

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Problem

Education is crucial for holistic human development, encompassing mindset, attitude, character, language, and societal contributions. It involves structured efforts to foster critical, creative, and innovative thinking, leading to intellectual growth and strong moral values. In Indonesia, education serves as the foundation for national advancement, aiming to create an independent and competitive society. Quality education can enable people to achieve their potential and support the development of a just, prosperous and sustainable society. Improving education quality is essential for sustainable development. Indonesia's education system, rooted in Pancasila and national laws, is tailored to its unique cultural and demographic characteristics. Aligned with SDG's (Sustainable Development Goal) according to Aziz and Najicha (2024) especially number 4 about quality of education, which promotes education that is inclusive, fair, and of high quality, Indonesia has introduced "*Merdeka Curriculum*". That offers a flexible, learner-centered approach that fosters creativity, critical thinking, and active learning (Safitri et al., 2022).

The *merdeka* curriculum supports students' development through diverse extracurricular activities and flexible teaching materials tailored to their needs. It emphasizes the Pancasila student profile and aligns with government themes (Kemendikbudristek, 2022). Since 2022, over 140,000 schools have adopted it as an enhancement not a replacement of the 2013 curriculum, providing flexibility throughout the 2022-2024 educational recovery phase. Unlike rigid 2013 curriculum, which limits deep learning with strict schedules and dense content, the *merdeka* curriculum offers a flexible structure for in-depth exploration, diverse teaching methods, and digital integration (Rahayu et al., 2022). Teachers can allocate lesson hours annually, focus on core material, and customize learning with digital tools. However, this flexibility poses classroom management challenges, especially in accommodating diverse student needs. Elementary teachers must adapt methods to foster an engaging, holistic learning environment, ensuring optimal outcomes.

The primary determinant that serves as a benchmark for the success of the *merdeka* curriculum implementation is educators, who play key roles as implementers, adapters, developers, and researchers (Agustinus, 2022). They set learning objectives, plan and conduct lessons, evaluate outcomes, also modify the curriculum to align with students' needs and local contexts. Alongside autonomy and flexibility, teachers design content, strategies, and assessments to enhance learning. In English language teaching, this adaptability allows them to tailor lessons to students' proficiency levels, learning styles, and cultural contexts, fostering meaningful communication and critical thinking. English in the *merdeka* curriculum emphasizes communication, integrated skills, and a student-centered approach. Students actively use English in real situations through methods like communicative, project-based, and task-based learning. Teachers have the flexibility to set objectives based on students' linguistic and communication skills while fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. This flexibility allows for innovative teaching methods, including technology integration, to create engaging learning experiences, helping students master English for both communication and self-development.

Effective classroom management is key to optimally the English subject in *merdeka* curriculum. It involves organizing and optimizing the learning environment to enhance focus, structure, and productivity. Strategies include clear expectations, positive relationships, and a balanced structure. In project-based learning, teachers facilitate collaboration, manage time, and provide guidance. Technology, such as digital platforms and interactive tools, further enriches learning. Strong management creates an engaging, inclusive, and effective learning experience. The central role of teachers in English classroom management. Teachers act as managers, facilitators, motivators, and evaluators who are expected to be flexible customize strategies towards needs of learners. Mubarak et al., (2023) underlined essence of collaboration and project-based approaches in the *merdeka* curriculum, despite facing challenges such as media limitations, gaps in understanding, and discipline and time management. In conclusion, teachers must be adaptive in creating a conducive learning situation,

supporting learners' exploration, also overcoming various challenges for optimal learning outcomes.

Initial observations indicated that classroom management in English learning through the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi was not optimal. During the learning process, the classroom atmosphere appeared to be less than enjoyable for students, with a lack of variety in learning media and strategies that caused students to quickly become bored. Additionally, there were still students who remained passive, unmotivated, and not actively engaged in learning activities. Teachers strove to apply a student-centered approach, but limitations in managing time, maintaining classroom discipline, and facilitating diverse learning needs posed significant challenges. This impacted the implementation of project-based learning (PBL), which should have been a key feature of the *merdeka* Curriculum. Furthermore, the use of technology in English learning had not been fully optimized. This situation resulted in learning activities that did not fully support the achievement of the *Pancasila* learner profile, which emphasized creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking. Therefore, this research was considered important to describe how classroom management was realized in English learning through the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum at SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi, as well as to identify the challenges faced by teachers in the process. For this reason, the researcher conducted a qualitative study titled **“Analysis of Classroom Management in English Learning through the Implementation of *Merdeka* Curriculum at the Eighth Grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi”**.

## **1.2 Focus of the Research**

There were the research focuses:

1. Describing the realization of classroom management of English learning through the implementation of *merdeka* curriculum at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi.
2. Analyzing the challenges faced by English teachers' in managing classrooms during the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum in English learning at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi.

### **1.3 Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the background there were formulations of the problems:

1. How was the classroom management realization implemented in English learning under the *merdeka* curriculum at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi?
2. What were the challenges faced by English teachers' in managing classrooms during the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum in English learning at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi?

### **1.4 Objective of the Research**

Based on formulation of the problem the objectives of this research were:

1. To analyze how the realization of classroom management in English learning under the *merdeka* curriculum at the eighth grade of SMP Negeri 1 Gunungsitoli Idanoi.
2. To identifying the challenges faced by English teachers in managing the classroom during the implementation of the *merdeka* curriculum.

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

The results of this study are expected to be used as information and increase insight for both the author and the reader regarding classroom management in the learning process.

#### **2. Practical Significance**

- a. For teachers, expected to be a source of information and insight for educators, enabling them to implement effective classroom management in accordance with existing circumstances and adapt to the applicable curriculum.
- b. For the future Researchers, expected to serve as a reference for further research and can be further developed.
- c. For University of Nias, expected to serve as a consideration for educational institutions in implementing classroom management in every aspect of their teaching and learning process.