

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter attempts to explain the background of the study, problem identification, limitation of the problem, research question, research objectives, and research significance.

1.1 Background of the Study

At the moment, advancements in science and technology are leading to developments in a better direction, as is the field of education. Attempts to improve the quality of education are still being developed. The Indonesian government administers a national education and training system regulated by law. In this regard, Law No. 20 of 2003 on the national education system, article 1, paragraph 1, and article 3 state that education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and process so that students can actively realize their development potential to acquire the skills needed by themselves, the community and the country of the nation.

The main components of the education system are students, teachers, and curriculum (Widyastuti, 2020). In the teaching and learning process, these three components are inextricably linked (Anwar, 2021). Without the presence of one of these components, the pedagogical interaction process does not work and the pedagogical goals are not achieved (Anwar, 2021; Sasmita, 2018). In an educational system, the curriculum functions as a tool for planning and setting goals, basic skills, basic materials, and learning outcomes, as well as implementing guidelines for implementing learning activities to achieve basic skills and educational goals. The curriculum is dynamic in nature and must constantly change and evolve (Marlina et al., 2022; Sasmita, 2018). Any change and further development of the curriculum must meet the challenges of the time.

Introduced by the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia in mid-2013, the 2013 curriculum was improved to become *Kurikulum Merdeka*. While the 2013 curriculum is a competency and character-based curriculum in an integrated manner that is an evolution of the Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP). According to Sasmita (2018) the 2013 curriculum, the emphasis is on effective learning in the learning process. So the learners should be active as the learners are at the center of the learning activities. Students should engage in understanding new materials and skills.

Kurikulum Merdeka, on the other hand, is a curriculum that addresses the essence of learning based on abilities and interests. The goal is to stimulate the interests and talents of children from an early age (Pendidikan & Teknologi, 2022). *Kurikulum Merdeka* has the emphasis on structure of the curriculum, which is divided into two main learning activities, namely: regular or routine learning, which is an intra-curricular activity; and a project to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (Kurikulum et al., 2022). The learning outcomes, organized by milestones, are presented in sections that describe the knowledge, attitudes and skills to achieve, strengthen and improve competencies.

As a pedagogical breakthrough, the move from the 2013 Curriculum to the *Kurikulum Merdeka* should create an even more effective and efficient teaching atmosphere, especially for all those involved in education, both teachers and students. Especially when you consider the existing dynamics that this curriculum has created due to the need to revive the implementation of education in Indonesia after the pandemic became a terrifying specter that caused a decline in education, especially in Indonesia. This decline is most clearly marked by the emergence of an education crisis, culminating in several studies showing that our students are experiencing learning losses and diminished learning outcomes. As a result of this pandemic, distance learning has been practiced for a long time, the hope of conducting teaching and learning activities that promote student activity has become very utopian (Agustami et al., 2017; Kemdikbud, 2022).

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a set of concepts that are very appropriate and can form the basis of an education that catches up with students due to the pandemic. This *Kurikulum Merdeka* in which each teacher is given the freedom to use the teaching materials used, later in this process learning will be carried out according to the needs and interests of the participating students. Learning is not limited to understanding what is being explained, but also to the extent to which knowledge is applied in practice.

In the previous curriculum of 2013, there was a separation of subjects that played a role in the formation of attitudes, skills and knowledge (Kemdikbud, 2022). *Kurikulum Merdeka* is now structured in such a way that all subjects contribute to the formation of attitudes (affective), skills (motor) and knowledge (cognitive) (Kemdikbud, 2022; McTighe et al., 2017). The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is equipped with contemporary benefits. For example, simpler and more comprehensive, including providing "Merdeka" for units of study in development, as well as presenting a more relevant and interactive learning system.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* has several requirements and changes that may differentiate its implementation from the 2013 curriculum from the perspective of classroom teaching and learning activities (Pendidikan & Teknologi, 2022). Learning activities is performed in the process of teaching and learning interactions to achieve learning goals (Nurmasyitah et al., 2023). The learning activity in question is the activity of the students when they receive the instruction given by the teacher. The 2013 curriculum uses a scientific approach to the learning activities for all subjects, namely observation, questioning, experimentation, information processing and communication (Kemdikbud, 2022; Prihastuti, 2016). The *Kurikulum Merdeka* uses differentiated learning in the teaching and learning activities according to the proficiency level of the students and focuses on the material and essential character development of the Pancasila student profiles (McTighe et al., 2017).

