun learning for students, so it is expected to increase students' interest and motivation to learn. In addition, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* also emphasizes the development of student competencies and skills that are relevant to the needs of the world of work. Third, adjusting to the times. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is designed to adapt to the times, so that students can keep

up with and take advantage of the ever-evolving developments in technology and science. Fourth, part of independent learning efforts. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is part of the independent learning effort launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Self-paced learning aims to provide a wider range of opportunities for students to learn and develop according to their interests and talents.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* gives children the opportunity to learn various topics and improve their abilities (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2021). Ki Hajar Dewantara said that the principle of the merdeka curriculum can be used to improve self-competence in accordance with children's character and maintain children's morals or attitudes by instilling character education values (Ainia, 2020). The *Kurikulum Merdeka* looks at learning as a whole. Learning must begin with competency mapping, learning planning, and the implementation of initial, formative, and summative assessments, according to Nugraha (2022).

The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is quite successful when viewed from its planning, implementation, and evaluation. Although there are some problems that teachers face on a daily basis, these problems should be a guideline for further improvement. The results of the research from the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English learning show that the application carried out by teachers in English subjects is in accordance with the phase D that has been formed, namely listening-speaking, reading-speaking, writing-presenting. This is certainly felt by teachers, how to see their students' activeness in class when asking questions, completing assigned tasks, and their cooperation in groups. The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in learning has been said to be almost completely implemented even though there are some English teachers who sometimes still use the old method when teaching in the classroom. In line with research (Damayanti et al., 2022), it is stated that, to achieve the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, schools as facilitators in student learning must prepare adequate facilities, provide services, assistance in learning experiences, and encourage the emergence of learning that is in accordance with the needs of students and students' desires so that learning takes place correctly and according to plan. So, for the proper implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, there must be encouragement from

schools and principals as leaders who must be able to guide teachers to make changes.

In the *Kurikulum Merdeka* learning, teachers can now focus on only 3 main components; learning objectives, learning processes, and assessments that can be summarized into one page of the lesson plan, while the other components are complementary (Astuti, 2021). The education system is a major component of education and has an important role in determining the quality of human resources. The education system introduced by the Indonesian government focuses on character education by conducting assessments in all subjects taught to students (Mahrus, 2021). Based on Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003, Article 1 Paragraph 19 states: "Curriculum is a set of plans and arrangements regarding the objectives, content, and learning materials as well as methods used to guide the management of learning activities to achieve certain educational goals".

There are four different approaches to assessing the curriculum. The curriculum can be seen in several ways. First, it can be considered as an idea that comes from theory and research. Second, it can be thought of as a written plan that embodies the curriculum as an idea, including goals, teaching materials, activities, tools or media, and learning time. Third, the curriculum can be considered an activity, which refers to how to carry out a written plan. In addition, the curriculum is defined by Law No. 20/2003 as a set of plans and arrangements that include objectives, content, and materials, as well as methods used to direct learning activities to achieve certain academic goals.

The main goal of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is to improve the quality of learning by emphasizing a more contextual approach, student-centered, and prioritizing aspects of competence and character. In its implementation, this curriculum aims to develop 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration. In addition, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is designed to reduce the administrative burden for teachers, so that they can focus more on providing meaningful and effective teaching.

The principle of freedom of learning in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* gives students the right to choose and organize the learning process according to their interests. The relevance of the material ensures that the content taught is in accordance with the times and the needs of students. Collaboration between students encourages interaction and cooperation in learning, while holistic continuous evaluation assesses student progress holistically, not only from academic aspects but also social character and skills.

In line with efforts to provide freedom in the learning process, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* also carries the principle of "Independent Learning," which allows students to learn according to their interests, talents, and speed. This approach is expected to create a more inclusive and relevant learning environment to the times.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a new innovation in Indonesian education because of its many advantages. Flexibility in learning is one of its advantages. This curriculum gives teachers the freedom to tailor their teaching methods according to the needs of students and the characteristics of their respective schools. With this flexibility, teachers can use a more contextual, individualized, and project-based approach. As a result, learning becomes more significant and relevant to the real world. In addition, the free curriculum emphasizes competency-based learning. This means that students not only learn theory but also learn to think critically, innovatively, and collaborate skills that are very important in the 21st century (Wati, 2023). One additional advantage is the different learning that can be tailored to the student's pace and interests. This chair no longer forces students to talk much. Instead, it is directed at improving student literacy and numeracy as well as character building based on the Pancasila Student Profile (Maulida, 2021). The *Kurikulum Merdeka* also encourages project-based learning, which helps students learn soft skills that are essential for working life.

