

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Character education represents a few of the academic subject matter that professionals in education throughout the world are debating in order to foster oneself ethical behaviors. It is an intentional endeavor to cultivate moral values that are both beneficial to one's self and beneficial to the community (Lickona, 1996). As a result, it plays an important role in molding and directing one's personality from being incapable to understand and apply values appropriately to being able to do so.

Character education has emerged before the independence of Indonesia, then became more visible after the independence of Indonesia (Lubis, 2020). However, it was only introduced to educational institutions in the 2003 Education System Law. Character education then had been developed to 2010, however, was only applied to the character-based curriculum in 2013. In the 2017, it becomes more apparent in the character education strengthening program or Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (Kemdikbud, 2017). Character education application then undergoes adjustments and improvements which are expected to be more focused on strengthening optimal character values which are embodied in Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

In Merdeka Belajar curriculum, a program designed that bolsters the profile includes character education of Pelajar Pancasila (Kemdikbud, Profil Pelajar Pancasila - Direktorat Sekolah Dasar). In this curriculum there are three curriculum implementation options that are tailored to the readiness of educational institutions, namely Mandiri Belajar, Mandiri Berubah, and Mandiri Berbagi. While the Mandiri Berubah and the Mandiri Berbagi has fully applied the Merdeka Belajar curriculum, the Mandiri Belajar only apply some principles of it. Other than that, the distinct difference between these three can be found in the teaching tools and the application of character education. The Mandiri Berubah using teaching tools provided by the PMM (Platform Merdeka Mengajar) or the Merdeka Teaching Platform, while the Mandiri Berbagi using its own teaching tools and the Mandiri Belajar still using the 2013 curriculum as the basis for learning. With this development, moral values are expected to be absorbed by students optimally.

Character education concentrates on developing moral identity, which is compatible with the commandment in the Qur'an always perform ourselves in a good manner. This is reflected in various surahs in Al-Qur'an, such as in surah Al-Baqarah verse 83 below:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
وَرِزْقِي الْفُرْبَى وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا
الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

The surah teaches us to always be courteous and use proper language when communicating with other.

Character education is now increasingly important considering the high use of social media that also bring negative impacts for adolescents (Heriansyah, 2018). There are many negative influences in social media which include the action of hate speech, cyber bullying, and the spread of fake news. These actions can affect the behavior of adolescents directly or indirectly. Directly, they could have imitated one of these actions or, worse, become a victim. Indirectly, this can cause changes on the way they behave towards their surroundings to become more aloof or even rebellious. This tends to occur in early phase of adolescents which is a transitional phase from children to adolescents that in this developmental stage, the desire to fit in and be known is a powerful motivator. It can be perceived that the seventh graders belong to this phase as they have just graduated from elementary school to junior high school.

One of negative influence that may easily be found on the majority of seventh-graders of junior high school in Indonesia is imitating hate speech through mockery words. Not only it is becoming something common in conversation between peers in informal situation, but sometimes it also appears in formal situation as in learning activity. It is might be happened as the students are already get used to using it in daily conversation. It is concerning as it can be seen that the student is not only using inappropriate words to state a thought, but also has not been able to completely understand the concept of

formal and informal situation. Therefore, this is also part of teachers' responsibility as an educator in integrating character values to overcome this situation when it occurs and to prevent this from happening in the future.

This situation is also experienced by Junior High School 4 Banjarbaru in English learning process where there are seventh graders who mock their peers. This school is a part of character education pilot project school chosen by the Banjarbaru city education office in 2017 that the teachers in this school have received training on character education (Kurniawan, 2017). Hence, the teachers mostly already get used to integrating character values in learning activity and dealing with this negative behavior.

The school adheres the policy by the Ministry of Research and Technology, Education and Culture, including the curriculum in which the school implements Merdeka Belajar curriculum. Based on the three options provided by the government, the school choose the Mandiri Belajar that still utilizing teaching materials from the 2013 curriculum by applying the principles of Merdeka Belajar curriculum. As the school is a part of character schools, as a result the teachers are familiar with instilling character values in learning activities.

Character values seemed to be integrated much easier in English learning as most of the learning materials are acquainted with the daily and social lives of students that they can relate. As a result, the students will tend to find an ease to learn character values simultaneously.

In the implementation of character education, there are many research that has been conducted with various focuses. One of them is about the teacher's efforts and challenges in implementing character education which lead to the result that there are several things that the teacher can do. Those who are teaching by direct example, assigning a task, cultivating a habitual action, and serving as a role model. Furthermore, teachers face challenges in terms of commitment, support, and appreciation. (Heriansyah, 2018). There is also a study on the difficulties encountered by teachers in incorporating character education in line with the 2013 curriculum into the English learning process. It shows the challenges that English teachers across Indonesia encounter involve matching character education values with available materials, the diverse characteristics of learners, and strategies for integrating various characters into English lessons. (Pratiwi, 2018).

Moreover, a study on the implementation of character education in the 2013 curriculum, found that the teacher implemented some values in pre, whilst and post learning activity. The teacher faced challenges that come from the number of students, learning situations, and learning materials which lead the teacher to the opportunities that can be applied in implementing character education by undertaking class management and becoming students' role model. Based on a study about character education implementation in junior high school, the researcher found that the teacher implemented some character values in pre, whilst, and post learning activity (Purnamasari, 2021). In addition, teacher holds an important role as educator, facilitator and model that

demonstrates and applies character virtues to the students. Moreover, teacher applied various ways in order to instill character values in the classroom (Thoyyibah, 2019).

These studies show similarities on the implementation of character education that the teacher face the learning demands both English material and character values. However, there has not been found any study that discussed the implementation of character values in Merdeka Belajar curriculum in English learning process. Therefore, in order to bridge the literature gap, a study needs to be conducted.

B. Definition of Key Terms

The researcher would refine the points of key terms that are focal for the readers to understand as follows:

1. Implementation

Implementation refers to the actions taken to instill character education through certain strategies.

2. Character Education

Character education is an intentional attempt to promote virtues that will provide beneficials to both the individual and society.

3. Merdeka Belajar Curriculum

Merdeka Belajar curriculum is a learning recovery movement in which teachers have the flexibility to choose various instructional devices so that learning can be tailored to students' learning needs and interests.

4. English learning process

It refers to an ongoing process of efforts made by the teacher that is professional, deliberately in realizing the communication skill in English context.

C. Research Question

The researcher collects questions in accordance with the researcher's explanation in the background of the study as follow:

1. What are strategies used by the teachers in implementing character education in Merdeka Belajar curriculum in English learning process?

D. Research Objective

Accordance with the researcher explanation in the background of study, the objective of the study as follow:

1. To identify what are strategies used by the teachers in implementing character education in English learning process

E. Research Significance

The researcher expects that this research will be able to contribute to the scope of implementation of character education in Merdeka Belajar curriculum.

1. Theoretical significance

This study can be used as a starting point for future research on the topic of implementing character education in Merdeka Belajar curriculum

2. Practical significances:

- a. For future researcher: This research is expected to contribute additional information about character education and can be used as a reference for future researchers, especially in Merdeka Belajar curriculum.
- b. For teacher: This research is expected to provide additional information for teachers regarding the implementation of character education in English learning process in Merdeka Belajar curriculum.