

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The role that the curriculum plays in the advancement of education, both in Indonesia and around the world, is crucial. Obviously, the curricula in each nation vary based on their respective educational objectives. The curriculum can be used to determine how the educational objectives are being carried out. The direction of learning that will be permitted at school will be known within the confines of the institution. The legal curriculum must be present in every school setting for this reason. There have been various curriculum modifications in Indonesia. In regard to the educational system in Indonesia, a new policy, The Merdeka Curriculum was released by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek).

The Merdeka Curriculum serves as a K-2013 evaluation tool. In order to reinforce the Pancasila student profile and provide students with additional opportunity to explore ideas and develop skills, the Merdeka Curriculum combines a variety of extracurricular learning opportunities. The Merdeka Curriculum was developed as part of the Ministry of Education and Culture's efforts to address a long-standing learning crisis that has gotten worse as a result of the pandemic. Low student learning results, even in fundamental areas like reading literacy, were a defining feature of the crisis.

National studies as well as International, one of which is PISA, shows that many students of Indonesia are unable to understand simple reading or apply math concepts base. PISA scores do not experience significant increase in last 10 to 15

years. Around 70% of 15 year old students are below the minimum competency reading and math. The study shows there is a big gap between region and between socioeconomic groups in terms of learning quality ("Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Episode 15: "Kurikulum Merdeka dan Platform Merdeka Mengajar")

Due to the loss of knowledge and widening knowledge gaps between areas and people during the Covid-19 epidemic, schooling lagged even further behind science (Adison Adrianus Sihombing, et al. 2021). The learning crisis has been exacerbated by the pandemic COVID-19 with loss of learning (learning loss) and increasing learning gaps:

- Before the pandemic, learning progress during one year (grade 1 SD) is 129 points for literacy and 78 points for numeracy.
- After the pandemic, learning progress during grade 1 reduced significantly (learning losses).
- For literacy, this learning loss is equivalent to 6 study month.
- For numeration, the learning loss is equivalent with 5 months of study.

(Taken from a sample of 3,391 elementary school students from 7 districts/Cities in 4 provinces, in January 2020 and April 2021) - "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Episode 15: "*Independent Curriculum and Independent Teaching Platform*".

Accordingly, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia introduced the "Merdeka Belajar" curriculum in Episode 15: "Kurikulum Merdeka dan Platform Merdeka Mengajar" in order to revive learning following the pandemic. This platform is also provided responding to the government's policy of closing schools which was widespread in many different nations due to Covid's 19 pandemic (Rahiem, 2021). Supported by Pujari, 2020 Likewise in other countries, students, teachers, and parents in India are dealing with a variety of challenges as a result of school closures. Therefore, online

education is a more viable and appropriate option, although it presents difficulties for students and parents from low-income families. According to UNESCO reports, the COVID-19 pandemic has prevented at least 9 out of 10 students from attending face-to-face classes around the world. Over 1.5 billion children in pre-primary through higher education are affected by the closure of all schools in 195 nations worldwide. In the world, 50% of students (826 million) and 43% of students (706 million) do not have access to a computer or the internet at home, respectively. Additionally, due to a lack of mobile network coverage, 56 million pupils cannot utilize mobile devices. About 89% (216 million), 82% (199 million), and 11% (26 million) of students in Sub-Saharan Africa countries do not have access to a computer, home internet, or mobile networks, respectively.

Moreover, various provinces in Indonesia, including DKI Jakarta, Banten, and West Java, have closed their schools beginning on March 16, 2020 (CNN, 2020; Kumparan, 2020). The anomalous situation compels the government to quickly and completely alter the educational system without prior planning.

This Merdeka Belajar curriculum was developed as a follow-up to the emergency curriculum that was introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Merdeka Belajar must also consider situational cases that might be a challenge in its implementation, such in the current plague, namely the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic is certainly one of the unexpected situations in the learning process so that this will be another challenge faced by the organizers of the policy (Abidah et al., 2020). In addition, because the implementation is left to teachers in schools, learning media, learning techniques, and a conducive and

directed learning climate will be another task for teachers to create this (Ramadania & Aswadi, 2020).

