



## ENGLISH TEACHERS' READINESS IN DESIGNING LESSON PLAN BASED ON CURRICULUM MERDEKA AT VOCATIONAL SCHOOL NUMBER 1 JAMBI

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### ABSTRACT

This research, conducted by Kharisma Nur Azizah, explores the readiness of English teachers at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi in designing lesson plans based on the "Curriculum Merdeka." The study aims to identify the preparations and challenges faced by teachers in supporting their readiness for the 10th-grade lesson plans under this new curriculum framework. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, the research collected data through interviews. The findings reveal several key aspects of readiness and challenges for English teachers. Readiness includes cognitive aspects such as the importance of lesson plan design, understanding the independent curriculum, using media resources to support lesson plan creation, and the ability to compile and evaluate lesson plans effectively. Physical readiness (energy and health), psychological readiness (interest and motivation), and the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure are also critical components. The study found that the curriculum is both flexible and complex. Teachers utilize various media sources like ESP, TOEIC, the Merdeka teaching platform, and YouTube to prepare lesson plans based on major department profiles and determine competency (CP), topic (TP), and lesson activity plans (ATP). Physical readiness in designing lesson plans requires an intensive two-week period, while psychological readiness helps increase knowledge and update teaching experiences to meet student needs effectively. Challenges include time management and aligning lesson plans with diagnostic assessments of student characteristics to ensure they meet the standards of the Curriculum Merdeka.

*Keywords* : Educational Challenges, Merdeka Curriculum, Teacher Readiness, Lesson Plan Design, Vocational School

### A. INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a conducive learning environment and process, aiming not just to transfer knowledge but to hone abilities and skills through proper stimulation. According to progressivism, the educational process comprises two main components: psychological and sociological. The psychological aspect requires educators to understand the innate potential of their students, while the sociological aspect involves guiding this potential towards meaningful and productive directions.



The quality of educational outcomes is significantly influenced by the teachers. Mulyasa (2013) emphasizes that teachers are pivotal to the success of students' learning. Professional teachers are expected to develop curriculum content and lesson plans that nurture the growth of students across different eras. The rapid advancements in science and technology necessitate that educators, citizens, and the government anticipate and respond to these changes effectively.

Teachers play a critical role in the implementation of any curriculum. Alawiyah (2014) underscores the importance of teachers as the frontline agents in curriculum delivery. A curriculum is essentially a comprehensive plan that outlines lesson structures, teaching methods, and the organization of learning activities to achieve specific educational goals. It encompasses both the content and the learning resources necessary for effective teaching. Responding to evolving educational needs, the Indonesian Ministry of Education introduced the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum. This initiative aims to enhance the quality of education by providing teachers and students with greater autonomy in the learning process. The "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum emphasizes independent, student-centered learning that fosters understanding and proficiency. By allowing students more flexibility and opportunities to engage in class discussions, this curriculum seeks to create a more dynamic and less monotonous learning environment (Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021).

Designing effective lesson plans is a complex task, especially when aligning them with specific learning objectives and strategies (Fujii, 2019; Putri, 2016; Widodo, 2006). The government's guidelines often prescribe a scientific approach, requiring teachers to incorporate creative and appropriate teaching methods. The success of any curriculum hinges on the readiness of the teachers, as their ability to plan and execute the curriculum effectively in the classroom is crucial.

Teacher readiness is paramount because the implementation of any curriculum depends on their expertise in conveying information. Before designing and planning the materials for the teaching-learning process, teachers need to thoroughly understand the new curriculum. Susilawati (2021) suggests that "Merdeka" implies giving teachers the freedom to choose the



most effective teaching strategies and curricular components for their students. This approach emphasizes educational democracy and flexibility.

This curriculum has been adopted in several regions across Indonesia, including Jambi, starting in 2022. However, its implementation varies depending on the readiness of each school. SMKN 1 Kota Jambi is one of the pioneering schools that has begun using the this curriculum. To implement this new curriculum, schools must prepare adequately, including developing curriculum-specific lesson plans and conducting teacher training sessions. At SMKN 1 Kota Jambi, the transition involves using the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum for grade 10, while grades 11 and 12 continue with the K13 curriculum. The dual curriculum approach reflects the gradual adaptation process. Given the importance of teachers' readiness in designing lesson plans, this research focuses on understanding the preparedness of English teachers at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi to implement the "Merdeka" curriculum. The study aims to explore their readiness and the challenges they face, thereby contributing valuable insights to support the effective rollout of the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum.