There are many advantages and disadvantages of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Educators must be willing to implement a more flexible and competency-based approach. New concepts such as Learning Objectives Flow (ATP) and Learning Outcomes (CP) are still a challenge for many teachers. They are also confused about how to use it in daily learning (Awaliyah & Tiarina, 2024). In addition, the Merdeka

Curriculum can fail in some places due to limited infrastructure, especially in areas that have limited access to technology and learning resources (Fitra & Tiarina, 2023). The absence of teacher training is one of the reasons why the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is uneven in many schools.

2.1.1.2 Characteristics of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* has several characteristics that distinguish it from traditional curricula (David Johnson and Roger Johnson 2020). Here are some of the main characteristics of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*:

a. Soft skills and character development

The main characteristic of *Kurikulum Merdeka* is that it prioritizes project-based learning and character. Learning does not only focus on memorizing concepts, but also involves students in practicum or experiments called "learning by doing". Students will be involved in observing phenomena related to a concept to gain knowledge. The learning models used include inquiry, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and discovery learning. Through conducting experiments and making projects, students will develop soft skills such as communication skills, cooperation, leadership, critical thinking, and time management, which will make learning more meaningful for them. The formation of student character in accordance with the profile of Pancasila occurs indirectly through the learning process. However, without being accompanied by the right attitude, students' abilities in various matters will not provide benefits to society. Therefore, it is expected that students can demonstrate behaviors that are in accordance with the values of Pancasila, including its six main characteristics, namely faith and piety to God Almighty, noble character, respect for diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity. In addition, students also have the opportunity to study important issues such as sustainable lifestyle, tolerance, mental health, culture, entrepreneurship, technology, and democratic life. They will then be trained to act in response to these issues.

b. Focus on essential material

All subject matter is important to learn, the time available for learning in school is limited. Therefore, it is better if we focus on the most useful essential materials. One of the basic competencies that need to be emphasized is literacy and numeracy. Literacy is the ability to analyze reading and understand the concepts behind writing. While numeracy is the ability to analyze and use numbers. Both competencies are important for students in everyday life, no matter what profession they will take in the future. *Kurikulum Merdeka* offers less teaching material, but the discussion is more in-depth. This is much better than learning a lot of things, but it is easily forgotten because it does not delve into it. Each teaching material in this curriculum has essential questions that guide students in understanding the things they learn. It is expected that students can answer these questions based on their learning experience.

c. Flexibility for teachers and students

Teachers have the ability to conduct learning that is tailored to the abilities of each learner. Since each child has different abilities, it is the teacher's job to assess the learners' initial competencies and facilitate appropriate learning.

Based on the opinions of the above experts, it can be concluded that the curriculum that emphasizes soft skills and character development aims to form students who are not only academically intelligent, but also have strong social and emotional skills. As well as focusing on important material, learning becomes more efficient and relevant, allowing students to understand the core concepts that are essential to their development. In addition, flexibility for teachers and students provides room for adjustment of learning methods according to individual needs, so that the teaching and learning process becomes more effective and enjoyable.

2.1.1.3 Concept of *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is based on key principles that support more flexible and student-centered learning, according to some education experts. Dewi (2023) emphasized that the *Kurikulum Merdeka* must use a student-centered learning approach, which gives students the freedom to choose their own learning path. The concept of differentiation in learning, according to Santos (2022), allows teachers to tailor their teaching to meet the needs of each student. Hidayat (2023) highlights the role of project-based learning in improving critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The *Kurikulum Merdeka*, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022), aims to improve the character of students through the Pancasila Student Profile. Meanwhile, Black & Wiliam (2020) emphasized how important it is to conduct a thorough evaluation to evaluate student development.

According to some experts, there are several main concepts that are the basis for the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*:

1. Student-Centered Learning

The free curriculum gives students the freedom to choose a course of study that suits their interests, talents, and pace. This is in line with the idea of student-centered learning that has been widely used in the contemporary education system (Dewi, 2023).

