

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Approach and Type of the Research

The approach used in this research is the qualitative method, which aims to deeply understand social phenomena through the exploration and interpretation of meanings assigned by individuals or groups to their experiences. This approach was chosen because of its relevance in capturing students' perspectives on the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1. As stated by (Creswell, 2018) qualitative research is designed to understand how individuals or groups make sense of a social phenomenon or issue by employing in-depth data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. In this case, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to explore students' subjective experiences, which cannot be measured quantitatively.

The type of research used is a descriptive case study, which focuses on providing a detailed and in-depth depiction of a phenomenon within its real-life context. Yin (2018) explains that descriptive case studies are highly effective for analyzing complex phenomena in real-life environments, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. In this study, the descriptive case study approach is employed to understand how students at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1 respond to the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka

Descriptive case studies also allow researchers to observe the interactions between students, teachers, and the school environment holistically, thus producing a rich and comprehensive depiction. This aligns with Stake's (1995) perspectives, which emphasizes that case studies facilitate an in-depth exploration of a specific case to understand its nuances and dynamics. Through this approach, researchers can explore key elements influencing students' perspectives, such as their readiness to learn, support from teachers, availability of resources, and learning environment.

3.2 Variables of the research

In this qualitative descriptive study, traditional variables as understood in quantitative research are not used. Instead, the central phenomenon under investigation is students' perspectives on the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka in English learning at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1. This translates into a single core "construct" or conceptual variable that encompasses multiple dimensions including students' understanding of the new curriculum, their learning experiences, emotional responses, and expectations for learning.

Thus, this single construct students' perspectives serves as the focus of the study. The data collection (interviews and observations) are designed to explore diverse aspects of this perspective without imposing predetermined variables. This approach aligns with the characteristics of qualitative research where the "variable" is a concept grounded in lived experiences as opposed to a measurable numeric entity.

3.3 Setting and Schedule of the Research

The research will be conducted at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1, a private junior high school in Indonesia that has recently implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka. This school was chosen because it provides an ideal setting for understanding how students perceive the implementation of the new curriculum, focusing on their learning experiences, challenges, and benefits. The research will be carried out over a period of two months, from May 2025 to June 2025. The condensed timeline will ensure that the data collection and analysis are conducted efficiently.

3.4 Source of Data

In research, data can be categorized into primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to the information directly collected from original sources through methods such as interviews, surveys, and experiments, specifically designed to address the research questions (Creswell, 2014). In this study, the primary data were collected through interviews with students involved in the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1. Secondary data referred to information that supported and complemented the primary data, which came from indirect sources or methods not aimed as the main

data collection technique (Babbie, 2010). In this study, the secondary data were obtained from classroom observations, which were used to validate and enrich the findings from the interviews.

3.5 Instrument of the research

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the main instrument in the data collection process. The researcher is directly involved in understanding the research situation, establishing communication with participants, and interpreting data in depth by considering the context and emerging meanings. This research relies on qualitative methods such as interviews and observations, which provide space for researchers to comprehensively explore the views, experiences, and attitudes of the participants. However, to collect the necessary information from the participants, a structured interview sheet was used as the supporting instrument. The interview sheet in this study contains a number of open-ended questions designed to explore students' understanding of the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1. The questions are organized based on relevant theories and aligned with the research objectives, to ensure direct relevance to the focus of the study. Interview sheets are distributed directly to students, allowing them to provide written answers that reflect personal experiences and views. This approach gives respondents the opportunity to think deeply before responding, so that the data obtained is authentic and reflective. Furthermore, the researcher collected, compiled, and analyzed the answers systematically through a qualitative analysis approach to find recurring themes, patterns, and meanings in the data.

3.6 Data Collecting Technique

The data collection techniques employed in this research are designed to gather comprehensive and relevant information about students' perspectives of the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1.

a. Interviews

Interviews were used to collect data directly from the students regarding their perspectives and expectations on the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Adhabi, (2017) provided the idea that, interviewing is a process in which the researcher asks various questions to the person participating in the

interview and tries to get information from the interviewer about a particular subject. In this research, the interview was conducted in the form of an open-ended written questionnaire. The questions were designed based on semi-structured interview guidelines and given to 25 students at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1. Students were asked to answer each question, allowing them time to reflect and express their views freely.

b. Observations

In this study, researchers conducted classroom observations to understand how the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka takes place at SMP Swasta Kristen Tomosa 1. Yeradkar, (2020) stated that Observation is a data collection tool which is used by the researcher for collecting live data with the help of his/her senses of observation in the controlled or naturalistic situations of the occurrence of events. Observation is carried out by directly observing the learning process, the interaction between teachers and students, and how the learning methods are applied in accordance with the principles of the Kurikulum Merdeka.

The following are observation indicators used by researcher to observe student behavior, participation, and responses to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language learning using a checklist as an observation tool.

No	Indicator / Indikator yang Diamati	Yes	No	Additional Notes
1	Students actively greet, say goodbye, apologize, and express thanks verbally			
2	Students show confidence in expressing opinions in front of the class			
3	Students work together in groups to complete project-based tasks			
4	Students are enthusiastic during speaking activities with peers			
5	Students connect learned vocabulary and expressions to real-life contexts			
6	Students ask questions when they do not understand the material			
7	Students compose simple texts with teacher guidance			
8	Teacher provides space for students to express ideas and opinions			
9	Teacher uses project-based or exploratory activities			
10	Students seem to have difficulty understanding instructions or activities			

3.7 Data Analysis Technique

In this research, the researcher applied the Miles et al. (2014) data analysis technique, which consists of three main stages: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Each stage was systematically conducted to process raw data into meaningful insights regarding students' perspectives of the Kurikulum Merdeka implementation.

a. Data Condensation

Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, and organizing the raw data collected from the open-ended questionnaires. In this stage, the researcher carefully read all student responses, identified significant statements, and grouped similar ideas into categories or emerging patterns. This process helped reduce the large volume of text while focusing on key themes related to students' perspectives and expectations of the Kurikulum Merdeka. Data that were irrelevant or repetitive were excluded to sharpen the focus of the analysis.

b. Data Display

After the data were condensed, the next step was to present the organized information in a visual or structured format. In this research, the data display was done through thematic tables that grouped student responses under relevant categories such as: understanding of the curriculum, learning experiences, emotional reactions, and suggestions for improvement. These displays made it easier for the researcher to interpret relationships between responses and draw insights. Data displays also helped maintain clarity and consistency during the analysis process.

c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

In the final stage, the researcher interpreted the displayed data to draw conclusions regarding the research questions. This included identifying the main findings about how students perceive the implementation of the Kurikulum Merdeka and what kind of learning experiences they expect. The conclusions were not taken at face value but were verified by returning to the raw data to ensure consistency. Triangulation with documentation (such as photos of classroom activity) was also used to strengthen the validity of the conclusions.