

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problem

Education is one of the important elements in the development of a nation, because through good education, the quality of human resources can be improved. In Indonesia, the education system continues to undergo updates to create education that is more relevant to the needs of the times and world developments. One of the major steps taken by the Indonesian government is the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a major change in education in Indonesia, which emphasizes a broad and flexible approach to learning (Irawati et al., 2022). The goal of this curriculum is to equip students with the abilities and expertise necessary for modern life (Ingias et al., 2022). This curriculum is designed to provide flexibility to educators and students so that they can learn more flexibly, creatively, and according to their respective potentials.

Hazmi (2019), teachers not only play an important role in the world of education but are also a determining factor in the success of education. Teachers must gain a better understanding of how the *kurikulum merdeka* is implemented. Moreover, teachers must change the way they view many new elements introduced in this new curriculum. The ideal educational goals cannot be achieved if teachers do not make changes or do not apply all the principles contained in this curriculum. However, many English teachers face various difficulties when doing so. Teachers must understand new ideas, incorporate innovative methods, and adjust their methods to the diverse backgrounds of students as the main actors in the learning process. The readiness of teachers to implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is still an issue. Several factors influence this, such as the limited number of instructions, lack of facilities, and insufficient understanding of how this curriculum can be used in classroom life.

Although the goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* are very positive and promise progress for the world of education, in reality, its implementation in the field does not always go smoothly. Amid the technological advancements in the 4.0 industrial era in secondary schools, there are several issues in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. They include the need for independent educational institutions, the need for consistent improvement in teachers' abilities, and the need for adequate infrastructure (Sinulingga, 2022). Additionally, Asrifan (2022) found several issues with the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. This includes the competence, abilities of teachers, educators' perspectives on their roles as implementers of education, and the readiness of infrastructure, facilities, and resources. Teachers, as the frontline of education, face various challenges in implementing this curriculum. Some of the difficulties faced include limited understanding of the curriculum concept, lack of supporting facilities, and resistance to changes in teaching methods that are more flexible and based on the potential of the students.

The *Kurikulum Merdeka* is expected to transform the world of education, especially English language learning. It is hoped that this curriculum will enhance students' abilities in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity, and creativity. It is hoped that teachers can also become good facilitators, create an inclusive learning environment, and utilize technology to aid learning. In addition, it is hoped that the educational process is tailored to real-world needs so that students can adapt to the global society.

Learning English with the *Kurikulum Merdeka* presents many challenges. Although this curriculum is intended to improve the quality of education, the reality on the ground shows that teachers face many problems, ranging from understanding the concepts to applying them in the real world. Therefore, broader support is needed, such as intensive training for teachers, provision of adequate facilities, and ongoing guidance to ensure that the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is well implemented and has a positive impact on students.

In the national curriculum, learning general English at the primary and secondary education levels provides opportunities for students to broaden their

horizons about social relationships, culture, and employment opportunities available around the world. Their critical thinking skills can be improved by understanding this sociocultural and intercultural knowledge. All Indonesian children must have the ability to communicate in English with people from different cultures. The curriculum emphasizes the importance of learning English as a global language, and aims to improve the quality of English in Indonesia. As implementers of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers must ensure that they are able to apply it effectively so that students can learn.

The curriculum structure will be more adjustable, and the time allocation will be planned to be completed in one year. To organize learning outcomes, also focus on important materials. Additionally, flexibility provides teachers with the opportunity to adapt a variety of teaching tools to meet the needs and characteristics of students. It became a reality, however, because the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is a relatively new educational program. All rules and guidelines of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* must be applied by English teachers in Indonesia. According to previous research, the main problem faced by English teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is the problem of preparation, which is associated with various administrations in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Another study found that English teachers in Indonesia face many challenges when implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

Urgent research on the challenges of English teachers in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is followed by efforts to improve student learning outcomes. Effective curriculum implementation is very important to improve student learning outcomes. If teachers face difficulties in implementing the curriculum, students tend to be less likely to achieve the desired learning outcomes. Research on the difficulties teachers face in implementing the curriculum can help identify obstacles in the effective implementation of the curriculum and provide information on strategies to overcome them, which will ultimately improve student learning outcomes. A study of the difficulties faced by teachers in implementing the curriculum can also provide information on policy-making and decision-making at the school level, education level, and other levels of education.

