

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1) the Background of the Research, (2) the Questions of the Research, (3) the Purposes of the Research, (4) the Limitations of the Research, (5) the Significance of the Research, and (6) Definition of Key Terms.

Background of Research

To improve the quality of Education in Indonesia, the minister of Education and culture of Indonesia has changed the education policy with a new curriculum called “*Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum.” The *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum is expected to transform into student-centered learning. Teachers are facilitators, mentors, and controllers; they are not the only sources in this learning activity that turns students into active participants (Pertiwi et al., 2022). In implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, teachers have faced some difficulties starting from the less flexible curriculum structure, the lesson hours are determined per week, and the material is too dense so that there is not enough time to manage learning and teaching activity (Maulida, 2023). Furthermore, teachers are busy to prepare the learning process in the classroom.

In this case, teachers' concerns regarding the new curriculum and its implementation in schools will likely vary. According to Khoboli & O’toole (2012), teachers may have different concerns about implementing the new curriculum and

adapting a new practice due to their understanding of their schools' management conditions. Some teachers may willingly contribute to the innovation process, but others might find it hard to accept change. This happens when they are confronted with changes in their characteristics and convictions based on previous experiences and practices (Mandukwini, 2016 in Karakuş, 2021). Uncertainty: Teachers may be confused or resist standard practices and new ideas when changes demand innovation beyond their experiences. In addition, they must still be supported and followed up on throughout the implementation of the reform (Leung, 2008 in Tafai, 2017).

Therefore, teachers should have a deep and thorough understanding of the concept of the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum and need to change their mindset about reforms in this curriculum so that they can master what the *Merdeka Belajar* curriculum is and how it is structured the system is running too. Teachers' desire to innovate and develop themselves in the face of curriculum changes must also be considered. Suppose the teacher does not want to make changes and cannot operationalize the principles contained in this curriculum. In that case, the expected educational goals will not be achieved optimally.

Based on an informal talk done through informal interview on Oktober 24th, 2023, between the researcher and a junior high school teacher in Tanjung Jabung Barat who implemented the curriculum, it discovered that teachers faced several challenges in implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. Information from the informal talk said it was difficult for teachers to find sources and supporting information because not all schools implement the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. It

was also stated that some stakeholders did not understand the concept of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, which impacted teachers who would implement the curriculum. Teachers felt that it was too much physical activity based on the teaching module that the government designed, so they needed more energy, although the teachers should move from one class to another all day. Also, some teachers can not elaborate well with other teachers. They felt various problems, such as the low level of school management, which characterize the many phenomena of poor quality of some educational institutions in Indonesia. Educational institutions need control with a type of planning that is not just to respond to changes that are expected to occur in the future but more.

Based on the research background, the researcher needs to investigate several cases. The cases, namely, the teachers challenges and how they have been overcome the problems faced in taking the role in the implementation *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in their school.

Research Questions

To achieve the purposes of the research, the problems of this Research are formulated as follows:

1. What are the challenges English teachers face in the implementing of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in Junior High School?
2. How do the English teachers cope with the challenges during the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum?

3. What are the teachers' suggestions towards the improvement of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum implementation?

Purpose of the Research

In accordance with the research questions above, the main purposes of the Research are:

1. To explore English teachers challenges in implementing the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in practicing at their school.
2. To identify English teachers coping strategy in the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum
3. To investigate the suggestion for the implementing *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum in Junior High School .

Limitations of the Research

In this Research, the researcher limited some aspects that has been investigated. First, the participants of the research are English teachers at a Junior High School with *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. Second, this research explored how English teachers perceive the challenges with some coping strategy to overcome some problems in the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, particularly in the implementing *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. The participants in this research were the English teachers at one of Junior High School in Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency

Significance of the Research

The results of this Research was expected to give more contribution for English teachers who teach *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum, the researcher hopes this Research will be useful to them. The information from this research could help teachers to understand more about how to cope the challenges in the implementation of *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum. The researcher hope this research can be considered as reference for those who have interest in the same context towards *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum Implementation.

Definition of the Key Terms

To better understand and avoid misinterpretation, the researcher must state the definition of each key term in this Research. The researcher defines the main term as *follows:*

1.1.1 *Merdeka Belajar* Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum with diverse intra-curricular learning where the content will be more optimal so that students have enough time to explore concepts and strengthen competencies

1.1.2 Teachers' Challenges

A challenge can generally defined as a demanding task or circumstance. Teacher challenge refers to the shift in the role of teachers from being traditional experts to becoming coaches who guide students through complex, real-life

1.6.3 **Implementation**

Implementation is the process of carrying out deliberate, planned actions with the goal of transforming knowledge and concepts into actions that benefit people in the real world.