2. Differentiation in Learning

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* gives teachers the freedom to choose learning strategies that suit their classroom situation. This curriculum adjusts the level of difficulty and teaching methods according to the needs of each student (Santoso, 2022).

3. Project-Based Learning

This curriculum emphasizes a project-based learning approach, or project-based learning, which aims to improve students' understanding of concepts by providing hands-on experience (Hidayat, 2023).

4. Pancasila Student Profile

The purpose of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is to form students who have strong characters based on Pancasila values, such as faith and piety, global diversity, mutual cooperation, independence, critical thinking, and creativity (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

5. Holistic Assessment and New Assessment Format

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* uses formative, formative, and diagnostic assessments to evaluate student development thoroughly rather than focusing solely on academic outcomes (Black & Wiliam, 2020).

2.1.2 Implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is an important step in improving the quality of education in Indonesia. Rahmawati (2021) This curriculum provides flexibility for educators in designing learning that is more in line with student needs and emphasizes strengthening character and competency in the 21st century. In the implementation process, there are three main aspects that must be considered, namely learning planning, learning process, and learning assessment.

2.1.2.1 Learning Planning

According to (Rosad, 2019), implementation is the process of executing new ideas, processes, or a series of activities with the hope that others can accept and make adjustments in the bureaucracy to create achievable goals with a reliable implementation network. Translation, enrichment, and curriculum development are part of learning planning. Learning planning must consider the situation, conditions, and potentials that exist in each school in addition to referring to the demands of the curriculum. All teachers involved in lesson planning activities must understand this concept. which regulates what teachers should do, when and how to do it, then limits the goals based on certain instructional goals, and regulates the implementation of work to achieve maximum results resulting from the process of determining learning objectives. Furthermore, to make alternatives that are in accordance with the learning approach. In addition, teachers are also required to collect and analyze important information to support learning activities so that they can develop and communicate plans and decisions related to learning to interested parties.

According to the directive of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology No. 56 of 2022, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is implemented within the framework of learning recovery and as a complement to the previous

curriculum. A flexible, simple, and contextual document is called a learning plan, which includes learning objectives, learning steps, and assessments. Learning outcomes determine learning objectives. This is done by taking into account the uniqueness and characteristics of the educational unit. In addition, teachers must ensure that the learning objectives are in accordance with the student's stage and needs. Based on the description above, it can be concluded that students in preparing lesson plans must have the ability to optimize the various abilities that students have; goals should be clear and orderly; and the material necessary to achieve the learning objectives must be provided taking into account the established principles.

Learning planning for the *Kurikulum Merdeka* consists of several key steps that ensure learning runs well and meets the needs of students:

1. Learning Outcome Analysis (CP)

Teachers identify competencies that must be mastered by students based on the Learning Outcomes that have been set in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Rosad, 2019). It includes literacy, numeracy, as well as 21st-century skills that must be developed.

2. Initial Competency Mapping of Students

The teacher conducts an initial assessment to understand the level of students' understanding of the material to be taught. This is important so that learning can be adjusted to the student's condition (Santoso, 2022).

3. Determination of Learning Objectives (TP)

Teachers set learning goals that are specific, measurable, and in accordance with student needs. This goal must be in line with the Learning Outcomes and Pancasila Student Profile (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2022).

4. Selection of Learning Methods and Strategies Teachers

Choose appropriate learning methods, such as Project-Based Learning, Problem-Based Learning, or inquiry approaches

(Hidayat, 2023). This strategy is adjusted to the student's learning style to be more effective.

5. Development of Teaching Materials and Learning Media

Teachers prepare teaching materials, either in the form of books, modules, videos, or other digital sources that can support the learning process (Dewi, 2023). The use of technology is also optimized according to school facilities.

6. Preparation of Teacher Evaluation and Assessment

Plans Determine the assessment methods to be used, both diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments (Black & Wiliam, 2020). This evaluation aims to measure student development holistically, not only from academic aspects but also character and skills.

7. Flexible Learning Plan Preparation

Teachers develop flexible learning plans to adapt to the dynamics in the classroom and the diverse needs of students (Mulyasa, 2021). This planning includes preliminary, core, and closing activities in learning.

