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## Student teachers' difficulties in implementing lesson plans during teaching internship

Rahmanissa Nurul Hikmah Prasetyanti<sup>1</sup>, Rismiyanto<sup>2</sup>, Titis Sulistyowati<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Muria Kudus; Jl. Kampus UMK, Gondangmanis, Bae, Kudus, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia,  
phone/fax.0291-438229

e-mail: [1chacaprasetya73@gmail.com](mailto:1chacaprasetya73@gmail.com), [2rismiyanto@umk.ac.id](mailto:2rismiyanto@umk.ac.id), [3titis.sulistyowati@umk.ac.id](mailto:3titis.sulistyowati@umk.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

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#### Keywords:

*Lesson Plan, Student Teachers, Teaching Difficulties, Teaching Internship*

Implementing lesson plans in real classroom settings often poses challenges for student teachers despite formal preparation. This study investigates the difficulties experienced by English student teachers from Muria Kudus University during their teaching internship at SMA at Kudus in the 2024/2025 academic year. Using an embedded mixed-method design within a case study framework, seven seventh-semester student teachers were selected through purposive homogeneous sampling. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, followed by thematic analysis and participant validation. The findings indicate persistent challenges across multiple stages of lesson plan implementation, including limited teaching experience, time constraints, classroom management issues, and inadequate availability of instructional media. These difficulties demonstrate gaps between planned instruction and actual classroom practice. The study highlights the need for stronger preparation in adaptive teaching, classroom management, and media utilization to support student teachers in aligning their lesson plans with real teaching contexts.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many studies have shown that student teachers often struggle when entering real classroom environments, even after completing pedagogical coursework. Research indicates that pre-service English teachers commonly face difficulties related to classroom management, instructional delivery, time allocation, and adaptation to students' needs during teaching practice (Adams et al., 2022; Lestari & Lestari, 2022; Mudra, 2018; Pakpahan, 2023). For example, Lebala et al. (2024) found that the challenges perceived by pre-service teachers significantly influence the effectiveness of their teaching practicum, suggesting that the transition from theory to practice is far from smooth. These recurring issues highlight that the early stages of teaching remain demanding for student teachers, particularly those still developing their pedagogical competence (Genç, 2016; Han & Tulgar, 2019). A student teacher is a student who is majoring in the education department and undergoing training to become a teacher, but has not yet taught professionally. To assist student teachers in the transition from theory to the real world, universities commonly have a microteaching class. Microteaching plays an important role in preparing them for real classroom contexts, as it enhances their teaching skills through the "teach, critique, and re-teach" cycle ((Allen (1967) in Elias, (2018); Purwanti & Suhargo, (2024))). Another researcher, such as Suryani & Rismiyanto (2021), also stated that microteaching lesson study provides the environment for EFL student teachers to collaborate, engage, and reflect on their ideas, beliefs,

and teaching experiences. So, their language teaching and learning will improve. After pursuing their skill in the microteaching class, student teachers will undergo teaching internship programs. However, engaging with real students in real classrooms does tend to present greater challenges than during microteaching class (Auni et al., 2022; Amin et al., 2020; Ilyin et al., 2024).

During teaching internship programs, the student teacher is required to prepare lesson plans for their classes while under the supervision of their mentor teacher. Lesson planning is an essential component of teacher professionalism, as it serves as a guide for teachers in organizing classroom activities and achieving learning objectives (Farhang et al. (2023); König et al. (2020). Lesson plans are used to support teaching practice and provide a means for students to achieve greater learning. In the Indonesian context, lesson plans are aligned with the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes student-centered learning and flexibility in classroom implementation (Ministry of Education, 2024; Rachmawati & Maulida, 2024). However, when the lesson plan is implemented, there are still many student teachers who have difficulty in implementing their original lesson plans during the classroom activity (Emiliasari & Jubaedah, 2019; Rahmawati & Saefullah, 2021).

Several previous research already stated their arguments toward this issue. Lestari and Lestari (2022) found that time management is the overarching difficulty, even if the student teacher is careful in preparing the lesson plan. Then, Khoir and Huda (2025) found that challenges such as limited school materials, student misbehavior, repetitiveness of activities, insufficient teaching approach, and a lack of student feedback inhibit implementation. Mudra (2018), also added that student teachers in rural schools faced difficulties like poor infrastructure, lack of media, and student discipline problems. Moreover, Mahrus et al. (2023) reported inconsistencies between lesson plan design and actual practice due to limited content knowledge and insufficient media. However, most of these studies were conducted either before the Merdeka Curriculum was fully implemented or in different educational contexts, so they do not yet describe lesson plan implementation in post-pandemic, fully offline classrooms applying the Merdeka Curriculum. This leaves a gap in understanding how student teachers experience lesson plan implementation in the current curriculum context. These challenges suggest that lesson planning and implementation remain difficult for student teachers (Wiediantin et al., 2023; Priajana, 2022).

At Muria Kudus University, especially in the English Education Department, the teaching Internship program is a compulsory component for English Education student teachers for their final year before they complete their thesis and graduate as English teachers. However, preliminary interviews revealed that English student teachers from Muria Kudus University still have some difficulties during their teaching internship in one of the SMAs at Kudus. Although previous research already stated some of the difficulties during the implementation of a lesson plan in the teaching internship, there is a difference between this research and the previous research. The current research is held in the high school environment, especially in SMA at Kudus, which applies the Merdeka curriculum as its main curriculum. It is taking time after the COVID-19 pandemic, which made the teaching and learning process hold in offline classes. Meanwhile, some of the previous research was hold before the pandemic or during the pandemic and had not yet applied the Merdeka curriculum as their school curriculum (Sedana et al., 2023).

Based on those statements, the researcher is using Khoir and Huda (2025) as the applied theory to examine English student teacher difficulties in implementing lesson plans. These difficulties include apperception, learning objectives, material delivery, resource media, approach teaching, feedback, time management, dealing with unexpected conditions, students' responses, providing a conclusion, motivation, and suggestions (Rahmadani et al., 2022; Ropohl &

Rönnebeck, 2020). These challenges directly impact how well lesson plans are implemented during the teaching internships program.

In this program, student teachers are required to prepare lesson plans based on the Merdeka Curriculum and implement them during classroom teaching. Since the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes flexibility, student-centered learning, and adaptive teaching, it may create new challenges that were not encountered in earlier teaching contexts. These differences show that more specific research is required to investigate the difficulties student teachers face when implementing lesson plans under this curriculum, particularly in a real classroom setting. By examining these challenges within the updated curriculum and post-pandemic conditions, this study provides a more current picture of how student teachers negotiate the gap between planned instruction and actual classroom realities. It is expected that their experiences will reveal unique difficulties that have not been sufficiently documented in previous research. Therefore, this study aims to identify English student teachers' difficulties in implementing lesson plans during their teaching internship at SMA at Kudus in the academic year 2024/2025.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed an embedded mixed-method with a case study design, in which quantitative data were incorporated within a primarily qualitative research framework. According to Creswell and Clark (2018), an embedded design is appropriate when a researcher uses one data type to support, enhance, or deepen the primary data type but does not give both an equal methodological status. In this research, qualitative data served as the core component, while the quantitative data from the questionnaire functioned as a supplementary element to strengthen the interpretation of the interview findings. This approach aligns with Creswell & Creswell (2017), which emphasizes that qualitative inquiry is suitable for exploring participants' experiences in depth, especially when the research aims to understand complex teaching challenges in authentic contexts.

Seven participants from seventh-semester English Education student teachers from Muria Kudus University are involved in teaching internships in the SMA at Kudus, Central Java, Indonesia. These students were selected through purposive homogeneous sampling because they were directly involved in preparing and implementing lesson plans using the Merdeka Curriculum.

To collect the data, the researcher will give a consent form to the participants of this research. Data were collected from the participants in a Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire, adapted from previous frameworks Khoir and Huda (2025) difficulty in implementing the lesson plan aspects. The questionnaire will be organized through Google Forms to capture depth and better retain students' experiences and perceptions of their difficulties in the implementation of lesson plans, before conducting semi-structured interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of hindrances that the questionnaire may not have captured.

The research was undertaken in four stages. First, the participants will complete the questionnaire. The researcher will prepare some statements for the questionnaire with a negative tone about student-teacher difficulties in implementing the lesson plan, for example: "I have difficulties in implementing apperception". This questionnaire statement will be adapted from Muslem Bukhari Daud (2021) and will be divided into three phases: pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching. The participants will choose between strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Strongly Agree is worth 4, agree is worth 3, disagree is worth 2, and

strongly disagree is worth 1. The questionnaire items are already intertwined with the Merdeka curriculum lesson plan aspects, which are below.

