

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

The curriculum, which is considered the “spirit” of education, must be continuously reviewed, developed, and adapted in line with the rapid development of science and technology as well as the competencies required by graduates in the modern era. Curriculum development is therefore essential to ensure that education remains relevant, dynamic, and responsive to societal needs. In fact, due to the fast-paced development of knowledge and technology, education systems can no longer rely on outdated or rigid curriculum structures that do not reflect current educational demands.

According to Aytaç (2023), curriculum serves as a framework that guides learning objectives, teaching processes, and educational development in response to changing educational needs. As a goal, environment, and approach to education, the curriculum includes not only the design of learning materials but also social interactions and systematic instructional strategies within the classroom. It functions as a structured framework that guides teaching and learning processes in educational institutions. Therefore, curriculum management plays an essential role in ensuring that learning activities are conducted effectively, efficiently, and continuously through proper planning, implementation, and evaluation supported by feedback mechanisms Aytaç (2023).

In addition, curriculum development is not merely a technical process of designing lesson plans or teaching materials, but also a comprehensive effort to improve the overall quality of education. The role of educators in curriculum implementation is highly crucial, particularly in English language teaching. Besides delivering learning materials, they are expected to adapt instructional strategies to accommodate students' diverse needs and classroom conditions. Their perspectives provide valuable insights into how curriculum policies are translated into actual classroom practices and how challenges emerge during the implementation process, especially under the Merdeka Curriculum.

In the context of English language teaching, the curriculum plays a significant role in determining learning objectives, instructional strategies, classroom interaction patterns, and assessment practices. Any change in curriculum design will directly influence how teachers organize their teaching activities, deliver learning materials, and evaluate student performance. This indicates that the curriculum is a dynamic system that must continuously evolve to meet the changing demands of education in both local and global contexts.

Furthermore, the implementation of curriculum reform requires careful consideration of classroom realities. Although curriculum changes are intended to improve educational quality, their success depends greatly on how teachers interpret and implement them in actual teaching practices. Teachers play a central role as the main implementers of curriculum policies in the classroom.

Therefore, their readiness, understanding, and competence significantly affect the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

However, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in English language teaching has introduced various challenges for teachers, despite its emphasis on flexibility, autonomy, and student-centered learning. Many English teachers experience difficulties in adjusting their teaching strategies, particularly when shifting from traditional teacher-centered approaches to more independent and student-centered learning models. This transition often requires major adjustments in classroom instruction, teaching materials, and assessment methods.

According to Abidin and Malisa (2023), the Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes teaching at students' ability levels, ensuring every learner's right to learn, and providing sufficient opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy competencies. In English language teaching, this curriculum encourages teachers to adapt instruction based on students' learning needs and proficiency levels. However, such expectations also require teachers to make significant adjustments in instructional planning and classroom practices.

In addition, teachers face challenges in dealing with students who have different levels of English proficiency. Classroom diversity in terms of ability, motivation, and learning readiness makes it difficult to apply uniform teaching strategies. As a result, teachers are required to design learning activities that accommodate various student needs while still achieving learning objectives (Astuti et al., 2023).

Moreover, the transition from previous curricula to the Merdeka Curriculum requires a significant adaptation process for both teachers and students. Teachers are expected to design more flexible, creative, and student-centered learning activities. However, this adaptation process is not always easy, especially for teachers who have long been accustomed to structured and teacher-centered teaching systems. Therefore, the early stages of implementation often involve adjustment difficulties that may affect teaching effectiveness in the classroom.

Several studies have examined teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the Merdeka Curriculum. For example, Zebua et al. (2024) found that teachers appreciated the flexibility of the curriculum, which allows for more innovative and student-centered teaching practices. However, the study also identified several challenges, including limited learning resources, differences in student abilities, and increased administrative workload.

Similarly, Waruwu (2024) revealed that although the Merdeka Curriculum supports independent learning and creativity, teachers still face challenges such as heavy workload, lack of training, and limited institutional support. These challenges often affect teachers' confidence and effectiveness in implementing the curriculum in English language classrooms.

