

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

An introduction to the study is given in this chapter. This chapter includes references to several significant topics. The background of the research, the identification of the problem, the research questions and objectives, and the research's significance are all included in this chapter. The researcher mentions the study's outline in the final section of this chapter.

#### **Background of the study**

Every civilization needs education to advance, and curriculum reform is crucial in determining the nature and course of the educational system. Reforming the curriculum has become a top concern in Indonesia, a nation dedicated to growing its educational system. Among these transformative efforts is the 2020 introduction of *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which seeks to empower teachers, promote a comprehensive education for pupils, and bring Indonesia's educational system into compliance with international norms (Deni et al., 2022). The successful implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* holds great relevance in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

*Kurikulum Merdeka* is a manifestation of a curriculum reform. It also includes transformative efforts that have the potential to change educational paradigms. Curriculum reform is a crucial tool for creating an educational system that is responsive to the constantly changing needs of the populace (Hakim, 2023). In

Indonesia, a nation with a strong commitment to developing its education sector, education reform initiatives have become top priorities, and commitments to prepare students for a constantly changing global landscape have been made (Legi et al., 2023). One such transformative initiative is the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, introduced in 2020.

Indonesia's education reform, which aims to modify the country's educational system to make it more flexible to the needs of the twenty-first century and to encourage student autonomy, creativity, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship, includes the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The idea of *Kurikulum Merdeka* is to give students the means to take ownership of their education and develop skills relevant to the modern world. The curriculum includes numerous elements, including competency-based learning, a student-based approach, and character education. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* places a strong emphasis on character education as well as the development of moral principles, social responsibility, and positive values in addition to academic knowledge and abilities. This entails raising kids' levels of integrity, empathy, respect, resilience, and cultural awareness.

*Kurikulum Merdeka*, taken as a whole, signifies a change toward a more inclusive and innovative educational system that equips pupils to succeed academically. In addition to imparting knowledge, the *Kurikulum Merdeka* aims to foster students' holistic learning by promoting the growth of their critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability (Yonata et al., 2022). Furthermore, this puts the Indonesian educational system in line with global norms and guarantees that everyone

is equipped to handle the difficulties brought on by quickly developing technology and more intensive networks (Yonata et al., 2022). The successful application of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English language learning program has a notable effect because it upholds the teacher's responsibility to promote students' language proficiency and comprehension of Indonesian culture in a global perspective.

The junior high school in Yogyakarta has been using the *Kurikulum Merdeka* for about a year, based on the researcher's experience organizing an internship program there. However, it became apparent that the school was up against several challenges when putting the curriculum into practice. During the program's implementation, researchers also noticed that junior high school instructors still had trouble putting the curriculum into practice. Teachers still struggle to adjust to the new curriculum and struggle to locate appropriate learning media. Thus, the *curriculum* and its implementation issues in schools are of interest to researchers.

Some studies related to have been carried out by researchers. For example, in his research entitled "Teacher's Experiences of Teaching English with the *Kurikulum Merdeka*", Noviyana, (2023), found that teachers experienced confusion in understanding and managing classes according to the provisions of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. So, learning English in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is still not effective in carrying out teaching in the classroom. Alimuddin, (2023) also conducted research with the title "Implementation of *Kurikulum Merdeka* in Elementary School." Research findings show that elementary schools have implemented learning

according to the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, but during implementation, there were obstacles related to understanding, all of this was caused by a lack of training.

While several studies have examined teachers' experiences in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. These researchers only focus on the advantages and challenges that arise when teachers implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. However, different from this research, the researcher focuses on challenges faced by the teachers in implementing the curriculum and the strategies to solve the challenges in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. There are several reasons why this research is being conducted. First, Evaluation of Curriculum Implementation: This research aims to evaluate the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in junior high schools in Yogyakarta by examining the experiences of EFL teachers. Understanding the challenges teachers face in implementing curriculum can provide valuable insight into curriculum effectiveness. Secondly, by investigating the experiences of EFL teachers, this research can identify the specific challenges and obstacles they face in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The study's overall objective is to improve curriculum implementation and raise educational standards by offering insightful information about the tactics and obstacles associated with *Kurikulum Merdeka* implementation in Yogyakarta junior high schools.

### **Identification of the Problem**

The implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which attempts to encourage a learner-centered approach and develop critical thinking abilities in pupils,

represents a dramatic shift in Indonesia's educational paradigm. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Yogyakarta junior high schools have both opportunities and challenges because of the curriculum implementation. Comprehending the obstacles encountered by educators and the tactics they utilize to surmount them is imperative for guaranteeing the successful execution of the updated curriculum and enhancing the educational journey for learners.

