

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **A. Research Background**

Education is an important factor in the development of a country. The curriculum has a significant role in determining the quality of education provided to students. The curriculum is the most important component decided in the education system unit as a means of achieving educational goals and guidelines in carrying out teaching at all types of educational levels (Asrudifah et al. 2022).

In 2022, the Indonesian government launched the Merdeka Belajar curriculum policy to improve the quality of learning at all levels of education. The curriculum also aims to address the learning crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Bonal and González (2020) the pandemic has also caused learning gaps, with factors such as student circumstances, family conditions, and economic conditions contributing to these gaps during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Based on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Indonesian students' literacy and numeracy scores are below the international average (Hewi & Shaleh, 2020). PISA results found no significant improvement in the last ten to fifteen years. The government took these findings seriously. Therefore, the government seeks to improve PISA results by implementing the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

The curriculum refers to teaching and learning activities. Fatmawati (2020) claimed the curriculum is one of the essential learning instruments that educational institutions must complete. English is among the subjects included in the Merdeka

Belajar curriculum, which aims to enhance students' abilities in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. Additionally, as noted by Rohayati (2018), English is utilized in published research findings, emphasizing the significance of possessing language proficiency not only for social communication but also for the advancement of scientific knowledge. Hence, English plays a crucial role in the curriculum.

In the new academic year 2022/2023, during the odd semester, SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta has not only adopted the Merdeka Belajar curriculum as its guiding framework but has also retained the implementation of the 2013 curriculum. The school's approach is based on facts and information gathered in the field by researchers who were previously engaged with the institution. The unique aspect is that the school is simultaneously employing two curricula. Specifically, grades eight and nine continue to follow the 2013 curriculum, while grade seven has embraced the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

Several policies need to be implemented at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta to implement the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. One of them is a good understanding of the concept of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum so that it can be implemented optimally and as expected. Based on research by Safitri et al. (2022), it shows that the understanding of the development of the Pancasila student profile strengthening project 83% of educators are in the lowest level category (translator) and only 17% are in the second level (interpretation). So, this has been capable of being an asset for the successful implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at the Early Childhood level. However, the results of information from the English Teacher

explain at a glance that along with the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta, it is still in the adaptation stage, and teachers are still learning more about the curriculum concept.

Optimal school support is the key to successful curriculum implementation, especially for English teachers in the teaching and learning process. Through robust institutional support, English teachers can enhance the quality of education with greater innovation and comprehensiveness. As stated by Gumulya and Widiastuti (2013), teachers hold significant responsibilities in both curriculum development and implementation, as they are directly involved in its implementation in the classroom. In addition, Tiara (2019) claims that no matter how good an institution is, if teachers do not carry out their duties properly, the results of curriculum implementation can be obtained not maximized.

Likewise, the readiness of supporting facilities, both in terms of technology and innovation, needs to be improved to ensure the quality of English teachers is up to the standards set by the Ministry of Education for the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Rosidah et al. (2021) state that teacher readiness is a condition of a teacher's readiness to use technology to provide responses or answers in carrying out his professional responsibilities. Based on the results of information from English teachers, teacher preparation is not only waiting for policies from schools but further exploring information about the concept of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum with other schools and the Ministry of Education website.

The obstacles faced can hinder the effective implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum. The results of information from English teachers indicate that

a significant obstacle for English teachers is not having teaching experience with the Merdeka Belajar program. In addition, the ability to implement the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in English has not been a common thing for teachers and students. Moreover, the Merdeka Belajar curriculum is still relatively new, and many schools have not yet implemented it. Based on Miladiah et al. (2023) the results of their research show that Bina Taruna Junior High School experiences several obstacles such as the lack of understanding of the concept of Merdeka curriculum by educators, students, education personnel, and even parents, thus hindering the implementation process. In addition, there are other challenges in understanding Essential Materials, Flow of Learning Objectives (FLO), Teaching Module (TM), and evaluating student progress faced by English teachers. After looking at the background mentioned above and the phenomena related to the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at school, the author is interested in conducting research with the title "The Analysis of the Implementation of Merdeka Belajar in English at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta."

## **B. The Research Questions**

Based on the background of this research, the researcher wants to delve into more details regarding the Implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in English. To ensure the research is more focused and the discussion does not deviate too far, the focus of this research is limited.

1. How is the Merdeka Belajar curriculum implemented at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta?

2. What factors support and inhibit the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta?

### **C. The Objectives of the Study**

In accordance with the explained research focus, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To understand the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta.
2. To identify the factors that act as supporting and hindering elements in the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta.

### **D. The Significations of the Study**

1. Theoretical Benefits
  - a. Developing knowledge in the fields of curriculum, education, and technology.
  - b. Adding to the study of science and curriculum development in the learning process.
2. Practical Benefits
  - a. For Students: Getting students used to being excited and actively involved in learning through the Merdeka Belajar curriculum.
  - b. For Teachers: Develop professionalism by applying various learning models.

- c. For Educational Institutions: Creating a professional academic climate, improving teachers' abilities, and overcoming learning problems.
- d. For Readers: As a reference for similar research.
- e. For Researcher: As a first step to develop further research skills.

#### **E. Research Scope**

This research analyses the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum in English at SMP Negeri 80 Jakarta. The research covers various aspects, including the supporting and inhibiting factors of curriculum implementation. Data collection is limited to English learning activities, both inside and outside class hours. The data sources involved the principal, curriculum deputy, English teachers, and students. The method used was descriptive qualitative, using interview, observation, and document analysis techniques.