In addition, Supriyatin (2025) found that English teachers used various strategies to implement the Merdeka Curriculum, such as adapting teaching materials based on students' needs, integrating project-based learning, and utilizing digital media to enhance student engagement. However, the study also

revealed several challenges, including limited understanding of curriculum guidelines, insufficient training, time constraints, diverse student proficiency levels, and lack of teaching resources. These conditions affect teachers' confidence and consistency in applying the curriculum in English classrooms. The study emphasizes that successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum requires continuous professional development and strong institutional support.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, they mainly focus on general perceptions, teaching strategies, and implementation challenges. Limited attention has been given to the specific Challenges experienced by English teachers in their daily classroom practices. Therefore, a more focused investigation is needed to understand how curriculum changes influence teachers' workload, classroom management, student engagement, and instructional effectiveness from the perspective of an individual teacher.

From a broader perspective, curriculum implementation is not only influenced by policy design but also by teacher readiness, student readiness, and the availability of supporting facilities. Without adequate support systems, even a well-designed curriculum may not achieve its intended learning outcomes. Therefore, collaboration between teachers, schools, and educational policymakers is essential in ensuring successful curriculum implementation.

Furthermore, teacher readiness is considered one of the most influential factors in determining the success of curriculum implementation. Teachers

who possess adequate pedagogical knowledge, professional competence, and a clear understanding of curriculum objectives are more likely to implement educational reforms effectively. On the other hand, insufficient preparation may create challenges in lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment practices. Therefore, continuous professional development programs, workshops, and institutional support are necessary to help teachers adapt to curriculum changes and improve the quality of instruction. In the context of English language teaching, teacher readiness becomes even more important because language learning requires not only content delivery but also the development of communication skills, learner engagement, and meaningful classroom interaction.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum depends not only on curriculum design but also on teachers' readiness, institutional support, and the availability of adequate learning resources. Insufficient preparation and support may hinder the achievement of curriculum objectives and affect the effectiveness of learning activities in the classroom (Reffy et al., 2022).

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of understanding and knowledge in several of its chapters. Surah Az-Zumar 39:9 states:

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِثٌ أَنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُوا رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ
 فَلَمْ يَسْتَوِ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ



This verse highlights the distinction between those who possess knowledge and those who do not, emphasizing the importance of learning and understanding. In the context of education, it reflects the essential role of teachers in guiding students toward knowledge and academic development. Teachers are responsible for ensuring that students not only receive information but also understand and apply it meaningfully in their learning process.

In relation to this study, which focuses on an English teacher's perspective on Challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English, this verse emphasizes the importance of teacher competence and readiness in facing curriculum changes. Teachers are required to continuously adapt their teaching practices while maintaining the quality of English language instruction. Therefore, a competent and well-prepared teacher plays a crucial role in managing classroom challenges and supporting students' learning development.

Several previous studies have also examined curriculum implementation in English language teaching. Waruwu (2024) found that although the Merdeka Curriculum offers flexibility and supports student-centered learning, it also presents challenges such as limited infrastructure, lack of training, and classroom management difficulties.

However, most previous studies focus on general perceptions of curriculum implementation rather than in-depth exploration of teachers' lived experiences, particularly regarding on Challenges in the Merdeka Curriculum

in real classroom practice. This indicates a research gap that still needs further investigation.

In addition, previous studies generally involve multiple participants from different schools and focus on broad aspects of curriculum implementation. As a result, there is still limited understanding of how individual teachers experience and interpret the challenges of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in their daily teaching practices. Exploring a teacher's personal experience can provide a deeper and more contextual understanding of the difficulties encountered in the classroom. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by focusing on a single English teacher's perspective and examining on Challenges in the curriculum in a specific educational setting.

The difference between this study and previous research lies in its specific focus. While earlier studies examine general perceptions of curriculum implementation, this study focuses on an English teacher's perspective on Challenges of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English. It aims to explore how curriculum changes affect teaching practices, classroom management, student engagement, and teacher workload in real classroom contexts.

Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it enriches the literature on curriculum implementation in English language teaching. Practically, it provides insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and educational stakeholders in improving the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. The findings of this study are

expected to support the development of more effective teaching strategies, better training programs, and improved classroom practices.

