
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM MERDEKA IN THE CONTEXT OF ENGLISH LEARNING

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine how the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in a Junior High School in Pontianak. The method in this study uses descriptive qualitative, which describes the subject about the situation and data obtained during interviews and observations so that it becomes useful information and can be easily understood by readers. This research provides an overview and explanation of the progress, challenges, and recommendations after the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka in a Junior High School. The result of this study is that the implementation of Curriculum Merdeka has been well implemented and is ongoing, in which there are perceived progress, especially in learning, even so there are still challenges in carrying it out, so there needs to be good cooperation between schools, principals, teachers, students, and parents.

Keywords: Curriculum Merdeka, English Learning, Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum is a very important part of education, in order to smooth the various processes that are in it. The curriculum is used as a guideline for most schools and teachers in developing learning tools that will be used in classroom learning. this is what will always be part of the educational goals in Indonesia so that all students receive an equal education (Muyassarotul & Hafidzoh, 2022).

The curriculum is useful for teachers, as a guide in preparing and preparing lesson plans so that the learning process becomes directed and effective. According to Rahayu et al (2022), as an instrument to improve the quality of education, the curriculum includes the objectives and formulation of the content of learning activities that can prepare students to be able to carry out the work assigned in the future with a variety of abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and good values.

In Indonesia, there have been many changes and improvements to the curriculum and in 2019, Nadiem Makarim as Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Mendikbud Ristek) initiated the Merdeka Curriculum, which was then tested in 2020 and began to be used in 2022. The Merdeka Curriculum is a curriculum that follows the development of modern technology and the learning system must be creative and innovative. Merdeka Curriculum is a learning design that provides opportunities for students to learn independently, not feeling

pressured, calm, happy, relaxed and of course paying attention to the natural talents of students. In its implementation, teachers are allowed to use various teaching tools so that they can be tailored to the learning needs and interests of students.

The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has undergone many changes and there are challenges that schools, teachers, students must go through, especially in English language learning. There are studies that discuss the Merdeka Curriculum, the first is research from Damayanti et al (2022), which suggests that there are several challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum, namely in Indonesian language learning. Furthermore, namely research from Fitriah & Wardani (2022), which found that the paradigm of the Merdeka Curriculum for elementary school teachers is something new and needs guidance in preparing everything for its implementation. In research from (Rahayu et al., 2022), it was revealed that by implementing the Merdeka Curriculum, there were changes felt by the school and teachers could take free steps to be creative.

In connection with the challenges faced by teachers and students above, the researcher is motivated to conduct research as an evaluation material on the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out what progress and difficulties are faced, especially in learning English and what are the recommendations for this.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Curriculum

In the field of education, having a curriculum is sign of how well a nation is doing with its educational system. This affirmation highlights how crucial it is for a nation to study, design, test, revise, and decide on the curriculum that will be used or mandated in all of its educational establishments (Werang, 2015). According to Hamalik in Mustari (2014), curriculum is a collection of plans and arrangements on goals, content, and learning resources as well as the procedures utilized as rules for structuring learning activities to meet certain educational objectives. Additionally, according to Nurdin & Sibaweh (2015), the curriculum is a course of study that students are required to do as part of the school's official programme in order to meet learning objectives. According to Mustari (2014), the curriculum is essentially created by organizing a number of activities that include student learning plan and students experiences that they have gained from their education both inside and outside of the classroom. In order to help

teachers create and prepare lesson plans, gather materials for objectives, and assess student learning in the classroom, the curriculum serves as a crucial resource.

2. The Relationship Between Curriculum and Learning

Education and curriculum are closely related, the curriculum system's constituent parts will subsequently give rise to a teaching system, which will direct the instructor during the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Fauzan, 2017). A curriculum is a set of instructional activities that students follow in school that includes learning objectives, instructional materials, learning procedures, and learning assessment. The curriculum was conceptually created by experts and has been applied as a national policy and guide for carrying out instruction. All learning processes, however, must take the curriculum to consideration when choosing strategies, approaches, and content, as well as when evaluating students. The idea of learning is expanding at the moment; learning activities are becoming more complex and pay attention to various learning patterns (Fauzan, 2017).