## **B. METHOD**

The research method utilized in this study is qualitative with a case study approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study targets specific teachers to understand the readiness of English teachers teaching the tenth grade at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi in designing lesson plans based on the Merdeka curriculum. This approach is suitable for gathering detailed information about the natural conditions of the research subjects. Participants are asked general questions to elicit their specific opinions, which are then described in terms of themes and central phenomena (Creswell & Plano, 2011; Arikunto, 2010; Sugiyono, 2014).

The study was conducted at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi, located at Jln. Jendral A. Thalib, Kec. Telanaipura, Kota Jambi, Jambi 36361, from June to July 2023. This school was chosen because it is the first vocational school to implement the Merdeka policy. The subjects of this research were English teachers teaching the tenth grade at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi. Three English teachers were selected to supplement and validate the study's findings. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling, where the researcher selects the best individuals or places to understand a phenomenon, as outlined by Creswell (2011). The



criteria for participants included being driving forces for the Merdeka curriculum and being certified teachers. The focus of this research was on the readiness of English teachers in designing lesson plans based on the Merdeka curriculum at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi. The researcher selected appropriate methods and tools for data collection to acquire objective data. The primary data collection technique was interviews.

The researcher was responsible for clearly and specifically describing the interview process, transcribing the audio data accurately, and systematically analyzing the data. According to Creswell & Plano (2011), qualitative data analysis involves three activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

## C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Teachers' Readiness in Designing Lesson Plan.

- **Process of understanding**

The process of a teacher comprehending how to design learning materials reflects their accountability, ensuring that the content and methods used align with the established learning outcomes. One aspect of teacher readiness involves understanding how to create lesson plans based on the Merdeka curriculum, which supports an effective learning process. Teachers each have their own methods for grasping new policies, as illustrated by the following statement:

*Interviewer: "How is your understanding of the Merdeka curriculum based lesson plan?"*

*Teacher HA : "In my opinion, the lesson plan for the Merdeka curriculum is very good, because in this curriculum students learn independently, which means that the teacher is student-centered so we can know the results of innovation from students".*

*Teacher AD : "In my opinion, the lesson plan for the Merdeka curriculum is called a*



*Module, here there is also additional material included in the lesson plan. In more detail, the lesson plan and the Module are almost the same, the lesson plan is in the Module”.*

Based on the statement above, the researcher concluded that Teacher AD perceives the lesson plan for the Merdeka curriculum as a module, since the RPP (lesson plan) is included within the module. Additionally, the module contains supplementary material to be taught.

- **Using Information**

Information sources are essential for various purposes, including conveying information through different media for teachers' use. These media greatly assist teachers in processing information sources. Media becomes more engaging and diverse when teachers effectively use available technology. For instance, while books are a common medium, incorporating technology can make them more interesting and comprehensive. This is supported by the statement from an English teacher in the following interview:

*Interviewer : “How do you process sources of information in designing Merdeka curriculum based lesson plan?”*

*Teacher HA : “I process information according to the achievements that we will make from books and other sources that can support the preparation of lesson plan”.*

*Teacher PM : “The sources of information we need are, because vocational ESP, TOEIC, and work-related texts. After that, I will process the data in a structured way to design lesson plan”.*

*Teacher AD : “Sources in designing lesson plans can be from the internet and books”.*

From Teacher’s Statement, the researcher concluded that Teacher AD considers assessment data as a crucial information source for designing lesson plans. Teachers require this data for effective classroom learning. This data is gathered from counseling teachers who have conducted differential assessments of students. Additionally, teachers supplement this assessment data with information from the Internet and books.



- **Compiling and Evaluating**

The connection between lesson plans and learning evaluation is that lesson plans provide direction for the learning process and help ensure that the expected learning outcomes and objectives are achieved. Each teacher needs a lesson plan to guide the learning process towards achieving the Learning Outcomes (CP) as outlined in the Merdeka Curriculum. Before creating the lesson plan (RPP), teachers must follow certain steps, such as setting learning objectives based on students' majors. This is illustrated in the following interview:

*Interviewer : “What are the steps in designing Merdeka curriculum based lesson plan?”*

*Teacher HA : The steps are in accordance with the procedure, there are CP, TP and ATP. After that, we will create material that suits the major. (Are the CP /Learning Outcomes directly regulated by the government, ma'am?) Not from the government, but they provide the keywords, we combine them/process the Learning Objectives according to each department”.*

*Teacher PM : “The first is because here it is SMK, so we have to synchronize with their majors, namely what are the profiles of graduates from these majors, learning objectives that must be achieved, then what can the English teacher support so that they can be competent in accordance with the industrial world, after getting that then we can display the Learning Outcomes earlier, then lower the Learning Objectives”.*

Based on statement above, teachers require diagnostic assessment data to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, skills, and knowledge before beginning instruction. This data helps in aligning learning outcomes and goals.

