
EFL Teacher Agency in Merdeka Curriculum

Maulidia Rachmawati Nur^{1*}
Restu Luthfiani Maulida²

^{1,2} Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Ibn Khaldun,
Indonesia

Abstract

Curriculum is undoubtedly a crucial part of education. In Indonesia, education curriculum has already undergone several changes. Among others, the newly introduced and implemented one is called "Kurikulum Merdeka". This study aimed to investigate how English teachers enact agency in English teaching process under curriculum change (Kurikulum Merdeka) and what are the challenges in English teaching process use Kurikulum Merdeka. A case study was used as the research design in this study. Interview guidelines and questionnaires were used as the instruments to get the data. The participants were five English teachers from four Junior high schools in Bogor, Jawa Barat, Indonesia. The result or findings showed that English teachers enacted agency in their teaching process used Kurikulum Merdeka with several characteristics, namely: Teacher Intentional Action, Teacher Autonomy, Teacher Professional Growth, Teacher Collaboration and Teacher Contextualization. And there are several problems or challenges in teaching English used Kurikulum Merdeka, such as: lack of information, lack of facilities and infrastructure, and students' abilities. To solve the problems or to face the challenges collaboration from government, school support, teachers, parents and students is needed.

Keywords: Teacher agency; curriculum change; kurikulum merdeka; challenges.

^{1*}Corresponding author, email: maulidia.rahmawati@uika-bogor.ac.id

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher agencies play crucial roles in curriculum change, it has become an important construct on educational change, at the institutional and national levels, teacher agency affects the implementation of educational policies (Tao & Gao, 2017). Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues (Calvert, 2016). It is an important concept to study because it can help transform professional learning to better support educator learning.

When a curriculum is being revised or updated, teachers are not passive recipients of the changes but active participants who shape and influence the implementation process. Teachers may feel a sense of loss or disorientation as they let go of old ways of teaching and embrace new ones. Curriculum change often involves shifts in content, pedagogy, assessment methods, and overall educational goals. When faced with curriculum changes, teachers' agency can empower to actively engage with curriculum change. Buchanan (2015) and Sannino (2010) have analyzed the role of agency in teachers' response to educational reforms, including resistance, negotiation, and adaptation. Agency allows teachers to draw on their knowledge, skills, and experiences to shape the implementation process. It involves their capacity to make informed decisions, adapt the curriculum to meet their students' needs, and provide valuable feedback for ongoing improvement. Eteläpelto et al. (2013) and Lau et al. (2022) state that agency allows teachers to negotiate their identities within contexts of policy reforms and changing educational practices. Similarly, Sloan (2006) uses the concept of identity and agency "to better understand the ways they experience and respond to accountability-explicit curriculum policies". Teacher agency is enhanced

when educators are provided with opportunities for collaboration, professional development, and involvement in decision-making processes related to curriculum change.

The development of the English language curriculum in Indonesia has been varied over the years (Riadi, 2019). The country has undergone several changes in its curriculum since the emergence of the English language curriculum in 1975. In 1975, English Curriculum was the first English language curriculum in Indonesia; in 1986, the curriculum was developed to improve the quality of English language teaching in Indonesia; in 1994 Curriculum, the curriculum was developed to emphasize the importance of communicative competence in English language teaching; in 2004 Curriculum, the curriculum was developed to emphasize the importance of integrating technology into English language teaching; in the 2006, the curriculum also known as the Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP), is a competency-based curriculum that aims to develop students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and in 2013 the Indonesian government introduced the new national curriculum known as "Kurikulum 2013 (K-13)". Then in 2018 the government of Indonesia launched the "Merdeka Belajar" program and in February 2022 the Indonesia's education minister introduce the new curriculum known as "Kurikulum Merdeka", this curriculum focuses on essential material and character development of student with the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemdikbud, 2022). This curriculum change may challenge teacher, especially EFL teacher in Indonesia, teacher have to adopt new pedagogical approaches or incorporate new teaching materials and adapt their teaching process with the new curriculum.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed almost all aspects of life, including education in general and teaching English in particular.