3. Curriculum in English Learning

Every curriculum revision aims to advance and raise the standard of education in Indonesia by keeping up with the times. Numerous changes have been made to the way English is taught in schools. The curriculum was introduced in 1984 and adopted a communicative approach, but it still emphasised reading comprehension and grammar. The 2004 Curriculum is competence-based and incorporates real learning resources that have been appropriated from the target language's culture. Due to a lack of understanding, this also makes it challenging for teachers and students to comprehend the content. In order to update the 2004 Curriculum, a school-based curriculum was introduced in 2006 along with a policy requiring each school to create its own learning materials. However this approach was deemed insufficiently effective since not all educational units were prepared equally (Widyaiswara, 2014).

The government also constantly revises the curriculum in order to improve upon the previous curriculum as a result, the 2013 Curriculum has undergone some fairly substantial changes, where in the English is not eliminated, particularly for elementary schools. The uneven distribution of English lessons in elementary school's implementation varies depending on its policies regarding to keep English lesson in the curriculum or not (Ardaya et al., 2022). Every curriculum development has a policy regarding how its learning system is to be implemented. For example, the 2013 curriculum does not apply English subjects at the elementary school level. On

the other hand, the KTSP curriculum and the Curriculum Merdeka which are currently being implemented actually apply English subjects at the elementary school level.

4. Curriculum Merdeka

A lot of changes have been made to the educational system and its constituent parts since the Curriculum Merdeka was implemented. These changes aimed at advancing education in general and at improving teacher and students performance in particular. The teaching and learning process between teacher and students has changed as a result of the Curriculum Merdeka implementation. Learning now more creative and innovative, and technology is being used more effectively as a tool to support learning based on the idea of Curriculum Merdeka. The Curriculum Merdeka is significant component of Indonesian educational. Progress, and it unquestionably takes into account recent advancements (Rahayu et al., 2022). According to Yamin & Syahrir (2020), the Curriculum Merdeka is a realignment in Indonesia's national education system that is part of the country's efforts to advance change and progress and prepare it for the times ahead. Minister Nadiem Makariem has also stated that "Cultural transformation must be carried out in order to implement education reform, an administrative approach cannot accomplish this (Satriawan et al., 2021).

The Curriculum Merdeka has been implemented in a few schools in Indonesia, though not all of them have done so simultaneously. In order to help students learn more thoroughly, meaningfully, and joyfully and not in a rush the Curriculum Merdeka concentrates on key subjects and builds student competency throughout each phase (Kemendikbud, 2021). Through project activities that can offer more chances for students to actively investigate real-world issues like environmental, health, and other issues to support the character development and competency profile of Pancasila students, the learning process will become more interactive and relevant (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). In order to realise an advanced Indonesia that is sovereign, independent, and has personality, the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia issued Decree Number 56/M/2022. This is a form of full support for the curriculum's improvement. The goal is to create Pancasila students who are critical, creative, independent, faithful, pious to God Almighty, and have noble character. They also work together and have global diversity through the implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

Teachers and schools are free to choose what constitutes appropriate learning, and the curriculum is flexible and student-centered. In contrast to the 2013 curriculum, the Curriculum Merdeka introduces the concept of “Freedom to Learn,” which, according to Sherly et al. (2020), means granting schools, teachers, and students the freedom to innovate and learn in a self-directed and creative manner. This freedom begins with the teacher. The curriculum now places more emphasis on quality learning for the realisation of quality students characterized by the Pancasila youth profile, which identifies competent Indonesian human resources prepared to take on global challenges rather than requiring students to meet a minimum completeness score (Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022).