- **Physical readiness (Sufficient energy and health)**

Teachers with high performance can enhance the quality of education. Their performance is linked to their ability to effectively fulfill duties such as designing lessons. This requires physical readiness, including energy and health, as well as favorable conditions for lesson planning. Collaboration among teachers is crucial for timely completion of lesson plans,



allowing them to cross-check and connect assessment data with class materials. Each teacher has their own approach to lesson planning, taking into account various situations and conditions.

*Interviewer : “How long does it take to design Merdeka curriculum based lesson plan?”*

*Teacher HA : “Actually, the time to design a lesson plan can depend on the situation, because we have a set deadline target, the time depends because you don't just have to do it at school, you can arrange the time to make it at home. Whether it is fast or slow is up to us. (Approximately how many meetings are in 1 RPP, ma'am?) Depending on the RPP, usually if there is a lot of material we can have 2 to 3, or there are also 3 to 5 meetings”.*

*Teacher PM : “It depends on the time it takes to make the lesson plan. For me, for the lesson plan, I can get several meetings in 1 day. But with all of the above from start to finish, approximately for 1 semester it takes 2 weeks intensely”.*

According to statement above, it takes about two weeks of intense effort to complete everything for a semester. Additionally, the process of designing the RPP is influenced by the surrounding circumstances and conditions, as these can contribute to a highly productive period. For instance, holidays allow teachers to design lesson plans more comfortably. Coordinating with other teachers for cross-checking also needs to be managed to ensure all information sources are covered.

- **Psychological readiness (Motivation and Interest)**

The lesson plan enables teachers to meticulously prepare and strategize actions for facilitating effective learning experiences. Effective lesson planning aims to attain specific learning objectives by integrating the teacher's enthusiasm and motivation into each instructional session. Moreover, student-centered lesson planning prioritizes students' readiness, interests, and educational needs within the classroom environment.

*Interviewer : “What are the goals and benefits do you get after designing a lesson plan?”*



*Teacher HA : “For me is getting knowledge and information about the latest curriculum policies so that I can design lesson plans well in accordance with the independent curriculum rules and also to develop students' skills in supporting learning”.*

*Teacher PM : “ To help myself as a teacher, to update my knowledge too, keep refreshing my experience too. Apart from that, for students also by carrying out activities or activities that have been designed in such a way from various considerations, variables. We decided to make steps like this they also learn with us more comfortable, easier to class and less messy”.*

Based on the statement above, the researcher inferred that the teachers are motivated to employ differentiated learning under the current new policy, making it easier for students to engage in classroom learning. It is crucial for teachers to individually assess each student, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, which greatly enhances the learning process. Lesson plans can effectively cater to diverse student needs in a practical manner, ensuring tailored educational experiences.

- **Physical readiness (Facilities and Infrastructure)**

The availability of facilities significantly influences the lesson planning process. Teachers are able to finalize their lesson plans effectively when supported by adequate resources. For instance, access to school-provided internet or Wi-Fi is essential for teachers to gather information online. Proper utilization of comprehensive facilities not only streamlines the lesson planning process but also enhances teacher readiness. Furthermore, teachers consider how facilities can optimize the design of their lesson plans, as discussed in the following interview:

*Interviewer: “How do you facilitate yourself in designing Merdeka curriculumbased lesson plan?”.*

*Teacher HA : “Yes, I attended training facilities and the device need is a laptop, wifi*



*to open the internet, YouTube, information from friends, information from vocational schools to find out what the achievements are, so that I can design lesson plans and be able to make the material that I display”.*

*Teacher PM : “What I need is usually a laptop, cell phone, internet, independent teaching platforms, discussion partners and community friends”.*

Teachers require adequate facilities to prepare when crafting lesson plans. A laptop is crucial for processing acquired data, while information from vocational schools and other teachers supplements material development. Teachers also attend training sessions to enhance their skills. Additionally, they utilize internet resources, such as the government-supported Merdeka Mengajar platform, to gain insights and readiness in designing lesson plans aligned with the Merdeka curriculum.