In addition to face the challenges caused by the pandemic, English education and teaching has also been faced with the challenge of equipping students with the knowledge and ability to access, use and interpret texts that use different modes to convey messages. This ability, multimodal literacy, is the literacy that is believed to be of the important features of this century. Multimodal literacy is the literacy our students need to be exposed to and master to participate and contribute to their surroundings. Responding to this challenge, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, designed and implemented the Kurikulum Merdeka. Part of implementing the curriculum is the provision of learning resources in the form of textbooks that support the achievement of curriculum goals through teaching materials and learning activities that are not only interesting and fun but also equip students with the knowledge and abilities needed today (Kemdikbud, 2022).

After all the explanation above, in this study, the researcher is interested to know about EFL teacher agency in the new curriculum era, how EFL teacher adapt with the new curriculum and what are the challenges. The study of Teacher agency in curriculum change needs to be done because not many researchers have researched this study in Indonesia, therefore this research is very important to do and can provide benefits for teachers and existing stakeholders. Therefore, the researcher decides to take the title of this research “EFL Teacher Agency in Curriculum Change in Secondary Education”. The research questions of this study are: (1). How do EFL Teachers enact agency in developing teaching process under curriculum change? (2). What are the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English foreign language teaching?

This research is expected to bring some benefits in English foreign language teaching, there are two significances of this study, the first is theoretical significance, a result of the research can be useful to support the development of theories about teacher agency and curriculum change in teaching English as a Foreign Language. Especially in Indonesia, the new curriculum that we know as Kurikulum Merdeka has just been implemented. Therefore, this research is needed to find out about the challenges faced by EFL teachers and how EFL teachers enact agency in the development change and teaching process under curriculum change; the second is practical significance, the findings of this research can help teacher to know about their challenges in EFL teaching process under curriculum change and help them to develop their teaching process and adapt with the new curriculum.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Teacher Agency

Definition of Teacher Agency

Nagels (2018) stated “Agency is the ability to act on others and the world where individuals and groups are both producers and products of social systems”. In fact, human agency is characterized by several major aspects that operate consciously in a functional and phenomenal way. Every human being has the ability to choose and to act according to their interest, act according to what they like and consciously. Each person’s ability to choose and carry out the decisions they want in everyday life is known as agency (Jhing & Benson, 2013). Agency is an important thing in the life of human being because it can make everyone happy to do their activities based on the thing they like. Agency, in other words, is not something that people can have; it is something that people do or, more precisely, something they achieve (Biesta & Tedder, 2006). It denotes a

'quality' of the engagement of actors with temporal-relational contexts-for-action, not a quality of the actors themselves. Gao (2010) defined agency as an individual's will to act as well as their capacity to act in sociocultural discourses.

Tao, J., & Gao, X. (2017) stated that Teacher agency is the ability of teacher to perform the role of teaching while considering factors such as teacher beliefs, attitudes, and the constraints and resources available in the working environment. Teacher agency refers to teachers' capacity for adopting agentic behavior in teaching communities. Teacher agency is often connected to narrow agendas of school management, wherein the contribution of agency is restricted to bringing about change in the school curriculum. Teacher agency refers to the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of education quality (Guoyuan, S. 2020).

Teacher agency has been defined as a capacity to shape critically responses to problematic situations (Biesta & Tedder, 2007), partly informed by teachers' underlying sense of purpose and beliefs about their professional roles (Biesta et al., 2015). Buchanan (2015) and Sannino (2010) have analysed the role of agency in teachers' response to educational reforms, including resistance, negotiation, and adaptation. Agency allows teachers to draw on their knowledge, skills, and experiences to shape the implementation process. It involves their capacity to make informed decisions, adapt the curriculum to meet their students' needs, and provide valuable feedback for ongoing improvement.

Characteristics of Teacher Agency

Teacher agency is characterized by several key qualities and aspects. Here are the characteristics of teacher agency by several authors:

- **Intentional Action:** Teacher agency involves teachers taking intentional and purposeful actions in line with their beliefs, goals, and knowledge (Nguyen, P., Webel, C., Yeo, S., & Zhao, W., 2022). Teachers actively make decisions and choices to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues.
- **Autonomy:** Teacher agency is closely linked to autonomy. Teachers have the freedom and independence to make decisions about their teaching practices, curriculum, and professional development (Nguyen et al., 2022). They have the authority to shape their own learning and teaching experiences.
- **Professional Growth:** Teacher agency is focused on teachers' continuous professional growth. It involves teachers actively seeking opportunities for learning, reflection, and improvement (Calvert, 2016). Teachers take ownership of their professional development and engage in activities that enhance their teaching practices.
- **Collaboration:** Teacher agency also involves teachers contributing to the growth of their colleagues (Nguyen et al., 2022). Teachers collaborate and share their knowledge, experiences, and expertise with others. They actively participate in professional learning communities and engage in collaborative problem-solving.
- **Contextualization:** Teacher agency recognizes the importance of teachers adapting their practices to the specific needs and contexts of their students (Nguyen et al., 2022). Teachers have the ability to tailor their teaching approaches, strategies, and materials to meet the diverse needs of their students.

Based on the text above, the researcher conclude that teacher agency is characterized by intentional action, autonomy, professional growth, collaboration, and contextualization (Nguyen et al., 2022; Calvert, 2016). It empowers teachers to take ownership of their professional development, make decisions, collaborate with colleagues, and adapt their practices to meet the needs of their students and contexts.

2.2 Curriculum Change

Curriculum change is a significant educational milestone that aims to align the education system with the needs of a continuously developing society. It involves both planned and unplanned changes and can occur at various levels, including the classroom, school, or entire education system. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing these changes, which can have both positive and negative impacts on students. Factors influencing curriculum change include individual perspectives, financial pressures, staffing issues, student abilities, and regulations. The process typically involves planning, implementation, and evaluation phases to ensure effectiveness in meeting educational objectives.

Marmoah, Sri, et al. (2023) stated that teachers face several challenges during curriculum changes. Some of the most common include: Resistance to change; lack of resources; alignment; evaluation; innovation; teacher training; managing change; communication; and students engagement. These challenges highlight the importance of careful planning, effective communication, and ongoing support for teachers during curriculum changes.

2.3 Kurikulum Merdeka

Definition of Kurikulum Merdeka

In 2018 the government of Indonesia launched the “Merdeka Belajar” program and in February 2022 the Indonesia’s education minister introduce the new curriculum known as “Kurikulum Merdeka”, this

curriculum focuses on essential material and character development of student with the Pancasila Student Profile. Kurikulum Merdeka is the new name of the model educational plan in Indonesia, which the Minister of Education and Technology authoritatively sent off. Based on Kemendikbudristek (2022) Kurikulum Merdeka defined as a curriculum with various intra curricular learning where the content will be more optimal, so the students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competence. The curriculum organized by educational units under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). Implementation of curriculum refers to the Law of Republic Indonesia (UUD) Number 20 of 2003 concerning about the National Education system. Merdeka Curriculum developed by Kemdikbud that gives teachers the freedom to create quality learning that is appropriate for the needs and learning environment of their students. It focuses on essential materials, the development of competencies and character, and provides various resources for teachers to implement the curriculum.

The Kurikulum Merdeka is the turn of events and execution of a crisis educational program sent off to answer the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Kurikulum Merdeka is designed to be more flexible and adaptive to the needs of students and schools (Kemdikbud, 2022), allowing for more creativity and innovation in teaching and learning. This curriculum emphasizes the importance of character education and the development of students' competencies in various fields, including language, mathematics, science, social studies, and arts. Kurikulum Merdeka is also designed to be more inclusive, with a focus on providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or abilities and this curriculum includes the use of technology in teaching

and learning, with a focus on digital literacy and the use of online resources.

There are some studies related to this research, the first is a study conducted by Tao, J., Gao, X. (2017) "Teacher agency and identity commitment in curricular reform" the study explores how teacher enact agency to facilitate their professional identity during curricular reform, the study conducted life history interviews with 8 English for special purposes teachers and collected field notes to examine the interaction of teacher agency and identity commitment to professional development in the curriculum reform context in China. Their findings suggest that teachers' agentic choices were mediated by their identity commitment, Identity commitment influenced teacher agency in how they positioned themselves and acted toward reforms.

The second is a study conducted by Jenkins, G. (2019) "Teacher Agency: the effects of active and passive responses to curriculum change" This study identified teacher agency manifested in three ways: proactively, reactively and passively, as influenced by the many contextual factors (determinants) which affected teachers. Teacher effectiveness in implementing curriculum change was shown to be heavily dependent on school leadership, teacher relationships with leaders and colleagues, and school operational practices and school culture, as well as personal motivation. Collegiality and perceptions of trust increased the likelihood of proactive agency, whereas job intensity and constant curriculum change led to increased occurrences of reactive agency. Passive agency resulted from poor relationships with school leaders, personal reluctance to change curriculum or lack of knowledge of school procedures.

The two studies that had been conducted above showed that teacher agency in curriculum change is important thing that have to be done. Based on the previous research that has been describe above, the author can conclude that this research is different from previous research. And only some researchers have explored about teacher agency in the Indonesian context. This research focus on EFL teacher agency in developing English teaching process under curriculum change in Indonesia. The thing that different this study from previous is that this study search to know about the challenges that faced by EFL teacher during adapt with curriculum change and how EFL teacher in Indonesia enact agency in curriculum change.

3. METHODS

This research is under the paradigm of qualitative research, and a case study was used as the research design. Case study is included in the qualitative method. Qualitative research methodology is considered suitable for researchers who investigate areas of study that reveal facts or intend to ascertain and theorize salient problems. This qualitative method is taken from the data, which is then explained by relevant theories, to produce a theory that strengthens the previous theory. This study investigates EFL teacher agency in curriculum change.

Five English teachers were invited to be the research participants in this study, they are two males and three females. The research participants of this research are five teachers from four different school of Junior High School in Bogor, three teachers are from public school and two teachers are from private school. They are teaching English under the curriculum change in Indonesia, especially in teaching English with Kurikulum 2013 and Kurikulum Merdeka. The research participants have

represented of English Teachers in public and private schools in Indonesia.

Two instruments were used to get the data, namely the first is interview guideline and questionnaires in the second stage. In this study, researchers use interview guidelines to find out about how EFL teachers enact agency in the development of their teaching process under curriculum change and the challenges with the solutions. In addition, questionnaires were conducted as a way to strengthen the answers to the interview about the characteristics of teacher agency.

In this study, the researcher used the technique by Miles and Huberman's (1994) divided the steps in data analysis activities into several parts, namely collecting, reducing data, presenting data, and conclusions.

4. RESULTS

The results and findings answered two research questions through interviews and questionnaires. The interviews were used to collect more in-depth data about teacher agency and challenges in curriculum change Kurikulum Merdeka. The questionnaires were used to obtain answer about how teacher display the characteristics of teacher agency in the curriculum change.

4.1 Teacher Agency and Challenges in Curriculum Change (Kurikulum Merdeka)

4.1.1 Teachers' Opinion on Curriculum Change

As a teacher in an educational context, teacher have to know about educational changes, one of them is curriculum change. In this section, teacher tells their opinion about English curriculum change in Indonesia and about the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka and the strategies to face that.

Teacher #1

“Kurikulum Merdeka is a good change for education in Indonesia, because students can be more active in the learning process. Although there are several challenges such as the facilities and infrastructure needed in teaching, and also the confidence of students who still need to be improved. To face those challenges, cooperation between teachers and parents is needed to provide learning support and motivation.” (Teacher #1, in-depth interview, 26 January 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #2

“Kurikulum Merdeka is in accordance with current conditions. However, there are several challenges that I face, such as students who have never studied English, to face that, as a teacher I Introducing English to children as a lesson that is fun and easy to learn.” (Teacher #2, in-depth interview, 31 January 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #3

“Kurikulum Merdeka is more flexible and improves the previous curriculum with more interactive learning media. There are several challenges in implementing this curriculum, such as class mastery and new learning strategies. To face that, I motivated students with P5 (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajaran Pancasila) and make the learning process more interesting.” (Teacher #3, in-depth interview, 5 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #4

“Kurikulum Merdeka provide more freedom. However, this is also a challenge for children who are required to be more active and creative. To face that, I discussed with other teachers to solve the problem, by motivating students that English is important to learn.” (Teacher #4, in-depth interview, 12 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #5

“In the Kurikulum Merdeka students are more active in learning process. The challenge is that we have to know more information and look for references outside of the books. So, teachers need to learn more about technology to applied new things in the teaching process.” (Teacher #5, in-depth interview, 12 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Based on the result of interview above, can conclude that all of participant already know about Kurikulum Merdeka. On the process of implementing the new curriculum, teachers faced several challenges, including lack of information, lack facilities and infrastructure, and student ability. To solve the problems or the challenges, collaboration from the government, school, teachers, students and parents are needed to support the implement of Kurikulum Merdeka.