There are four important points that concern the government in implementing this policy which includes the implementation of the national standard school exam (USBN), the implementation of the national exam (UN), the lesson plan (RPP), and the zoning regulations for new student admissions (PPPDB) (Tohir, 2019). They are principals guiding Merdeka's implementation. Merdeka Belajar refers to a planned implementation of education for schools, especially for teachers by giving them freedom and actualization for them in running the national curriculum in accordance with existing resources in schools (Izza et al., 2020). Merdeka Belajar is anticipated to be able to examine the abilities and potentials of students in school planning. According to studies, students develop these skills early. Whereas in a higher education setting, Merdeka Belajar is focused on developing individual student skills to have multi-tasking skills and also the development of the campus system as a forum for the actualization of the academic community in society (Siregar et al., 2020). So that there is hope that Merdeka Belajar's policy will become a forum to update all resources in a national system of education.

Merdeka Belajar Policy still faces a number of practical challenges. The individual's safety must be guaranteed by the Merdeka Belajar policy. Distinctions that the accommodated students collectively. It includes accessibility. For special needs students using the system as usual, even though many remain problem regions (Asfiati, 2020). Merdeka Belajar must additionally take certain circumstances into account that be difficult to implement, such as in the Covid-19

pandemic, which is the current scourge. One of the most recent examples of unanticipated events during the learning process, Thus that there will be just another difficulty for the administrators of the rule (Abidah et al., 2020).

The Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, Nadiem Makarim said that they were committed to the principle of independence, independence in learning, and they would present three possibilities to schools; their choice would depend on their preparations. He also claimed that schools will have the freedom to select their own curriculum for the 2022/2023 academic year. If schools are not prepared to make adjustments to their curriculum, they can implement the 2013 curriculum totally as the first alternative. The emergency curriculum, which is a condensed version of the 2013 curriculum, can be implemented in schools under the second option. Allowing schools to fully implement the Merdeka Curriculum is the third option.

With the most recent curriculum, the framework itself will be considerably more adaptable with annual targets for school hours. It will concentrate on key learning resources that enable studying to be managed in phases as opposed to annually. Nadiem Makarim added that this will provide teachers flexibility to use different educational tools that suit students' characteristics.

According to Independent Implementation Circular of the Independent Curriculum No. 2774/H.H1/KR.00.01/2022, Jambi City will apply the Merdeka Curriculum in the 2022/2023 academic year. It was previously used in Penggerak School Batch 1 classes like SMPN 4, SMPN 12, SMPN 10, and SMP Nurul Ilmi as well as Batch 2 classes like SMP Unggul Sakti, SMP Adhyaksa, SMP Kristen Bina Kasih, SMP Tri Sukses, and SMP Al-Falah. Therefore, more schools would

implement the Merdeka Curriculum for the 2022/2023 Academic Year. Therefore, the researcher wished to investigate how the Merdeka Curriculum is being implemented in Jambi City.

Even though the Education Department of Jambi City required schools to implement Merdeka Curriculum sooner or later, teachers must be prepared to implement it in their class. The researcher wanted to know the teachers' perception in implementing the learning process and assessment of Merdeka Curriculum. Moreover, in the researcher's MGMP, the majority of the teachers used Merdeka Curriculum and received training to implement it in their school, but some of them didn't know how to implement it in their classroom.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background above, the problem of the study is formulated as follows:

1. What are the teachers' experiences towards the Merdeka Curriculum?
2. How do teachers view the learning process and assessment for the Merdeka Curriculum implemented?

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are as follows, based on the research questions:

1. to investigate the teachers' experiences towards the Merdeka Curriculum
2. to explore how teachers view the implementation of learning process and assessment towards the Merdeka Curriculum

1.4 Limitation of the Research

During the academic year 2022–2023, the study was carried out at public and private junior high schools in Jambi City, paying particular attention to Penggerak School Batches 1 and 2 and Penggerak Teachers. One Penggerak School, five Penggerak Teachers, and 19 teachers who used the Merdeka Curriculum in the classroom were the participants. English will then be the subject of Merdeka Curriculum implementation.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is believed that this research would provide useful information for teachers and aspiring researchers. The findings of this research might lead to the creation of a fresh, relevant review for researchers who are interested in this subject. This is beneficial because it might serve as a starting point or a point of reference for prospective Merdeka Curriculum implementation. The research's findings are also anticipated to be applicable in a variety of contexts, such as other elementary schools, senior high schools, and other institutions of higher education, even though the study's primary focus is only on junior high school English teachers in Jambi. Also, other researchers are free to modify their studies on the use of the Merdeka Curriculum in various Indonesian cities.