

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the foundation and general outline of the study, which consists of the background of the study, the research question, the aim of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the clarification of key terms, and the organization of the paper also provided.

1.1 Background of the Study

Education is a human learning process to become individuals with character. As Purwanti (2021) mentions, education is a crucial aspect of life in the world community. In accordance with the importance of education, it is necessary to have an implementable and systematic educational curriculum to support the success of education. Bhuttah et al. (2019) stated that a curriculum is a set of objectives that provides opportunities for students to engage with various information and learning techniques. The curriculum is also defined as accumulating knowledge and learning experiences in various learning environments with varying cognitive content, instructional plan, and technology (Uphoff, 1982).

According to Olivia (2009); Ornstein and Hunkins (2009), curriculum development is a comprehensive process in which a curriculum is planned, designed, and implemented in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in curriculum development because their involvement and knowledge of the curriculum allow them to use current resources to achieve educational goals. Marsh (2009) supports that teachers are regarded as active participants in curriculum development, with the responsibility of adapting a curriculum to their teaching and learning activities.

The curriculum in Indonesia has had a massive development from comprehensive learning to student-centered learning. However, curriculum development in Indonesia is currently focused on technical issues and has not addressed substantial issues. Thus the quality of education in Indonesia has not

significantly improved. This was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which caused a different learning loss in the achievement of students' competencies. According to Rosser, King, and Widoyoko (2022), Indonesia has experienced a long learning crisis. Furthermore, Indonesia is ranked 73 out of 79 countries in literacy and numeracy (Mustaghfiroh, 2020). Therefore, The Ministry of Education and Culture designed the *Kurikulum Merdeka* as an essential part of the effort to recover learning from the crisis that had been experienced for a long time.

In addition, Abidah et al. (2020) explained that there are four main components in the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which aims to provide broad space for each student, teacher, and school in determining policy steps, including; (1) assessments in the form of written exams and/or assignments such as group assignments, essays, and portfolios, (2) provision of character surveys and minimum competency assessments, (3) implementation of one sheet lesson plan, and (4) implementation of the zoning system at admission new students.

On the other hand, *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a product based on globalization which encourages The Ministry of Education and Culture to always be adaptive and solutive. As stated by Prihantoro (2015), curriculum development must pay attention to the needs of the general public. This is influenced by individuals' needs to adapt to a complex society (Boyaci & Atalay, 2016). One of the essential educational needs, especially for primary school students, is the subject of English as an international language that everyone in the world should learn.

In addition, the primary school level is appropriate for introducing English as a foreign language (Ellis et al., 2002). Primary school students as young students are the best age group to learn English as a foreign language. However, in practice, English subjects in primary school have not been carried out properly due to a lack of preparation and implementation from the teacher (Rahayu et al., 2021). This describes that teachers are essential in achieving educational goals regarding teaching and educating students.

Furthermore, implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* requires teachers with the capacity and competence to realize comprehensive education implementation (Meliyawati et al., 2020). Teachers are expected to understand new things using technology to help implement effective teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, teachers should act as mentors, facilitators, and motivators to improve students' creativity and character. Based on this description, primary school English teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is needed to investigate.

From the description above, the researcher examines English teachers in primary schools who have been familiar with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This research starts from the fact that the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a new curriculum that requires teachers' understanding. Furthermore, different from previous studies, the authors mainly investigate the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in other fields. Therefore, with this research, the researcher wants to know the English teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the primary school level.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the research background, this research sought to answer the following question:

“What is primary school English teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*?”

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study investigates primary school English teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Little study has been conducted on teachers' understanding of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* at the primary school level. Thus, the present study is expected to fill the gap. Furthermore, this study focuses on the primary school English teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The results of the study are expected to be beneficial both in theory and in practice as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of this study is expected to contribute further knowledge regarding primary school English teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This research is expected to impact curriculum development and implementation from the school to the national level. Furthermore, this research is expected to produce some propositions as a comparison in developing English language learning and contribute ideas about the benefits of theory to the theoretical study of curriculum and learning.

2. Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study aims to reveal the understanding of English teachers in primary school to the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Thus allowing the next generation of students to be skilled and prepared for the future. The results of this study are expected to contribute to improving curriculum development. In detail, the results of this study are expected to be useful for:

- a. Teachers as input to improve the quality of the English teaching and learning process in the classroom.
- b. The Ministry of Education and Culture as an input in reviewing the English Curriculum documents developed to improve the quality of basic education.
- c. Future researchers to open insights for further research, especially in the issue of curriculum document studies, curriculum implementation, and teachers' understanding.

1.6 Clarification of the Key Terms

The definitions of the key terms that have been used in this study are as follows:

1. Curriculum

The term “curriculum” refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school. Furthermore, the curriculum is also interpreted to all of the organized courses, activities, and experiences which students gain in the learning process at school.

2. *Kurikulum Merdeka*

The term “*Kurikulum Merdeka*” refers to the new curriculum that revitalizes the education system in Indonesia with a project-based and cross-subject learning culture. In the case of current research, the term focuses on the key concept of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, the structure of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, learning and assessment process the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and learning environment in the English classroom based on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

3. Teachers’ Understanding

The term “teachers’ understanding” refers to the skills and knowledge that enable a teacher to be successful. This is related to the teachers’ understanding in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* including explaining the material, guiding, and evaluating students to improve their abilities.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

The paper is organized into five chapters. Each chapter has the capacity to explain the contents in detail.

1. Chapter I Introduction

This chapter presents the background of the study, the research question, the aim of the study, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the clarification of key terms, and the organization of the paper.

2. Chapter II Literature Review

This chapter presents the foundation of theories that are relevant to the topic of research. It will discuss the definition of curriculum, *Kurikulum Merdeka*, and teachers’ understanding. Several previous studies are also mentioned in this chapter.

3. Chapter III Research Methodology

This chapter describes the procedures of the research which are used by the researcher to conduct the fundamental research. It will include research design, research site and participants, data collection, and data analysis.

4. Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the result of the data and elaborates on the findings drawn from the data analysis. The research results also discussed the current literature review on the primary school teachers' understanding of the English Curriculum on the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

5. Chapter V Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter presents the conclusion from the research results and analysis. Recommendations that are expected will be beneficial to further researchers related to investigating teachers' understanding are also provided.