4.1.2 Teachers' Adaptation with The New Curriculum

During in the process of implementing the new curriculum, Teachers have to improve their teaching and enact the new curriculum in the classroom. In this section, we discuss how Teachers adapt with Kurikulum Merdeka.

Teacher #1

“I used different methods every week, to create a good environment learning together with my students and I measure the success of my students based on the certain classification. The students who have good classification first can help other students.” (Teacher #1, in-depth interview, 26 January 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #3

“Teachers have to more creative and innovative in developing curriculum, by utilizing a platform for teachers like PMM (Platform Merdeka Mengajar). The success of this English class measured based on the abilities of students in different aspects (listening, reading, speaking

and writing).” (Teacher #3, in-depth interview, 5 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #4

“Create an interesting learning process together with students, and the success of the class is measured based on students’ abilities.” (Teacher #4, in-depth interview, 12 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Based on the result of interview above, it can conclude that in implementing the new curriculum teachers have developed their teaching method to attract students’ interest to be more active in English learning process and can achieve students’ learning outcomes based on students’ abilities.

4.1.3 Teachers’ Professional Development under Curriculum Change

To improve the professional development, teachers have to stay up to date with the new educational development. Teacher must be able to take initiative to enhance the professional development. In this section, we discuss about how teachers can take initiatives and implement new ideas to enhance their professional development in teaching English through Kurikulum Merdeka.

Teacher #1

“Yes, I read literature from the internet or social media, but I have never attended training or seminar regarding Kurikulum Merdeka.” (Teacher #1, in-depth interview, 26 January 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #2

“To develop my professionalism as a teacher, I take initiative to attend a lot of teacher training and carry out independent training in Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) and applicated new ideas to implement in the class.” (Teacher #2, in-depth interview, 31 January 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #4

“Read literature about Kurikulum Merdeka from the internet and attend the teacher training about Kurikulum Merdeka.” (Teacher #4, in-depth interview, 12 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Based on the result above, all of participants take the initiative to read a lot of literature from internet to stay up to date with educational change. And four participants gave the positive result, they have attended teacher training, but one of five participants never attended the teacher training or seminar about Kurikulum Merdeka.

4.1.4 Teachers' Collaboration with Students, Colleagues and Parents

In this section, we discuss about how teachers build collaboration with the students, colleagues and parents in English teaching process under curriculum change.

Teacher #1

“My collaboration with my students is holding English competitions with OSIS to attract students' interest, and with my colleagues I shared knowledge and experiences in teaching with other teacher, and with parents of students I collaborate in monitoring student learning progress.” (Teacher #1, in-depth interview, 26 January 2024, Researcher Translation)

Teacher #5

“Together with my students, I determine their learning interests and with colleagues, I discuss to developing teaching modules. And with parents of students, I communicate to support the student learning process.” (Teacher #5, in-depth interview, 12 February 2024, Researcher Translation)

Based on the result of interview, it can conclude that all of participants have good collaboration with students, colleagues and parents. With their students, teachers create collaboration that can attract

students' interest to learn English better. With colleagues, teachers have discussions about their teaching process. And with parents, teachers collaborate in supporting the learning process and monitoring students learning progress together.

4.2 Characteristic of Teacher Agency in the Curriculum Change

4.2.1 Teachers' Intentional and Purposeful Actions

This section discusses the results of the questionnaire from the first theme in answering research question is EFL teachers enact agency in developing teaching process under curriculum change. This is shown from the results of question number 1 in this questionnaire:

Statement 1, there is "I'm able to create a good environment learning together with my students": 4 participants (80%) answered agree and 1 participant (20%) answered strongly agree.

From the results of the questionnaire above, it shows that teachers give positive results from the questionnaire statements regarding the teachers' intentional and purposeful action in curriculum change, one of the characteristics of teacher agency.

4.2.2 Teachers' Reflection in the Classroom

This section discusses the second theme of questionnaire, questions of this theme is about teacher reflection in the classroom. This perception was obtained from questions number 2,3 and 4.