The limited facilities at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa often hinder a vibrant and innovative learning atmosphere. Although educators are trying hard to implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, there are several obstacles. One of the main problems is the lack of learning aids such as infocus, which makes the presentation of the material less engaging and difficult for students to understand. Textbooks and whiteboards are not always enough to grab students' attention when teachers want to explain complex concepts. In addition, students face difficulties in finding additional information online due to the school's limited wifi facilities. In today's digital era, not being able to get online educational resources greatly hinders the educational process that should be more interactive and fun.

The condition of students at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa is also a factor that worsens this situation. Many students come from underprivileged economic backgrounds, so they do not have technological devices such as laptops or smartphones that can be used to support learning. When online or hybrid learning is implemented, students who do not have access to technology feel left behind and lose motivation. They often feel discouraged when they see their more capable friends being able to follow the lessons better. These limitations create a gap in comprehension of the material, where students who have better access can explore and understand the lesson more deeply, while others are forced to struggle with the same material without adequate support. The impact of all these limitations is significant. The *Kurikulum Merdeka*, which is designed to provide freedom and flexibility in learning, has become difficult to implement effectively. Teachers feel pressured because they are not able to provide an optimal learning experience for students. They try to find alternative ways to convey material, but often the results are not satisfactory. As a result, the goal of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* to develop students' interests and talents cannot be achieved optimally. At SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa, the hope of creating a more independent and creative generation seems to be getting farther and farther away, and the challenge of improving the quality of education in this school is becoming more and more urgent. In this situation, all teachers, students, and

parents must unite to find solutions so that education in this school can develop and provide greater benefits for the future of students.

In implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, teachers not only play the role of educators but also facilitators, which means they must create and deliver lesson materials in a creative way. Teachers must be creative to create an engaging and interactive learning environment. This makes it easier for students to understand the lesson material. By using new methods such as project-based learning and interactive discussions, teachers can help students with critical thinking and problem-solving. The *Kurikulum Merdeka* values teachers' creativity and emphasizes the importance of acquiring critical thinking skills for students. Students should not only passively receive information; they must also be able to analyze, evaluate, and apply their knowledge to real-world situations. Students at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa have different educational backgrounds and learning experiences, which affect their ability to adapt to this change in learning patterns. Because they are accustomed to traditional learning approaches that focus on memorization, students face difficulties adapting to more exploratory and independent learning methods.

The socio-economic background of students at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa also affects the effectiveness of the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Many students come from families with financial limitations and do not have access to supporting technological devices such as laptops or stable internet connections. As a result, they face difficulties in seeking additional information or learning digital skills, which are important components of education. With these conditions, teachers will face more difficulties in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka*. Not only must teachers overcome limitations in resources and facilities, but they also need to adjust their teaching methods to suit the backgrounds and abilities of each student. To create a good learning environment and ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to develop in the current era of education.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining the extent to which English teachers at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa are able to implement the *kurikulum*

merdeka for students, as well as how teachers can understand new ideas, incorporate innovative methods, and adjust their methods to the diverse backgrounds of students as the main actors in the learning process. The readiness of teachers to implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* is still an issue.

Knowing the problem, the researcher was motivated to solve the issue by conducting a study titled "**An Analysis of English Teacher's Difficulties in Implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the English Teaching Learning Process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa.**"

1.2 Focus of the Research

Based on the background of the problems above, the focus of the research was as follows :

1. To find out how do teacher implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in teaching English at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa
2. To find out how do the difficulties of teacher in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in teaching English at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa
3. To find out how do teacher face difficulties in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the teaching and learning process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

1. How do teacher implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in teaching English at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa?
2. What are the difficulties of teacher in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in teaching English at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa?
3. How do English teacher face difficulties in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the teaching and learning process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa?

1.4 Objectives of the Reasearch

1. To find out how do teacher implement the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in teaching English at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa
2. To find out how do the difficulties of teacher in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in teaching English at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa
3. To find out how do teacher face difficulties in implementing the *Kurikulum Merdeka* in the teaching and learning process at SMP Negeri 4 Lahewa

1.5 Significance of the Research

The significance of this research were :

a) Theoreticallys

The findings of this research can contribute to the development of educational theory, particularly in the context of implementing the new curriculum in Indonesia, namely the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

b) Practically

- 1) For researchers, this provides information that can be used by other researchers as a reference to understand the practical challenges faced in the implementation of the new curriculum, particularly in English language teaching.
- 2) For Teachers, this research provides direct insights to English teachers in general, regarding the challenges they face in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.
- 3) For Other Researchers This research has practical relevance for other researchers interested in studying curriculum implementation in a broader context.
- 4) For students, they will benefit positively from the improved quality of teaching resulting from teachers' understanding of the challenges in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum.