

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Approach and Type of Research

The research on analyzing the difficulties of English teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English Learning Process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa uses qualitative research methods, especially the case study approach. Qualitative research is suitable for gaining a holistic and contextual understanding of how the curriculum is applied in a natural setting. This approach helps in exploring the complexity and nuances of curriculum implementation from the perspective of the teachers involved. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. This approach is designed to explore and describe the readiness, challenges, and strategic approaches in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Data collection involves in-depth interviews, documentation, and live questionnaires to gather rich and detailed information.

Data analysis is conducted to condense the data, present it in a meaningful way, and draw conclusions that answer the research question. This type of research is a case study. Case studies allow for in-depth exploration of the application of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in a specific context. This allows researchers to understand the intricacies of curriculum implementation, challenges, and opportunities that arise during the implementation process. According to Husein (2024), case studies involve field research conducted in a specific environment. This method is appropriate for understanding real-world situations and gaining an in-depth understanding of the complexities of educational practice. By focusing on one case (SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa), this research can provide valuable insights into the specific challenges and successes in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in this context.

3.2 Variables of the research

Research variables refer to traits that can be observed, measured, or manipulated in a study. In research, these variables are used to analyze or explain the relationship

between various components. According to (Puspitasari, 2020), research variables are all forms of objects that are the focus of the study and observed to collect information to produce conclusions. This is also in line with the opinion (Maspupah, 2021) which states that research variables are objects chosen by researchers to be studied in order to collect data and draw conclusions.

According to Sugiyono (2019), research variables are attributes, values, or characteristics that vary among the subjects studied. In this context, the difficulties experienced by teachers can vary, making them suitable variables for research. The research on analyzing the difficulties of English teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English Learning Process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa is likely to involve the following variables:

1. Independent Variable: Based on the title, the independent variable is "Independent Curriculum". This is the curriculum that is being implemented, and this research aims to explore its impact as well as the challenges in its implementation.
2. Dependent Variable: The dependent variable is "English Teacher Difficulty" This refers to the challenges and problems faced by English teachers during the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This study aims to analyze and understand these difficulties. This refers to the challenges and problems faced by English teachers during the implementation of the Independent Curriculum. This study aims to analyze and understand these difficulties.

3.3 Setting and Schedule of the Research

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa, located in Lahewa Subdistrict, North Nias Regency. The school has 14 teachers in total, one of whom is an English teacher. Overall, the school consists of five classes, and the focus of this research was on the eighth-grade class, which has 27 students. The research was carried out from March to April 2025, aligned with the English class schedule for the eighth grade and the availability of the English teacher for interviews and

questionnaire distribution. The researcher began the activity by submitting a formal research permit letter to the school on March 18, 2025. After receiving approval, the researcher conducted an interview with the English teacher on March 26, 2025, to gather information about the teacher's understanding of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the challenges faced in its implementation. Then, on April 10, 2025, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the teacher as a supporting instrument to obtain additional data regarding the difficulties in implementing the curriculum. On April 16, 2025, the researcher observed the English teaching and learning process in the classroom to identify the real challenges encountered by the teacher during instruction. All research activities were carried out systematically and in coordination with the school to ensure that the teaching and learning process was not disrupted. These activities aimed to obtain accurate data in analyzing the difficulties faced by the teacher in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in English teaching and learning.

This school is one of the junior secondary education institutions that plays an important role in educating the young generation in the area. Standing in an area that is still thick with the cultural values and traditions of the Nias community, SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa has challenges as well as great potential in the development of education oriented to the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. As a public school, SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa is under the auspices of the North Nias Regency Education Office and follows the national education policy. With a geographical condition that is quite far from the city center, this school faces several obstacles in terms of infrastructure and accessibility, such as limited internet networks and lack of technology-based learning support facilities. However, on the other hand, the existence of this school is the main pillar in providing proper education for children around Balefadorotuhu Village and its surroundings.

In terms of teaching staff, SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa is supported by a number of teacher who are committed to educating students with various existing limitations. Some teachers are local educators who understand the social and cultural characteristics of the local community, so that the approach in the learning process is more contextual to the daily life of students. The subjects taught include the

national curriculum, with an emphasis on mastering the basics of science and character values based on the Pancasila Student Profile proclaimed in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. In terms of learning schedule, SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa follows a regular school system with teaching and learning activities that take place from Monday to Friday. School entry hours usually start at around 07.30 WIB and end at 14.00 WIB. In addition to classroom learning, the school also encourages a variety of extracurricular activities that aim to develop students' non-academic skills, although facilities for these activities are still limited.

Overall, SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa reflects the condition of education in remote areas that still face various challenges, ranging from limited infrastructure to the readiness of educators in implementing the new curriculum. However, with the spirit of student learning and the dedication of the teachers, this school continues to strive to provide quality education for the next generation in the North Nias region.

3.4 Source Data

In the study using the case study method, the main data sources came from teacher (Fersiman Gea, S.Pd), students of class VIII, and documentation. Teacher are the main source of data that provides information through interviews and questionnaires. Conduct in-depth interviews with English teacher at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa to get first-hand information about the difficulties they face in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. These interviews can be conducted individually or in groups. Researcher the learning process in the classroom is also able to see firsthand how teachers implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the challenges that arise during the process. These observations can provide rich data on interactions between teachers and students. Collect documents related to the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, learning implementation plans and teaching materials used by teachers. Analysis of this document can provide insight into the fit between the curriculum and teaching practices.

3.5 Research Instruments

Research instruments are tools used to collect, measure, and analyze data in research. These instruments can be questionnaires, interviews, documentation, observations, or other measuring tools related to the research methodology used. Creswell (2022) said that research instruments are tools that are systematically designed to collect accurate and valid data to answer research questions. Meanwhile, Bryman (2022) emphasized that the selection of the right instrument is very important to increase the credibility and validity of research results.

Interviews are the primary method of gathering qualitative data, allowing researchers to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights in depth. According to Taherdoost (2022), good interview design includes creating clear research questions, selecting participants, and drafting main and follow-up questions. Interviews can be structured with predefined questions, semi-structured with a combination of fixed and open-ended questions, or unstructured with free-flowing discussions. Researchers such as Guest et al. (2021) emphasize how important it is to achieve saturation, which occurs when no new subjects emerge from additional interviews—usually after 12–16 interviews.

Questionnaires are versatile research tools that can be used in both quantitative and qualitative research. They can be closed (allowing for free response) or open (allowing multiple choice and Likert scale). Ellis et al. (2021) emphasized that a well-designed questionnaire should test the questions and check for bias to ensure validity and reliability. Tran et al. (2021) also said that the sample size needed for the questionnaire depends on the purpose of the study and the strength of the statistics.

Documentation is a method that involves examining reports, policies, lesson plans, or official notes to obtain relevant data. Bolderston (2021) states that documentation over time provides objective and stable data and can complement interviews and questionnaires by providing factual, historical, or institutional context. Findings become more credible if they are properly analyzed from various data sources.

3.6 Data Collection Techniques

To obtain complete data on the difficulties of teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the researcher used several data collection methods. In this study, the researcher used interview, questionnaire and documentation techniques.

1. Interview

The data collection technique through interviews is carried out by asking teachers directly to obtain information about their experiences or opinions. The interview was conducted to explore more in-depth information about teachers' experiences and views related to teachers' difficulties in implementing the independent curriculum. This interview will be addressed to several teachers who have implemented English learning in the eighth grade. The goal is to find out what difficulties teachers face when implementing the independent curriculum in English learning.

2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a data collection tool in the form of a series of questions that are systematically arranged and used to obtain information from respondents regarding a certain topic. Questionnaires are often used in social, educational, and psychological research to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Respondents can fill out questionnaires independently, and the results can be analyzed to draw conclusions or make generalizations about the larger population. A questionnaire is a research instrument that contains a series of questions designed to collect information from respondents. Questionnaires can be in the form of open-ended or closed-ended questions, and are used to measure respondents' attitudes, opinions, or behaviors.

3. Documentation

Documentation is an activity that collects data in visual. Documentation is used to collect various learning-related materials, such as teacher notes regarding lesson plans, student worksheets, and examples of narrative texts that have been written by students. In addition, documentation also includes recordings of learning activities that can provide a clearer picture of the application of concept mapping techniques in the teaching context. This

documentation will help researchers to support findings from interviews and questionnaires.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data will be collected through a variety of consistent collection methods, which will result in huge variation. Therefore, to reach understandable conclusions, data analysis is necessary. Data analysis is the process of finding and compiling systematic data obtained from interviews and documentation. This process includes organizing data into categories, describing them into units, synthesizing them, organizing them into patterns, choosing which ones are important and which ones should be studied, and making easy-to-understand conclusions. In the following description, the methods used to analyze the data of this study, which involves the use of interactive models by (Miles and Huberman) in the qualitative analysis process, include data reduction, data appearance, and verification.

1. Data reduction

In data collection, researchers obtained various data. Therefore, it will be necessary to reduce data that is sharply sorted, focused, discarded, and organized and select appropriate data related to research. Data reduction means summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important ones, looking for themes and patterns, and removing unnecessary ones. At this stage, researchers select, focus, simplify, abstract, and alter the raw data in written records. The goal was to obtain findings that were the focus of the study.

Data reduction is a crucial step in qualitative data analysis that aims to simplify and select information to focus more on the core of the research problem. By selecting, summarizing, categorizing, and abstracting data, researchers can obtain findings that are more structured and easy to interpret. For example, in research on teachers' challenges in implementing the Independent Curriculum, the data reduction stage can be carried out as follows: Collecting data through interviews and observations, Discarding irrelevant information (for example, public opinion that is not related to the purpose of the research), Grouping data based on themes such as teacher

preparation, learning methods, and assessments, Summarizing the findings into a narrative or table that is easier to analyze.

2. Data display

The purpose of the data display is to provide a description of the next plan that the researcher should undertake. Data views can be short descriptions, graphs, relationships between categories, and so on. In this step, the researcher tries to collect relevant data so that it becomes information that can be concluded and has a certain meaning. This process can be done by displaying data, making connections between phenomena to interpret what is actually happening and what needs to be followed up to achieve the research objectives. In displaying the data in this study, a narrative description is used to present the research achievements.

3. Verification

The final stage in analyzing the data in this study is conclusion and verification. Drawing conclusions is that the initial conclusions expressed are still provisional, and do not change if no strong evidence is found to support the data collection stage. Therefore, verification must be done to obtain data validation. Verification is a step when researchers decide on a conclusion by verifying and rechecking that the data is valid. The researcher conducted the withdrawal and verification after examining all the data, reducing the data, and presenting the data to answer the problems in this study.