This is shown from the results of statements number 2,3 and 4 there are: Statement 2 is "I can learn new thing in a teaching process" 2 participants (40%) answered agree and 3 participants (60%) answered strongly agree. Statement 3 is "I'd like to understand students' ways of thinking and acting better": 1 participant (20%) answered agree and 4 participants (80%) answered strongly agree.

Statement 4 is “I regularly endeavor to estimate my success in teaching situations”: 3 participants (60%) answered agree and 2 participants (40%) answered strongly agree.

From the results of the questionnaire above, it shows that teachers give positive results from the questionnaire statements regarding teacher reflection in the classroom, teacher reflection is one of the intentional and purposeful action that teachers have to do in teaching process especially in educational change.

4.2.3 *Teachers’ Autonomy and Contextualization*

This section discusses the third theme of the questionnaire, questions of this theme is about teachers’ autonomy and contextualization, teachers have the freedom to make decisions about their teaching practices and teachers have the ability to tailor their teaching approaches, strategies, and materials. This perception is obtained from questions number 5,6,7. This is shown from the results of statements, there are: Statement 5 “I am free to use my own supplementary materials to enhance student learning”: 2 participants (40%) answered agree and 3 participants (60%) answered strongly agree. Statement 6 “When planning my work, I’m able to utilize the feedback that I get from my student”: 3 participants (60%) answered agree and 2 participants (40%) answered strongly agree. Statement 7 “I’m able to modify my teaching process to adjust and support the learning process of my students”: 2 participants (40%) answered agree and 3 participants (60%) answered strongly agree.

From the results of the questionnaire above, it shows that teachers give positive results from the questionnaire statements regarding the characteristic of teacher agency that are teachers’ autonomy and contextualization. All of the participants feel have the freedom and ability to adapt their teaching approaches, strategies, and materials to meet the

diverse needs of their students. It means that they have the characteristic of teacher agency.

4.2.4 Teachers' Professional Development

This section discusses the fourth theme of the questionnaire, questions of this theme is about teacher professional development. This perception was obtained from questions number 8 and 9. This is shown from the results of statements numbers 8 and 9, there are: Statement 8 "I am free to choose my professional learning pathways": 3 participants (60%) answered agree and 2 participants (40%) answered strongly agree. Statement 9 "I can implement the techniques and methods learn during professional development sessions": 4 participants (80%) answered agree and 1 participant (20%) answered strongly agree.

From the results of the questionnaire above, it shows that teachers give positive results from the questionnaire statements regarding the characteristic of teacher agency that is teachers' professional development. All of the participants feel free to choose their professional learning pathways and they can implement the techniques and methods learned during professional development sessions. It means that they have the characteristic of a teacher agency.

4.2.5 Teachers' Collaboration

This section discusses the fifth theme of questionnaire, questions of this theme is about teachers' collaboration in English teaching under curriculum change. This is shown from the results of statement number 10, that is: "My institution seeks my input in curriculum and syllabus designing": 2 participants (40%) answered agree and 3 participants (60%) answered strongly agree.

From the results of the questionnaire above, it shows that teachers give positive results from the questionnaire regarding the characteristic of

teacher agency that is teachers' collaboration and work environment. It means that they have one of the characteristics of a teacher agency.

5. DISCUSSION

How do EFL Teachers Enact Agency in Developing Teaching Process under Curriculum Change (Kurikulum Merdeka)

In the first research question regarding How do EFL teachers enact agency in developing teaching process under curriculum change, the result of this question is taken from the result of the interview guideline and questionnaire of all participants and all statements in this study are based on the characteristics of the teacher agency.

Based on Nguyen et al. (2022) and Calvert (2016), Teacher agency is characterized by several key qualities and aspects: first, Teacher agency involves teachers taking intentional and purposeful actions in line with their beliefs, goals, and knowledge; second, autonomy: Teacher agency is closely linked to autonomy. Teachers have the freedom and independence to make decisions about their teaching practices, curriculum, and professional development; third, Teacher agency is focused on teachers' continuous professional growth; fourth, collaboration: Teachers collaborate and share their knowledge, experiences, and expertise with others; Contextualization: Teacher agency recognizes the importance of teachers adapting their practices to the specific needs and contexts of their students.