Table 1. Questionnaire Items

No	Question	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
<b>PRE-TEACHING</b>					
<b>Apperception (Module Identity, Meaningful Understanding, Essential Question)</b>					
1	I have difficulties giving the introduction and meaningful understanding about the material to students				
2	I have difficulties in asking suitable and varied types of questions to guide students' thinking.				
3	I have difficulties in linking the material with real-life topics.				
<b>Learning Objectives (Learning Outcomes &amp; Learning Objectives)</b>					
4	I have difficulties in explaining the learning objectives.				
5	I have difficulties in aligning the learning objectives with the learning outcomes				
6	I have difficulties in selecting the most suitable teaching method and strategy for students' capabilities to reach the learning objectives.				
<b>Resource Media (Facilities, Infrastructure, and Materials)</b>					
7	I have difficulties due to the lack of engaging media resources during the teaching session.				
8	I have difficulties due to insufficient support in the form of materials, devices, and resources from the school textbooks.				
9	I have difficulties because students are not interested in textbooks and prefer media like games and videos.				
<b>Approach Teaching (Pancasila Student Profile and Learning Method)</b>					
10	I have difficulties in implementing a student-centered approach during teaching sessions.				
11	I have difficulties because using a student-centered approach feels ineffective in my teaching internship.				
12	I have difficulties in aligning classroom activities with the indicators of the Pancasila Student Profile				
<b>WHILST TEACHING</b>					
<b>Material Delivering (Learning Activity and Materials)</b>					
13	I have difficulty projecting my voice loudly enough to be heard by the entire class.				
14	I have difficulties using English confidently when delivering the material				
15	I have difficulties in delivering the material, and sometimes only explain what I understand.				
<b>Feedback (Assessment, Enrichment, and Remedial)</b>					
16	I have difficulties in providing feedback for students' questions or answers that support students' learning and growth.				
17	I have difficulties in giving enrichment & remedial for students' work				
18	I have difficulties in giving feedback for diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments				

<b>Time Management (Learning Activity and Assignment)</b>	
19	I have difficulties in setting up and applying the time limit efficiently.
20	I have difficulties in managing time because the class is noisy and hard to control.
21	I have difficulties that cause me to skip parts of my lesson plan (example: Assignment) due to a lack of time and class management.
<b>Dealing With Unexpected Conditions (Learning Activity)</b>	
22	I have difficulties in handling unexpected issues like missing materials or broken tools during teaching sessions.
23	I have difficulties in facing impromptu teaching situations.
24	I have difficulties in staying calm when unexpected things happen during teaching.
<b>Students' Response (Learning Activity)</b>	
25	I have difficulties because students show a lack of attention and response during classes.
26	I have difficulties in keeping students' attention during the lesson.
27	I have difficulties in managing students' disciplinary issues effectively.
<b>POST TEACHING</b>	
<b>Providing a Conclusion, Motivation, and Suggestion (Learning Activity)</b>	
28	I have difficulties in giving suitable verbal and non-verbal reinforcements.
29	I have difficulties in attracting and maintaining students' interest when concluding the lesson.
30	I have difficulties in giving conclusions, motivation, and suggestions to students at the end of the lesson.

Second, the participants took part in individual interviews to reflect upon their experiences. The interview questions will be prepared before the interview session by following the findings of Khoir & Huda (2025) on student teacher difficulties in implementing lesson plans and aligning them with the lesson aspects from the Merdeka Curriculum. Here are the interview questions.

Table 2. Interview Question

No	Difficulty Phase	Questions
<b>PRE-TEACHING</b>		
1	Apperception	How do you start a lesson and connect it to students' context, and what challenges do you face in doing so?
2	Learning Objectives	What difficulties did you face in aligning and implementing learning objectives, and how did these affect your lesson?
3	Resource Media	What challenges did you face regarding the availability or use of teaching materials, and how did it affect your lesson planning and teaching?
4	Approach Teaching	What challenges did you face in implementing student-centered learning, and how did your teaching experience and the Pancasila student profile influence that?
<b>WHILST-TEACHING</b>		
5	Material Delivering	What classroom management challenges did you face during your teaching internship, and how did they affect your lesson delivery?
6	Feedback	What challenges did you face in giving feedback, assessment, and remedial or enrichment during your teaching internship?

7	Time Management	What time management challenges did you experience during your internship, and how did they affect your implementation of the lesson plan?
8	Dealing With Unexpected Conditions	What difficulties did you encounter in dealing with unexpected problems while teaching at the teaching internship? How did you handle unexpected challenges during your internship, and what did you learn from the experience?
9	Students' Responses	How did students respond while you were teaching? How did you deal with unresponsive or uninterested students? What are the difficulties? And what strategies did you use to improve their engagement?
<b>POST-TEACHING</b>		
10	Providing a Conclusion, Motivation, and Suggestion	What difficulties did you face in giving reinforcement, conclusions, motivation, or suggestions, and how did these affect your teaching?