METHOD

This research uses descriptive research with a qualitative approach. According to (Sugiyono, 2020), qualitative research is a process of collecting data in a natural way with the aim of analyzing the phenomena that are happening. This descriptive method is a method that describes, describes, and analyzes or explains the findings of the data obtained without drawing broad conclusions. This research was conducted at a state of junior high school in Pontianak. In this study using observation and interview techniques to collect data. Observations were made in the eighth grade when learning took place, to find out the situation and atmosphere when learning. Interview were conducted for collect data that is useful for knowing and describing progress, challenges that faced by Headmaster, English Teachers, students, and other subject teacher after implementing the Curriculum Merdeka in school, as well recommendations given to overcome this problem. Interview questions totaling 50 questions where researcher conducted interview offline to the Headmaster as many as 11 questions, two English teachers in the eight grade as many as 14 questions, other subject teacher as many as 11 questions, and also four students of eight grade as many as 14 questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There are progress and challenges faced, as well as recommendations at a State of Junior High School in Pontianak as subject in this research after implementing Curriculum Merdeka from the academic year of 2022/2023, the result of the research and discussion were obtained as follows:

1. The Progress in the Implementation of Curriculum Merdeka

a. Differentiated Learning (Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi)

Administrative Preparation. In the Curriculum Merdeka, before the teacher compiles and makes teaching modules, what must be done is to prepare a diagnostic test to be given and filled in by students at the beginning of learning to find out what students need. After knowing what students need for the learning process, teachers can design teaching modules that are in accordance with the Flow of Learning Objectives (ATP) and based on the development of Learning Outcomes (CP). For assessment, there are summative and formative assessments, summative assessment is the achievement of student learning outcomes by comparing learning achievements with Criteria for Achieving Learning Objectives (KKTP), formative assessment is an assessment to determine the extent to which Learning Objectives (TP) have been achieved by students.

Analyzing Students Needs. In the learning process in implementing the Curriculum Merdeka, there is differentiated learning, the teacher plays an important role at the beginning of learning, the teacher must map students based on their interests, talents, and or learning styles, so that the teacher can provide what students need during the learning process. In this differentiated learning, it focuses on essential material so that learning is more in-depth, but not wordy.

Learning Process Is Flexible. In the Curriculum Merdeka, learning is student-centered, namely by developing the potentials, talents, and abilities that exist within each student. Teachers must be able to make learning meaningful and fun, so teachers are given the freedom to innovate and be creative in determining what to use in learning.

Students Become More Active. In learning English in a state of Junior High School as the subject of this research, the teacher gives a brief explanation of the material and then students are more to discuss and present in front of the class so that students become more courageous to express opinions using English and become more active in learning.

The principal, English teachers, teachers of other subjects, and also students feel very happy and welcome the existence of this Curriculum Merdeka, because this curriculum provides another view that in learning students must be the center, so that all students cannot be forced to be the same, but the teacher must be able to act as a facilitator who can teach and adjust to what students need.

Differentiated learning, where learning is tailored to different student abilities and of course the way of teaching is different, so that teachers must map students first according to the interests

and talents of students, this is in accordance with the opinion (Sumarsih et al., 2022). Student-centered learning gives teachers the freedom to design learning according to the needs and characteristics of students. The material presented in differentiated learning is more concise and meaningful, then the teacher as a facilitator can provide learning outside the classroom, this makes students explore themselves more so that they get a good experience, besides that students can be more active, become independent, and can think critically, this is in line with the opinion (Rahayu et al., 2022). For assessment in the Curriculum Merdeka, there are diagnostic, summative, and formative assessments, which are comprehensive assessments that encourage students to have competencies according to their interests and talents without burdening students with achieving minimum scores or it is said that there is no more KKM in the Curriculum Merdeka, this is in accordance with the opinion (Rahayu et al., 2022).

b. Technology-Based Learning (Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi)

Teachers Create Interesting Learning Media. Teachers must make optimal use of technology, especially in learning English, by utilizing technology teachers can create interesting learning media, such as in learning English at a state of Junior High School as subject in this research, teachers have utilized the application to edit which is used to make power points so that they are more interesting and not monotonous, then display the power point in front of the class using a projector.

