

ABSTRACT

Khofifah, Anisa Nurul (2025). Exploring EFL Teacher Challenges in Classroom Practice and the Professional Well-Being under *Merdeka* Curriculum: A Narrative Inquiry in the Junior High School Context.

The *Merdeka* Curriculum promotes flexibility, student-centered learning, and differentiated instruction in Indonesian classrooms. However, its new demands present several challenges for English teachers. These classroom challenges may influence teachers' professional well-being, particularly in terms of their job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and motivation. Therefore, this study aims to explore the classroom challenges faced by an EFL teacher under the *Merdeka* Curriculum and how these experiences relate to her professional well-being.

This research employed a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations involving an English teacher at a public junior high school in Bandung. The study sought to gain insight into the teacher's real classroom experiences and how these experiences affected the three aspects of her professional well-being.

The findings revealed that the teacher encountered various instructional challenges, including difficulties in implementing student-centered activities, managing diverse student abilities, designing differentiated tasks, and dealing with limited infrastructure and digital tools. These challenges were closely connected to fluctuations in her job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and motivation, shaping the state of her professional well-being.

The study concludes that the challenges of implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum are linked to the professional well-being of teachers. Supporting teachers in this context requires not only adequate resources and continuous professional training but also recognition and collaborative support that help them maintain their motivation, confidence, and satisfaction in teaching.

Keywords: EFL teacher, *Merdeka* Curriculum, teacher well-being, classroom challenges