Third, an analysis was conducted on the data. Here is the analysis of the questionnaire, adapting Alkharusi, (2022).

1. First, the questionnaire results will be scored. Participants' answers will be scored from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with strongly agree worth 4, agree worth 3, disagree worth 2, and strongly disagree worth 1.
2. After the researcher scores all answers, because the questionnaire uses negative statements, the researcher will sum up the scores of the positive responses from each aspect.
3. The researcher will divide the total score of each number by the total number of participants to get the mean score.
4. The mean score of each number on the questionnaire will be interpreted. The score interpretation criteria in this research were developed by the researcher, by dividing the total score range (1-4) into four categories equally, adapting a Likert four-point scale range interpretation by Nee & Yunus (2020).

**Table 3.** Four-Point Likert Scale

SCALE RANGE	EXPLANATION
4,00 - 3,00	Very Difficult
2,99 – 2,00	Difficult
1,99 – 1,00	Less Difficult
0,99 – 0,00	Least Difficult

The interview data were analyzed through a thematic analysis process following Creswell and Creswell (2017). After all interviews were transcribed, the researcher read the transcripts several times to gain a clear understanding of the participants' experiences during their teaching internship at SMA in Kudus. The transcripts were then open-coded, where meaningful statements related to the ten difficulty aspects—such as apperception, material delivery, feedback, time management, and students' responses—were identified. These codes were later grouped into categories that reflected similar ideas or challenges. From these categories, the researcher developed broader themes that represented the main difficulties student teachers faced when implementing lesson plans based on the Merdeka Curriculum. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, member checking was conducted by asking participants to review and confirm the coded data and emerging themes. This step helped ensure that the analysis truly reflected their experiences and reduced potential researcher bias.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data collected from the questionnaires and interviews identified that student teachers encountered difficulty across ten components of the lesson plan implementation phase during their internship at SMA in Kudus.

#### 3.1 Student Teachers' Difficulties in Implementing Lesson Plans During the Pre-Teaching Phase

In the pre-teaching component, challenges were identified in the apperception, learning objectives, resource media, and teaching approach components. During the apperception, several of the participants struggled to develop engaging introductions and relate the lesson to real-world experiences. Even though the apperception was stated as "Less difficult" and the mean was around 0.42, 1, and 1.57 for numbers 1, 2, and 3, the participant stated something different during the interview. Participant 1 stated that *"..sometimes students don't immediately relate.."*, then participants 2, 4, and 7 also stated that *"..not all students are immediately interested or understand how real-life events relate to the lesson"*. It was difficult for some student teachers to choose the most effective way to deliver apperception so that students could more easily understand the material through a real-life context. This is in line with Rahmadani et al. (2022), who stated that providing apperception is intended to increase students' enthusiasm, stimulate their curiosity, and boost their motivation to engage in the learning process, as it plays a crucial role in preparing students both physically and mentally for learning. However, in practice, some teachers still overlook this important step in their teaching.

Meanwhile, during the learning objectives, although the questionnaire was stated as "Less Difficult" by showing the mean just around 0.57 until 1.71, most of the student teachers (Participant 1, 3, 4, 5, 7) stated that they had *"difficulties due to time management in implementing the learning objectives and the varied needs of students"*. This was echoed by Ansyari (2018) who found that the student teachers in their study failed to connect clear indicators in their objectives. That is related to the student teacher who finds it difficult to implement learning objectives because the students' needs are varied.

Resource media and teaching strategy were also areas of concern since it stated as *"difficult"* based on the questionnaire interpretation. Participants 1 and 3 stated that their *"main challenge is the lack of proper facilities."* Meanwhile, participants 6 and 7 stated that their difficulties were *"lack of digital teaching materials that suit the students' local context."*, while students' preference to use interactive media placed additional pressure. Therefore, student teachers had difficulties in implementing their lesson plan because they struggled with a lack of digital teaching resources and proper facilities. This finding aligns with previous research from Mudra (2018), which stated that one of the student teachers' challenges during teaching internship is learning materials or resources, and teaching aids or media. Several participants also reported that limited teaching media and an uncondusive class environment hampered student engagement and made lesson plan implementation difficult. This aligns with Rizka et al., (2024), who found that external factors such as a "less fun class situation" and lack of preparation significantly influence students' anxiety and learning outcomes.