Students Become Happy And Creative In Learning. In learning using technology, students pay more attention when the teacher explains, they feel happy when learning using media such as power point, so they are not bored, besides that in one of the learning materials students are asked to edit an assignment using any application they can use, and it turns out that students are good and creative in making these edits.

Technology-based learning is that teachers make optimal use of technology when teaching, thus making learning fun, creative, and by utilizing technology it can make it easier for teachers to create learning media that is interesting and not monotonous so that students feel happy and not bored, besides that using technology when learning makes students not stuttering technology, this is in line with the opinion (Rahayu et al., 2022).

c. Project-Based Learning (Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek)

Students Collaborative. In the Curriculum Merdeka, there is something called P5 (Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila), where students are asked to make projects outside of learning

hours. With this project, students do more activities in collaboration and work with their friends in groups to create and present their products. In a state of Junior High School as the subject of this research, students are asked to make products with the theme "Local Wisdom".

Students Become More Creative And Productive. In English learning, project-based learning has also been implemented. By making these simple products, students become productive and more creative in expressing their ideas in making something so that it becomes interesting to see.

Project-based learning makes students more productive and creative, which the Curriculum Merdeka provides flexibility and focuses on developing students' uniqueness and abilities, in accordance with the opinion (Rahayu et al., 2022). With project-based learning, students receive quality, expressive, and progressive learning, and that way the Pancasila student profile can be embedded in everyday life (Sumarsih et al., 2022). Students are given the freedom to express ideas for the products they work on, and explore their ability to learn new things, this is in accordance with the opinion of (Melani & Gani, 2023).

2. The Challenges in the Implementation of Curriculum Merdeka

a. Differentiated Learning (Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi)

Teacher's Ability To Map Students. The first challenge faced after implementing the Curriculum Merdeka is that teachers still do not fully understand how to map students and determine students who can learn independently, need guidance, are guided, and are guided, so teachers have difficulty because teachers must first collect student data.

Difficult To Manage The Time Due To Being Taken For A Project. The next challenge is that it is difficult for teachers to maximize learning, because after the implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka, the lesson hours, especially English, which are usually four lessons a week, are now three hours for class learning and 1 hour specifically for projects, so teachers must be extra in maximizing time in the classroom.

Teacher's Knowledge About Curriculum Merdeka. Teachers experience difficulties, especially in preparing teaching tools, due to the lack of knowledge and references related to the Curriculum Merdeka so that teachers have to find out and understand for themselves how to do learning in the Curriculum Merdeka.

The Student's Abilities And Motivation. Students' different learning abilities and motivation make learning less optimal, because there are still students whose English skills are low so they

have not learned independently, besides that there are still students who lack motivation in learning English so they are still afraid to be active in the classroom when they are discussing or when studying in groups.

The challenges faced in differentiated learning are that teachers are required to be able to understand the characters and needs of students, their interests and talents, with the mapping process, teachers are also still confused and have difficulty in determining learning models, types of learning and differentiated learning media because students have different characters, interests and ways of learning, besides that learning time is reduced because it focuses on project activities so that teachers have difficulty maximizing learning activities, in accordance with the opinion of (Melani & Gani, 2023).

b. Technology-Based Learning (Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi)

Difficulty Mastering Basic Skills for Using Technology. The challenge in technology-based learning is that teachers' ability to utilize technology is still lacking, teachers find it difficult to use technology in learning because they do not know how to use it.

The Facilities to Support Learning are Still Lacking. The next challenge in technology-based learning is that the facilities provided by the school are still not enough, in a state of Junior High School as the subject of this research the projector provided by the school is still limited and if you want to use the projector you have to take turns with other teachers, so it is a little inhibiting if the teacher has to use the projector simultaneously.

Challenges in technology-based learning, where teachers still do not master technology due to lack of knowledge about how to use the latest applications, where teachers are required to be able to create learning media that are interesting, varied and in accordance with the needs of students to meet learning in the 21st century, in addition, facilities such as projectors as a supporter of technology-based learning are still insufficient so that teachers have difficulty and must take turns when going to use the projector, this is in line with the opinion of (Damayanti et al., 2022).

c. Project-Based Learning (Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek)

Inadequate Funds. In project-based learning carried out by the subject of this research, there are still obstacles related to funds to support the projects made, this is because the school implements the Curriculum Merdeka independently.