1.1.2.2 Learning Process

Learning implementation is the following stage, which aims to provide a high-quality, contextual, and captivating learning experience (Zein, 2020).

During this time, educators are expected to prepare lessons that:

a) Interactive

Interactive learning involves two-way communication between teachers and students or between fellow students. This method allows students to be more active in the learning process through discussions, questions and answers, group work, and the use of technology such as digital quizzes and online learning platforms. With high interaction, the understanding of the concept becomes more in-depth.

b) Inspire

An inspiring teacher is able to arouse students' enthusiasm and motivation to learn by providing real examples, success stories, and building a positive learning environment. Teachers can also inspire students by showing enthusiasm, giving appreciation, and connecting the material to real life so that students are more interested and excited.

c) Fun

Fun learning helps to increase student engagement and make them enjoy the learning process more. This can be achieved through the use of educational games, story-based approaches, humor, and variations in teaching methods such as simulations, experiments, and creative projects. A fun learning atmosphere also reduces stress and increases material absorption.

d) Challenging

Challenging learning provides assignments or activities that are appropriate to the student's ability level but still encourages them to think critically and grow. Learning challenges can be in the form of analytical questions, problem-solving-based projects, or activities that encourage creativity and innovation. This challenge aims to increase students' fighting power and build higher-order thinking skills.

e) Motivate students to participate actively; and active participation

Teachers must create a supportive classroom atmosphere so that students are encouraged to be actively involved in the learning process. This can be done by asking reflective questions, encouraging discussion, building students' confidence, and rewarding their contributions. Active participation improves comprehension of the material because students not only listen, but also think and interact.

f) Provide sufficient space for initiative, creativity, independence, according to the talents, interests, and physical and psychological development of students

Each student has different talents and interests, so learning should provide freedom for them to explore and develop their potential.

Teachers can provide flexible projects, interest-based assignments, as well as the opportunity to choose the way of learning that best suits them. In addition, this approach also pays attention to aspects of students' physical and psychological development, so that learning remains relevant and effective for each individual.

The learning process is an activity in which teachers and students work together to achieve a specific goal. The Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture on Standards for the Elementary, Junior and Senior High School Education Process regulates the way learning is carried out. These regulations cover things like time allocation for face-to-face learning, textbooks, and classroom management, as well as the types of learning that consist of introductory activities, core activities, and closing activities.

As part of the responsibility of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers must prepare students physically and psychologically to attend preliminary activities. Furthermore, teachers should contextually motivate students about the benefits and applications of lessons in daily life by providing local, national, and international examples and comparisons. Next, the teacher explains the learning objectives or basic competencies that must be achieved, asks questions that connect previous knowledge with the material to be learned, and provides the scope of the material for 15 activity descriptions.

This is the main activity and is part of the learning process. At this point, the teacher is responsible for imparting his knowledge to achieve the goal. Activities should be carried out in an interactive, inspiring, fun, challenging, and motivating manner so that students can seek information and provide adequate opportunities for creativity, initiative, and independence according to the student's talents, interests, and psychological development. Activities should also ensure that students are fully engaged, so that teachers and students can share knowledge about the topics discussed. For these core activities, learning models, methods, media, and resources are tailored to teachers and subjects.

Based on the points above, an interactive, inspiring, fun, challenging, and motivating learning process will encourage students to be actively involved in learning activities. By providing enough space for initiative, creativity, and independence, learning can be tailored to students' talents, interests, and physical and psychological development. This approach not only improves academic understanding but also helps to form individuals who are independent, innovative, and ready to face future challenges.

The learning process of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* consists of several important stages, according to Bergmann & Sams (2019): The purpose of this curriculum is to make education interactive, fun, and meaningful for students.

1. Pre-Activity

- a) Teachers prepare students physically and mentally to participate in learning.
- b) Provide an introduction to the topic to be studied in an interesting way, for example through triggering questions, light discussions, or case studies.
- c) Explain the learning objectives to be achieved in the session.
- d) Relate the material to the student's previous experience or real-life context to make it more relevant.