Similarly, while applying the teaching approach, it was challenging for student teachers to apply a student-centered approach, as many students were reluctant to participate, and participant 2 stated that this behavior could happen because *"they've mostly learned through traditional classroom methods."* The impact of this issue, according to participant 7, *"it has become difficult to build competencies such as creativity, collaboration, and responsibility in line with the Pancasila Student Profile."* Nazim et al. (2024) indicated this perspective and argued that student

teachers encounter barriers within the actual classroom concerning collaboration and active learning.

### 3.2 Student Teachers' Difficulties in Implementing Lesson Plans During the Whilst-Teaching Phase

During the whilst-teaching phase, there were challenges in delivering the lesson materials, feedback, time management, and unplanned events. Some participants reported a lack of comfort level in delivering the lesson materials in English, as well as limited to no ability to manage the class, which ultimately impacted how much time was spent on effective instruction.

During the material delivery, some of the participants stated in the questionnaire that delivering material is "Difficult". This is in line with the result in the interview, participant 4 stated that *"the main challenge is keeping students focused in noisy classes"*. It is also stated by participant 7 that, *"students were likely to talk about another topic among themselves during the lessons"*. The uncontrolled behavior by students makes student teachers difficult to implement the lesson plan and lose focus on delivering the lesson. This is consistent with the findings of Ibrahim et al., (2024), who reported that *"the difficulties in teaching English at SDN Mangunsari include curriculum transitions, gaps generated by students of different ages within the same grade, and inconsistency caused by a lack of alignment between teaching and assessment,"* indicating that differences in students' developmental readiness can intensify classroom management challenges.

Moreover, this finding is also supported by Napanoy et al., (2021) stated that student teachers have several problems during implementing a lesson plan, for instance, a classroom overloaded, students' attitudes, and limited knowledge of the material.

Providing feedback was likewise problematic for many of the participants, especially for any enrichment and remedial activities, as it was interpreted to be "Difficult" in the questionnaire. Participants 1 and 3 stated that *"Limited time makes it hard for me to give individual feedback"*, then participant 2 stated that *"My challenge is determining fair assessment standards and constructively delivering feedback"*. The student teachers often struggled with limited time and constructive feedback, making it difficult to implement the lesson plan properly. As stated by Baumert & Kunter (2013) in Ropohl & Rönnebeck (2020), giving constructive feedback is a difficult task for student teachers because it requires different types of knowledge, such as content knowledge (CK), curriculum knowledge, and assessment knowledge.

Another issue they had was with time management. This statement is proven by the questionnaire response, where the student teachers' responses are interpreted as "Difficult" for the items in the questionnaire about time management difficulty. The mean score for numbers 19 to 21 turns out to be around 2.28 – 2.85, which is still interpreted as difficult in many cases. The participants also stated during the interview, such as Participant 3, who stated that *"too much time is spent calming the class down, so the lesson plan isn't fully completed."* Another participant, like participants 4 and 5, stated that *"class time is shortened due to other school activities."* Meanwhile, participant 7 responds differently, *"I get too focused on certain discussions or activities, and the time allocation doesn't go as planned."* This makes student teachers difficult to implement their lesson plan because there would be changes to the lesson activity, or they had to drop or rush activities altogether just to make sure all of the steps in the lesson plan are done. These findings corroborate Mahrus et al. (2023), whose findings also showed inconsistencies in the planned and actual performance of lessons due to contextual changes.



Participants also experienced unexpected challenges, such as tech issues or classes being suddenly changed in time. In the questionnaire, this difficulty is located in numbers 22, 23, and 24. The mean score of the numbers turns out to be 2, 2.8, and 2, which is interpreted as "Difficult". Moreover, during the in-depth interview, participants 1 and 7 stated that *"When something unexpected happens, like a power outage, I try to stay calm and immediately switch to discussions or Q&A."* Another participant, like participant 2, stated, *"The difficulty I experienced was preparation. Often Wi-Fi signal would suddenly disappear, and we couldn't open the PPT material, which was difficult for me. I was confused about what activities to give the students."* This situation makes student teachers have to quickly adapt and can not implement their lesson plans thoroughly. The previous research, like Lebala et al. (2024), confirmed that student teachers had several difficulties during teaching internship, such as insufficient time for teaching practice, an uncondusive environment at host schools, and undisciplined behaviors of students.