### **Challenges do Teachers’ Experience in Lesson Plans Design.**

Without a structured lesson plan, teachers are unable to effectively conduct the learning process. They lack clear goals and direction for achieving learning objectives. Various obstacles hinder teachers, including limited preparation time, assessment planning, and understanding of student characteristics. Time constraints pose challenges in designing comprehensive lesson plans and optimizing learning tools, as highlighted by an English teacher in an interview at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi.

*Interviewer : What challenges or difficulties did you experience when designing the lesson plan?*

*Teacher HA : “The challenge is time, maybe in terms of the physical as well. If we don't enjoy it, it's a challenge. It can be slow to do the lesson plan, so it's not on time. Then there is the internet network, because the signal is also sometimes a problem”.*

*Teacher PM : “It's difficult for me to design lesson plan for me, it's hard to find the right time to design lesson plan”. (Are there any other difficulties related to students when designing maam lesson plan?) “Yes, designing it must be in accordance with the students, because here it is student center so it must be student-centered whereas if students have to be teacher-centered it's easy, the difficulty is when we are alone*



*when they are busy we are centered on many people. So the lesson plan must be as flexible as possible according to them”*

Based on Teachers' statement, the researcher determined that teachers emphasized the importance of tailoring lesson plans to meet students' specific needs. The teacher faced challenges in initially creating lesson plans that aligned with the material for each session. Consequently, the teacher regularly revisited and adjusted lesson plans to better fit both the curriculum content and the students' learning requirements.

Based on the findings, teachers' readiness in designing lesson plans for the independent Merdeka curriculum demonstrates their understanding of its concepts. This readiness includes cognitive preparation, where teachers perceive the Merdeka curriculum as facilitating independent student learning and promoting efficient and innovative teaching methods. Information sources used in the lesson planning process include books, the internet, and materials related to work, such as TOEIC, as well as platforms like YouTube, libraries, and Merdeka Mengajar. Teachers align learning objectives with instructional content and use diagnostic assessments to evaluate students' strengths, weaknesses, and skills before adjusting teaching strategies accordingly.

Similarities and differences with previous research (Afista et al., 2020) show that all teachers understand the lesson plan format, but there are variations in the use of information sources and the application of student-oriented learning models. Despite using previous lesson plan formats, teachers already possess assessment instruments for evaluating their lesson plans. Physical readiness for lesson planning involves creating a conducive environment, such as utilizing holiday periods for planning and collaborating with peers for information sharing. Psychological readiness includes teachers' interest and motivation in effective lesson plan design, emphasizing simplicity and clarity over complexity.

Infrastructure supports, such as training facilities, aid teachers in mastering lesson plan preparation for the new curriculum, requiring more time than usual (Made et al., 2022). Challenges identified include time management, especially when designing lesson plans outside of school hours, and the need to understand student characteristics to tailor lesson



plans effectively. Insights from teachers HA, PM, and AD highlight the difficulty in addressing individual student needs and aligning instructional materials with curriculum expectations, echoing challenges identified in previous research (Kinasih & Risminawati, 2017). Understanding student characteristics remains crucial for teachers to create inclusive lesson plans that optimize student participation and learning outcomes.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings discussed regarding English teachers' readiness to design lesson plans based on the Merdeka curriculum at SMKN 1 Kota Jambi, the researcher draws conclusions. The English teachers generally demonstrate a solid understanding of the lesson planning process under the Merdeka curriculum, encompassing its objectives and components. This readiness includes comprehension of the process, utilization of information sources, compilation, and evaluation of lesson plans. It also involves physical readiness (energy and health), psychological readiness (interest and motivation), and logistical readiness (availability of facilities and infrastructure).

However, unlike the previous curriculum, teachers now emphasize the need for diagnostic assessments to identify students' strengths, weaknesses, and skills before adjusting learning objectives. Challenges identified include time management, requiring efficient use of time to enhance readiness in lesson planning and avoid challenges. Another challenge is ensuring that lesson plans align with students' individual needs to maintain consistency with instructional materials in each session. Therefore, understanding each student's characteristics is essential for creating inclusive lesson plans that optimize student engagement and learning outcomes.

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