2. Main Activity

- a) Teachers deliver learning materials with appropriate methods, such as discussions, project-based learning, or problem-based learning (Hidayat, 2023).
- b) Students actively participate in exploration, experiments, or group discussions to understand the concepts taught.
- c) Teachers act as facilitators who guide students to think critically, develop creativity, and collaborate in the learning process.
- d) The use of technology or interactive learning media to increase student engagement.

3. Post-Activity

- a) Teachers and students reflect on what has been learned.
- b) Students are given the opportunity to convey their understanding or ask questions related to the material.
- c) Teachers provide feedback on student participation and understanding.
- d) Arrange learning follow-ups, such as project assignments or additional activities to deepen students' understanding (Popham, 2021).

2.1.1.3 Learning Assessment

The next stage is the assessment process of the learning assessment process. Learning assessment is expected to measure the aspects that should be measured and be holistic in nature. Aprilia (2022), assessment can be diagnostic, formative, and summative.

1) Diagnostic assessment

procedures for examining and analyzing the factors that contribute to a student's learning difficulties. It assists teachers in creating effective teaching methods. The goal of diagnostic learning is to collect preliminary data on students' knowledge, skills, and behaviors, including their strengths and weaknesses. Curriculum Independence involves diagnostic assessment, which is an independent assessment that aims to determine the characteristics, competencies, strengths, and weaknesses of students. This assessment helps in creating a learning model that suits various competencies and conditions of students.

- a) Review reports on previous student learning outcomes.
- b) Identify competencies that need to be taught.
- c) Create an assessment tool to measure student competence. This can include written or oral tests, skills-based assessments (such as products or practices), and observations.
- d) Collect information about the student's background, motivation, interests, learning facilities, and other relevant aspects as needed.
- e) Conduct assessments and process the results.

- f) Using the results of the diagnosis as data and information to plan the learning process based on the characteristics and level of achievement of students.

2). Formative assessment

During the learning process, teachers must conduct assessments to measure students' understanding, learning needs, and progress. Formative assessment is a type of assessment that is used to monitor and improve the learning process and to measure the achievement of learning objectives. Formative assessments can be carried out at the beginning and throughout the learning process. After analyzing the formative assessment data, teachers can determine the students' commitment to achieve the goal. This data allows teachers to take instant actions, such as repeating lessons on topics that students do not understand well, improving current learning activities, or planning learning activities for the future. This method guarantees the quality of education and ensures that every student achieves their learning goals. The teaching module has a formative assessment plan to integrate formative assessment into the learning process.

In addition, there are two types of formative assessments, assessments at the beginning of the class and assessments during the grade. Assessments at the beginning of the class are used to support different learning and ensure that students get what they need. Assessments during class, on the other hand, can be used as a basis for thinking about the entire learning process and can be used as a reference for better learning planning. Teachers can move on to the next goal if the student is considered to have reached the goal. However, if students have not achieved their goals, teachers must reinforce them first. In addition, teachers must conduct summative assessments to ensure that the overall learning objectives are achieved.

3). Summative assessment

Summative assessment is an important part of the learning process because it helps determine if students have achieved the

desired learning outcomes. This is a type of evaluation used to determine grade promotion and/or graduation from an educational unit by measuring the achievement of learning objectives and/or student learning outcomes. This assessment is carried out by comparing the achievement of student learning outcomes in one class. Various sections, including knowledge, skills, moral and social attitudes, and learning outcomes, are developed systematically and purposefully.

2.1.2 Difficulties of English Teachers in Implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The teaching and learning process is the focus of this research. To implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, schools face many problems. Due to incomplete understanding, organizing learning becomes difficult. Teachers are often confused about whether the applied application is in line with curriculum expectations even though they have received prior instruction. This is not surprising because for more than 70 years, teachers have relied on very strict rules and have no freedom to regulate their own learning. As a result, teachers also believe that learning is not going well. Classroom management is a teacher's ability to create and maintain a conducive and acceptable classroom environment so that students can achieve effective and efficient educational goals (Nahampun et al., 2023). Teachers are responsible for assessing students' learning and evaluating their progress. Applying questions and consistently motivating students to think creatively about those questions is the most efficient and innovative teaching method (Furkatovna, 2022).

