

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher discussed about the background of the study, problem limitation, research questions and research objectives. Furthermore, the researcher also explained the significances of the study, definitions of key terms and the writing organization of this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Many experts have explained the meaning of education. Of all the definitions, it can be concluded by the researcher that education is a conscious and planned effort carried out to develop one's potential to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and the skills needed by oneself and society. The main purpose of education is to produce person with the ability to think and act with quality and character so that one has a good quality of life.

Further, the purpose is achieved through learning process. Learning is a planned activity to increase knowledge, train skills, gain experience and so on resulting in a change of behavior by students. Regarding this, Pantiwati et al., (2023) who asserts that learning involves the involvement of a combination of several elements, namely human, materials, facilities, and processes that influence each other to achieve certain learning objectives.

One essential aspects of education is curriculum. Curriculum is the main support in the teaching and learning process. The quality of the curriculum will greatly determine the achievement of educational goals (Amadio et al., 2014).

With the rapid development of the times, there were changes in human life. These changes bring new challenges that must be faced by a nation. Therefore, Indonesia through the Ministry of Education and Culture has designed and changed the curriculum several times. The aim is to adjust with the development and progress of times and prepare students to face the challenges of certain times.

Curriculum in Indonesia has change at least twelve times from before independence to the present. The changes started in 1947 then continue in 1952, 1964, 1968, 1975, 1984, 1994, 2004, 2006, and 2013. The latest curriculum was officially introduced on February 2022 as a response to the industrial revolution 5.0. Moreover due to learning crisis because of Covid-19 pandemic, the new curriculum which called *Merdeka* Curriculum serves as exigent curriculum. The *Merdeka* Curriculum is an important learning transformation; not only dealing with post-pandemic education but also dealing with the world situation which continues to change according to the times.

Hadi et al., (2023) proposes that there are some major differences to previous curriculum. The big difference lies in the focus of student development. The 2013 Curriculum focuses on students' academic abilities in general where the assessment includes four aspects, namely knowledge, attitudes, skills and behavior whilst *Merdeka* Curriculum focuses on students' character and moral development. Further in the implementation, the *Merdeka* Curriculum gives freedom and chance for the teacher to develop learning according to the needs and conditions of their students while the 2013 Curriculum has its own structured and clear guidelines for the teachers to follow.

There are many perceptions come from educational stakeholders especially teacher about the *Merdeka* Curriculum. Perception is a psychological process that occurs because our sensory receives stimulation from a certain object in the form of information, experience or understanding. Perception is a form of attitude. Polak on Perdana (2021) stated that perception is a stable tendency of a person to act or react in a certain way in certain situations. The implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum receives various responses from teacher in general. There are already some positive opinions that support the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum. Yet there are also negative responses that complain about curriculum changes. Teachers think that the changes are considered too early to replace the 2013 Curriculum (Ningsih, 2023). In addition, the concept of *Merdeka* Curriculum is also not fully understood by teachers. Therefore, training for the teachers is intensively carried out by the Ministry in order to enlighten teachers in implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum which will be used as National Curriculum in 2024 (Aulia, 2021).

Moreover, in Jayapura Municipality *Merdeka* Curriculum is only applied to the seventh grade of Junior High School (JHS, henceforth) for the 2022/2023 academic year. Further in the 2023/2024 academic year, the *Merdeka* Curriculum also applied for the eighth grade of JHS.

The main reason for the researcher to do this research is because there is a lot of research on the teacher's perception of the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum at the primary and secondary education levels in general. Further the researcher also found several teachers' perception who teaches other subject but

there is none from EFL teacher. Additionally, the status of *Merdeka* Curriculum will be fully mandatory to use in school on 2024. Thus, this study can contribute to give input and suggestions that can be used as a consideration in welcoming the mandatory implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. For these reasons, the researcher wants to conduct a study of what is the perception of EFL teacher about the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in JHS at Jayapura Municipality which has been done for the last semester and what obstacles faced by them.

1.2 Problem Limitation

The problem limitation of this study is limited to the perception of EFL teachers in JHS at Jayapura Municipality on the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum and what obstacles they faced. Conducting a study on the perception of all JHS English teachers in Papua regarding the implementation of *Merdeka* curriculum and the obstacles that the English teachers faced requires quite a long time and costs a lot of money. Therefore, on this occasion, the researcher limited the object of this research to the perceptions of EFL teachers only at state JHS in Jayapura Municipality, considering that compared to private schools, state schools do not have much freedom in modifying the curriculum given by the government and the number of state schools is greater than private schools. Moreover, apart from that, state schools are also a direct extension of the government to provide education that in accordance with national education goals.

