CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

In helping to make education more advanced, the Indonesian government has issued many programs that can support the progress of education. One of the government's efforts to support the progress of education in Indonesia is to issue a program called *Merdeka Belajar*. Nadiem Anwar Makarim as the minister of education and culture of the Republic of Indonesia or the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia is the person who designed the *Merdeka Belajar* program in which the concept of the program was strengthened by Nadiem's intention to make learning conditions carried out by teachers and students enjoyable and with unencumbered scores or achievement scores. The life of an advanced society indicates that the quality of education has improved (Neina, 2021). From this statement, by making learning fun and making it easy for students to understand the material, it will lead students to become more advanced and qualified, and make it easier for them to become an advanced society. According to Santosa (2022) stated that the program is a new breakthrough in the aspect of the Indonesian education system where the learning process provides independence and lots of space for students, teachers and schools to innovate and also participate in broader matters. Vhalery et al., (2022) say that *Merdeka Belajar* has the same concept as the ideals of the Father of Indonesian National Education or known as Ki Hajar

Dewantara which encourages the formation of an independent spirit character, because it focuses on freedom in terms of learning independently and also creative.

Merdeka Belajar has a program part in an effort to help improve the learning process called the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is focused on the profile of Pancasila students where the aim of this curriculum is to produce graduate students who can uphold character values and are also competent. Flexibility in creativity that is carried out in learning and knowing the needs, interests and talents as well as students' abilities is something that exists in the use of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Rahayu et al., 2022). This is similar to the focus of *Merdeka Belajar* where freedom is very much considered in learning, the freedom that is meant is freedom to learn creatively and innovatively and independently. The curriculum should indeed be able to improve the quality of learning and see what students need and also the development of students. The curriculum is also an example of a set of educational programs in which the program is structured and executed to achieve educational goals and in that there are components that are interconnected with each other (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). The effectiveness of the curriculum can be seen from the effective results of the curriculum whether it is in accordance with the guidance and needs, practicality, flexibility, relevance, continuity and effectiveness. It should also have a strong foundation and have principles in achieving educational goals. In this *Kurikulum Merdeka*, there is an approach that can be applied to assist learning activities and what is meant is project-based learning activities (Krishnapatria, 2021). The Project-based activity in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* basically frees students to learn and helps students to encourage their learning activities creatively and innovatively.

Project-based learning (PjBL) which from the name shows that in the learning and teaching process the project is used as a task. Hira et al., (2021) stated that using a project will be able to make students work independently or become the center of their learning, as well as work together in making projects in groups with the teacher as a facilitator and show the understanding they have while learning. The learning and teaching process that is carried out in stages (systematic) and invites students to produce products, gain skills and knowledge in improving the quality of life and express opinions by way of presentations related to complex tasks and issues in the real world is the purpose of project-based learning (Chen & Yang, 2018). Uziak (2016) argues that project based learning can help students be active, think critically, and solve problems in learning activities that can be done by discussing practical problems. Collaboration, communication and negotiation skills are better because they are trained when disseminating social learning with Project-Based Learning (Pan & Seow, 2018). Students can find out the relationship between practice and theory through the Project Based Learning approach, and gain a deep understanding of the lessons implemented (Beckett & Slater, 2018). The importance of student motivation is guaranteed by project-based assignments, when students are able to manage activities around them and interpret tasks or learning well, and believe in learning outcomes from themselves (Gomez-Pablos et al., 2017). Furthermore, Handrianto and Rahman (2018) stated that having deep and meaningful experiences for students is the goal of Project-Based Learning. Project-based learning asks for the results of a product that has been designed after solving a problem with a considered limited time (Veselov, 2019). Mahasneh and Alwan (2018) also argue that students' scientific abilities increase, such as increasing

problem solving, debating, asking questions and making conclusions caused by Project-Based Learning.

Based on the previous explanation both related to the *kurikulum merdeka* and project-based learning have been socialized and introduced whether it is done directly or indirectly (online media). However, there are still some who have not implemented this. Therefore, this study attracts the attention of researchers who are expected to know its application in learning activities.

Based on what was obtained in the preliminary observation and interview at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja with the related teacher, namely the English teacher. Which school implements a *kurikulum merdeka*. However, the new independent curriculum is only focused on grade 7, while for grades 8 and also grade 9 they still use the previous curriculum, namely K-13. Thus, for grade 7, they are required to implement a *kurikulum merdeka*, which in this curriculum is one aspect of the *kurikulum merdeka*, namely students are asked to make projects. With project learning required in the curriculum it can be said that in classroom learning, teachers can implement one of the approaches related to projects, namely project-based learning. It is certain that the projects contained in the independent curriculum can raise problems related to the presence or absence of project-based learning implemented in this *kurikulum merdeka*.

Based on the things that have been explained before, it is necessary to observe whether or not there is project-based learning in this *merdeka belajar (part of kurikulum merdeka)*. This was done because not many have researched the implementation of this *kurikulum medeka*. Based on that interest, the purpose of the

researcher is to describe the application of project-based learning in terms of *merdeka belajar* at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja.

1.2 Problem Identification

The government continues to strive to help improve the quality of education in Indonesia. Many things have been done by the government to help improve the quality of education in Indonesia, one of which is issuing a new policy or program called *Merdeka Belajar*. *Merdeka Belajar* also has several program sections to help improve the quality of education in Indonesia, the section is called the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* frees learning activities to be carried out innovatively and creatively by using the Project-Based Learning model. Here, the government asks schools, teachers and students to implement the model which calls for projects as their duty. Even though the distribution of information related to the new education program has been disseminated directly or indirectly, there are still schools that have not or have implemented the program that has been requested by the government. Therefore, it is very important to find out whether the school has implemented the Project-Based Learning model in learning at school.

1.3 The limitation of the problem

Based from the identification of the problems described previously, it can be seen that the focus of this research is to determine the implementation of Project-

Based Learning in schools in terms of Merdeka Learning, which is more precisely one of the schools in Singaraja, SMP N 4 Singaraja.

1.4 Research questions

Regarding to the identification of the problems above, the research questions for this study are as follows,

1. Is there any existence of implementation of Project-Based Learning at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja incase *Merdeka Belajar*?

2. How is the implementation of Project-Based Learning at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja incase *Merdeka Belajar*?

1.5 Objective of the study

Regarding to the research questions above, the objective of the study are as follows,

1. To identify the existence of implementation of Project-Based Learning at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja incase *Merdeka Belajar*

2. To describe the implementation of Project-Based Learning at SMP Negeri 4 Singaraja incase *Merdeka Belajar*

1.6 The significance of the study

In this significance of the study, there are two kinds of research significance that are expected to be achieved by this research, namely:

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, the research results contribute to knowledge related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning, especially incase of Merdeka Belajar and English Learning and also understand to implement the learning program.

2. Practical Significance

a. For Teacher

The results of this study can provide information related to Project-Based Learning. In addition, this research can also be a reference and guideline if the teacher wants to implement a learning program..

b. For Students

In the results of this study there is information related to the implementation of Project-Based Learning. And also for students if you want to know more about how the program was implemented at the time of research and what students focus on in its application.

c. For Other Researchers

The results of this study can be used as a reference for researchers who want to discuss the application of Project-Based Learning and are expected to be useful in conducting similar research related to the information needed in it by other researchers.