On the contrary, the lack of infrastructure is still an obstacle in disadvantaged areas. Due to the absence of electricity and internet, teachers have difficulty completing various modules. In underdeveloped areas, the lack of safe classrooms makes learning difficult. Some teachers in disadvantaged areas expect considerable help from expert trainers to understand the curriculum better. This is essential to allow teachers to share knowledge and experience when creating a curriculum that benefits students. Schools also need parental support and teaching

tools to help students learn. In addition, the following can hinder curriculum change and implementation:

1) Knowledge and planning

The principal plays an important role in interpreting the overall education policy and curriculum policy documents; Therefore, their knowledge is very important. The principal must establish and decide on the human, financial, and physical resources necessary for curriculum changes to be effective. Curriculum reform will not succeed if the implementation plan is not in accordance with the context of the special school. One of the responsibilities of the principal is to organize school activities so that teaching and learning are in accordance with the school's goals. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes are key to educational innovation and better curriculum management.

2) Lack of vision

Transformation efforts can easily dissolve into confusing, inappropriate, and time-consuming project lists without a clear vision. One of the biggest mistakes made by leaders when implementing curriculum changes is being too hasty to implement rather than formulating a vision of how implementation will go and creating an implementation plan that aligns with projections. A school cannot function if it does not have a vision; To stay focused, the vision must be communicated to all parties involved.

3) Teacher's view

About their ability to understand curriculum changes affects the success of the curriculum on a daily basis. Teachers have the power to change the meaning of curriculum policies. It requires knowledge, skills, a positive approach, and a passion for teaching. Certain teachers are not always receptive to change; However, other teachers may prefer to be involved in the process of new innovation. This usually happens when they are faced with a change that requires a change in their personal beliefs and principles derived from previous

experiences and practices. Factors that make people resist change. These include the following:

- a. Uncertainty about what curriculum changes mean
- b. Poor motivation
- c. Lack of clarity about development
- d. Ambiguity and lack of understanding of the nature and scope of the expected change
- e. Insufficient resources to provide specialized support and knowledge
- f. Inadequate support of existing educational practices and safety practices.

2.2 Relevant Research

Research related to the difficulties of English teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* has become the main focus in various academic studies, especially in understanding the challenges and strategies faced by educators, especially in the context of education at the junior high school level. Therefore, it is important to know the difficulties of English teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English learning process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa. Some of the studies that are relevant to this study are:

1. Research conducted by Syahrída Awaliyah, Yuli Tiarina (2024) "An Analysis of English Teachers' Difficulties and Strategies in Implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* on the Seventh Grade at SMPN 1 Panyabungan Selatan" in the results of her research also highlights the difficulties of teachers in understanding the new concept of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, infrastructure limitations, and differences in focus in student assessment. The researcher also used a qualitative descriptive method. This study also has advantages and disadvantages, the advantages are providing concrete strategies used by teachers to overcome difficulties, while the disadvantages include not examining the direct impact of the strategies used on the effectiveness of learning, not discussing students' perspectives on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The results of this study are also in the form of teachers experiencing