Determining the challenges EFL teachers in Yogyakarta junior high schools encounter while implementing the curriculum is the first research topic. This means looking at the difficulties and roadblocks teachers face when putting more student-centered, flexible curricula into practice. Based on my initial observations at Yogyakarta junior high schools, teachers noted difficulties in applying the curriculum, including a lack of knowledge and being unprepared when implementing the curriculum. Nonetheless, teacher comprehension and readiness are vital since they have a big influence on the educational system for students. A high level of readiness, according to Lynch et al., (2017), is necessary for great teaching methods that improve student learning outcomes.

The second research question focuses on the strategies used by EFL teachers to overcome the challenges faced in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Despite barriers, teachers can develop innovative approaches, adapt existing teaching methods, collaborate with colleagues, seek professional development opportunities, or utilize available resources to increase the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. However, based on my initial interview, one teacher explained that

they had difficulty implementing appropriate strategies. Because teachers still do not know what strategies they want to use to implement the curriculum, the strategies they use are still mixed with previous curriculum strategies. Therefore, researchers raised this title to identify the challenges faced by EFL teachers and suitable strategies to use to face the challenges of implementing the curriculum.

### **Delimitation of the Research**

Based on the problems in the previous section, this research is limiting research focus. The focus of this research is twofold, namely what challenges teachers face when implementing the curriculum and the strategies teachers use in implementing the curriculum. Second, the research location is also limited, taking the only place in junior high schools in Yogyakarta. Third, researchers also limit the participants to only six participants who will be recruited from EFL teachers for this research. Finally, the only research method used in this study was qualitative methods.

### **Research Questions**

Based on the background above, the researcher formulates two research question:

1. What are the challenges faced by the teachers' in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* at Junior High Schools in Yogyakarta?
2. What are the strategies to solve the challenges in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* by the teachers in Junior High Schools in Yogyakarta?

## **The Objective of the Research**

Based on the research questions, the research objectives are:

1. To explore the challenges faced by junior high school teachers in Yogyakarta when implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.
2. To explore the strategies to solve the challenges in implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka* by teachers in junior high schools in Yogyakarta.

## **The Significance of the Research**

The results of this study are expected to provide benefits and knowledge for teachers, institutions, and further researchers.

### ***For the teacher***

The results of this study can help teachers better understand how to apply the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the difficulties that have been mentioned to reduce or eliminate teachers' inability to implement it. In addition, it is envisaged that this research will assist educators in anticipating problems, so they don't encounter them. Teachers who encounter comparable issues and challenges might utilize the same tactics found in this research to assist them in discovering solutions. As a result, educators can utilize this research as a resource to identify the difficulties associated with adopting the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and to determine effective coping mechanisms.

### ***For the institution***

The results of this study are expected to assist institutions in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Because the results of this study discuss how a teacher

implements the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in learning English and find out what the teacher's challenges in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Apart from that, this research can help institutions improve the quality of learning in junior high schools and can help institutions develop more appropriate strategies and programs to achieve learning goals.

### ***For the future researchers***

By conducting this research, future researchers can study teachers' experiences in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in junior high schools. In addition, the results of this research can be used by future researchers as a theoretical basis for additional research on the same subject and can even become recommendations for further research. Therefore, conducting this research can also inspire researchers to research the challenges and strategies for overcoming the challenges of implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* related to this research in other junior high schools or at the high school level.

### **Organization of the Chapter**

There are five chapters in this research, each of which provides an overview of the previous chapter. The introduction to the research is presented in the first chapter. There are six sections to an introduction: the study's background, its problem statement, its scope, its research question, its goal, and its significance.

The second chapter of the study is devoted to the literature review. This chapter offers all the details and fundamental theory necessary to discuss the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The literature review highlights several



theories relevant to this research. In addition, this second chapter covers the concept of composition for teachers facing the challenges of implementing the Curriculum, strategies for overcoming the challenges of implementing the Curriculum, and related study reviews. The conceptual framework is also included at the end of chapter two by the researcher. The conceptual framework is provided in the section following chapter two.

A discussion of research methodology is found in chapter three. The research methodology and data collection techniques are clearly explained in this chapter. In addition, chapter 3 contains seven methodology components: research design, research setting, research participant, data collection method, data collection procedure, data analysis, and data analysis.

Chapter four is to provide comprehensive information about collecting data on research findings. Chapter Four explains the results of data analysis. There are two main things described in this chapter, namely findings and discussion. There are two main findings related to the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* and the challenges teachers face when implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

The recommendation and conclusion are included in chapter five. The researcher summarizes the research findings in this chapter about the research problems. This chapter also contains recommendations for some parties such as teachers, students, and future researchers.