Differentiated learning is learning that takes into account all student differences, is open to all and meets the needs of each individual (Kemdikbud,

2022). Differentiated learning has three streams of learning activities, namely content differentiation, process differentiation and product differentiation (McTighe et al., 2017). The Pancasila Student Profile is a form of translation of the National Educational Goals, which serve as the main reference for educational policy and even serves as a reference for educators in developing students' character and competence. Based on the Ministry of Education and Culture No. 56/M/2022, there are six competencies that characterize the profile of Pancasila students, namely: having faith, fearing God Almighty and having a noble character; mutual cooperation; critical thinking; global diversity; creative; and independent. Therefore, the Pancasila Student Profile Raising Project can be designed to encourage students to learn a number of crucial subjects such as: B. a sustainable lifestyle, tolerance, mental health, culture, entrepreneurship, technology and democratic life.

Curriculum changes to date are aimed at improving the quality of learning, which includes learning the English language. However, changes in the curriculum from year to year have shaped teachers' perceptions of the learning process, in this case the process of providing materials, learning strategies, assessment methods, and evaluation of results. of student learning. The teacher's educated perception influences performance and affects the learning process, which indirectly also affects students, so students have a perception of the English learning process that will change many things to explore.

There are different types of research on the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The focus of this research is generally on student and teacher perceptions of *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation. Various studies have been carried out on the perceptions of teachers in many places. For example, Perdana(2021)conducted research at Se-Kapanewon Tepus Elementary School. The results indicate that Kapanewon Tepus SD PJOK teachers' perception of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* as a whole is good. Another study conducted by Anwar (2021) in the Madiun and East Java regions showed that PAUD teachers' perceptions of learning with new paradigms led the *Kurikulum Merdeka* to have a direction, which corresponds to freedom of thought and freedom of thought. freedom of study for children. However, this

study was not conducted in North Bali middle schools. It is also important to know the perceptions of teachers and students in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the teaching and learning activities in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially in North Bali.

SMP Negeri 2 Sawan is a North Bali school that uses an *Kurikulum Merdeka* and applies the requirements of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, namely implementing differentiated learning. Before conducting this research, the researcher made preliminary observations to identify the problems in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. During the observation, the researcher found several problems, Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at SMP Negeri 2 Sawan begins in 2022/2023 year. SMP Negeri 2 Sawan is a *penggerak* school that can implement *Kurikulum Merdeka*, where the school meets the requirements and is ready to implement the new curriculum as a *penggerak* school that focuses on developing student learning outcomes holistically which includes competence (literacy and numeracy) and character, starting with superior human resources. The implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* is applied in grade 7th. Based on the description above, the writer intends to find out how teachers implement the activities of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially English subjects, and students' perceptions of the learning process in classroom based of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

1.2 Problem Identification

Based on the background, this study identifies some problems. First, teachers do not fully understand implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the first semester. The process of teaching and learning activities in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* focuses on the essential material and character development of Pancasila student profiles. The teacher should support the needs of teaching and learning activities in the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Second, every student and teacher at SMP N 2 Sawan has different skills in implementing the teaching and learning process due to differences in the ability to use media and technology for teaching and learning processes the

teacher's job to support the students. In addition, no research has been done on the teaching and learning activities of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially in Sawan with regard to English teaching. Based on the above situation, this research was conducted to find out the teaching and learning activities at SMP N 2 Sawan and the learning process from the perception of students and teachers.

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

To avoid misunderstanding, several limitations should be noted. First, this research was conducted at SMPN 2 Sawan. Second, to identify the activities contained in the module of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for the 7th Grade English Subject of SMPN 2 Sawan. Finally, this study focused on investigating the English teacher's perspective on the activities in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* English module and the responses of 7th graders about the ongoing learning activities.

1.4 Research questions

Based on the research background described above, the research questions of this study are:

1. What activities are available in the *module* of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for English subject of Grade 7 of SMPN 2 Sawan?
2. What activities are assigned to students during the English teaching and learning process in the classroom?
3. How do the English teachers perceive about the available activities in the *Module*?
4. How do the students perceive about the learning activities based on *Kurikulum Merdeka*?

1.5 Research objectives

Based on the research question above, the purpose of the study can be formulated as follows:

1. To identify what is contained in the *module* of *Kurikulum Merdeka* for Class 7 English Subjects at SMPN 2 Sawan.
2. To describe the activities assigned to students during the teaching and learning process of English in the classroom.
3. To describe the perception of the English teacher about the activities available in the *module*.
4. To describe students' perceptions of learning activities based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

1.6 Research Significance

This study has two significances as follows:

1.6.1 Theoretical significance

Theoretically, the benefits obtained are as a reference that can be used to obtain an overview of the Perceptions of English Teachers and students towards teaching and learning activities in the implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

1.6.2 Practical significance

- a) For school

Practically, the benefits obtained by the school are as information as well as input to parties involved in implementing the concept of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, especially for SMPN 2 Sawan.

- b) For the teachers

The results of this study are expected to be useful as a material for consideration in preparing lesson plans and improving teacher competency.

- c) For the student

The results of this study are expected to be felt by students by improving the learning concept so that the learning process can be carried out optimally.