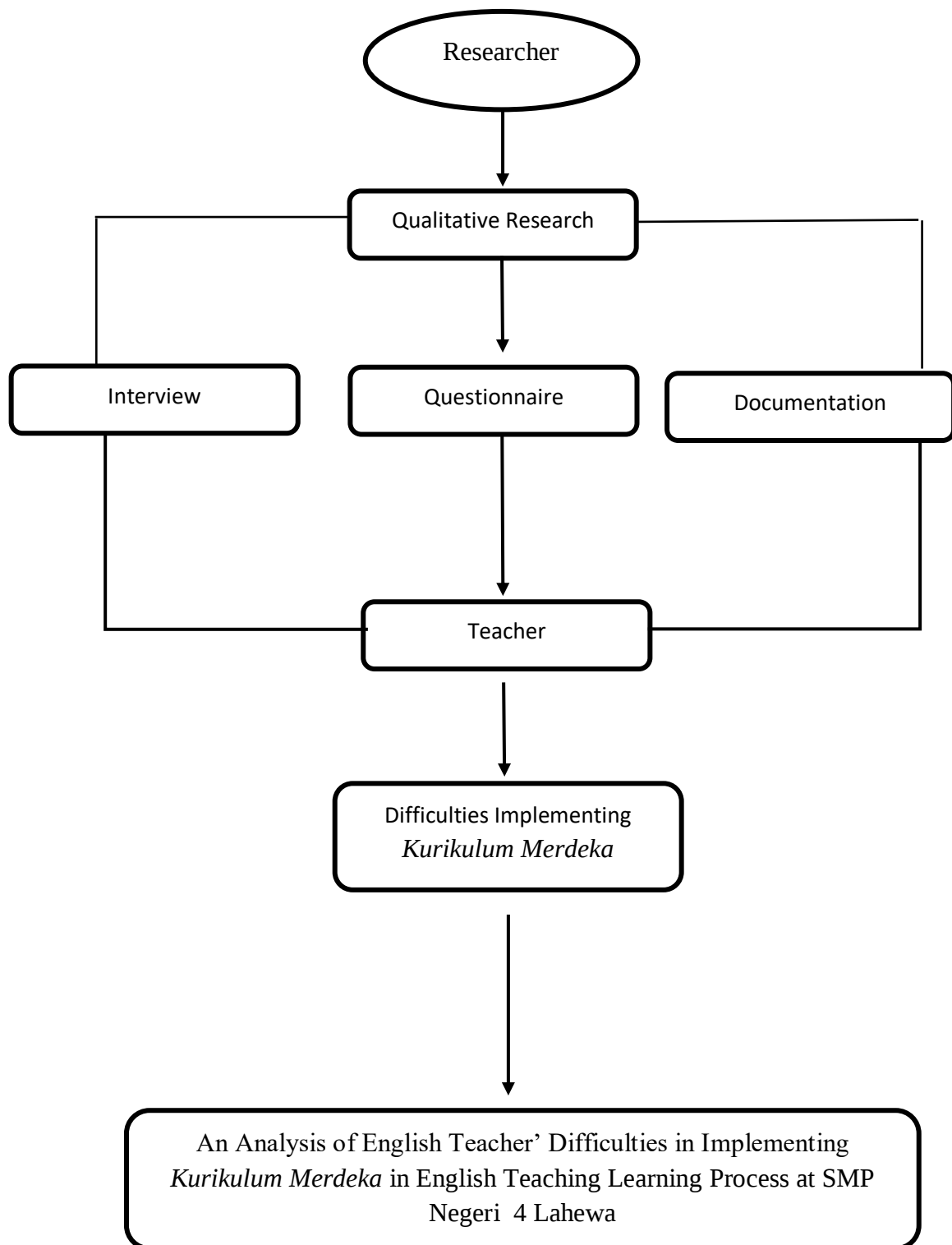
difficulties in understanding new terms in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, such as Learning Outcomes (CP), Learning Objectives (TP), and Learning Objectives Flow (ATP), the change in the focus of assessment from academic to character makes it difficult for teachers to conduct assessments, obstacles in choosing learning methods due to a different approach from the previous curriculum, limited facilities and infrastructure, Such as the lack of books and poor internet access, making it difficult to implement the curriculum.

2. The next relevant research is a study conducted by Septrida Fitra, Yuli Tiarina (2023) "An Analysis of English Teachers' Challenges in Implementing Merdeka Curriculum at SMAN 3 Solok Selatan" in the results of her research said that it identified five main challenges experienced by teachers, including in designing lesson plans, media use, and classroom management. In his research, the researcher also used qualitative descriptive methods, data collection through in-depth interviews and documentation. This research also has the advantage of explaining the main challenges faced by teachers in implementing the independent curriculum, and the disadvantages also do not provide concrete solutions to overcome the challenges found. The results of this study are also in the form of, teachers face challenges in designing teaching materials because they have to adjust to different levels of student understanding, limited time is the main challenge in implementing lesson plans, teachers experience difficulties in using digital learning media due to lack of training, classroom management is a challenge, especially in motivating students who are less interested in learning English and assessments are difficult to carry out optimal due to the limited time to evaluate each student's abilities in depth.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is "a set of interrelated ideas and concepts that help researchers to understand and explain the phenomenon being studied", according to Maxwell (Mensa Osei et al., 2020: 55). This framework serves as a guideline for building research questions, finding relevant variables, and directing data analysis.

This research discusses the difficulties of teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English learning process. In the study, this prospective researcher uses qualitative research with data collection techniques consisting of Interview, Documentation, Questionnaire.



Figures 2.3 Conceptual framework