The challenge in project-based learning faced by schools is in terms of funding, where all forms of funding to implement projects in learning, especially English, come from personal funds

not from government assistance, so funding for implementation must be budgeted properly, this is in line with the opinion of (Redana & Suprpta, 2023).

3. The Recommendations in the Implementation of Curriculum Merdeka

a. Differentiated Learning (Pembelajaran Berdiferensiasi)

Make Assessments To Map Students. Teachers should make assessments in advance, namely cognitive or non-cognitive assessments, this is a way to make learning fun and students feel enthusiastic because it does not force students to learn and adjusts to what students need.

Change Mindset. Teachers are expected to always keep up with changes and of course, they must change their mindset and old habits and replace them by trying new things related to differentiated learning in the Curriculum Merdeka. Teachers must find a way out in dealing with existing problems, such as by making learning meaningful and interesting but still maximizing the time available.

Teachers Collaborate and Frequently Access PMM. Fellow teachers must share knowledge with each other in order to facilitate the learning process at school, in this case, teachers can collaborate with each other to form a teaching forum, besides that, they also find out about the Curriculum Merdeka from the Platform Merdeka Mengajar (PMM).

Increase Knowledge Regarding Teaching Methods. As a teacher, must always upgrade yourself, especially in how to teach students, students have different characters and abilities, so teachers must be more creative in preparing teaching tools that are in accordance with the abilities and characters of students.

In differentiated learning, teachers must adapt to what students need in learning, and make students feel comfortable and motivated to learn (Rahayu et al., 2022). In addition, teachers play an important role in learning, and with the implementation of the new curriculum, teachers must increase their knowledge and also take part in gradual training, such as training on student-centered teaching strategies, improve their ability to prepare differentiated learning according to guidelines, and must change their mindset in applying old paradigm learning to the new paradigm (Sumarsih et al., 2022). The government has also prepared the Merdeka Mengajar Platform (PMM) which can be accessed by teachers and provides content related to learning, besides that, fellow teachers must share and collaborate with each other to create interesting and diverse learning.

b. Technology-Based Learning (Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi)

Take Part In Workshop Activities About Using Technology For Teaching. Teachers must always learn throughout their lives to improve their teaching skills by keeping up with developments in the digital era, such as by participating in workshop activities about making learning media using technology.

School Ensure Support The Required Facilities. Schools should also be able to support, provide, and fulfill the facilities needed in teaching in today's digital era.

Technology-based learning, namely the need to increase teacher resources to support the successful implementation of the Curriculum Merdeka, a way that can be done is to increase teacher competence in using technology through various sources such as attending learning media development workshops, asking teachers who understand technology better or by learning through social media (Melani & Gani, 2023).

c. Project-Based Learning (Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek)

Include The Student's Parents Participation. By including parents in helping to finance the project activities of their sons and daughters so that the activities can run well.

Project-based learning that can be done is to include the role of parents in supporting their children's project activities at school by providing financial support (Redana & Suprpta, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of Curriculum Merdeka, especially in English language learning at a state of Junior High School as the subject of this research, is going well and there are progress, challenges and recommendations, where in differentiated learning, namely student-centered learning so that students become more active, creative, and dare to speak in front of the class. Technology-based learning makes students feel happy when learning because it is not monotonous, besides that students become creative. Project-based learning makes students able to collaborate and work together in groups, and makes students more creative and productive.

The challenges faced in implementing the three lessons are the difficulty in maximizing learning time because it focuses on projects, lack of student motivation in learning English, teachers' ability to use technology, and inadequate facilities.

The recommendations for the existing challenges are that teachers must change their mindset from old habits to new habits, teachers must always upgrade themselves, increase

knowledge related to the Curriculum Merdeka at PMM, and fellow teachers must share and collaborate with each other.

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