Within the terms of the students' responses, a number of the participants reported that the learners were inattentive, undisciplined, or passive during activities. The questionnaire data also showed that they have difficulties in all the questionnaire numbers of difficulty in students' responses. The questions are in the numbers 25, 26, and 27, then the mean scores show that they are interpreted as "Difficult" by having 3, 2.42, and 2.57 as the mean scores. The undisciplined students make student teachers difficult to implement the lesson plan, because if the students did not want to listen, the classroom activities will be disrupted. This aligns with the conclusions of Adams et al. (2022), which stated that limited classroom management skills create barriers for pre-service teachers teaching students.

### 3.3 Student Teachers' Difficulties in Implementing Lesson Plans During the Post-Teaching Phase

Finally, during the post-teaching phase, there were challenges in providing conclusions, motivations, and suggestions. In the questionnaire, the student teachers stated that their having difficulties giving suitable reinforcements; meanwhile, during the interview, participant 2 said, *"I often forget or run out of time to give clear reinforcement and conclusions."* Then the same case also happened to participants 3 and 4; they stated that *"I ran out of time"* during this step. Participant 7's response is a bit different; it stated that *"I focus too much on explaining the material, so the reinforcement and conclusion parts are either skipped or done hastily."* It was clear that a few student-teachers were struggling to conclude lessons in a meaningful way because they ran out of time, which diminishes the overall impact of teaching. The findings of this difficulty are linked with Priajana (2022), who stated that student teachers are constrained in reflecting or drawing conclusions by involving students. This can happen because some of the student teachers still lack teaching experience, time management, and classroom management skills.

The main findings of this research indicate that lesson plan implementation difficulties are found in all stages of teaching, from planning to teaching and reflection. The findings call attention to the need for teacher education programs to not only emphasize lesson planning content, but also the development of pre-service teachers' capacity for adaptability, management, and handling the unexpected. Addressing this through teacher education will affect the ability of future teachers to connect theory to practice when implementing lessons based on the curriculum they are given.

**Table 4.** Summary of Student Teachers' Difficulties in Lesson Plan Implementation

Phase	Aspect	Key Difficulties
Pre-Teaching Phase	Apperception	Struggled to link material with real-life context; limited student interest
	Learning Objectives	Difficulty formulating measurable and aligned objectives
	Resource Media	Limited facilities, lack of engaging media, unreliable internet
	Approach Teaching	Challenges in applying student-centered learning: passive students
Whilst-Teaching Phase	Material Delivering	Lack of confidence in English use; noisy classes
	Feedback	Difficulty providing detailed, fair, and timely feedback
	Time Management	Inability to complete the lesson plan within the allocated time
	Dealing with Unexpected Conditions	Technical problems; sudden schedule changes
	Students' Responses	Passive participation; low attention and discipline
Post-Teaching Phase	Providing Conclusion, Motivation, and Suggestion	Difficulty closing lessons effectively and motivating students

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the challenges faced by student teachers in carrying out their lesson plans during their practicum experience in SMA in Kudus, using the Merdeka Curriculum. The research findings indicated that challenges experienced by student teachers happened in all stages of teaching involving ten aspects: apperception, learning purpose, resource media, teaching actions, material transmitting, feedback, time-management, responding to unexpected situations, students' response, and providing conclusion, motivation, and suggestions. While there were a myriad of challenges for student teachers, the most common challenges occurred with limited media resources, ineffective feedback, time management, and passive student participation. Our findings suggested that even though student-teachers had been prepared for making lesson plans, they were still struggling to adapt their plans to classroom realities.

This study highlights how teacher education programs need to provide better preparation in classroom management, using adaptive pedagogies, and contingency planning so student teachers can respond more effectively to the unpredictable climate of classrooms. In addition, through ongoing support from mentor teachers and reflection activities, pre-service teachers may be able to develop resilience and flexibility.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small, involving only seven participants, which may limit the transferability of the findings. Second, the study was conducted in a single school context, SMA in Kudus, which may not fully represent diverse teaching environments. Third, although the study used an embedded mixed-method design, the qualitative component remained dominant, meaning the findings rely heavily on interview-based interpretations.

Future research may address these limitations by involving a larger and more diverse sample across multiple schools or regions, employing a more balanced quantitative–qualitative integration, or exploring additional contextual factors such as school infrastructure, student demographics, and curriculum implementation challenges. Therefore, subsequent studies will further enrich the literature around preparing future teachers to develop effective classroom practice through their teacher education programs.

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