Questionnaire number 1 is the first theme in this study, namely, teachers able to create a good environment learning together with students. The result obtained are almost all participants agreed that theincludesto create good environment learning with students and questionnaire number 2,3 and 4 are the second theme in this study about teachers' reflection in the classroom, this second theme include in first

characteristic of teacher agency. Based on the result of the findings from the two themes above, all of participants have the first characteristic of teacher agency that is intentional and purposeful action. These findings are studies by Toom et al., (2015) teacher agency describe as teachers' intentional efforts to act in accordance with their belief, goals and knowledge as they engage with their various working context (Nguyen, et al., 2022). To make choices based on their goals and values, teachers need to experience some autonomy within the context they work and student's context, based on the findings of this study, all of participants have the freedom and independence to make decisions about their teaching practices, curriculum, and professional development, they have the authority to shape their own learning and teaching experiences. These findings are studies by Jhing & Benson (2013) Each person's ability to choose and carry out the decisions they want in everyday life is known as agency. To enact agency in teaching process, teacher have to focused on teachers' continuous professional growth. It involves teachers actively seeking opportunities for learning, reflection, and improvement (Calvert, 2016). Teachers take ownership of their professional development and engage in activities that enhance their teaching practices. Based on the findings of this study with two instruments, all of participants have developed their professional growth through their own pathways. To support teachers in dealing with curriculum change, teachers have to create collaboration with students, colleagues and parents. Based on the findings of this study with two instruments, all of participants have created good collaboration. With their students, teachers create collaboration that can attract students' interest to learn English better. With colleagues, teachers have discussions about their teaching process.

And with parents, teachers collaborate in supporting the learning process and monitoring students learning progress together.

Based on the results of the research and several theories above it can be concluded that EFL teachers have enacted agency in implementing curriculum change (Kurikulum Merdeka). The first question in this study “How do EFL teacher enact agency in developing teaching process under curriculum change?” based on the results of this study, researcher can conclude that EFL teacher enact agency by several key qualities and aspects, make intentional and purposeful action, teacher autonomy to make decisions about their teaching practices, curriculum and professional development, collaboration and work and students’ contextualization.

The Challenges in Implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English Teaching

The second research question is about the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka in English teaching. The results of this research question are based on participants’ answer in interviews and based on participants experience in English teaching English use Kurikulum Merdeka.

The target of curriculum change is no other than the teacher as the direct implementers in the classroom. While curriculum is the planned program, teachers are the actors that implement the program through teaching and learning process. Teachers in all regions of Indonesia are now concentrating on preparing to facilitate teaching and learning using the Kurikulum Merdeka. Shifting from an old curriculum to a new curriculum is not an easy task for teachers; they need sufficient support from schools and the government.

Based on the findings of this study, the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka, are lack of information, there is no enough

information, which of course will cause teachers to face confusion in implementing curriculum. The second challenges or problem is lacking facilities and infrastructure to support teaching and learning process, Kurikulum Merdeka requires the students to do projects, to have special and great projects, adequate funding is very crucial, and to solve that the financial support is needed. And the last challenge is students' ability, teachers have to support and help students to get success in English lesson. To solve the problems or the challenges, collaboration from the government, school, teachers, students and parents are needed to support the implementation of Kurikulum Merdeka.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that EFL teacher enact agency in teaching English under curriculum change (Kurikulum Merdeka), because they have characteristics of teacher agency, which means that teachers do intentional action; teachers have the freedom and independence to make decisions about their teaching practices, curriculum, and professional development; teacher focused on teachers' continuous professional growth; teachers collaborate and share their knowledge, experiences, and expertise with others; and teachers adapting their practices to the specific needs and contexts of their students. Based on participants' answer in interviews and questionnaires in this study, most of them have teacher agency characteristics in English teaching used Kurikulum Merdeka.

In addition, participants in this study also faced several challenges in English teaching used Kurikulum Merdeka and have the solution to solve that. Based on the results of this study, the challenges in implementing Kurikulum Merdeka, are: lack of information, lacking facilities and infrastructure, and students' ability. To solve the problems or the

challenges, collaboration from the government, school, teachers, students and parents are needed to support the process in implementing the new curriculum.

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