There are at least twelve aspects with four different stages of implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum. Those stages are the initial stage, the

developing stage, the ready stage and lastly the advanced stage. Secondary schools can choose which stage they want to use according to school's condition and the target they set for the implementation of the Curriculum for their school. Therefore, the researcher focuses on the developing stages because most secondary schools have entered their second year on the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL teacher toward the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in JHS at Jayapura Municipality?
2. What are the obstacles faced by EFL teachers in the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in JHS at Jayapura Municipality?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are based on the statement of the research questions. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To investigate the perceptions of EFL teacher toward the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in JHS at Jayapura Municipality.
2. To explore the obstacles faced by EFL teachers in the implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in JHS at Jayapura Municipality.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The purposes of this study are to reveals the perceptions and the obstacles faced by JHS English teachers on the implementation of new curriculum. Hence

the results of this study will be very useful for some parties such as government and teacher.

The government, specifically regional education authority will get content for input as well as matter of evaluation in preparing for the comprehensive implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in Jayapura on 2024. Next for the English teachers who teaches in JHS at Jayapura, this study will gives an idea of what issue or problem teacher faces. Thus, on MGMP of JHS English teacher, the issue or problem known through the results of this research can be used as discussion material for the better implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum in JHS English teaching and learning.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

The definitions of key term used in this research are as follows:

1.6.1 Perception

The word perception comes from Latin word *percipere* which means to receive or to take. Authors describe perception as a psychological process when human's brain take and comprehend information or data from environment. The information and data received through human sensory become input which will be interpreted meaningfully by our brain (Démuth, 2012).

In simple way, perception is a process of thinking in certain condition or circumstances. It is the ability to understand, respond and give meaning to something by concluding information and interpreting messages against a stimulus. The stimulus is obtained from the sensing process.

1.6.2 Implementation

The word implementation has a broad meaning. Implementation can be defined as activities or actions to achieve goals. In this study, the researcher defines implementation as the application of certain policy or standard in order to achieve something.

In educational context, implementation is an action that starts with preparation, then adaptation and lastly assessment. Implementation is a deliberate action to the stage that the process is intended to transform education in line with some policy objectives (Lane, 1979).

1.6.3 Curriculum

Curriculum is a program of teaching and learning which contains the vision, mission and purpose of education that has been adjusted to the needs of the community. It contains plans and arrangements in the matter of learning objectives, material content, methods and so on for carrying out learning activities (Alhamuddin, 2014). Curriculum is a composition of planned activities that provided by educational authority which is the Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Cultures for education unit towards the realization of the National Education and Institution's goals.

1.6.4 Merdeka Curriculum

Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that supports the flexibility of learning. The purpose of the flexibility is so that its meet the learning needs and interests of students (Lestari & Qamariah, 2023). Not many different from previous curriculum, *Merdeka* Curriculum not only focus on cognitive abilities

improvement of students but also focus on their character development. The learning process in the independent curriculum is designed to improve students' cognitive abilities and also develop students' personality to become more independent, cooperative, courageous and polite. At last, this curriculum is aims to improve the quality of Indonesia's education by provide a different nuance of learning in order to having adjustment with the development of existing education. Thus to create human resources that are not only superior in academics but also have good character.

Thus, this research is a study about JHS EFL teachers understanding, self-belief, and respond toward the application of the new policy or standard namely *merdeka* curriculum, which is a program of independent teaching and learning that contains the vision, mission and purpose of national education.

1.7 Writing Organization

In reporting this research, the researcher divided this undergraduate thesis into five chapters. Chapter one discussed about background of the study, problem limitation, research question and research objective, significance of the study, definition of key terms and organization of the study.

Chapter two discussed the related literature which contain a significant theories and previous study that in accordance with this research. Chapter three states the methodology used in this study. It is include the instrument and technique used to collect the data and to analyze it.

Chapter four discussed about the findings of the study. There are two kinds of data namely questionnaire and interview. The result of questionnaire is

analyzed by simple statistical technique. While the result of interview is analyzed through data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion.

The last chapter is conclusion. The researcher gives the conclusion from the research's findings and also proposed suggestion for authorities, EFL teachers and the future researcher that wants to conduct a research on the matter of *Merdeka Curriculum*.