Based on these considerations, this research is entitled:

“Exploring an English Teacher's Perspective on Challenges in the Implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in Teaching English.”

B. Definition of Key Terms

1. Teacher's Perspectives

Teacher's perspective refers to teachers' beliefs, perceptions, interpretations, and experiences regarding particular educational phenomena and practices. According to Borg (2003), teachers' perspectives are shaped by their prior experiences, professional knowledge, beliefs, and the contexts in which they teach. These perspectives influence how teachers understand, interpret, and respond to educational changes and classroom realities. In the context of this study, teacher's perspective refers to an English teacher's views, experiences, and reflections concerning the challenges encountered in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English. This perspective provides valuable insights into how the teacher perceives curriculum changes, addresses instructional challenges, and adapts teaching practices within the context of the Merdeka Curriculum.

2. Challenges

Challenges refer to the obstacles or difficulties encountered

during the implementation of educational policies and teaching practices. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), teachers often encounter various challenges when implementing educational reforms, including adapting instructional practices, assessment methods, classroom management, and professional responsibilities. In this study, challenges refer to the difficulties experienced by an English teacher in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, including increased workload, inadequate training and professional development, limited teaching resources, difficulties in applying differentiated instruction, integrating technology into teaching, and addressing students' diverse levels of English proficiency.

3. Merdeka Curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum is Indonesia's current educational framework designed to provide greater flexibility for both teachers and students. It strongly emphasizes student-centered learning and allows teachers to adapt lesson plans according to students' needs and learning contexts. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (2022), the Merdeka Curriculum focuses on essential competencies, character development through the Pancasila Student Profile, and flexibility in designing learning activities that support students' individual needs. In this study, the Merdeka Curriculum refers to its implementation in English language teaching, particularly focusing on the challenges encountered by an English teacher, including limited

resources, insufficient training, and difficulties in implementing new teaching strategies.

4. Teaching English

Teaching English is the process of teaching students the English language, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. According to Harmer (2015), teaching English involves selecting appropriate teaching methods, learning materials, and classroom activities that enable learners to develop their communicative competence effectively. In this study, teaching English refers to the process of implementing English language instruction under the Merdeka Curriculum, particularly in relation to the teacher's ability to deliver effective instruction while adapting to curriculum changes.

C. Research Questions

1. What the challenges does an English teacher face in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English?
2. What strategies does the English teacher use to overcome on Challenges in the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English?

D. Objectives of Study

1. To examine the challenges faced by an English teacher in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English
2. To identify the strategies used by the English teacher to overcome on Challenges in the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching English.

E. Significance of Study

1. Students

Students benefit from this study since it makes clear the difficulties teachers face while implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in English education. Students can become more conscious of possible gaps in their learning process and create ways to adjust to the evolving curriculum by comprehending these concerns. With this knowledge, people may be more proactive in their language learning process and guarantee that they receive an excellent education even in the face of curriculum-related challenges

2. Teachers

Because it demonstrates how the Merdeka Curriculum adversely affects their teaching strategies, this research is an excellent tool for English teachers. It can help teachers identify common problems including inadequate training, an increasing workload, and inefficient teaching strategies, as well as encourage conversations about possible solutions. Furthermore, the results may help teachers modify their methods to better meet curriculum modifications while upholding high standards for English language instruction.

3. Educational Institutions and Policymakers

The research's findings might be useful to policymakers and educational institutions in determining how well the Merdeka Curriculum teaches English. If institutions understand the difficulties instructors face,

they can take the necessary steps to provide more training, resources, and support systems. Policymakers may also utilize this research to examine curriculum policies and suggest modifications that will make it easier to execute them without compromising the ability of teachers to deliver high-quality instruction

4. Future Researchers

This study establishes the foundation for further research on the use of curriculum and its impact on English instruction. Future researches might look into alternative teaching methods, policy modifications, and teacher preparation programs to mitigate the negative consequences of curriculum changes. Comparative studies of the effectiveness of different curricula in a range of educational settings can also be conducted in order to develop more comprehensive and effective language teaching strategies.